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INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT AND REVOLUTIONARY  
CRISIS ON THE HORN OF AFRICA:  
INDIGENOUS POTENTIALS AND PATTERNS

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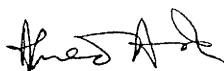
A.A. Rehman

Thesis submitted for the  
Degree of Master of Arts at  
The Australian National University

1979

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work.



— 2/8/79

(A.A. Rehman)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to

My Parents

and

My Teachers

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Horn of Africa attracted widespread attention only recently, when, following the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 and through the subsequent Ogaden War (1977) and aggravation of the Eritrean Insurgency (1962- ), it became one of the major crisis areas of the world. Yet, little written work in the academic field is available to assist us in understanding the strategic situation of the region. Whatever meagre literature there is on this subject<sup>1</sup> is focused on the region's strategic situation primarily in terms of global politics. Reference to the local *milieu* has been brief and casual. There has been little attempt made to relate the information in this regard to the present<sup>2</sup> set of crises in any way other than in terms of a simple, cause-and-effect analysis. Neither has there been a real attempt to formulate,

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<sup>1</sup> This includes: Peter Schwab, 'Cold War on the Horn of Africa' in *African Affairs/The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.77, No.309, January 1978, pp.6-21. Mohammed Ayoub, *The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Superpower Involvement/Canberra Paper on Strategy and Defence, No.18* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, RSPacS, ANU, 1978). Tom J. Farer, *War Clouds on the Horn of Africa* (New York, 1976). J. Bowyer Bell, *The Horn of Africa: Strategic Magnets in the Seventies* (New York: Crane, Russak and Company, Inc., 1973). Mordechai Abir, 'Red Sea Politics' in *Conflicts in Africa/Adelphi Paper No.93* (December 1973). Most of the works on the area apart from the above, which again are not great in number, deal primarily with one or the other of the individual countries. The approach in these works is not inter-disciplinary but traditional, mostly historical. A bibliography on the subject is attached at the end of this work.

<sup>2</sup> The major research and writing for this thesis was done between July 1977 and July 1978. Thus, 'present'/'recent'/'current' in this paper will generally refer to the period prior to the middle of 1978.

out of this information, an indigenous pattern of strategic relationships through a theoretical approach. If there is such a pattern, it should be of use, not only in understanding the present situation on the Horn, but also in making projections in regard to its future.

The aim of this work is to help overcome the above shortcomings in the existing literature on the subject.<sup>3</sup> An attempt will be made to both evaluate the local *milieu* as a source of potentials for international conflict and revolutionary crises, and to arrive at a conclusion as to whether it presents any particular pattern of strategic relationships and behaviour of the actors involved.<sup>3a</sup> A concurrent aim will be to attempt to establish that the problems of security on the Horn of Africa originate, primarily, not as an extension of the global power political complex, but from within the region itself. The local *milieu* of the region will be analysed in terms of the two relatively more permanent of its constituent factors, viz. the geopolitical setting and the historical process involved.<sup>4</sup>

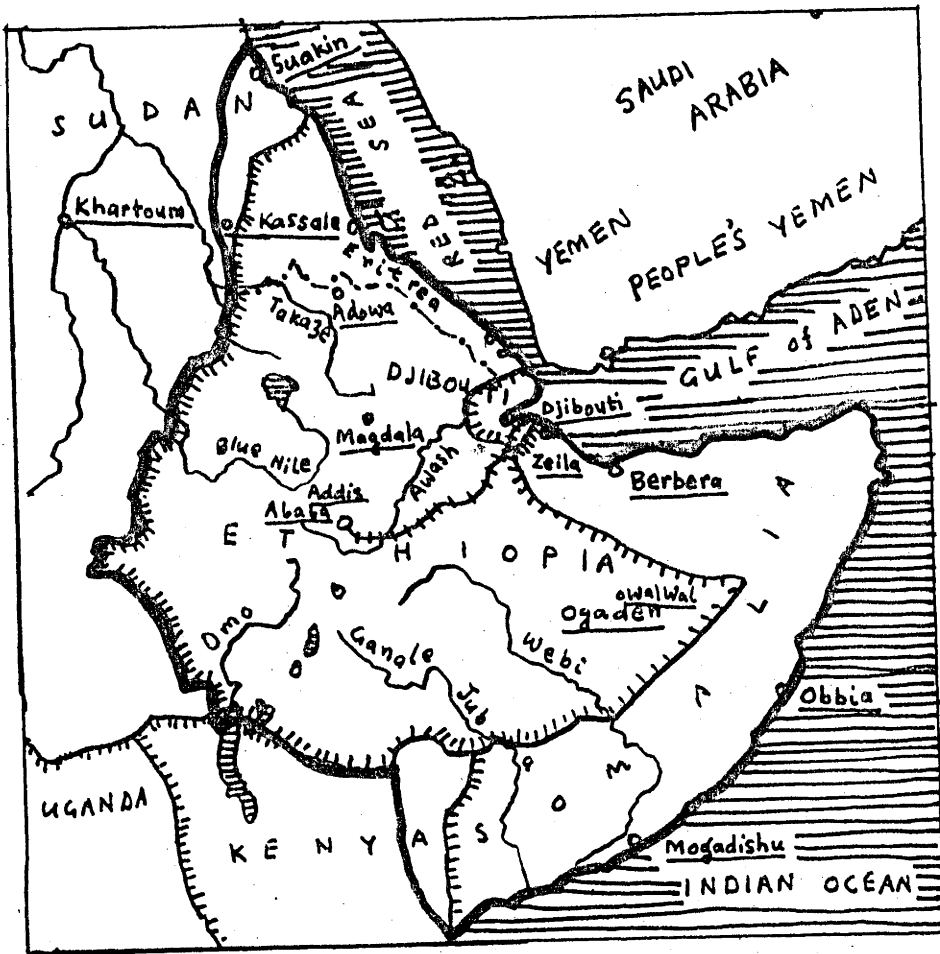
The complexity of the analysis attempted require conceptual parameters and structure particularly defined for this purpose. The geographical limits of the work, as set by the term 'Horn of Africa' - employed, generally, to mean

<sup>3</sup> An abridged version of a part of this thesis has been accepted for publication in *Horn of Africa* (quarterly; Summit, N.J.).






<sup>3a</sup> At both states' (e.g. Ethiopia, Somalia) and sub-state (e.g. the Eritrean Liberation Front, the West Somali Liberation Front) levels.

<sup>4</sup> Both terms, i.e. 'geopolitical setting' and 'historical process' will be defined broadly to include such elements as those of culture, ethnicity and socio-economic psychodynamics.

STATES OF THE HORN OF AFRICA



KEY:

	The Horn (limits)
	International Boundaries
	De-internationalised Boundary
	River
	Water Body
ETHIOPIA	State-name
<u>Zeila</u>	Place-name
o	City/ town

the states of Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti, will include, for the purpose of this research, also such other adjacent areas as those which, though not part of these states, are, nevertheless, inhabited by societies primarily belonging to one or the other of these entities. This is justified by the fact that, as will be shown in the following chapters, the geopolitical and historical development of these societies, embracing as they do, all aspects of their life, including socio-economic and cultural - have been more in closeness with the Horn's system than as a part of the broad regions lying beyond, i.e. the Arab and the ethnic African regions of the continent. The Beja areas of the Sudan and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya are examples of such areas.

The study of the region's history, though brief, nevertheless, will try to encompass the whole of the time span involved. Starting with the beginnings of human settlement in the area, it will survey the whole period down to the contemporary events. However, much of the details dealt with in general studies of the area's history will necessarily be overlooked. But, at the same time, certain points that will seem to be of particular relevance to the theme of the present research, as outlined above, will be dealt with at greater length. This overall, if brief, review of the region's history is essential for the purpose of identifying and understanding the broad pattern of strategic affairs in the area, if any, and to trace the historical stages of the area's development.

Historical information in this paper will be arranged in terms of a linear chronological projection, except for when the attempt at theorising may necessitate a diversion, even if at the cost of restatements, at places, of the same facts - in favour of a circular weaving of the data around particular concepts and hypotheses. The unavoidable restatements, however, will be only with differing purpose at different points and thus, will not really constitute any repetitions in terms of significance and relevance.

Further clarification is required in view of certain terms used in this paper. 'Conflict' will mean, here, strategic conflict, i.e. conflict involving military violence. 'International conflict' will be employed as meaning conflict with repercussions on an international level. 'Revolutionary crisis' will be used to term situations of confusion and tension owing to actual or potential socio-political change. The term 'global politics' will mean international politics on a global level, i.e. that involving the major actors of the world-wide international system. This will be so as to avoid a confusion between international politics on a global level and that on only a regional level - that may arise from the use of the term 'international politics' to denote, as is often done, the former kind of international politics. 'International politics' here will mean any kind of international politics involving international actors - whether global or regional.

The work will proceed through five successive and interrelated chapters. The one following the present will be 'The Geopolitical Setting', which, having assessed the plausible effects of geopolitical facts on contemporary strategic situation in general, will attempt to describe, firstly, the geopolitical realities of the Horn, and then, the ways in which these realities affect the present strategic situation in its particular setting. concurrently, it will try to identify a geopolitical pattern of the strategic relationships and developments on the Horn of Africa.

The next two chapters will deal with the historical background of the present crisis. The first of the two, 'The Historical Process', starting with an inquiry into whether or not historical background affects present conditions at all, it will proceed to study the comparatively remote part of the area's history - the period prior to its becoming interwoven into the mainstream of world politics. The Horn's affairs, during this period, generally in isolation from the global political system, might have developed a historical pattern of strategic relationships and behaviour, as more or less independent of extra-regional involvement. The chapter will simultaneously narrate the historical developments on the Horn during this remote period, relate these developments to its present conditions, and, try to identify a historical pattern of relationships and events emerging from them. The next chapter, 'The Historical Process in the Global Process' will trace the

historical developments since the area became, through large scale and incessant European interference (15th century onward), a part of the then Eurocentric global political system. It will try to assess the manner in which the events of this period contributes to the potentials for crisis on the Horn, as well as examine whether the historical pattern identified in the preceding chapter keeps on persisting in the affairs of the Horn, inspite of its being subjected, now, to the global system with all its multifarious extra-regional influences. This chapter also identifies the ways in which this part of the area's history confirms, strengthens or modifies this pattern.

The concluding chapter integrates and restates the conclusion reached in the body of the work and will suggest their relevance to the present strategic conditions on the Horn.

## CHAPTER II

THE GEOPOLITICAL SETTINGIntroduction: The Role of Geopolitics

Geography plays an important role in the shaping of social conditions, which are but a complex of human behaviours. This is because all human behaviour, in the ultimate analysis, is a set of interactions between man and his milieu - and milieu inevitably includes geographical factors. In fact, the geographical setting is a *basic* foundation for any milieu.

International security relations, in turn, are but a complex of human behaviour in the setting of an international system. Thus, a study of the geographical setting is a primary necessity in the understanding of any area of international security. For this reason, it is desirable that the study of security in the Horn of Africa be started with a survey of the geostrategic realities of the area.<sup>1</sup>

The above, however, is not to suggest any kind of acceptance of the idea of geographical determinism. One need not agree

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<sup>1</sup>The facts of physical geography and their bearing upon men and states are among the most *fundamental* influences upon world affairs. Location, climate, topography, size, shape, nature of the soil, possession or lack of raw materials, and sources of irrigation have a vital bearing upon the conditions and relations of states. National security, economic well-being and the relative national power which a state can bring to bear in world affairs are intrinsically connected with them. An understanding of international affairs *begins* with these facts and their influences.' : Norman J. Padelford and George A. Lincoln, *The Dynamics of International Politics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p.51.



with the view held by the traditional geopoliticians that geography inevitably plays the crucial role in determining behaviour and their consequent events.<sup>2</sup> Geographical factors may, but also may not, play such a crucial part. The role is inevitable, but not inevitably crucial. But, on the other hand, in spite of the established inadequacy<sup>3</sup> of traditional geopolitics, the fact remains that geography can become the crucial factor in certain circumstances. Thus, for instance, the geographical limitations of being landlocked and surrounded by South Africa affects the foreign policy of

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<sup>2</sup> I refer here to the five leading traditional geopoliticians: Rudolf Kjellen [*The State as a Form of Life*, 1916]; Alfred Thayer Mahan [*The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783*, 1890]; Halford Mackinder [*Democratic Ideals and Realities*, 1919; revised, 1943]; Karl Haushofer [*Politische Geographie und Geopolitik*] and Nicholas J. Spykman [*The Geography of Peace*, 1944]. Their deterministic bias is well reflected in such dictums of theirs as 'Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; who rules the World Island commands the World' (Mackinder, quot. in Norman J. Padelford and George A. Lincoln,

op.cit., p.78) - and, 'Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia, who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world' (Spykman, quot. Padelford and Lincoln, op.cit., p.80). For a brief introduction to traditional geopolitical thoughts, vide Padelford and Lincoln, op.cit., pp.75-81; Richard Muir, *Modern Political Geography* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975), pp.192-198.

<sup>3</sup> The traditional geopoliticians cancelled each other's deterministic propositions. The last of them seems to have cancelled his own (as much as anybody else's) determinism, by his comment, 'the geographical determinism which seeks to explain by geography all things from the fourth symphony to the fourth dimension paints as distorted a picture as does an explanation of policy with no reference to geography'. For Spykman's own deterministic ideas, vide fn.2 above. For a criticism of the deterministic views, vide: Raymond Aron, *Peace and War/A Theory of International Relations Fr.*, translated by Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962, 1966), pp.182-203.

Lesotho. In spite of being a Black African nation, she, contrary to the general Black African policy of hostility towards the White regime of South Africa, maintains cooperative and peaceful relations with it. Similar considerations crucially affect the policies of Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Laos also.<sup>4</sup>

### The Setting

The region, as already defined<sup>5</sup> is more or less a triangle with the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean coasts as two of its three sides (Map).

It is a *central highland* cut into two by a rift valley<sup>6</sup> and with a vast *periphery of semi-desert lowland*.<sup>7</sup>

The Highland tilts towards the northwest of the triangle as a whole, forming the heart of the Ethiopian State. Most of the coastal Periphery of the lowlands encompasses the Somali-inhabited areas in the east of the triangle, including Somalia as well as the disputed Ogaden and the rest of the Hararghe<sup>8</sup> province of Ethiopia. The Periphery is almost

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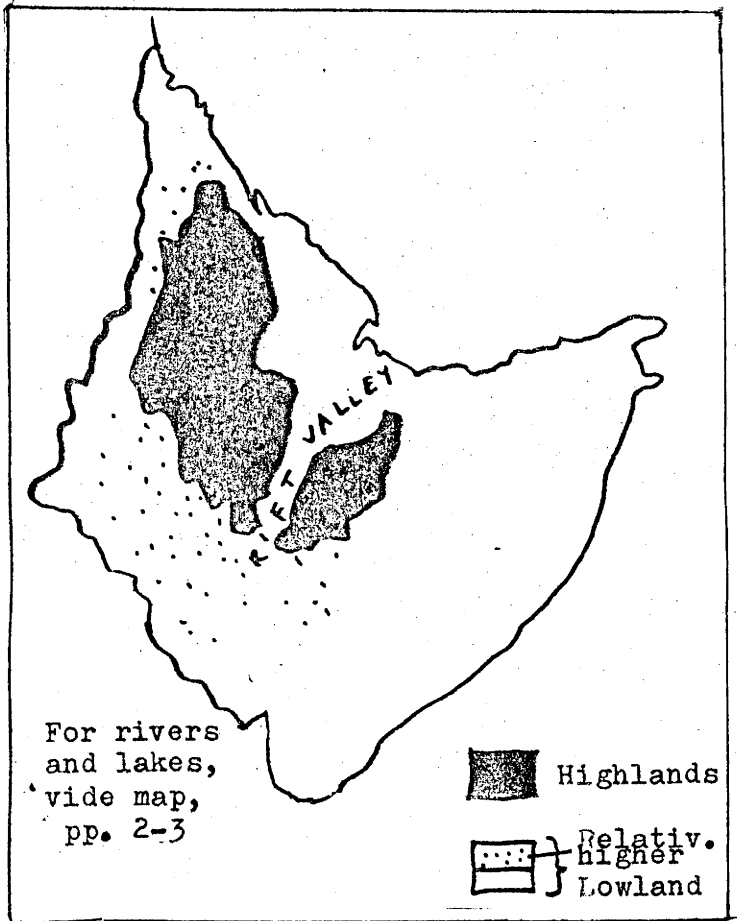
<sup>4</sup> For a discussion on certain aspects of the problems of landlockedness as faced by Lesotho, *vide*: T. Thahane, 'Lesotho, an Island Country: the Problems of Being Landlocked' in *The African Review/A Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs*, (Dar Es Salaam) Vol.4, No.2, 1974, pp.279-290. For a general discussion on landlockedness, *vide*: Muir, *op.cit.*, pp.57-60. Also, my 'Antarjatic Samparka Samasya/Bhoobaddhata' (Bengali: 'Problems in International Relations/Landlockedness') in the *Bichitra*, Dacca, July 1972.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide, supra*: Ch.1, pp.2-3.

<sup>6</sup> This central highland will be referred to in this work as the '*Central Highland(s)*', the '*Highlands*' or the '*Core*'.

<sup>7</sup> This will be referred to as the '*Periphery*', the '*Peripheral Lowlands*' or the '*Lowlands*'.

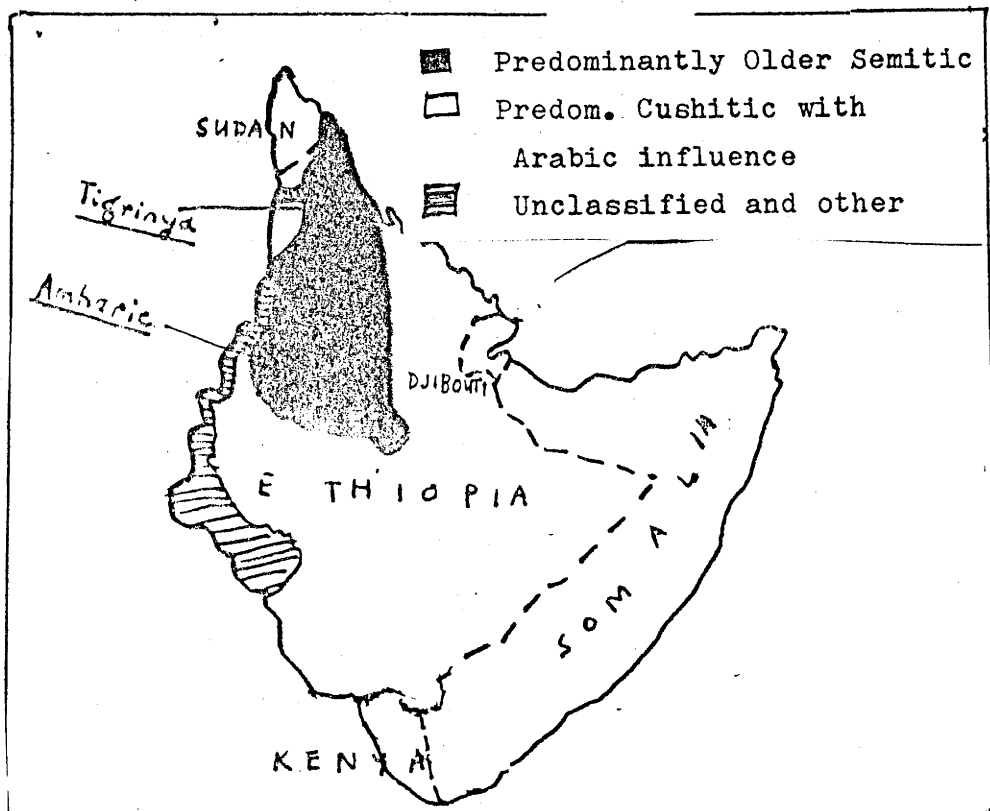
<sup>8</sup> Spelled also as Harar, Harrer.



Horn of Africa:  
Topographic Pattern  
(pp. 9-10)

Based on: George A. Lipsky,  
Ethiopia/ its people, its society, its Culture

(New Haven: HRAF Press, '62),  
p.29



Horn of Africa:  
Distribution of Languages (pp. 12-14)

Based on: J.S. Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia (Oxford Univ. Press, 1952),  
Map - 1

pushed into the Red Sea by the Highlands at one point in Eritrea.<sup>9</sup> In general, however, Eritrea also is a part of the Periphery. The Ethiopian provinces of Sidamo, Samo-Goffa, Kaffa and Wallaga also fall mostly in this Periphery.<sup>10</sup>

There are two river systems on the triangle. One is that of a set of more or less parallel rivers running from the Highlands westwards into the Sudan. The other one, of similarly parallel rivers, runs eastwards across the Periphery into the Indian Ocean.

All these rivers cut across international boundaries: the first system that between Ethiopia and Sudan; the second, that between Ethiopia and Somalia. However, the 'catchment areas' of all these rivers remain well within the boundaries of Ethiopia.

Among the major rivers in the subregion there are two exceptions to these systems: the river Awash, which runs south from Lake Abbe, and the river Onomo, which runs north from it. Neither of these crosses any international boundaries.

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<sup>9</sup> 'The plain of the Samhar, which separates the Ethiopian highlands from the sea, is only about fifty miles wide at a point .... It is at this point that the Ethiopian escarpments are nearest to the sea'. Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes/The Challenge of Islam and the Re-unification of the Christian Empire/1769-1855* (London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1968), p.5.

<sup>10</sup> The distinction between the 'Core' and the 'Periphery' becomes blurred in the southwestern parts of the Horn. The two overlap each other and make the dichotomy the least obvious in this particular part of the system. Moreover certain features (e.g. rain forests, negroid pagan population, etc.), uncommon to both the 'Core' and the 'Periphery' also appear here. This is true in many of the aspects of geopolitics under consideration. This point will be further discussed in course of this chapter.

There are eleven big lakes, all of which (except the biggest two) along with the two 'exceptional' rivers, form a physical barrier, supplementing the rift valley and dividing the whole subregion into two (Map, pp. 2-3, 9-10).

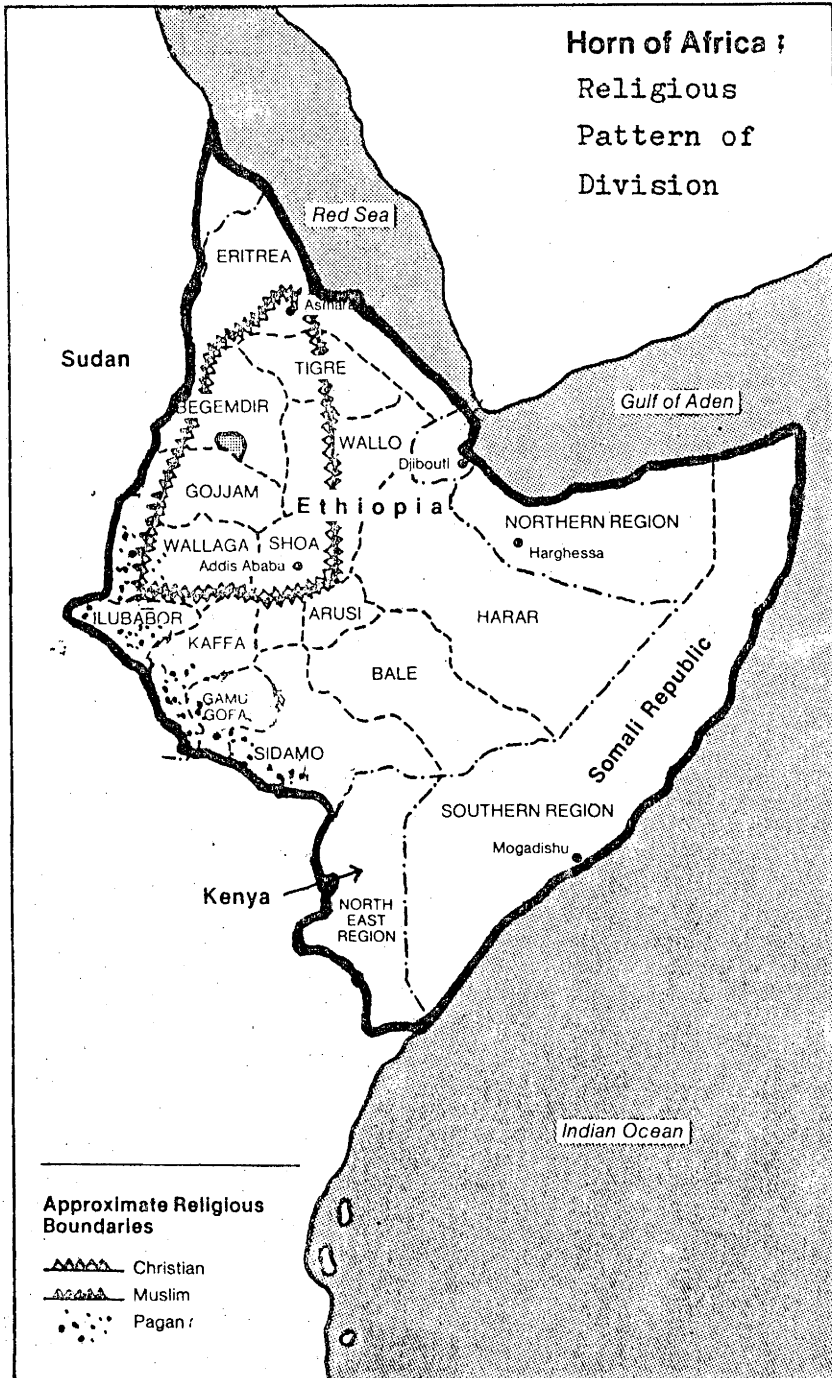
### Human Factors

In ethnic terms, the triangle may be divided primarily into a predominantly Semitic Core coinciding more or less with the Highlands<sup>11</sup> and a non-Semitic, mainly Cushitic Periphery coinciding in the same way with the Lowlands.<sup>12</sup>

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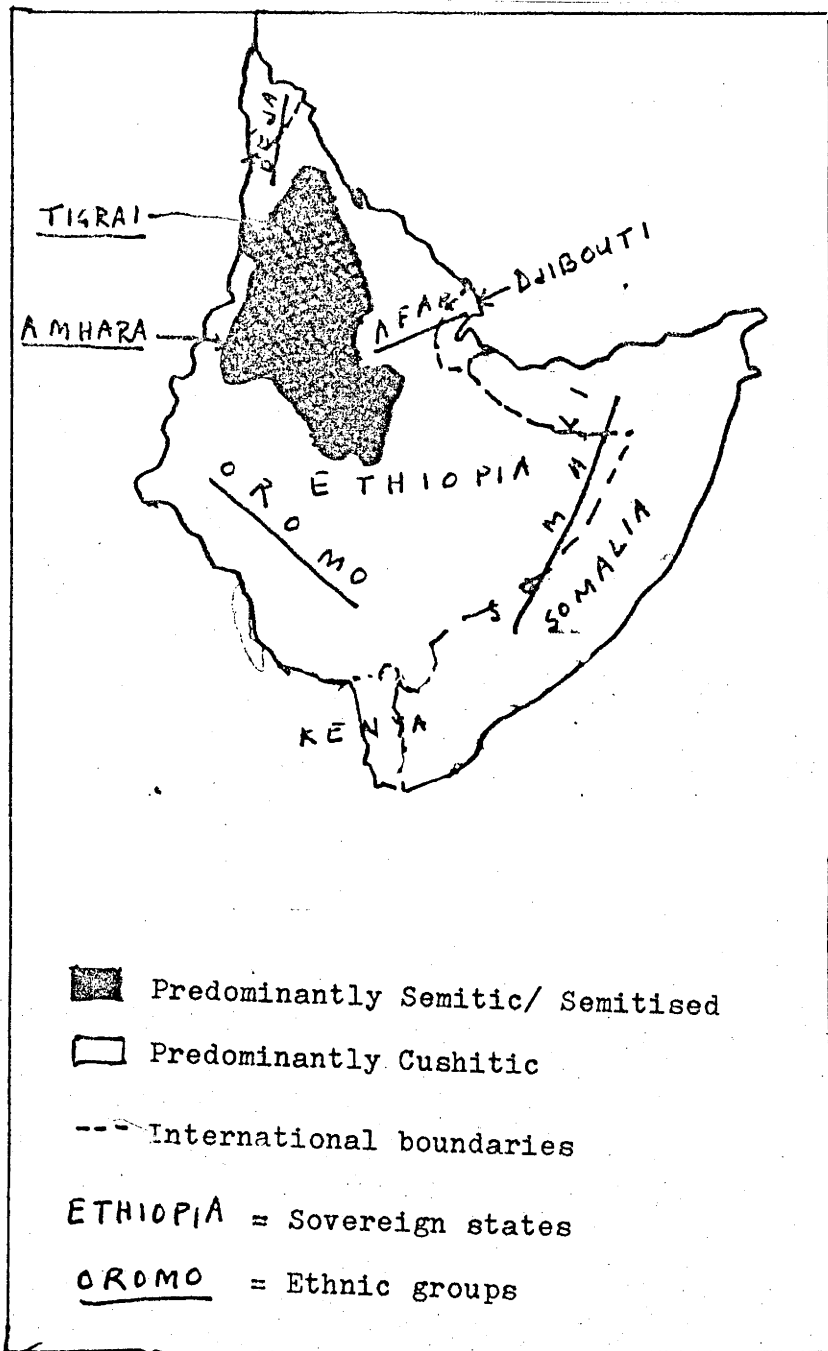
<sup>11</sup> There are no pure Semites on the Horn. But the Amharas of Highlands descend from the Sabaeen Semitic migrants of ancient times. These Semitic groups intermarried with the local Hamites, and thus took the name Abyssinian (from the Arabic 'Habash' - the 'mixed'): G.K.H. Trevaskis, *Eritrea/A Colony in Transition: 1941-52* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press), pp.4-5. 'Abyssinian' is used both as synonymous with, and wider than the 'Amhara'. In the latter case, it denotes 'the historic kingdom of the *highlands*' (my emphasis). Frederick J. Simoons, *Northwest Ethiopia/Peoples and Economy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), pp.vii-viii, fn.1. The above explanation of the term 'Abyssinian', though accepted generally, is nevertheless controversial. It is also suggested that 'Abyssinia' derived from the tribal name 'Habashat' (as distinct from 'Habash'). Trimmingham, cited by Simoons, op.cit., p.vii, fn.1. The 'Habashat' were one of the tribes from South Arabia: Stephen H. Longrigg, *A Short History of Eritrea* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945, p.11). 'Semitic' and 'Semite' in relation to the Horn's population will mean, in this work, the Semitized mixed society originating from the Sabaeen settlements.

<sup>12</sup> The whole of the Periphery, except a part on the extreme fringes in the west, is Cushitic. The western fringes are Negroid in ethnicity. The Agaw and the Sidamo, inhabiting parts of the Periphery in the southwest are also taken to be non-Cushitic. But some writers regard the Agaw also as part of the Cushitic stock. Cf. reference to 'the Cushitic inhabitants notably the Agaw': Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians/An Introduction to Country and People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960-1961), p.98; '... other Cushitic peoples, such as the Agaw (Agaw) ...' George Lipsky, *Ethiopia* (New Haven, Conn.: HRAF Press, 1962), pp.45-49. The Afaw, in fact, seem to be of two types. The Agaw, in general, are closer to the Gallas and Somalis (Cushitic): Lipsky, *ibid.*, pp.343-44. But, those of them living on the



Adapted from: Conflicts in Africa/ Adelphi  
Papers Number Ninety-three (London: The  
 International Institute for Strategic  
 Studies, 1972).

Horn of Africa: Ethnic Pattern of  
Demographic Distribution



Based on: Patrick Gilkes in Africa Report,  
May-June 1974; Donald Levine in Africa  
Report, May 1971 (pp. 34 and 14, respectl.).

While the Semitic Core is more or less a homogeneous Amharic society,<sup>13</sup> the non-Semitic areas may be divided into at least four major sections: (i) the Somali lands, (ii) the Afar areas,<sup>14</sup> (iii) the Beja areas, and (iv) the land of the Oromos (Map).

The Highland Core coincides with the seat of Coptic Christian settlement, while the Peripheral areas are Moslem. However in the west centralmost parts of Ethiopia, both the Highlands and the Peripheral areas are inhabited by considerable numbers of pagans.

Culturally, and particularly linguistically, the triangle is Hamito-Semitic at the base. The Semitic element in this 'base' is of ancient Sabaean origin, supplemented to different degrees at different places by relatively later Semitic (i.e. Arabic) and other, non-Semitic elements.<sup>15</sup> The proportion

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12 (cont'd)

Highlands Core are perhaps Semitic - descendants of Moses, according to their own claims. They are a part of the general society of this 'Core' in terms of their culture and religion also. They are Amharic speaking Christian agriculturists like the rest of the 'Core's' population. Lipsky, *ibid.*, p.44. The 'Core'-'Periphery' dichotomy seems to prevail even if over-riding the apparent unity of the Agaws.

The Sidamo area is mostly inhabited by the Sidamo, a non-Cushitic people. However, the Sidamo feel themselves integrally united with the Galla, a Cushitic people, flanking them on both sides. This they feel as part of the 'Oromo' group. All these groups are non-Semitic (see map). Sidamo are also known as Sidama.

<sup>13</sup> The Highlands are Abyssinian, and thus, homogeneously Amharic. *Vide, supra*, fn.11.

<sup>14</sup> The Afars are also known as 'Danakil' (singular: Dankali).

<sup>15</sup> The whole subregion, except for a few enclaves in the west, conforms to this generalisation. Lipsky, *op.cit.*, pp.52-61.



of Sabean Semitic gradually increases with altitude and closeness to the Highland Core of the triangle.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Tigrinya, the language of Tegre and the Eritrean highlands, is closer to Ge'ez, the African form of the ancient Sabean Semitic;<sup>17</sup> next is Amharic, the language of Shoa<sup>18</sup> and its surroundings. On the other hand, the Somali language is so close to the latter Semitic, i.e. Arabic, that there is argument as to whether or not it is itself a form of Arabic.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Vide* *ibid.*; map, p.53.

<sup>17</sup> My interview with Mr Mesfin Alazar, Eritrean exile, Sydney, 1978.

<sup>18</sup> Spelled also as Shewa, Shawa.

<sup>19</sup> Thus Somalis vacillate for and against the use of Arabic script for their language. At independence in 1960, at first, they found themselves unable to decide. E.A. Bayne, *Birthday for Somalia, American Universities Field Staff/Reports, Northeast Africa Series, Vol.VIII, No.1 (Somalia), 1961, p.2*. Later they accepted the script (Lipsky, *op.cit.*, p.52) but abandoned it in favour of the Latin alphabet in October 1972. Keesing's, *op.cit.*, p.26392. They identified themselves with the Arabs in joining the Arab League a little more than a year later, in February 1974. *ibid.* The Somalis claim their origins to be Arabic and take pride in it. Robert L. Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia* (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1966), p.9. Claims of this kind are more of cultural than racial significance. They represent, not the actual position as to the racial origins of the people concerned, but their *view* of themselves. Cf. the claims of many Indian Moslems, essentially non-Semitic in actual terms - to be Arabic, Persian or Turkish in origin. Similarly, the Somali claim to Arab origins, in spite of its objective baselessness, is significant in indicating their *cultural affiliation* with the Arabs. For Arab element in Somali descent, *vide: infra: Ch.III, pp.71-72*.

The same is true of certain of the Eritrean dialects.<sup>20</sup>

Galla is also close to the latter Semitic elements, i.e. Arabic.<sup>21</sup>

And finally, Arabic influences are so strong in the southwest and the western fringes of the Periphery that it has become the *lingua franca* in those areas.<sup>22</sup>

In socio-economic terms, the society of the Central Highlands is built on a feudal agrarian base,<sup>23</sup> while the

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<sup>20</sup> The Eritreans on attaining autonomous status in federation with Ethiopia, proclaimed Arabia as one of their two official languages. Tigrinya was made the other. Significantly, they refused to accept Amharic, the *lingua franca* and the only official language for the rest of the Ethiopian Empire as even one of the official languages. A significant portion of Eritrea speaks pure Arabic, while many others speak such related dialects as 'Beja' and 'Afar'. Particularly, the 'Beja' dialect is spoken in Arab Sudan also. Lipsky, op.cit., pp.52 and 57-58. In Eritrea, Arabic is the *lingua franca*, *ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>21</sup> The Galla also, like the Somalis, claim to be Arabic in origin. This claim is presumably primarily in racial terms, but also cultural. Lipsky, *ibid.*, p.40. For the cultural significance of such claims see footnote 19 above.

<sup>22</sup> Lipsky, pp.50-51.

<sup>23</sup> Amhara feudalism is discussed in all the writings on the Ethiopian social/economic system. *Vide:* for example: Patrick Gilkes, *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernisation in Ethiopia* (London, 1974); Lipsky, op.cit., pp.62-68. Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia* (Chicago, Lond.: the University of Chicago Press, 1973), p.1. Frederick Gamst, *Peasantry and Elites without Urbanism: 'The Civilization of Ethiopia'* in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.12, No.4, 1970, pp.373-92. John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Oxford, 1974). Peter Schwab, *Decision-Making in Ethiopia* (London, 1972) and *Human Rights in Ethiopia* in *Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge), No.1, March 1976. John M. Cohen, *Peasants and Feudalism in Africa: the Case of Ethiopia* in *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (Ottawa), Vol.III, No.1, 1974, pp.155-7 and *Ethiopia: a survey of the existence of a feudal peasantry* in *Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge), Vol.XII, No.4, December 1974, pp.665-72. Gene Ellis, *The Feudal Paradigm as Hindrance to Understanding Ethiopia* in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14,2 (1976), pp.275-295 and *Feudalism and Peasantry, Social Structure and Development in Ethiopia* (1976). At the same time, it also has been noted that the feudal characteristic, essentially marking Ethiopia Proper do not apply to the other parts of the

Peripheral societies are, basically, a pre-feudal nomadic pastoral system.<sup>24</sup>

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23 (cont'd)

present State of Ethiopia, which constitute parts of the 'Periphery' identified in this work, *vide*, e.g. Gene Ellis, *The Feudal Paradigm ...*, p.278.

<sup>24</sup> In 1963, at least 75% of the total number of Somalis in Somalia were pastoral and nomadic ('migrant'). E.A. Bayne, *From Clan to Nation, Northeast Africa Series, Vol.X, No.2* (N.Y.: American Universities Field Staff Report Service), 1963, p.2, fn.1. The Somalis in general, as viewed by even as urbanized and westernized a Somali as the Chief of the country's only armed force at independence, is 'free to wander ... with our herd with nothing between ourselves and the sky ... He will not change'. They have not changed to any considerable degree since the statement was made in 1960. This statement may be taken as significant not only as an objective statement of the Somali position but also as a subjective indication of their tendencies and preferences for a nomadic way of life, and the fact that these tendencies and preferences are too strong to be wiped out with ease by even the forces of urbanization and westernization. Cf. reference to 'reluctant [to change] and tradition-loving people [of Somalia]' Anthony Sylvester, *The Somalian Road of Self Confidence in Impact International*, London, 22 February-7 March, 1977, p.4.

Even as late as 1974, in spite of deliberate and strenuous efforts by the Somali government to build up permanent settlements out of the nomadic population, at least 70% were still nomadic. *Vide*: '... nomads ... 70 percent of our [Somalia's] people are precisely that' Barrah, President, Republic of Somalia, *quot. ibid.*

The Oromos of the Periphery, particularly the Borana and other southern and western Oromos are nomadic/pastoral while those on the Highlands, and thus closer to the 'Core', are settled. The dichotomy prevails in religion too; while the Oromos are mostly Moslem, those close to the 'Core' have, through intermarriages with the Amhara, become almost inseparable from the latter. Lipsky, *op.cit.*, pp.41-42. Alys Reece, *To My Wife, 50 Camels*.

The Eritreans of the lowlands and also of some parts of the Highlands, have been classified as from among 'The Major Nomadic Peoples', Lipsky, *op.cit.*, pp.45-48.

The Sidamos, like the Galla, are nomadic, when from the Peripheral areas. Those closer to the 'Core' are agriculturalist. Most of the Sidamo fall in the 'Core'. *ibid.*, p.49.

In short, the Horn is composed, roughly, of two contrastable units: (i) a Central Coptic Christian feudal agrarian<sup>25</sup> society in the Highlands controlling the catchment areas of all the river systems in the area; and (ii) a Peripheral set of Moslem nomadic pre-feudal pastoral societies on the semi-desert coastal lowlands controlling all the outlets from the interior into the world outside. However, the political geography<sup>26</sup> of the area, a relatively artificial and thus less permanent factor, does not coincide with this structure set by all the other aspects of its geography. This will be discussed later.<sup>27</sup>

The Horn of Africa faces the seas on two of its sides (north and south) and a more or less impregnable land frontier

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<sup>25</sup> Ethiopia Proper has been referred to as 'feudal' and 'feudalist'. Cf. '... the people of Eritrea have been waging an armed struggle against ... *feudal* Ethiopia' (my emphasis): Anonymous, *The Eritrean Liberation and the African Revolution*, in *Liberation*, monthly (Eritreans for Liberation in North America), Vol.II, NO.2, February 1973, p. Also, '... *feudalist* Ethiopia ... collaborating in the oppression of the Eritrean people ...' (my emphasis): Anonymous, *United States, Israel and Ethiopian Collaboration in Struggle*, p. These extracts from Eritrean sources significantly show the Peripheral's view of the *feudal character of the Highland 'Core'*. First, they view this as a point of distinction between themselves and the 'Core'. Secondly, their i.e. the Peripheral's own tendencies are antifeudalist - a fact that supports our proposition (below) that the body political tendencies of the two systems/set of systems are in direct mutual opposition. By 'body political tendencies' we mean tendencies evolved through development as a political society. 'Body politic' is political society.

<sup>26</sup> 'Political geography' and 'geopolitics' are often used interchangeably. It is desirable to draw distinction between the two terms. Political geography is geography as shaped by political considerations and boundaries while geopolitics is politics as shaped by geographical factors.

<sup>27</sup> *Vide infra*: pp.17-41.

on the third (west). It is obvious that the Peripheral areas, facing the seas, are open to the world while the Central Highlands remain relatively inaccessible and land-locked. On the question of maritime access to and from the rest of the world, the Peripheral coasts may be divided into two: (i) the Red Sea coast, and (ii) the coast on the Indian Ocean.

Of the two coasts, the one of the Indian Ocean, i.e. the Somali coast, is more safe<sup>28</sup> and accessible than the coast on the Red Sea, i.e. the Eritrean one. This is because of the fact that the Red Sea is virtually a closed sea.<sup>29</sup> It has two physical outlets it is true; but, given their width of less than 24 miles, these outlets lie within the legal jurisdiction of one or the other of the adjacent states. Both the outlets lie within the military range of both the respective littorals.

### Political Geography

The political geography of the area has two aspects: (i) the geography of what might be called the 'natural' socio-political development of the area, and (ii) that of its

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<sup>28</sup> Maritime 'safety' here is in terms of political safety i.e. safety from interference and politically decided obstruction.

<sup>29</sup> For this reason, the Sea has sometimes been referred to as a 'Lake'. Cf. such a reference in Jeane-Claude Gillebaud, *Africa's Horn of Troubles/Battling for the Lake of Arab Peace*, in *The Guardian*, July 17, 1977. Also in A.S., *Red Sea/Whose lake will it be?* in *Impact International*, London, 8-21 April 1977, pp.5-6. Mordechai Abir, *Red Sea Politics*, in *Conflicts in Africa, Adelphi Papers* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1972).

present political boundaries and the political nature of its system or systems.

The first aspect is a more permanent, deep-rooted and natural phenomenon than the second, which is relatively artificial, recent and temporary. The geography of the 'natural' socio-political development is a matter of *natural evolution* through conscious and unconscious interactions<sup>30</sup> of a primarily intra-regional character.<sup>31</sup> So, not very surprisingly, it tends to coincide with the other natural aspects of the geopolitical setting in question. In terms of 'natural' socio-political development, the Horn of Africa has come to be composed, by this time, of two mutually hostile

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<sup>30</sup> Interaction being a kind of behaviour, may generate from conscious decision or subconscious tendencies and habits. Long-term repetition of similar conscious behaviour may result in a subconscious habit and a particular tendency associated with it. 'Natural' socio-political developments usually proceed through a combination of both such conscious and subconscious/unconscious types of behaviour. Thus, for instance, the Amhara's treatment of the non-Amharas of Eritrea as inferior was initially the result of a conscious realization of a *real* inferiority of the latter's civilization - say, in terms of education. The non-Amharas of Eritrea were really inferior in these terms, when the Amharas came in contact with them for the first time some centuries back. But the continuation of this type of treatment at present does not generate from any conscious realization of any such inferiority on the part of the non-Amharic Eritreans - as such inferiority is no longer a fact. But the habit of treating them as inferior has persisted. So, the treatment of the Eritrean non-Amharas as inferior at present is not a conscious behaviour but a subconscious pattern of interaction. The 'natural' socio-political development in this case is a combination of these initial conscious and later subconscious interactions. The result is the continued Amhara treatment of the non-Amharas of Eritrea as inferior notwithstanding the real changes in the original situation.

<sup>31</sup> The 'natural' socio-political developments on the Horn of Africa have been the results of mainly regional interaction. Extra-regional forces only supplemented the regional forces in the process. It is the combination of conscious and subconscious tendencies *from within*, as behind the developments, that make them a process of *natural evolution*.

units, viz. (i) the system of the Central Highlands, and (ii) that of the Periphery. In terms of body political tendencies, the two are in direct opposition and conflict with each other. While the former is unitary, centralist, imperial, expansionist and perhaps racist<sup>32</sup> - the latter is its direct opposite. It is a pluralistic, *somewhat* democratic,<sup>33</sup> multiracial confederal system, containing the former.

This presentation of the situation is a description of the inherent tendencies that have grown up within the entities of the subregion, as sets of characteristic features<sup>34</sup> and not necessarily by current position.

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<sup>32</sup> Being racist in inherent tendencies is different from being such in conscious policies. Socially superior societies usually tend to be racist. They tend to treat the other societies as inferior and to preserve their own purity. This naturally results in social discrimination. This is quite natural. Cf. the development of the caste system in India as a device to preserve the purity of the Aryans. However, such tendencies may become irrelevant with change in conditions. *Vide*: for instance, *supra*, fn.30. In such cases such tendencies are reduced to mere discriminatory prejudice without any real basis. For a brief discussion on the development of the caste system in India as a device to preserve the purity and superiority of the Aryans, *vide*: my *Foreign Relations of Bangladesh: The Historic Pattern* (Dacca, 1976).

<sup>33</sup> The Peripheral systems are traditionally democratic in essence, though not necessarily in exact line with the classical, western model of democracy. There have been 'Sultans', i.e. 'monarchs'. But their role has involved more prestige than actual power, which rested with popular councils. On a higher level, again, there has been a democratic approach, where power rested in what may be termed, in the modern western jargon, a Senatorial system. A comparable system may be seen in the Sultanates of Malaysia. This, which may be called 'Sultanic Democracy', still persists in some parts of the Periphery, e.g. in the Afar areas.

<sup>34</sup> This aspect will be discussed in greater details in later chapters.

The present political position in the area, in terms of geography, coincides with none of the foregoing aspects of its basis structures. The geography of these present political conditions involves: (i) the nature of the area's boundaries, and (ii) the nature of the political systems within these boundaries. None of these conform with the basic political structure.

As for the international boundaries on the Horn, not one among these relates to any of the basic aspects of its geopolitical structure: its ethnic system, economic considerations, geophysical structure or historic 'natural' socio-political development. In fact, these basic aspects are what, significantly enough, have been traditionally regarded as bases for justification of actual or claimed international boundaries.<sup>35</sup>

Ethiopian - Somalian boundary cuts across the Somali people and has no geophysical features to support it. It neither coincides with the line of distinction between the body-politics concerned, nor has it any historic continuity or stability to back it.

The boundary between Somalia and Djibouti also cuts across the Somali people. It also fails to satisfy all of the above-mentioned criteria of a justifiable boundary. The Djibouti-Ethiopian boundary also is unsatisfactory in a

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<sup>35</sup> *Vide.* For a brief discussion on boundary claims on the basis of 'historical, ethnic, geographical or strategical reasons' and economic necessity, Muir, op.cit., pp.176-177.



similar way. It cuts across the ethnic unity of the Afars. In the same way it cuts through the geophysical unity of the Danakil Depression. It too cannot justify itself in terms of any of the generally accepted criteria for international boundaries.<sup>36</sup>

Neither do the boundaries of Ethiopia with Sudan nor that of Somalia with Kenya conform with the basic geostrategic realities of the area, as outlined above. The former cuts across such ethnic groups as the Beja and other non-Semitic peoples, as well as such geophysical unities as the Beja lowlands. The latter cuts through the ethnic and geophysical unity of the Somali lands.

The presently de-internationalized boundary between Ethiopia and Eritrea also fails to conform with the fundamental geostrategic realities. It cuts through such closely knit ethnic groups as the Tigrinya-speaking Christian Semitics. It also cuts across the Ethiopian Highlands, incontestably a single geophysical unit.

#### Implications of the Setting

The above conditions present us with a super-imposed real situation in the area that clashes with the realities of its basic character. This signifies a total basis for contradiction throughout the region. The above conditions present us with a system super-imposed on a more natural system that evolved through ages.

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<sup>36</sup> For discussion on this in greater detail see below pp.22-36.

It is on this geopolitical basis of contradiction, built upon and fed by the elements of history, that the basic threat to stability and security in the area rests. That is, the problems of security in the Horn of Africa region generates primarily, though not exclusively, from *within* the region itself and its nature. The secondary factor, extra-regional involvement and aspirations, also derives from the geostrategic nature of the region.

To begin with, the boundaries of the region fail to reflect its basic geostrategic realities as outlined above. They also *clash* directly with these realities. This centrally contributes to all but one of the major problem situations of the region: (a) the Somali problem including the West Somali Liberation struggle, (b) Eritrean Insurgency and (c) the Djibouti Question. The single exception is the Ethiopian Revolution and Civil War.

The boundaries, while tying up such parts of the 'Periphery' as the Ogaden, Eritrea and the Oromo and the Afar areas - with the 'Core' into one single state (Ethiopia), at the same time, cut through such Peripheral, geopolitical and socio-economic entities as those of the Somali and the Afar areas - forcing the entities' members into separation and economic hardship. Thus, the tying up of Peripheral areas like the Ogaden, Eritrea, the Afar and the Oromo areas with Ethiopia Proper, i.e. the 'Core's' system - into the one single state of Ethiopia, has naturally resulted into a set of intra-state conflicts between these Peripheral areas on the one hand,

and the 'Core'-based system of the Ethiopian state on the other. These conflicts have translated into the separatist/ autonomist struggles of 'West Somalia' (West Somali Liberation Front - WSLF); Eritrea (Eritrean Liberation Front - ELF , (Eritrean Liberation Front - Popular Liberation Forces : ELF-PLF); the Oromo (Oromo Liberation Front - OLF) and the Afar areas (Afar Liberation Front - ALF).<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, these separatist struggles, in some cases (e.g. 'West Somali', Afar), where the international boundary has cut through one or the other of the Peripheral socio-political entities - have been supplemented by irredentist movements to unify the split entities. Thus, the 'West Somali Liberation' struggle is supplemented by - in fact, originates from - the Somali irredentism, aiming at unifying all the Somali inhabited lands into a single state<sup>38</sup> and is openly sponsored by the Somali Republic. Somalia has consistently and constantly denounced all of its

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<sup>37</sup> The OLF is a less-known of the insurgent movements of the Horn. for this and for the SALF (Somali Abo Liberation Front). - another of the less-known movements, *vide: Africa Confidential*, Vol.19, No.11, 26 May 1978, pp.5-6.

<sup>38</sup> According to the mainstream of the movement, this state is, naturally, the Somali Republic. *Vide: infra*, fn.40. To Ethiopia, unification of the Somalis, if any, should be within her bounds.

present borders, the Somali-Ethiopian, Somali-Kenyan and Somali-Djibouti.<sup>39</sup> While there is not enough evidence available to

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<sup>39</sup> The Somali Republic was established in 1960. Its open sponsorship and patronage of the Somali irredentist moves are reflected in its Constitution as well as the flag. 'The Somali Republic shall promote ... the union of Somali territories, ...' The [Somali Republican] Constitution (1 July 1960). First Part, Art.6/4: quot. in Somali Govt., *Somalia at a Glance* (Mogadishu, 1964), p.55. The Somali Republican flag incorporates a five pointed star on it, each of the five points representing one of the five Somali areas; former Italian Somaliland, former British Somaliland, former French Somaliland, the Somali areas under Ethiopian control and the Northern frontier District of Kenya. *Vide*: Murumbi, Kenyan representative, speech at the OAU, Second Extraordinary Session of the Council of Ministers, Dar Es Salaam (12-15 February 1964), quot. in Hoskyns, op.cit., p.57.

The Somali Republic appears to still follow this policy, after over a quarter of a century. For example, during the Ogaden crisis of 1977, the Republic supported the irredentist insurrection led by the West Somali Liberation Front. It went to the extent of even sending its forces to support the insurrection. *Sunday Nation*, Nairobi, 12 February 1978. *Editorial: The tide of war turns against Somalia*, *The Nairobi Times*, Nairobi, 12 February 1978, p.6. *The Baghdad Observer*, Baghdad, Vol.VII, No.3025, p.1.

The Somali-Ethiopian boundary has been denounced, though only occasionally and implicitly, by Ethiopia also. Cf. '... the historical frontiers of Ethiopia stretched from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, including all the territory between them [i.e. also Somalia] ... there is no record in history either of a Somali State or a Somali nation ... During the 19th century ... Ethiopia ... [was] robbed of all its coast line ... [including] Somalia ... Italian aggressors ... used our Ethiopian coastline of ... Somalia to carry out attacks ... we ... the Ethiopians will have claims to make [on Somalia, across the present Somali-Ethiopian boundary]: on the same basis as Somalia, and more on historical and geographical reasons': Aklilou Habta-Wold, Prime Minister of Ethiopia: speech at the OAU Summit Conference, Addis Ababa, May 1963; '... according to Ethiopian tradition, what is now the Republic of Somalia formed part of ancient Ethiopia ... In more recent times, Ethiopian Emperors have, on various occasions, asserted their sovereignty at least over the northern part of Somalia': Mesfin (Ethiopian writer), *The Ethio-Somalia Boundary Dispute*, pp.27-29, quot. in Catherine Hoskyns, *Case Studies in African Diplomacy: 2/the Ethiopia-Somalia-Kenya Dispute 1960-67* (Dar Es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.3. Also, the formal acceptance by an Ethiopian authority of petitions by Somali tribesmen from the Somali Republic for their 'reunion' with Ethiopia, and the publicity given by the Ethiopian Government to the incidents. *The Times*, London, referred to in *African Recorder* (New Delhi), 3-16 December 1962, pp.345-346.

make a certain assessment of the attitude of the Somalis outside the Republic, from whatever evidence is available, they also appear to subscribe to the idea.<sup>40</sup>

This is natural. The Somali people are a very close-knit ethnic unit. They are all homogeneously non-Semitic as distinct from the neighbouring Amharas. They all speak the Somali language, and in general, strongly profess the same Islamic religion. This strong following of this one common religion means that all of them are bound in one

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. 'We, the political parties of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya (NFD) ... are members of a single Somali nation ... We want to reunite with our brothers with whom we can evolve an administration suited to our way of life. The only form of administration that is any good to us is a Somali administration. This is centred on Mogadishu and we shall unite with it.

'... our destiny ... is the unity of all Somali people... Together with our brothers we shall resist any further betrayal of our birthright': *Statement by the Somalis of the Kenya Northern Frontier District (March) 1962*, quot. in *The Somali Govt., The Somali Republic and African Unity* (Mogadishu, 1962), Appendix 2, pp.33-35. Also, the West Somali Liberation Front's appeal for international assistance to '... our just struggle for freedom and unity [with the Somali Republic]': Extracts from an WSLF statement, quot. in *The Young Pakistan (Weekly)*, Dacca, Vol.XXI, No.385, 24 August 1969. In Djibouti, it is significant that both the country's major nationalist movements have been treating their country as a part of the Somali entity. This is reflected in their official names, viz. the African Peoples League for Independence of French Somaliland and the Front for the liberation of the Somali Coast. The latter has had its headquarters in Mogadishu, i.e. in the Somali Republic. *Vide*: Karl Lavrencie, *Jibuti/Is it going to be a new Angola?* in the *Impact International*, London, 12-25 December 1975.

single socio-legal system.<sup>41</sup> Given so many things to share in common and their clan-based social system, this makes the Somalis a very closely-knit social unit. The Somali boundaries cutting through this unit, simply obstruct the normal social intercourse among its members, inevitably irritating the Somalis on both sides of the border and tempting them to do away with these obstructive divisions.

Feelings of this kind are generated also from the fact that these boundaries equally obstruct even the normal subsistence economic activities of the Somalis, most of whom are nomadic cattle-herders, accustomed to move freely throughout the Somali lowlands from place to place for the seasonal pastures, and finding the borders a severe obstacle to their livelihood. Even the urban and settled Somalis are not free from the effects of this irritation. Almost all urban Somalis have close relations and property outside the city - left very much a part of the pastoral fabric of economy. So,

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<sup>41</sup> The strength of Islamic feelings amongst the Somalis is significant also because this distinguishes them from all their immediately neighbouring societies, including the Moslem Afars. The strength of the Somalis' Islamic attachment has always been evident, ever since their conversion, as much obvious in the statement by its present 'Marxist' President that, 'Islam is our ethical basis. Somalis are 100% Muslims ... Islam too is a progressive creed ...' as in the 16th century *Jihad*, the 19th century resistance under the 'Mad Mullah' or the inclusion of 'encourage[ment] ... of the ... Islamic peoples' as one of the national objectives in their liberal democratic Constitution of 1960. *Vide*: J. Bowyer Bell, *op.cit.*, p.11; Hess, *op.cit.*, pp.130-148. Somali Republican Constitution, First Chapter, Art.6/4; A.S. *Somalia/Marrying Islam with Communism in Impact International*, London, 26 November-9 December, 1976, p.3. On the other hand, the Afars are only 'nominal-Muslims' and 'really pagans'. Mordechai Abir, *Red Sea Politics in Conflicts in Africa*, Adelphi Paper No.93, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies (1973), p.33. E.F. Bozman (ed), *Everyman's Encyclopaedia*, Vol.IV (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1958), p.248.

policies made by the urban elites of Somalia also are very much directly affected by the irritation caused by the Somali boundaries.

Certain other aspects of these boundaries also contribute to the Somali irredentism. For instance, the complete network of routes linking the two 'regions' of the Somali Republic in the shortest, cheapest and smoothest way is left under Ethiopian control. Somalia aspires to gain control over this area for economic and strategic convenience, and to assist her efforts at greater national integration. The northern and southern 'regions' of Somalia have consistently shown two separate personalities through such indications as patterns of political rivalry and concern with the maintenance of a balance of the two regions' interests.<sup>42</sup> These two regions came to develop such separate personalities due to a number of factors. Perhaps the most important of these is the difference in their respective colonial experience. Other factors, such as differing tribal affiliations and proximity to Arab countries in the north or East Africa in the south also have contributed to this distinction. Whatever the causes and their order of priority, the distinction has come to be a reality to be reckoned with, even within the stronger framework of Somali nationalism. This postulates

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. for instance, the assassination of the Republic's President Abdirrashid Shermarke, by a member of 'a northern tribe which felt that it was not adequately represented in the Parliament'. Keesing's, op.cit., 23762. Also, the careful balance maintained between the north and the south in the composition of the Revolutionary Council after the coup of 1969; the Chairman, Gen. Barrh was from the south. The Vice-Chairman, Gen. Korshal was from the north. *ibid.*

a requirement for increased intercourse and integration between the two 'regions' as a precondition for Somali nation-building,<sup>43</sup> in which these separate personalities would be dissolved into a single national ethos.<sup>44</sup> And for that purpose, the acquisition of this intermediate territory along with its network of communications is undoubtedly a matter of great significance.<sup>45</sup>

Both the major rivers of Somalia have their catchment areas on the Ethiopian side of the existing boundary. If Ethiopia stops or adversely controls water in these rivers at the upstream, Somalia's economy may suffer heavily. This is particularly so in view of the fact that pre-capitalistic economics are always crucially dependent on the natural

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<sup>43</sup> The same will apply to other incoming regions if and when such 'incomings' occur.

<sup>44</sup> Subordination of the lesser collective personalities to the overriding national ethos is a must for nation-building. This requires strengthening of the overriding ethos at the expense of the lesser ones, involving dissolution of the latter into the former. This dissolution, however, has not always to be total, i.e. to the extent to cause a complete integration. National ethos can be built up as stronger than that of the subnational character in a federal framework too. But this is not easy if the federal units are not of at least a roughly equal standing in terms of political weight and leverage. In such cases, nation-building may have to involve the idea of an *integral national personality*. Somalia faces a similar position. Her 'regions' are overwhelmingly disproportionate. Nation-building in Somalia is likely to require not a federal, but an integral state.

<sup>45</sup> Communication between the north and the south has been a major concern of the Somali Republic. It has been observed that 'the importance of the first all-weather ... road linking northern Somalia with the South [one of the first major projects of the Republic], needs no emphasising'. Karl Lavrencic, *Somalia: Living without Russia in Africa Magazine* (London), No.83, July 1978, p.40.



sources of water.<sup>46</sup> It is only with the advent of capitalism, bringing with it such factors as industrialisation, the rise of a market economy and the increased role of commerce, that dependence on control over sources of water lessens. At the same time, industrialisation may introduce newer uses of water and thus increase demand for it. Thus, while industrialised economies may need increased consumption of water, the *cruciality of their dependence* on it will be, nevertheless, lesser than a non-industrialised economy.

Ethiopia, in view of her recent changes, may start thinking in terms of unprecedented rates of industrialisation<sup>47</sup> or, more likely, may start thinking of modern irrigation systems. These may lead to an increased

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<sup>46</sup> The extent of the Somalis' dependence on water may be understood from the following observation by a writer: '... when I asked Somalis if a *mullah* would have the right to forbid the use of well [for religious reasons] ... I was told that the *mullah* would be run out of town, so precious is water'. This is particularly significant in view of the fact that the Somalis, in general, are very religious. E.A. Bayne, *Somalia on the Horn/A Counterpoint of Problems Confronting One of Africa's New Nations*, p.5, fn.2. In contrast, advanced agriculture can reduce such dependence on the natural sources of water with such means as water-reservoirs.

<sup>47</sup> The Ethiopian Revolution is likely to take to the Soviet brand of socialist thinking. The Soviet model of development will stand for rapid industrialisation of even a primitive feudal society. The Soviets have curtailed the centrality of industrialisation in their thinking on development programmes for the less-developed countries, in recent years. Notwithstanding this, industrialisation remains a basic theme in the Soviet model. *Vide:* for the role of industrialisation in the Soviet model, Charles K. Wilber, *The Soviet Model of Economic Development: A Re-examination*, in Roger E. Kanet & Donna Bahry (eds), *Soviet Economic and Political Relations with the Developing World* (N.Y. Praeger Publishers, 1975), p.44; and Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, *The Soviet Union and the Third World: From Khrushchev's 'Zone of Peace' to Brezhnev's 'Peace Programme'*, in Kanet & Bahry, op.cit., p.5.

exploitation of her rivers. This, in turn, may result in Ethiopia's controlling of the rivers shared by both her and Somalia. This, as already discussed, would prove to be disadvantageous or even fatal to the Somali economy.

All this remains, still, only a potential situation. But the potential is serious. This is particularly so because present policies are very often formulated on future apprehensions.

The Somali lands on the Ethiopian side of the border are known to have reserves of valuable minerals, e.g. gold. Speculations, including those about oil, add yet greater value to the area. These areas are a source of significant dairy products. One of the main sources of Ethiopia's coffee lies in this area and coffee is one of the bases of the Ethiopian economy. All this makes the area an important economic prize.

Just as the Somalis have objective reasons for irredentist claims on the Somali lands now under Ethiopian control, the Ethiopian Government also has its own reasons to fight such claims, and thus, contribute to the continued confrontation on the issue. Control over these areas gives her a strategic edge of balance of strength against Somalia,

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<sup>50</sup> According to recent (1974) reports, oil has been discovered in this area. *Africa Report*, 1974.

a traditional source of threat to her security.<sup>51</sup> The Ethiopian control over this area, as already shown, keeps Somalia weak. This control also provides Ethiopia Proper with an important *cordon sanitaire* through which the Somali Republican forces can never proceed with full military speed and fury, as consideration of safety for their own Somali kith and kin in this area will prevent them from, for example, engaging in massive aerial bombardment, and tank operations. This factor, in turn, will affect the Somali fighting capability and their chances of success against the Ethiopian Core, which, in any case, will feel freer in a total war, whether deep inside Somalia - or even in the rebellious Somali lands within her own boundaries.

The resources of the area and its good communication network also makes it a prize that Ethiopia cannot give up. Ethiopia's most strategic rail and road communications run either through or next to it connecting her with Djibouti, her traditional and the most important outlet to the world since Ethiopia depends considerably on her foreign trade, she cannot afford to lose these strategic lines of communications. This in

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<sup>51</sup> The three greatest threats to Amhara Ethiopian Core in history came from or via Somalia. The first, the *Jihad* (16th century) 'the greatest threat' to Ethiopia '(d)uring the last 700 years' started from northern Somalia and took over almost the whole of Ethiopia. The second, the 'Galla invasion' and immigration (16th century onward) which posed an even greater threat to the Amhara state, started from southern Somalia and took over the whole Ethiopian South, moved as far north as Bale, and at one stage, about the middle of the eighteenth century, made as serious inroads into the governing elite as to have almost occupied the imperial power. The third, the Italian attack, invasion and occupation started from Italian Somaliland. *Vide: infra*, Ch.III and IV. Also Thomas M. Coffey, *Lion by the Tail/The Story of the Italo-Ethiopian War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), pp.3-33. However, the Italians used their Eritrean colony also for this purpose.

turn adds one more reason to Ethiopia's special interests in gaining, and later unwillingness to lose, her Somali inhabited areas.

Finally, given the very many centrifugal forces and secessionist movements within the Ethiopian state, yielding to any one of them may add to the optimism of the rest of these movements and thus to their intensification. Holding on to these Somali territories is thus crucial for Ethiopia's own continued unity and existence in the present geographical shape.<sup>52</sup>

So, from both sides, the Ethiopian controlled Somali inhabited areas remain a prize worth acquiring and retaining, even if at the cost of continued and expensive struggle and intermittent, fullfledged wars.

The Eritrean problem is also a product of the *artificial* nature of a boundary. The boundary between Ethiopia Proper and Eritrea cuts across the Amhara-Tigrails. Before its de-internationalisation in 1952, it also deprived Ethiopia Proper of its closest outlet to the sea.

This had led to the Ethiopian struggle for the de-internationalisation of the boundary to unify the outlying

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<sup>52</sup> "The Somali claims on the Ogaden have been regarded in Addis Ababa as a mortal threat to the stability of the Empire. Ethiopia as a [plural] state simply cannot accept the legitimacy of ethnic separatism - a concession that would lead to further demands and ultimate fragmentation'. Bell, op.cit., p.25.

Amhara-Tigras with the mother society<sup>53</sup> as well as to acquire the Eritrean coast.<sup>54</sup> This in turn resulted in the extinction of Eritrea as a separate entity and thus the Eritrean struggle for independence. In the ultimate analysis, the artificiality of the boundary, at least to a significant degree, causes the present Eritrean problem.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, repudiated this boundary, even before it was actually de-internationalised in 1952, for its 'complete artificiality'. Selassie, radio broadcast, 28 March 1950, cited in *Keesing's* p.10841. This he did in the name of the *identity of cultural and social life* and the virtual *identity of language* between the peoples on both the sides of the boundary. 'The Ethiopian thesis [repudiating the boundary] was based on the ... fact that the vast majority of the populations of Ethiopia and Eritrea are of one ethnic affiliation ...', Dr Serson Bekkele, Ethiopian Charges d'Affaires in Kenya, in the *Sunday Nation*, Nairobi, 20 February 1977.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Selassie's repudiation on 28 March 1950 of the Ethiopian-Eritrean boundary in the name of 'landlocked Ethiopia's vital need for access to the sea' and his demand for control on the port of Massawa on the Eritrean coast 'in order that the economic development of Ethiopia ... shall not be further delayed'. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, op.cit. The Ethiopians have always been craving for an open water outlet. For instance, even before their bid for the Eritrean coast they engaged in negotiations with Britain in 1943 for a coastline around Zeila in Somaliland in exchange for a part of Ogaden, around Wal Wal. *Vide*: Thomas M. Coffey, op.cit, p.7. A number of Ethiopian memoranda to the four power Conferences (U.S.A., U.K., U.S.S.R., France) held in the immediate post-W.W.II period (late 40s) to consider the disposal of the former Italian colonies, also claimed Eritrea in the name of cultural identity and Ethiopia's need for an outlet to the sea. There were military/strategic considerations also. Cf. reference to the fact that 'Eritrea has been used by colonial powers as a base of aggression against Ethiopia' as a justification for the Ethiopian claim: Dr Serson Bekkele, Ethiopian Charge d'Affaires in Kenya, *Eritrea: the Ethiopian case* (commenting on the memoranda), *Sunday Nation*, Nairobi, 20 February 1977.

<sup>55</sup> Certain other geopolitical factors also supplemented the Ethiopian drive for the Eritrean coast. Ethiopia paid more attention to the acquisition of this than to the other alternative - the coast on the Indian Ocean. Eritrea remains a prize for Ethiopia not only because it contains both of her only two ports (Assab and Massawa) - already under her control, but also because of the fact that around 20% of Ethiopia's industry lies in Eritrea. Eritrean oil and oil refinery

The potentially dangerous situation of Djibouti also is due to the artificiality of its boundaries. These boundaries hold two separate ethnic groups, the Afars and the Somali Issas together into a state that has, at least outwardly, neither the viability nor the will to exist as an independent unit. Both groups have the majority of their members outside these boundaries, in neighbouring Ethiopia and Somalia, and there has been a manifestation among them, of a desire for unification with the greater mass of their respective societies.<sup>56</sup> These emotional tendencies are supplemented by the realisation that the territory, with almost no production of any significance at all, cannot carry on as an independent unit.<sup>56a</sup> On the other hand, this situation presents strong cases for irredentist claims by both the neighbouring states on this country. The strategic value of the territory and its port of Djibouti strengthens these irredentist tendencies. Lying at the narrow entrance of the Red Sea and serving as the

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(Assab) also enhance her importance. *'Ethiopian secessionists intensify their struggle'*, *Sunday Nation*, 20 February 1977.

56 Two of the main political groups of the Issas, the Front for the Liberation of the *Somali Coast* and the African Peoples League for Independence of French *Somaliland* reflect, in their very names, their view of the country as a part of a greater Somalia. *Vide: supra*, fn.42. This latter has been identified as 'Pro-Somali', *Impact International*, London, 23 April-13 May 1976, p.3. The Issas in general have been identified as 'pro-Somali', *The Standard*, Nairobi, 19 December 1977. On the other hand one of the major Afar groups, the *Movement for the Liberation of Djibouti* has been termed as 'Ethiopia-based', *Impact International*, 22 April-12 May 1977, p.3. The Afars traditionally owe allegiance to the Afari Sultan, whose seat has been inside Ethiopia. The Sultan, however, at present, is a fugitive in Saudi-Arabia.

56a It is observed, in terms of economic conditions that, for Djibouti, 'the outlook will be bleak'. *Africa South of Sahara, 1977-78* (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1977), p.340.

traditionally most important outlet for the Ethiopian interior, the port is an international prize in both commercial and military terms.<sup>57</sup> All this combined sets the situation as potentially ideal for an inter-tribal civil war with external involvements.<sup>58</sup> Any such crisis at this particular point of the region is very likely to involve all the powers on both the sides of the Strait, and along

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<sup>57</sup> The present 1976 chief minister [of Djibouti] Mr Ali Arif Burhan ... is an Afar and Afar tribes overlapped in Ethiopia. On the other hand, the Issas extend into Somalia. These extensions and overlapping ... have given rise to respective Ethiopian and Somali claims. ... [A statement issued by the Ethiopian foreign ministry in 1976] said that since most of the major tribes in the territory live in Ethiopia also and since there are historical and geographical links between Ethiopia and the territory and since 60% of the [sic] Ethiopia's foreign trade is conducted through Jibuti, the territory had a great ... strategic importance to Ethiopia's peace and security'. Anonymous, *Decolonization, French Style/Jibuti triangular in Impact International* (London), 27 February-25 March 1976, p.32. For the Somali irredentist claims, *vide also: supra*, p.24, fn.39. Also, 'Facing Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea, Jibuti also occupies an unenviable strategic location inviting the attention of powers other than France alone'. *Decolonization: French Style/Jibuti triangular*, op.cit.

<sup>58</sup> There are indications pointing to this possibility. For example, Cf. the alleged terrorist activities of the exclusively Afar M.P.L. (*Peoples' Liberation Movement*), and following resignation (18 December 1977) of the five Afar Members of the Djibouti Cabinet *en masse* and including the Prime Minister, complaining of the Government's '*tribal oppression*' - within six months of the country's independence (June 1977). Also reported links of the M.P.L. with forces across the borders in Ethiopia, and the Issa dominated Government's ban on it (18 December 1977). *The Standard*, Nairobi, 19 December 1977.

with them, the Great Powers with whom they are closely linked.<sup>59</sup>

The geography of natural socio-political developments in the region and the consequent basic tendencies of its various political societies clash with that of its existing political systems. This poses an inherent element of crisis in the geostrategic setting of the whole area. As mentioned above and as will be elaborated later - Ethiopia's traditional characteristics have been those of a pre-capitalist feudal conservative centralist autocratic system. A sudden break<sup>60</sup> with it in favour of the socialist democracy under multiple leadership, to which it was committed as a result of its Revolution, resulted in a contradiction. This contradiction of the imposed position and the traditionally *inherent tendency* of the Ethiopian body-politic has in turn

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<sup>59</sup> The fact that the countries adjacent to the Strait, Bab-el-Mandeb are extraordinarily zealous in their ideological commitments to either of the Great Power camps (e.g. the P.D.R.Y., Ethiopia, and until recently, Somalia) - or strategically bound with either of these groups (e.g. Djibouti) makes this particularly probable. While the first three states have zealously claimed to be Marxist, the last one is bound with the West through a military pact with France. Notwithstanding the French connection, Djibouti is an object of international Marxist interests also. Cf. for example, inclusion of Djibouti in the recent Soviet and Cuban planned Marxist Confederation of the Red Sea States. According to the plan, the confederation is to include Ethiopia, Somalia, P.D.R.Y. and Djibouti. A.S., *Red Sea/Whose Lake it will be? Impact International* (London), 8-21 April 1977, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Super Power Involvement* (Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No.18: Canberra, the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, A.N.U., 1978), p.14.



led to a continued crisis in the country. The imposed system has already started to show its failure to withstand the forces of the inherent 'natural' socio-political tendencies. Thus, the promised and emerging socialist democracy seems to have already turned into a military dictatorship tending towards a state capitalist system.<sup>61</sup> The system of plural leadership has been brought down to the original absolute centralist autocracy.<sup>62</sup> The initial promises of a confederal/federal relationship among the provinces have been subdued under ferocious integrationist

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. The aims of the 'Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution Programme' announced by the Revolutionary regime on 21 April 1976: 'the people will cast their *free and secret ballot to elect* a revolutionary people's assembly - which will assume the high authority of Government'. However, already, within two years of the revolution, one could see in the vague phraseology of this announcement, indications of a possible diversion from this promised course: cf. also, in this announcement, indications to the effect that the elections may be limited to parties favoured by the revolutionary regime only and that the democratic republic may be built *only 'under the leadership of a party of the Proletariat'* Addis Ababa radio, 21 April 1976.

<sup>62</sup> The course of this transition may be discerned in the reports published in the Press on the area during the post-Revolutionary period. Summary of these reports may be followed in the *Keening's Contemporary, Africa Confidential, Africa Report*, volumes of this period. For the final elimination of the hardcore *Me'ei Sone*, the last of the groups rivalling the Dergue, *vide: Africa Confidential, Vol.18, No.18, 9 September 1977, pp.4-6.*

policies.<sup>63</sup> The actual present seems to revert towards a conformation with the inherent tendencies generated by the past. This reversion is occurring through a process of crisis.<sup>64</sup> It is not only due to the forces of the natural socio-political tendencies of the Ethiopian polity. There are other factors also working in this direction, viz. the deliberate effort to set the Ethiopian Revolution as a close replay of the Soviet Revolution of 1917 and the precipitation of emergency situations in Eritrea and the Ogaden. But the independent and crucial role played by the factor of inherent tendencies is obvious from the fact that the 'reversal' in the policy was already underway, quite before either of these secondary factors came in. It may be suggested with more justification that the emergency situations, particularly that in Eritrea were a result, and not a cause, of the policy of 'reversal'.<sup>65</sup> The remarkable concern with equating the present Ethiopian situation with the Soviet revolutionary one, in turn, is a product of the emergency

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<sup>63</sup> *Vide:* The revolutionary regime promised 'regional autonomy' for each nationality in Ethiopia, including Eritrea, Addis Ababa Radio, 21 April 1976. But, 'Eritreans will have none [of such autonomy]', and then, the regime went as far as to eliminate even those of the main architects of the Revolution who would continue to think of Eritrean self-determination as one of the possible means of solving the Eritrean problem. Cf. for example, the elimination, in July 1977, of the leadership of the Me'ei Sone, the political wing, ideological mentor and one of the top-most units of the initial corporate leadership of the Ethiopian Revolution (1974) for, amongst other things, their belief in Eritrean independence as one of the possible options. Karl Lavrencic, '*Ethiopia/ the sick man of Africa*' in *Impact International* (London), 29 May-10 June 1976, p.5; '*Ethiopia: Dergue comes out on top*' in *Africa Confidential*, Vol.18, 9 September 1977, p.5.

<sup>64</sup> Ethiopia is in a serious state of crisis ever since its Revolution, 1974.

<sup>65</sup> *Vide:* my interview with Tadesse Kahsai, Eritrean exile, 1977, Sydney.

situations in Eritrea and the Ogaden. These crises not only brought the situation close to the Soviet revolutionary crisis, but also *necessitated* the deliberate equation of the Ethiopian situation with the Soviet experience in a bid to win Soviet sympathy and support. Soviet support was critically needed in view of the shaky regime's inability to face the crises and the general reluctance of the West to come forward with substantial assistance in facing them.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, the Somali society tends to be more suited to a pluralistic and loosely organised Islamic<sup>67</sup> and democratic, but militant system<sup>68</sup> rather than a centralised, strictly disciplined, marxist dictatorship. Somalia was put under the latter form of political system through the coup of 1969.<sup>69</sup> This has resulted in a crisis situation within Somalia, which, while not very visible, nevertheless has been forcing the actual situation imposed by the coup to revert in conformity

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<sup>66</sup> The recent developments including the Ethiopian regime's deliberate and obvious effort at equating the Ethiopian situation with the Soviet Revolution of 1917, and Western policy towards the Ethiopian revolutionary regime, will be discussed in some greater detail in later chapters. *Vide* also Ayob, *op.cit.*

<sup>67</sup> For the strength of Islam amongst the Somalis in Somalia, *Vide: supra*, pp.25-26. For that in Djibouti, *Vide: Djibouti declared Islam as the State religion at independence, Dawn*, (Karachi), 3 July 1977.

<sup>68</sup> *Vide: supra*, p.19. For a general description of militancy as a part of the Somali temperament, *vide: Alys Reece, To My Wife, Fifty Camels* (London, 1953).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. The centralization of all powers of the President, National Assembly, Government (Administration), Supreme Court and the Forces into a narrow based, military Revolutionary Council of twenty five - in one of the first acts of the Revolutionary regime (October 1969). Also, its ban on all political parties and major newspapers; its rhetorically expressive renaming of the country as a Democratic 'Republic' like Marxist E. Germany and N. Korea. *Keesing's*, p.23672.

with the inherent tendencies. (The crisis situation inside Somalia is not visible, not because it is not there - but because of the strict suppressive measures of the Government that keep it from coming out on the surface). Thus, Marxism has had to be wedded with the anti-Marxism of Islam<sup>70</sup> and the Government has had to discard its initial pacifist position on the question of Somali unification, for instance - in favour of a more militant stand.<sup>71</sup> The signs of a situation

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[In Somalia] Revolutionaries have had to adjust Socialist ideas for local consumption ... Marx and Islam have been wedded into the national philosophy of *Iska Wah Ugabso* ... that, according to Comrade General President Siad, in no way conflicts with Islam.

Bell, op.cit., p.34. *Vide* also, A.S., *Somalia/Marrying Islam with Communism*, op.cit. Even after this wedding, as late as in 1976, the Somali regime had to continue its fight against 'Islamic intrigues'. Jean Claude Guillebaud, *Africa's Horn of Troubles/Battling for the Lake of Arab Peace*, in *The Guardian*, 17 July 1977, p.13.

<sup>71</sup> For the initial pacifist stand, one may note the *statement* by the Somali Ambassador in Paris (22 October 1969) that the new regime in Somalia intends to have good-neighbourly relations with all contiguous countries. Also, the Revolutionary Council Chairman, Gen. Siyad's *statement* (25 October 1969) that the regime would not interfere in other countries' internal affairs and would respect the *OAU Charter* - which stands, in general, for the existing borders, and thus, against the militant Somali irredentism aiming at undoing the Ethio-Somali, Somali-Kenyan and Somali-Djibouti boundaries. For later 'reversion' to the original militant irredentist position, *vide: supra*, p.24, fn.39; *infra*, Ch.V.

of crisis underneath the quiet surface of suppressive discipline also leak out now and then.<sup>72</sup>

### The Topography

The topography of the region justifies special emphasis in this analysis. It not only contributes to the inherent

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<sup>72</sup> For example, cf.

[In] Somalia ... the northwest region national security court sentenced one man to death by firing squad and five to life imprisonment for forming an anti-revolution [anti-regime] *secret movement*. The National Security Court sentenced Mahmud Mohammed Musa to 10 years imprisonment for *slandering ... scientific socialism [i.e. the state ideology]*. Another court in Tagdayp sentenced 12 young men between 20-30 to prison for 10-15 years for waging *propaganda against socialism [state ideology]*.

*Vide: Impact International*, London, 13-26 September 1974, p.3.

'It is insecurity all through, right from the office messenger to the top ... anything said by anyone could lead to doom': Hussein Haji Ali Damleh, defecting Somali Ambassador to Kenya, Nairobi, February 1978, quot. in the *Standard*, Nairobi, 1 March 1978, p.1. '... Organized resistance cells ... formed to topple General Barre [the regime]. A number of Ministers, ambassadors and top civil servants who had fled the country ... formed the Somali Democratic Action Front' to overthrow the regime. *Standard*, *ibid*.

... six Army officers were apprehended for activities against the security of State [the regime] ... They were summarily put on trial, sentenced to death and executed. The figure, a far cry from the 80 or 50 reported outside Somalia, was announced by independent sources. These executions occurred in the north, near Hargeisa.

More serious was the army revolt in the Mogadishu area on April 9. The coup attempt is understood to have been master minded by Col. Abdullahi Yusuf, officer commanding the sector at the juncture of Ethiopian, Kenyan and Somali Frontiers, but carried out by Lt. Col. Mohamed Sheikh Osman, commander of an Air Defence Unit near Mogadishu ...

*Africa Confidential*, Vol.19, No.9, 28 April 1978, p.3.

Such reports, though infrequent, are significant.

tendencies of the region towards crisis, but also supplements these in a significant way by providing a favourable terrain for revolutionary warfare. This, in effect, means that this particular factor encourages organisation and thus realisation of the potentials of crisis by credibly promising success to such organisations. The geostrategic setting in general provides conditions that may lead the region's peoples to think of upsetting the status quo, and thus creating crisis. This significantly increases the possibilities of actual crises in the region.

A considerable portion of the Horn of Africa is mountainous highlands full of steep and numerous cliffs which provide excellent cover for guerrilla operations. At the same time, for counter-insurgency forces from without, these highlands can be formidable obstacles. This remains true for such forces from one part of the highlands (say, the Amhara Core) sent to operate in another part (say the Eritrean highlands). These two factors combined, make these highlands a very favourable terrain for guerrilla warfare.

On the Peripheral plane too, the topography is favourable for guerrilla warfare. The harsh and vast deserts offer a formidable barrier for any outsider sent to quell any local insurgency. Given the flat and monotonous landscape of the desert with little or no permanent physical features to serve as landmarks, it also turns out to be an obstacle as confusing and fatal as the highland ranges. For the local insurgents, however, this is not much of a problem; the land, being their home, is very well-known to them.

The flatness of the landscape also provides an advantage in the field of military mobility. On such landscapes, operations can be launched with significant speed. But, for the alien forces, this advantage may be offset by the relative lack of knowledge of the terrain and that of support of its population as compared with that likely to be enjoyed by the indigenous guerrillas.

If a guerrilla organisation decides to combine the highlands or a part thereof, with the peripheral lowlands or, again, a part thereof, it acquires perhaps the best possible geographical terrain for an overall strategy. A brief discussion of the classical strategy of revolutionary war will be useful in clarifying this point.

A classical revolutionary war proceeds through three stages.<sup>73</sup> In the first stage, the revolutionary organisation has to prepare and act in secrecy, confining its operations to ambush and hit-and-run activities. In the second stage the revolutionaries require safety and isolation, more than secrecy. During this phase, they have to maintain a *territorial entity*, wherein they carry out reforms to serve as display models indicative of their declared intentions. At the same time, they raise and train, in the safety of this entity, *regular forces* to fight an *open war* at the third and *final*

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<sup>73</sup> *Vide*: for the three stage formulation of revolutionary war, Mao Tse-tung, *The Three Stages of the Protracted War*, in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1968), pp.210-219. Also, Robert Thompson, *Revolutionary War in World Strategy: 1945-1969* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1970), pp.4-5.

stage. This last stage involves conventional warfare and acquisition, preferably very rapidly, of control over the whole of the country.

In the above-mentioned case, the revolutionary movement may depend on the coverage given by the topography of the highlands for the secrecy, safety and isolation required at the first two stages. At the third stage, the revolutionary forces may come out from their highland base and expect to sweep over the rest of the country with exceptional rapidity. The flat landscape of the lowlands may make exceptional swiftness a possible and critically favourable factor in their winning the final, conventional war.

Moreover, in this conventional showdown, the revolutionary forces would enjoy a particular initial advantage, at least against that portion of the regular forces and their installations that may be *stationed in the open of the flat lowland*. These latter forces would be vulnerable to surprise attack. The revolutionaries, on the other hand, in their safe hideout in the mountains, would always have the freedom to choose the time to start hostilities, according to their own convenience. The advantage of the first and surprise strike would always give the revolutionary forces an extra military balance of advantage from the outset of the conventional hostilities.

This means that any revolutionary movement taking the whole of the Horn, or any contiguous combination of its highlands and the lowlands, as the terrain of its planned war, would find such territory very much conducive to victory.



Of course, such other factors as the relative strength of the opposing conventional columns and the support of the local population will play crucial roles. But if the revolutionary movement is on a classical pattern, the protracted course of the revolution and the aforementioned 'combination' of the highlands and the lowlands into a single revolutionary terrain is likely to shape these factors in the revolutionaries' favour. They are not supposed, according to the 'classical pattern', to enter into the third or conventional stage of the war until they have built up a conventional force comparable to the counter-insurgency forces. And the 'combination' will essentially mean the gradual winning of the masses of the plains also on the revolutionaries' side during the early stages of the war.

The Eritrean insurgents, incidentally, find themselves exactly in such a position. Another case may be that of the Ethiopian struggle of the anti-regime Ethiopian Revolutionary Party (ERP).

The topography of the region, thus, promises high credibility of success for revolutionary struggles. It particularly helps the Eritrean liberation struggle and the underground movement of the ERP.

The topography of the region brings in other elements of inherent crisis also. For example, there are certain topographical barriers and units that suggest certain *manifest* and *natural frontiers* for the countries of the region. Given the artificial nature of the existing boundaries and the rough coincidence of these suggestive barriers with the ethnic

line of division also, these may tempt some of the countries to strive for their realisation as the actual legal border. One particular case calls for serious attention. A complete line of physical barriers, composed of a chain of lakes, two rivers, a couple of mountain ranges and a long rift valley, separates the Amharic core of the Ethiopian state from the traditionally hostile, rebellious Somali inhabited rest of the country.<sup>74</sup> This serves the Somali claims that these latter areas are a country entirely separate from Ethiopia and which, thus, should be liberated from her 'colonial occupation'. The line of barriers also obstructs military operations against the area's rebels, from the Ethiopian centre. These factors strengthen the position of the Somali irredentists and further encourage both revolutionary crisis and international military conflict in the area.<sup>75</sup>

### Conclusions

The study of the region's geopolitical setting leads to the following conclusions:

1. The region's geographical factors present a pattern of relationships between the various units of the region's system as well as that of the course of events within those units.

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<sup>74</sup> *Vide: supra.* pp.9, 11, 22 and 23.

<sup>75</sup> The West Somali rebels, as an organised 'Front', have been active since 1964. *Vide: Statement issued by West Somali Liberation Front, in Young Pakistan, Dacca, op.cit.* There have been actual international conflicts between Somalia and Ethiopia in the area in 1964 and 1977.

2. This pattern is that of a constant inter-actor contradiction between the Central Core of the system which corresponds to the traditional Ethiopian Highland society of the Amharic people - and a set of Peripheral societies, corresponding to the Somali Republic, Djibouti and such outlying areas of the present Ethiopian state as the Eritrean Lowlands, Ogaden and the Oromo areas.

3. The pattern suggests particular collective unconscious or subconscious socio-political tendencies for the Ethiopian Core and the Peripheral societies including Somalia. At present, the superimposed existing systems of both Ethiopia and Somalia not only do not correspond to, but also clash with, their respective socio-political tendencies. This presents situations of internal contradiction in both the states' societies.

4. Thus, the region's geostrategic setting presents a complex situation of crises of both inter-actor as well as intra-actor character.

5. This crisis situation is inherent in the objective conditions of the region's geostrategic setting, completely independent of any external factors, e.g. global politics.

6. The region's geostrategic setting, for both its abstract crises-potentialities and concrete physical conditions, is conducive to subconventional warfare.

## CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL PROCESSIntroduction: Role of the Historical Process

A study of the historical process of any phenomenon is as basic to its understanding as that of its geographical position.<sup>1</sup> This particularly applies to social conditions including international relations and security situations.

The role of historical background may be perceived in terms of three separate, though interrelated aspects, viz. (a) direct and simple effects of past experience on the present conditions, (b) historical patterns of behaviour, and (c) stages of historical development.

As already seen, all social conditions involve human behaviour which in turn is a set of interactions.<sup>2</sup> Interactions involve a past-present relationship. Each present action is a reaction to a past action. This means, interaction, and ultimately, all social conditions essentially involve history.

Then, repetition of the same or similar kind of behaviour results in habits, i.e. patterns of behaviour. Experience of such repetitions in the past i.e. in the relevant historical background, leads to a particular pattern of behaviour. Such

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide:* Raymond Aron upholding Montesquieu's view that 'geographical position and the experience of centuries [history]' transform the collective 'habits or custom' into 'national idiosyncrasy' which result in diplomatic behaviours typical of the particular nation [group] in question. Aron, *Peace and War/A Theory of International Relations* (Fr., translated by Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p.289.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide: supra*, Ch.II, pp.

patterns tend to persist in the present behaviour also. This is as much true with human collectivities as with individuals.

Finally, societies in general, pass through a more or less stereotyped set of successive stages of development. For instance, societies usually pass on from the hunting stage to the nomadic pastoral one, and from there, to the feudal and capitalistic systems. By tracing the historical background one can better understand the nature of the stage at which a particular society exists at a given time. This also can help in understanding the direction of the society's future.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, a study of the historical background involved is also, like that of the geopolitical setting, of a primary importance in any effort to understand the present conflict situation on the Horn of Africa and to its projection into the future.

#### Ancient Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa has been inhabited from times unrecorded. The most ancient inhabitants were probably Negroids, remnants of whose societies still exist as enclaves scattered over the region, particularly in its south western

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<sup>3</sup> Particularly Marxist analysis interprets all situations with deference to the stages of development. But many non-Marxist analysts also refer to such stages of development in their studies. Cf. W.W. Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth/ A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1971). In fact, ever since the concept of an evolutionary nature of history was established through the initial works of Hegel (1770-1831) and Darwin (1809-1882), the concept of stages of development has become a common and accepted term of reference in analysis of conditions.

fringes. The Negroid inhabitants were subjugated and overwhelmed by Cushitic migrants from northern Sudan. Even though these newcomers intermarried with the pre-existing Negroids, the population in the area developed as a predominantly Cushitic stock.<sup>4</sup>

The Cushitic invasion and settlement of the Horn of Africa was followed by a similar invasion and settlement by Semites from across the Red Sea.

A section of the Sabaeen Semitics crossed the narrow strip of the Red Sea in the south, and settled on the coast on the other side: sometime between 1,000 B.C. and 100 B.C.<sup>5</sup>

The permanent Sabaean settlement on the Horn was a significant event: it introduced the element of a body political conflict<sup>6</sup> in the area which continued to influence the overall situation subsequently. The Horn would see, henceforth, a persistent existence of, and conflict between two equally unyielding societies on the same scene: the Semitic and the Cushite. It was not for the first time that the area came to hold more than one society. There had been both Negroids and the Cushites in this same area before the Semitic onslaught

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<sup>4</sup> 'At the time when we get first glimpses of Ethiopian [The Horn's] history, the Cushitic peoples of the country appear to be in full occupation of the region. But 'Negro aborigines' existed even before that and 'negroid races ... once had possession of the entire area [the Horn]'. George A. Lipsky, *Ethiopia/Its people, its society, its culture* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1962), p.7. Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians/An introduction to Country and People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960, 1961), p.47. This obviously shows the Negroids to be the earliest known stock on the Horn.

<sup>5</sup> Lipsky, op.cit.

<sup>6</sup> I.e. conflict between political societies. *Vide: supra*, Ch.II, p. fn.

and settlement, and there were many more sub-societies within these two units. But never before had the system held more than one single independent unit at the same time. The Negroids were essentially subjected to the Cushitic order.<sup>7</sup> This was made possible by the numerical as well as the cultural inferiority of the Negroids. But now, the numerical superiority of the Cushites critically balanced the cultural superiority of the Semites. Neither of the two adversaries could completely subordinate the other. The system, thus, was split, for the first time, into two competing and conflicting units. These, supplemented by such other factors as differing environmental experiences, difference in religious and other aspects of collective value orientation, crystallised over centuries into the present dichotomy.

The Sabaeen settlement was important also because it introduced a disparity in the stages of development on the Horn, where society hitherto had been uniformly pre-feudal and nomadic pastoralist.<sup>8</sup> The Sabaeans brought with them agriculture,<sup>9</sup> and thus, essentially the feudal system.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Vide: supra*, p.50.

<sup>8</sup> With probably a few insignificant pockets of hunting and fruit gathering groups. As about the generally pre-feudal and pastoralist nature of the Cushites, it still persists. *Vide: supra*, Ch.II, p.15.

<sup>9</sup> '..."Sabaeans", Semites ... newcomers brought with them ... agricultural techniques ...', G.K.N. Trevaskis, *Eritrea/ A Colony in Transition: 1941-52* (London, N.Y., Toronto: Oxford University Press), p.4.

<sup>10</sup> The feudal system still persists among the Semitic society of the Horn and in general distinguishes it, along with certain other factors, from the other peoples of the area. *Vide: supra*, Ch.II, p.19.

As an advanced and thus stronger class neighbouring a relatively backward one tends to dominate it, this disparity resulted in the introduction of a struggle between two socio-economic systems and a contradiction between two stages of historical development. Thus, the Sabaeen settlement on the Horn not only brought in two independent units in its system but also set their pattern of relationship as that of a struggle, rather than of co-existence, or co-operation.<sup>11</sup>

It also brought a different kind of political organisation to the area. While the Cushitic societies were simple, democratically oriented, minimally organised, and intertribal confederal systems, the Sabaeans brought about the ideas which consequently gave rise to the institutions of highly organised, absolute monarchy. The two societies, thus, were committed, even if only implicitly, to two diametrically opposite political ideologies.<sup>12</sup> Their conflict was thus bound to take an ideological dimension too. This ideological incompatibility was not confined to the political arena alone.

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<sup>11</sup> There have been, though not many, efforts at interpreting the Horn's history and situation in terms of class struggle between socio-economic units. *Vide*: e.g. Dennis Walker's unpublished *draft paper* on the Ethiopian Revolution (Melbourne, 1977?). John Markakis, 'Social Formation and Political Adaptation in Ethiopia' in *Journal of Modern African Studies* (11,3), pp.361-81.

However, any effort to interpret the condition only or mainly in terms of class struggle amounts to unifactorial determinism, and thus is not acceptable. Class struggle is only one dimension of the basic contradiction between the Central and the Peripheral societies of the Horn.

<sup>12</sup> '... "Sabaeans", Semites ... brought with them some knowledge of political organisation'. Trevaskis, *op.cit.* However, it is not true, as this quotation may imply, that the pre-Sabaeen, Cushitic elements on the Horn did not have any political organisation at all. They had it, though very minimal in degree.



A whole set of new values, particularly as organised in the religion of Judaism, along with its cultural system, was introduced by the Sabaeans to the Horn.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the Sabaean settlement brought in two separate worlds to exist and to interact within the same system. For reasons already stated, the pattern of the interaction turned out to be one of conflict rather than of cooperation, or even coexistence.<sup>14</sup>

One aspect of the Sabaean cultural contribution to the area with important, though not very immediate or apparent consequences for the region's future history was the introduction of female circumcision, an ancient Arab practice.<sup>15</sup> Over the centuries it became an uncompromisable aspect of the Abyssinian culture. In the long run, it became a serious issue of theological confrontation within the society, adding one more factor of contradiction and crises to the scene. For example,

Opposition to female circumcision ... has become a practical problem ... in connection with the Roman Catholic missions to Abyssinia in the 16th century ... The missionaries forbade it among their female converts, with the ... result that no Abyssinian would marry them.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Vide*: reference to 'cultural contributions of the Semitic immigrants from Southern Arabia, among whom a large number were specifically Judaic [many others, vaguely under the Judaic cultural system]'. Lipsky, op.cit., p.7 [emphasis mine].

<sup>14</sup> *Vide*: supra, p.52.

<sup>15</sup> Wylde, *Modern Abyssinia* (1901), p.161 and Goodrich Freer, *Inner Jerusalem* (1904), p.121, cited in James Hastings, John A. Selbie and others, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (N.Y.: T & T Clark, 1910), p.679.

<sup>16</sup> Hastings, Selbie and others, op.cit., p.669.

This had multiple consequences. Besides adding one more factor of contradiction into the society, it also put check on the growth of the Catholic population in the area both in terms of conversion and reproduction. One can imagine a completely different course of history of the region in case the Catholic faith could have won the Monophysite Ethiopia into its fold. The whole value system would have experienced a drastic change with regard to the social, economic and politico-military aspects of the affairs of the area. The consequences would have affected even the present times.

#### Christianization of the Region

The Semitic civilisation became predominantly Christian during the period between 330 and 340, and has remained so ever since. Christianity became the state ideology.<sup>18</sup> The Semitic society was commissioned by the Byzantine centre of

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<sup>18</sup> 'Ezana, ... the Ethiopian King of the Axumite period, who reigned in the fourth century, was converted to Christianity, which became the official religion of the country [Axum: Semitic/Semitized body politic on the Horn] and the accepted religion of most of the people between 330 and 340'. Lipsky, op.cit., p. 3.

Christendom as the Christian outpost in Eastern Africa, with the objective not only to protect but also to expand the faith in that region.<sup>19</sup> The conditions which led to the Christianization of the Ethiopian polity are not known in detail. But it seems that the Ethiopian monarchy, in particularly unfavourable circumstances during the fourth century, sought and achieved the assistance of a Syrian Christian, Frumentus, at the cost of letting him become the virtual emperor. Frumentus' idealism and zeal for Christianity, combined with his remarkable statesmanship, virtually brought in Christian Byzantine imperial control over the country. Under this, the Ethiopian monarchy was led to formal Christianisation which was a logical consequence of the conversion of the dominant elite. A brief reconstruction of the scenario of the time under discussion, from the meagre information available, will make it clearer.

Queen Regent Thywa Sofya of Abyssinia, after the death of her husband King Ella Amida, became very dependent on Frumentus, the Syrian Christian, originally a prisoner slave but later the empire's treasurer and secretary. The Queen Regent had 'no more faithful subjects in the whole kingdom, to share with her the cares of government till her son [Infant and later Emperor, Ezana] should grow up'. Her dependence on Frumentus created favourable conditions for the

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<sup>19</sup> 'The country [Axum, i.e. the Semitic body-politic] came into contact with the Byzantine Empire and undertook a special mission to protect and extend Christianity in East Africa'. Lipsky, op.cit.

Christianization of the country. Having acquired virtually the imperial power, 'Frumentius ... sought out those of the Roman merchants', i.e. Levantines or Greeks who were Christians and urged them 'to establish conventicles in various places to which they might resort for prayer'. He provided them with 'whatever was needed, supplying sites for building and in every way promoting the growth of ... Christianity'.<sup>20</sup> Christian 'Syrian merchants were active at this time in Adulis [on the Red Sea coast] ... and ... the Syrians thus made their impact alike in the fields of religion and commerce'.<sup>21</sup> The polity was virtually brought under Christian control.

Ezana, brought up under the supervision and influence of this zealous Christian, at coming of age and to power, 'accepted [his virtual regent] Frumentius of Tyre as Christian bishop and established Christianity as the State religion'.<sup>22</sup>

The Christianization of Ethiopia and its projection as the Christian outpost in East Africa added one more dimension to the Ethiopian character: a conscious and zealous expansionist tendency. So far, the two competing and conflicting units had a natural tendency to expand against each other. But, so far, this tendency was only unconscious and

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20 R. Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1880-1925* (Addis Ababa, 1968), pp.33-34.

21 Conti Rossini cited in Pankhurst, op.cit., p.35.

22 Pankhurst, op.cit.

resulted from such other, conscious and direct motives as the preservation, or obtaining of economic prizes.

After this introduction to Ethiopia of a global ideological vision of its own position and responsibility this subconscious expansionist tendency was converted into a conscious, and thus stronger, behavioural motivator. The ethnic contradiction had taken conscious ideological dimension also, acquiring its full form, a few centuries later, with the assignment in Islam of a similarly missionary role to the Cushites of the Peripheral Lowlands.<sup>23</sup>

The way in which Christianization took place was significant. It not only set precedents for, but also reflected, a particular aspect of the Ethiopian political behavioural tendency - preparedness for ideological submission, if need be, in the interest of more concrete political interests. This same trait was shown repeatedly in the polity's subsequent history. To mention only two remarkable instances one can look at such submissions by Emperor Lebna

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<sup>23</sup> Islam is open about its expansionist zeal. Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, asked all Moslems to contribute to its expansion. *Vide*: Mohammed's sermon at the 'Last Pilgrimage' cited in Akram Khan, *Mostafa Charit* (in Bengali, Dacca). Also, 'Muslims in succession are duty-bound to communicate the message of Islam to the world', *Editorial in Islam and the Modern World* (Dacca), Autumn & Winter 1978. And, '... it is the duty of all the Muslims of the world, wherever they may happen to be, to arise for Islamic revolution [which includes the expansion of Islam as one of its goals]'. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, *Hukumate Islamiah* (in Persian: *On Islamic Government*), quot. in *Impact International*, London, Jan February 1979. Also, my *Iraner Biplav* (in Bengali: *The Iranian Revolution*, Dacca, 1979). *Vide*, for elaboration on the Islamization of the Peripherals and other relevant points *infra*, pp.63-77, 86-88 and Ch.IV, pp.94-97, 100-102, 106, 110-11, 121, 148-58 and 177. Also, Ch.II, pp.12, 16, 22, 39-40.

Dengel in the 16th century and by the present Ethiopian regime. Lebna Dengel submitted to the Roman Catholic order, against which the Ethiopian national Monophysite Church had been struggling for centuries - simply to achieve decisive Portuguese assistance against the almost fatal Moslem onslaughts in the early 16th century. The present Ethiopian regime committed the country to the Soviet version of Marxism, to achieve its support in the face of opposition from various quarters including the domestic front. This was a submission to an ideology directly opposite to the one to which the Ethiopian polity has been committed from time immemorial.

The introduction of Christianity had another important implication. It added a serious element of centripetality in the Semitized society, increasing its crisis potentiality. Christianity, due to its having experienced serious persecution in its earliest times, inherently bears a potential for contradictions and conflict. Due to the persecutions it was not until at least a couple of generations after the origin of the faith that something of its doctrines was put down in written form. Many of the initial teachings had been lost or distorted during the intervening period, leaving the organisers of the doctrines with serious ambiguities and missing links in the teachings. This led to many serious

contradictions and consequent bloody conflicts.<sup>24</sup> Once introduced to this unfortunate factor, '[T]he Ethiopians [also] proved their capacity for hairsplitting theological arguments by great outbursts of religious disputation over the form that the monophysite doctrines of the Orthodox [Coptic] Church should take ...'<sup>25</sup> Given 'the basic political nature of religious issues in the country'<sup>26</sup> this inevitably led to 'hairsplitting' political contradictions from which the Ethiopian polity has continued to suffer.

The expansionist policies of the Semitic civilization of the Horn led to the occupation of the Yemen and from there, an assault on Mecca in the Hijaz.<sup>27</sup> The city was the ideological centre of pagan Arabia, and assault against it was essentially part of the ideological mission zealously undertaken by the Christianized Semitic society of the Horn. There were other, non-ideological factors also, e.g. political and economic. But whatever the motives, the fact remains that this assault was a result of the consciously undertaken expansionist policy

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<sup>24</sup> The inherent potential for contradiction and crisis is far greater in Christianity than in those other doctrines which could be fortunate enough to be able to enjoy a protected development during their initial stage - during and immediately after the death of its proponent. Thus Judaism and Islam are less vague on their doctrinal fundamentals and thus have had fewer 'fratricidal' sects. Judaism enjoyed a long period of protection under successive Jewish kings. Islam also enjoyed similar protection. For the vagueness, possible distortions, and consequent fragmentation of early Christianity, *vide*, John Hick (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1977).

<sup>25</sup> Lipsky, *op.cit.*, p.13.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Hijaz, Hejaz, Hegaz.

on the part of Axum, the centre of the Semitic civilization on the Horn, which stemmed from its Christianization.<sup>28</sup>

The assault failed, but left the stateless central Arabian society with a feeling of insecurity. To counter the Ethiopian Yemēnite threat, the Central Arabs called in Persian interference.<sup>29</sup>

This in turn brought direct Byzantine interference also; thus, Central Arabia became a victim of international rivalry and conflict. Local anarchy, now supplemented by that of international power politics, made life miserable in the area. The Ethiopian *expedition* to the Hidjaz and its consequent factors, along with other forces of fusion led, as a reaction, first, to efforts at some form of security organisation with Mohammed's participation, and then, to the State of Islam under him. Islam, in parts, was a reaction to a prevailing disorder and insecurity aggravated by Christianized Ethiopia's missionary zeal<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the Christianization of Ethiopia and its adoption of a missionary role as the outpost for the faith, contributed along with other factors, to the rise of Islam in the seventh century. A favourable attitude of the Ethiopian polity towards the faith in its infancy, as will be seen later, assured its continued existence and rise as a political power with serious consequences.

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<sup>28</sup> Pankhurst, *op.cit.*, pp.47-48.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>30</sup> Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam* (London: Methuen, 1965), pp.lxviii-lxix, 13.



### Ethiopia Becomes an Inland Polity

The Semitic onslaught against the Cushitic lands continued and, boosted by the rise of Islam as a political power, overran the northern realms of the Cushitic domains, i.e. those in the north of Africa, also. However, unlike the Horn of Africa, there the Cushitic civilization failed to persist and compete against the Semitic onslaught. Rather, it was completely assimilated into the Semitic civilization of the Arabs. This could be possible because, here, unlike the Horn, the Cushites were inferior to the invading Semites, not only in culture, but probably also in numbers. More important, with a revolutionary message, it had a weapon that the earlier Semites on the Horn lacked: an appeal for the local, Cushitic masses themselves in favour of the incoming new order as against their own, by now oppressive, *ancien regime*. In this regard, the positions of the earlier Semites on the Horn and the latter ones in the north of Africa were diametrically opposite. On the Horn, the Cushites lived in a loose, free social system with egalitarian overtones and encountered in the Semitic civilization, a relatively rigid, elitist and oppressive monarchy, which, naturally enough, they rejected. In North Africa, on the other hand, the Cushitic society, by the time of the Semitic onslaught, had already advanced to the feudal elitist stage. As compared to this oppressive system, the new order of the Semitics looked like a liberating force, and thus, was, in general, welcomed.

The Semitic acquisition and acculturation of North Africa, particularly Egypt, resulted in a reinforced flow of Cushitic migration to the Horn. There was already a trickling continuation of the migratory flow of the earlier Cushites

that had resulted from the climatic transformation of the north of Africa in antiquity. Now, pushed by the Semitic onslaught, those of the northern Cushites who could neither accept nor tolerate the new Semitic order in Egypt and Sudan, migrated to the Horn along the coast of the Red Sea. Some other Cushites, having accepted Islam and the missionary zeal along with it, also started migrating to the Horn. Both the Cushitic groups migrated, though due to different causes and with differing motives, but jointly strengthened the Cushitic entity of the Horn. The result was a forced shift of the Semitic society from the coast to the interior.

The Semite's power on the coastal Lowlands of the Horn declined as a direct consequence of the Arab invasion of Egypt. Its effect was to force the Cushitic tribes of eastern Egypt and the northern Sudan southwards and, thereby, to project their Cushitic kinsmen already in the Northern Highlands and Barka Lowlands on to the Plateau. The Semitic civilization on the coastal lowlands crumbled under the invasion of the Cushites. Cut off from the sea by a wedge of lawless tribesmen, Axum, i.e. the Semitic entity, was cut off also from the commerce upon which its prosperity and power had been founded. Thus the early Abyssinians of Axum were forced to expand southwards into the Central Highlands.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Trevaskis, op.cit., p.5. Also Jean Doresse, *Ethiopia* (Fr. Tr. by Elsa Coult, London: Elek Books & N.Y.: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1959), pp.90-91.

This geographical shift of the Semitic society into the interior leaving the Peripheral areas for the Cushites gave shape to the particular geopolitical setting of the struggle in the area that still persists. The Semitic civilization became identical with the Central Highlands and the Cushites' confederacy, with that of the Peripheral Lowlands (map). The former had, by this time, taken up the basic characteristics that were to remain constant for centuries to come, down to the present period. It was central, a highland society, unitary and centralist, Christian of the Monophysite Coptic faith, and finally, hostile towards the other independent unit, the Cushites of the Periphery.

#### Islamization of the Horn's Periphery

The Moslems had viewed the Horn as a fertile ground for Islamization right from the beginning of the Moslem State in the seventh century. The Prophet of Islam called Bilal, an Ethiopian comrade of his, 'The first fruits of Abyssinia'.<sup>32</sup> Obviously, more 'fruits' were expected. At the same time the Christian power of Ethiopia showed, at the outset, sympathy and later, for a long time, a generally peaceful indifference and toleration towards the new system of Islam. This was natural: Christian Ethiopia, engaged as it was, in a crusade against the pagans as well as the Jews on the Horn could feel very close to the Moslems across

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<sup>32</sup> Pankhurst, op.cit., p.55.

the sea, engaged in a similar crusade against the same, common adversaries. A common cause could bind the two anti-Judaic anti-paganist forces into mutual sympathy, toleration, and even cooperation.

Relations between the Ethiopians and Islam were at first cordial. Thus when Mohammed sent some of his followers to Ethiopia, calling her 'a country wherein no one is wronged' and a 'land of righteousness' for a refugee from the Meccan persecution, they were given refuge and protection,<sup>33</sup> and, at one stage, the Ethiopian king, Armah himself accepted the new religion.<sup>34</sup>

Ethiopia's favourable attitude towards Islam in its earlier days was significant. First, it demonstrated as many other events in the polity's history will show, the polity's tendency towards a conservative reversion towards its past. In this specific case, as in many others, it was a reversion towards the Judaeo-paganic values, as salient in Islam. But, in fact, it showed a tendency to revert towards the past in general.

Then, perhaps, it also shows another aspect of the Ethiopian collective character already mentioned: preparedness for ideological submission, if need be, for more concrete political convenience. Armah 'was in no position to fight against Islam' and therefore 'saved his country from Arab invasion by his submission'.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, pp.49-54.

<sup>34</sup> Lipsky, *op.cit.*, pp.7-8.

<sup>35</sup> E.A.W. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia* (London, 1928), Vol.1, p.273. However, this version of the motive behind the acceptance of Islam is controversial.

This favourable attitude played a crucial part in the final rise of Islam as a political power, which 'necessarily transformed the entire Middle Eastern balance of power and had profound economic consequences',<sup>36</sup> and which ultimately affected, along with the whole world, the Horn of Africa also. We will discuss the impact of the rise of Islam on the Horn later. But here we will briefly refer to the role which the favourable attitude from Ethiopia played in the rise of Islam as a political force.

The availability of safe refuge for the early Moslems in Ethiopia

was of deep importance in the history of Islam. It convinced the Quraish of the sincerity and resolution of the converts and proved their readiness to undergo any loss and any hardship rather than abjure the faith of Mahomet.

A bright example of self-denial was exhibited to the whole body of believers who were led to regard peril and exile in 'the cause of God', as a privilege and distinction. It must also have suggested the possibility that the hostile attitude of their fellow citizens, combined with the merits of their creed, might secure for them within the limits of Arabia itself a sympathy and hospitality as cordial as that offered by the Abyssinian King; and thus it gave birth to the idea of the 'greater *Hegira*' - the emigration to Medina. This emigration provided Islam with a base for its state without which one wonders whether it could have become the formidable force that it became. Hence the Ethiopian attitude towards Islam in its early days contributed, perhaps even

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<sup>36</sup> Pankhurst, op.cit., p.49.

crucially, to its rise as a political force that was destined to play a central part at a later stage in the Horn's history.

Favourable attitudes of both the Christian Semitic and pagan Cushitic societies towards the Moslems helped bearing more 'fruits' to their efforts at planting Islam on the Horn. First established at Massawa, as early as in the seventh century,<sup>37</sup> Islam gradually spread towards the Ethiopian plateau and by the beginning of the fourteenth century, the majority of the people inhabiting the vast lowlands between the sea and the eastern edge of the Ethiopian plateau were Moslem, and the Moslem state of Ifat had been established high up the Awash valley on the eastern frontier of the provinces of Shewa. By about A.D. 1400 a number of additional Moslem states, Hadya, Fatayar, Dawaro, and Bali - had been established to the east and south of the Ethiopian Massif.<sup>38</sup>

However, Islamization in the area, as a permanent and significant factor began in and remained confined to the Peripheral lowlands. This is significant as this points to a fundamental difference between the Core and the Peripheeral societies. The Peripheral societies, finding Islam compatible to their tendencies, readily accepted it. The Highlands, on the contrary did not do so. It is not due to the physical obstruction presented by the Highlands topography. Islam has shown success in surmounting similar topographical obstructions in Afghan and Kafiristan highlands, and to cite

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<sup>37</sup> Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of Princes*, op.cit., p.xix.

<sup>38</sup> R.H. Kofi Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and the Ethiopian Empire/1813-1889* (London: Heinemann, 1975), pp.1-2. Further discussion on the rise of the Moslem states: *infra*, pp.67-77.

relatively more accessible but nevertheless challenging highlands-those of the Balkans. Apart from this, the physical barriers of Ethiopia itself have been overrun by Islamic forces, as will be seen below, during the Jihad of the 16th century. At least three times Islam has made its inroads across the physical barriers into Ethiopia claiming its government.<sup>39</sup> Moslem enclaves are found scattered all over the Highlands.<sup>40</sup> All these point to the fact that it is not physical inaccessibility but an unacceptability on the part of the Ethiopian society that accounts for Islam's restriction to the Periphery of the Horn. It is Islam's compatibility with the tendencies of the Peripheral societies as in contrast with its incompatibility with those of the Highlands that has been responsible for Islam's spread in and confinement to the Periphery.

#### Islamization of the Periphery: Rise of Moslem States

Mention has already been made of the fact that a disparity in the stages of development was introduced on the Horn with the Sabaean settlement around 100 B.C.<sup>41</sup> Since there was no conscious deliberate effort at overcoming this disparity between the Core and the Peripheral societies, the disparity continued and was apparent in both the socio-economic and the state-developmental situation even as late as the 10th century.

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<sup>39</sup> Under Ahmad Gran (16th century) and Lidj Yassu (20th century).

<sup>40</sup> J.S. Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952).

<sup>41</sup> *Vide: supra*, p.51.

While analysis of societies in terms of stages of development on the socio-economic level is already known, such analysis on the state-developmental level seems, still, to be non-existent. A brief diversion to discuss the latter, here, will be useful. A study of the historical development of various states can possibly suggest a general pattern of stages of development at this level also. There are reasons to believe that, *in general*, states pass through the following successive stages:

- (a) the nomadic state, non-territorial or, strictly speaking, the pre-state stage;
- (b) the city state stage;
- (c) the cosmopolitan, imperial state stage;
- (d) the nation-state stage;
- (e) the supra-national stage.

In the first, nomadic state stage, there is a rudiment of the state, with an organised population, subordinate to the sovereign will of the chief or the concensus of the society. But still, the concept of a rigid territorial limit is not very consolidated, though some form of the sense of territory (hunting or grazing spatial limits) is present. In the second stage, when these nomadic groups start settling down with the acquisition of agricultural and commercial skills, the state takes the form of a city state. The polity is much more organised and territorially limited. City walls are very often visible proofs of this sense of territorial limits. But still, the group is too little advanced to be able to comprehend the idea of a polity



transcending the limits of its own immediate community.

Greek city states of antiquity or the African coastal city states of the last millennium (e.g. Kilwa, Brava, Mombassa, etc.) are examples of states in this stage of development. In the third stage, the city states, gradually tied up in commercial relations which both originate from and increase their mutual interdependence, join to evolve into an imperial order. The intermediate, hinterlands also are included in the order. The society, however, is still too backward to submit to the idea of some kind of federal arrangement, giving each constituent city or people some kind of equality with the other units in terms of its own development. The state is a conglomeration of differing peoples, which are not equal in terms of autonomy. Some peoples are subject to others and, given the generally feudal character of the socio-economic system at this stage, this is inevitable. The Holy Roman Empire and the Hapsburg Empire of medieval Europe and most of the present states in Asia and Africa are examples of the State in this stage.<sup>42</sup> With the growth of the bourgeoisie and related factors connected with the growth of capitalism and the breakdown of the feudal system, democratic ideas flourish and *peoples* take over the role of *individuals* as the units in active politics. This leads to

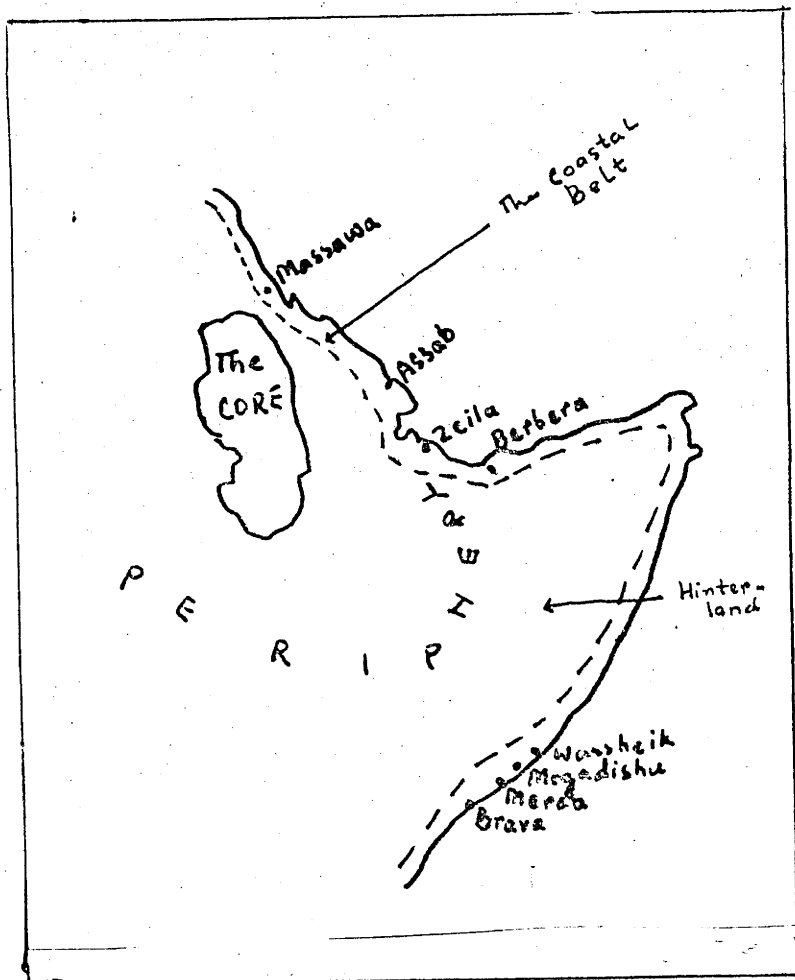
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<sup>42</sup> The present Asian and African states of this character, however, in some cases, claim to be democratic and/or federal. But in fact, most of them are imperial systems involving subordination of one group by another within the same state. This kind of subordination is a fact not unnoticed altogether. *Vide*, e.g. reference to 'internal colonial structure' to denote this: Z.A. Bhutto, quot. in *Dawn* (Karachi), 16 February 1971.

the competition for power amongst peoples, i.e. nations which breaks up the imperial system and thus results in nation states. Almost all modern European states, particularly those of Western Europe, are examples of the State in this stage.

At the same time, certain factors, including deliberate efforts at 'nation-building' and 'national unification' may amalgamate the various peoples of the imperial order concerned into one single people, and thus transform the imperial system into a nation-state. The example of Germany may be considered in this case. Most of the 'New States' are trying, in effect, to build up a nation state out of their respective imperial systems. In other words, they are trying to enter into the nation state stage from the colonial stage. After the stage of the national state comes that of the supra-national state. When a number of nation states acquire an approximate equity of strength, they can, without much fear of being subjected, join into a system on the basis of equal standing. The *emerging* 'supranation' of Western Europe serves a good example of the state at this stage. An older example would be that of Switzerland.

It is not possible to elaborate much on this theoretical aspect here. It demands a separate research project in its own right. However, this brief discussion will suffice to clarify the present discussion about the disparity between the Periphery and the Core in terms of stages of development on the state-developmental level.



Peripheral City States, c.10th. Century  
(p. 71)

By the tenth century the Periphery's nomadic societies had started to evolve into city states. One of the factors with crucial role in this respect was the 'latter Semitic' i.e. Moslem Arab migration to the Peripheral coasts during this period. These migrations were negligible, in terms of the number of migrants. But in terms of their impact on the state-developmental aspect of the Peripheral societies, they were very important. It was these migrants who founded the coastal city states from Zeila and Berbera on the North Somali coast to Mogadishu, Merca and Brava in the south. Such Eritrean port cities as Massawa and Assab also were probably a result of these Arab influences. These coastal Arab settlements evolved, out of the local Peripheral nomadic societies, a chain of city states all along the coast. Each city of mixed Arab and Hamitic stock, with its almost pure Hamitic hinterland, formed an organised city state. In the interior also the Arab migrations had important consequences. Several Arab Sheikhs, who migrated to the area and inter-married with the Hamites became nuclei of the several great Somali clans. This was, in effect, the beginning of the nomadic or pre-state stage of the state developmental process amongst the hinterland Hamites of the Periphery (map). Their very persons and their names with all the prestige that went along with them, deriving particularly from their religious standing as holy men, became centres around which the hitherto warring and fragmented minimal nomadic units, usually not bigger than a family, could and did rally and unite. For the first time these nomads experienced a

relationship based on allegiance to someone other than themselves. This was the beginning of the State in the Peripheral interior.

Both the Peripheral societies and what became later the Core's polity received their first roots of statehood from the Semitic immigrants from across the Red Sea. But the impacts of the two sets of Semitic immigration were different. While the earlier, i.e. Sabaean Semites, Semitized the indigenous society they came into contact with, and resulted into a Semitic civilisation - that of Ethiopia Proper, the latter, i.e. Moslem Arab Semites, instead, became absorbed into the Hamitic population itself and the city states and other polities they resulted into, were increasingly Hamitic in character. Thus, for instance,

[I]n 1698, when Mogadishu was occupied for a short time by Seif I of Oman during the period the Arabs were reconstituting their trading empire in East Africa, the Omani Arabs discovered that Mogadishu had lost its Arab character.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the latter Semitic migration, though from the same source as that of the earlier one, and with serious impact on the local scene again like the earlier set, nevertheless, could not wipe out the differences between the two body-political units - those of the Core and the Periphery. Instead, it in itself became well-fitted to the pattern of the dichotomy. There are a number of reasons behind this. One is the numerical insignificance of the latter Semitic

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<sup>43</sup> Hess, op.cit., p.7.

migrants in proportion to the local Hamitic population as compared with the significant size of the earlier Semitic settlement vis-a-vis the local Hamitic population at the time of its establishment.

Another reason has been the big gap of time-length between the earlier and the latter Semitic migrations. During this long period, situations had changed radically both on the Horn and in Arabia. The Semites who migrated around the 10th century were virtually different people from the Semites who migrated at least a millenium earlier. Thus their attitudes and impact on the societies they came across on the Horn were bound to be different from those of the earlier migrants. On the other hand, the situation on the Horn also had changed much. The socio-political dichotomy had taken quite a rigid form by the time the latter Semites came into the area. Any new element coming into the area's affairs could, more likely, only supplement or modify this pattern rather than erase or replace it with some other pattern of relationships.

A third factor was the differing socio-economic background of the two sets of migrants. While the earlier Semitic migrants were agriculturalist, the latter were mainly merchants or pastoralist missionaries. Thus, while the earlier set of migrants had introduced agriculture and its corollary, the feudal system, contributing to the distinction between Semitized and the Hamitic units, the latter set introduced nothing more to the receipient Hamitic society, than an improvement on the already

existing pre-feudal social system, and this could do nothing to dilute the distinctions.<sup>44</sup>

In the process of the nomadic 'states' transformation into the city state and thence to an imperial order, the various clan based polities of the interior became integrated with the coastal city states while the various city states joined to form loose confederations. Sometimes, these confederations themselves were linked up into greater but very loosely integrated polities. In essence, this was the initial period of the imperial system stage of the state-developmental process in the Peripheral societies. The development of city states and later imperial or cosmopolitan polities in the Peripheral societies was not confined to the coastal areas alone. Such states emerged in the interior and the western fringes of the Periphery also. Ifat and Harar in the interior of the eastern Periphery and Jimma in the Western fringes emerged as strong Sultanates at one time. Certain pagan states also emerged in the south west of the Periphery, while the Beja in the north west also evolved a pre-nation state polity, loosely affiliated with the Mahdist Sudan.

These developments did not take place uniformly throughout the Periphery. Due to differing environmental factors and

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<sup>44</sup> The foundation of city states by merchants is not to be confused with the rise of capitalism and with that of the bourgeoisie at a post-feudal stage. The citizenry of the primitive city state is not a bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie essentially lives on a market economy deriving its roots and strength from a crumbling feudal rural system in the hinterland under its control. But the citizenry of the primitive city state lives mainly on trade with other city states and does not generally have a 'crumbling feudal rural system in the hinterland'.

differing degrees of Arab or Ethiopian influence, different parts of the Periphery took differing lengths of time in reaching the same level of development in state-developmental terms. Thus while city states had already turned into cosmopolitan, imperial systems in the north east and the south west by the 16th century, it took the south east much longer to see a serious polity at that level. It was not until the early nineteenth century that the first entity of this kind in the south east, that of the Sultanate of Geledi, incorporating in some way the coastal city of Mogadishu, could come into being.<sup>45</sup>

These differences in the levels of political development within the Periphery would later contribute to internal tensions in the country now known as Somalia.<sup>46</sup>

By the 16th century there were on the Periphery, a number of polities comparable to Ethiopia in terms of stages of development on the state developmental level. So far, the confrontation was between a state (at the Core) and individuals or minor groups at a far lower level of political maturity and strength (in the Periphery), and thus, nothing more than a continuous and constant chain of skirmishes and raids. In the 16th century, for the first time, the long-developing conflict between the Core and the Periphery was ripe enough to take the shape of an *interstate confrontation*.

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<sup>45</sup> Hess, op.cit.

<sup>46</sup> *Vide: supra*, Ch.II, pp. 27-28 and *infra*, Ch.IV, pp.174-176.



With these developments and the greater extent of conversion to Islam, particularly as confined only amongst the lowlanders, the temporary community of interests between the Christians and Moslems in the early days of Islam on the Horn was replaced by a relatively more permanent struggle between the two. In fact, the Islamic forces, after expanding into the Horn's Peripheral societies, instead of injecting their initial friendship for Ethiopia into them, rather, became absorbed into the local pattern and shifted from friendship to confrontation in its relations with the Christian state of Ethiopia. Thus, while for a number of centuries Christian and Muslim principalities 'existed side by side in relative harmony' as Christian Ethiopia had very little to fear from the weak Muslim kingdoms,<sup>47</sup>

In the early decades of the fourteenth century the Christian empire and her Muslim neighbours came to open conflict, this turned out to be the beginning of a long conflict which continued into the sixteenth century<sup>48</sup>

and beyond, down to the present day. This change from initial mutual friendship with Christianity into an adversity was significant. This, on the one hand, showed the strength which the pattern of relationships on the Horn had already gained by that time: as long as the Islamic society remained insignificant on the Periphery as a politico-territorial entity - its relationship with the Core had no element of

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<sup>47</sup> Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes*, op.cit., p.xix.

<sup>48</sup> Darkwah, op.cit., p.2.

confrontation. As soon as this society became established as a peripheral power, it found itself, fitting with the Core-Peripheral pattern of relationships, in confrontation with the Core. On the other hand, it added to the Peripheral's pattern of behaviour, an element of conscious zeal in confrontation with the Central Highlands.

The spread of Islam was significant in one more way. It brought the area into direct relation with the global power political system. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

#### The Core's Vicious Circle of Revolts: Falasha Agaw Revolution

While the Peripheral areas experienced the spread and consolidation of the Islamic Power, the Core went through three important events, viz. the *Falasha-Agaw* and the *Zagwe* revolutions, and the '*Solomonic Restoration*'. In the 10th century A.D. the Falasha Jews as well as other non-Amharic elements such as the Agaws staged a revolution in the Core's entity, against its progressive Christianization. The Jewish Agaw Queen of the Damot region began burning down the churches, laying waste the land, and driving the King out of one place after another. The Queen, among other things, had reduced Aksum, the sacred site of Ethiopian Christianity, to rubble, leaving only the huge monoliths which she was unable to demolish.<sup>49</sup> The motivation of the rebellion was no doubt to revivify the older Judaic-indigenous cults and practices.<sup>50</sup>

The revolution was significant. Along with the choice of Monophysite Coptism rather than any other form of Christianity before it, and the non-Amharic Zagwe revolution

<sup>49</sup> Doresse, op.cit., p.92.

<sup>50</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., p.8.

of the mid-1130s after the revolution reflected as well as strengthened the quality of conservatism in Ethiopian society, showing that this society, when forced to deviate from its course, would do so to the minimum possible extent, and, whenever possible, revert to its original course. The Judaeo-pagan society had accepted Christianity under pressures of the time, but preferred that sect of this new faith which appeared to be closest to its own Judaeo-paganistic doctrines. Of all the Christian sects, the Monophysites are closest to the Judaic concept of the Deity.<sup>51</sup>

Later, with the advent of Islam the Ethiopian society seems to have felt attracted towards this renewed form of Judaism; it became the most generous asylum for the Moslems, and at one point in the early days of Islam, one of its Emperors<sup>52</sup> even embraced that faith. But again, the inherent conservatism kept the society from mass conversion and the Emperor was replaced.

Afterwards the Falasha and Agaw revolution betrayed the same affinity for conservatism. The same is true of the Zagwe revolution of the mid-1130s.

This tendency *towards* conservatism presents us with a paradoxical situation. Pressures over time force the Ethiopian society to transform, even if slowly and marginally.

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<sup>51</sup> While other schools of the Christian dogma believe in a dual nature of Jesus, i.e. in his simultaneous divinity and humanity, the Monophysites, like the Jews (and later the Moslems), believe in the impossibility of this kind of dual nature. To the Monophysites, Jesus, being God, is *purely* divine. To the Jews and the Moslems, however, he is *purely* human.

<sup>52</sup> Armah, *supra*, p.64.

The inherent force of conservatism contradicts this, causing revolutions or counter-revolutions. But the return to the past finds itself in contradiction with the demands of conservatism, because of the very fact that situations since the days of that particular 'past' have, by the time of this 'conservative' revolution, changed substantially. Thus, the 'conservative return' constitutes a break with the past, which is, paradoxically, an unconservative phenomenon, which in turn calls for another revolution to undo its unconservative effects. This, in effect, means that revolution and counter-revolution have become inherent in the Ethiopian society. This has been reflected in, and strengthened by each successive change and crisis, including the Falasha and the Zagwe revolutions.

#### Zagwe Revolution

The paradoxical pattern mentioned above brought in one more revolution very soon. After the Falasha revolution discussed above, the Zagwe revolution took place between 1135 and 1137.<sup>53</sup> Beginning in 1137, a new, Agaw and non-Semitic dynasty occupied the throne.<sup>54</sup>

The Falasha revolution had regressed too far towards the deserted past. Judaeo-pagan elements had remained strong in the Ethiopian value system, but this system had also become Christian. The complete reversion to the Judaeo-paganism implied by the Falasha revolution proved too sweeping,

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<sup>53</sup> Doresse, op.cit., p.23.

<sup>54</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., p.9.

and a Christian order with some pre-Christian influence was called for. The non-Semitic, but Christian Zagwe order seemed to fulfil this call of the polity at the time. The new dynasty based its 'claim to succession' on a legendary marriage (in the 7th century), with a daughter of one of the last rulers of Aksum, Delna-ad, or Armah, by name<sup>55</sup> and on 'descent from Moses'.<sup>56</sup> The Zagwe ruler demanded the dismissal by the authorities in Cairo of a bishop named Habib on the grounds that he was too old for office, the truth being that the *Abuna* (bishop) had in fact refused to recognise him as the ruler of Ethiopia.<sup>57</sup> However the new Zagwe dynasty was eventually recognised by the church.<sup>58</sup>

#### Concern for Legitimacy and Identification with Proto-Types

The above initial claims and acts of the revolutionary regime significantly reflected a continuing trait of the Ethiopian polity: its legitimistic mind and its tendency to derive legitimacy from identification with a 'superior', the 'original' proto-type. This remarkable concern with legitimacy and legitimization has been reflected at other times also. The so-called 'Solomonic restoration', in the next century, also was accompanied by claims to legitimacy based on legendary elements.

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<sup>55</sup> Doresse, *op.cit.*, p.53.

<sup>56</sup> Lipsky, *op.cit.*, p.9.

<sup>57</sup> Doresse, p.93.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

This tendency of the Ethiopians to seek legitimacy from identification with some superior prototype, usually, the 'original source', and to regard descent as the primary means of such identification - is reflected also in the *rist*-based pattern of land-holding which has been recognised as 'the corner stone of the traditional social structure' of Ethiopia Proper.<sup>59</sup> According to this system, the right of *atsme rist*,<sup>60</sup> i.e. the right to land-holding and the socio-political status that goes with it, is an 'exclusive prerogative of the descent group' deriving from a common 'bone' (*atsme*) or descent from the '*abbat*' (the 'fathers') - the *original* settler in the particular area under consideration. Traditionally, this descent-based right has been the primary basis of socio-political status amongst the Amhara. For example, not only the imperial power derived its legitimacy from the virtue of the 'Imperial Blood',<sup>61</sup> but, also, even at the lowest level of administration, only the *ristegna* (hereditary *rist*-holders) have been eligible for local office.<sup>62</sup>

It may be noted here, that the land-holding system in Eritrea and parts of Tigre, even amongst the highland Christians, known as *shehena* or *diessa* has been different and is based, not on descent, but on territorial residential

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<sup>59</sup> John Markakis, *Ethiopia: anatomy of a traditional polity* (Oxford, 1974), p.78.

<sup>60</sup> Termed, in the shortened form, also as '*rist*'.

<sup>61</sup> Ethiopian Constitution, 1955, quot. in Lipsky, op.cit., p.172.

<sup>62</sup> Markakis, op.cit., pp.76-82.

status. This supports the presentation of the area's setting in terms of the Core-Peripheral pattern identified in this paper.<sup>63</sup>

The importance of the system of land-holding may be assessed from the fact that almost ninety percent of Ethiopians are engaged in subsistence agriculture (a big section, if not all of the rest, living as lords supported by the same), that agriculture contributes sixty five percent of Ethiopia's Gross Domestic Product, and that it accounts for seventy eight percent of the country's export.<sup>64</sup>

This concern for legitimacy has had significant effects on the polity's behaviour and development. It became an important aspect of the Ethiopian value system and thus to some extent continued to condition the Ethiopian political behaviour, and led to a necessity, at times, to create legends and falsify.

Thus, to strengthen their claims to legitimacy, the 'Solomonian' establishment had to exaggerate the existing legends to the extent of presenting their dynasty as divine descendants of Jesus Christ. Thus, the classic chronicle of the Solomonian Kings, *Kebra Nagast* (Glory of the Kings), contends that, Solomon was one of a series through whose bodies had passed a 'pearl' first placed by God in Adam and intended finally, having entered the body of Hannah, to be the essence of her daughter, the Virgin Mary. Christ

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p.78.

<sup>64</sup> William Lee, 'Economic reform stalled by purges and civil war', in *Middle East Economic Digest* (London), Vol.21, No.7, 18 February 1977, p.5.

being the Son of God and Menelik a kinsman of Christ [through Christ's own ancestor and Menelik's father Solomon], the [Solomonian] Kings of Ethiopia, descendants of Menelik, are of a divine line.<sup>65</sup> This deification of the Emperor had serious implications. Since this deification of the Emperor, he was seen, by both himself and his subjects, as above all norms, including even those of religion and ethics. This view, having become a part of the collective value system,<sup>66</sup> essentially sanctioned absolute autocracy making the Emperor autocratic and the people docile. At the same time, for the non-Christian subjects, this legend made the Emperor-God anathema to their own religion<sup>67</sup> and thus made them inherently hostile towards him and his regime. This latter aspect sowed one more seed of crisis within the Ethiopian Empire. The general reluctance of Ethiopians to rise against the Emperor and inherent hostility of non-Christian subjects towards him has been evident on many occasions.

In the 20th century, efforts to raise insurrections in favour of land reform failed because of peasant opposition. Even the revolution of 1974 which deposed the Emperor had to legitimise itself by publicising a statement from him that his deposition was in compliance with his own *will*. On the other hand, the non-Christian Moslem subjects of the

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<sup>65</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., p.6.

<sup>66</sup> This has been observed in research on the value orientation in the contemporary Ethiopian society. *Vide: Asmalash Beyene, Patterns of Authority in the Ethiopian Bureaucracy (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1972).*

<sup>67</sup>The most fundamental article of the Moslem faith is a declaration that 'There is no god but Allah alone'.



Empire have at various times fought bloody *jihads* in defence of their faith which could not accept the Emperor as divine.<sup>68</sup>

The most recent example of the inherent tendency of the Ethiopian polity to create legends in the interest of some kind of legitimacy, is the equation by the present Ethiopian regime of the present revolutionary situation with the Soviet revolutionary situation of 1917 and its immediate aftermath.

Having uprooted the traditional source of legitimacy - the descent from Solomon and Moses, this regime looked for a new source: the Soviet version of the Marxian interpretation of history. To feel legitimate, in the eyes of not only the Soviet Union - the crucial source of strength<sup>69</sup> but also the base of the modern elite, versed mainly in the Soviet version of Marxism, and the recently organised masses under their leadership - the post-Revolutionary Ethiopian regime is obviously trying to equate its present conditions with those of immediate post-Revolutionary regime of Russia. This they are doing even though this equation is as simplistic and fallacious as the presentation of actual situations in the legends. This significant legend building tendency of the Ethiopian polity also led to the creation of the

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<sup>68</sup> Paul Brietzke, 'Land Reform in Revolutionary Ethiopia' in *Journal of Modern African Studies* (14,4), pp.637-660. Peter Schwab, *Decision-Making in Ethiopia: A Study of the Political Process* (London, 1972). *Keessing's* p.26733. The most serious of the *jihads* was that of the 16th century, led by Ahmed Gran. *Vide: infra*, Ch.III.

<sup>69</sup> Even as late as in 1977 i.e. after three years of consolidation, the 'need of effective and massive external support' for Ethiopia's revolutionary regime has been observed as 'crucial'. Collin Legum, p.310.

significant legend of Prester John. The significance of this legend will be discussed elsewhere in this Chapter.

#### Solomonic 'Restoration'

The Zagwe Revolution was followed by the so-called 'Solomonic Restoration'. In 1260, the 'Solomonic' dynasty was restored to the imperial power, with at least two important consequences. First, it established the Church as a strong temporal power in the Ethiopian polity. Second, it removed the Ethiopian capital to Shewa, the then seat of the restored dynasty. According to the legends, the restoration was effected with the decisive help of St. Takla Haymanot, or, perhaps more likely, that of the Church symbolised by the saint. Thus,

The conditions under which the [restored] ruling family made way for the legitimate house are supposed to have provided that the former [St. Haymanot] should retain certain lands and privileges in perpetuity [and] that one third of the land of the country should be held by the Church.<sup>70</sup>

Hence the Church became for all time to come, until a revolutionary change, a strong factor in the Ethiopian economy and thus in its politics, with a number of important consequences for the country's affairs and history.

[T]he powerful position thus created for the Church by the wily monk [St. Haymanot] is undoubtedly one of the main causes of the non-development of the country and of the maintenance of its medieval institution.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Rey, op.cit., p.239.

<sup>71</sup> ibid., p.240.

This was partly because of the conservative nature of the Ethiopian Church and partly because the acquisition of one third of the country's land and concomitant power and privileges gave it a strong interest in opposing change.<sup>72</sup> The Church's strong position also meant that political decisions of the Ethiopian polity henceforth would be more strongly imbued with religious doctrines and aspirations. The religious factor in political decision was in essence already present, but so far held an indirect sway, i.e. through its influence on the general value system of the polity. But, henceforth it became direct and institutionalised, and thus more certainly decisive. This was to influence the polity's future history, particularly in its relationships with the Periphery.

[A]fter the rise of the new Solomonic dynasty with Yekune Amlak in 1270 was a new policy of containing the Muslim principalities adopted.<sup>73</sup>

Admittedly, there were many reasons other than the new strength of the Church for this policy. The Emperor's 'main purpose became ... weakening and destruction of the encircling power of Moslem states ... the motivation for this policy was to a large extent political and commercial ... The wars of the thirteenth, fourteenth and even fifteenth centuries could be considered a struggle for authority, revenue and land between neighbouring political units'.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> The Church owned at least 25% of the total land of the State of Ethiopia on the eve of the Revolution (1974). *Vide: Karl Lavrencic, Ethiopia: the sick man of Africa, Impact International*, 28 May-10 June 1976, p.5. For a brief discussion on the continued resistance by the Church to change and its significance, *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Abir, *Ethiopia: Era of the Princes*, *op.cit.*, p.xix.

<sup>74</sup> Lipsky, *op.cit.*, p.9.

Still, the new strength of the Church also played an important, perhaps even largely decisive, role in this respect.

Then, in time, the Ethiopian empire came to embrace vast non-Christian territories. The continued adherence to the settlement whereby one third of the country's land should belong to the Church thus meant that many non-Christian societies within the Empire were deprived of their land and oppressed by a Church to which they, unlike the deprived Christians, had no allegiance. This sense of deprivation would aggravate their already existing hatred and resentment against the Christian Centre.

#### The Jihad

Reference has been made to the fact that the introduction of Islam had added one more dimension, that of ideological religious confrontation to the pattern of Core Peripheral conflict and strengthened it. This did not, however, happen very quickly. Not until after the so-called Solomonic Restoration did the struggle between the Highland Core and the Lowland societies become serious as a violent religious confrontation. So, not until this time did the Moslem Lowland societies seek and obtain assistance from the Moslem, Ottoman Caliphate. And then,

[T]he advent of the Ottoman power created profound changes in the political situation on the Red Sea ... It ... supplied new weapons to the Moslem princes with which to conduct this war. The Turks [Ottomans] introduced firearms into this area and, what was as important, supplied to the local princes

'disciplined bodies of troops capable of using firearms.'<sup>75</sup>

The balance between the two subsystems of the Core and the Periphery was upset in favour of the latter. A Peripheral confederacy under the leadership of Adal took an almost decisive offensive. These confederate forces, under the remarkably able leadership of the Somali General, Ahmad ibn Ibrahim,<sup>76</sup> with limited but significant Turkish support and the use of firearms, overran Ethiopia in 1533, reducing the Emperor into a fugitive.<sup>77</sup>

The balance of forces was re-established and maintained only by obtaining European support in the 1540s. First, the Portuguese rescued the Ethiopians from the Adalite menace by supplementing the Ethiopian resistance with an attack on Zeila, the military centre of the Adalite power. And then, they recovered the Central empire from the greatest danger ever experienced by that entity, i.e. the occupation of almost the whole of the Empire: In his distress, the Ethiopian Emperor, Lebna Dengel 'naturally' sought Portuguese assistance in 1535 which arrived in 1541, the year after he died. After having been defeated twice, the Portuguese and Ethiopian forces however finally succeeded in killing Ahmad and decisively defeating the Peripheral forces in a surprise battle near Lake Tsana (map, pp. 91-92).<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> A.H.M. Jones & Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Abyssinia* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), pp.81-82.

<sup>76</sup> Generally referred to as Gran, Giran or Granj (the left-handed). Also as Ghazi (Victor) Mohammad.

<sup>77</sup> Jones & Monroe, *op.cit.*, pp.82-83.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, pp.83-85.

### Ethiopian Era of Anarchy

The failure of the balance of force between the Central Highlands and the Peripheral society, though only temporary, had consequences for the Horn's future. 'The effect of one-and-a-half decades of continued defeat on the Christian empire can hardly be emphasised'.<sup>79</sup> As we have already seen, it brought in the element of colonialism, particularly European. The repeated and humiliating defeat of the emperor inevitably cast doubts on his claim to be regarded as divine. Given their staunchly Christian faith and belief in the Solomonic myth of the Emperor's divine ancestry, the doubts centred not on the divinity of the institution itself, but on the legitimacy of its occupant's claim to it. Henceforth conflict among a number of claimants to the imperial power would become common on the Ethiopian political scene. Added to the introduction of new religious schools by the Portuguese, this conflict resulted in an era of a near-anarchy. Recurrent revolts, succession struggles and dynastic, regional or religious wars became the order of the day.

[S]ince about 1730 upto the advent of Theodore in 1855 ... the Kings had exercised no real power, and had been murdered, deposed, restored and driven out again, or treated as nonentities.<sup>80</sup>

The gravity of the situation can be perceived by the fact that prior to Za Salassie's death in 1607, no Emperor had

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<sup>79</sup> Darkwah, *op.cit.*, p.2.

<sup>80</sup> Abir, *Ethiopia ...*, *op.cit.*, p.xxiii.

been killed in a rebellion for almost five hundred years.

The situation continued to deteriorate:

In 1813, indeed, no less than six nominal 'Kings of Ethiopia' were all alive, having been successively turned out of office by others.<sup>81</sup>

This series of crises and instability led to and merged into the '*Zamana Masafint*', the period from 1769 to 1855 when the regional rulers held the real power in the country and the King of Kings of the Amharic Core in Gondar became but a puppet in the hand of the regents, who from the last decades of the eighteenth century were of non-Amharic, Peripheral, Galla origin.<sup>82</sup> One may imagine the extent of instability and gravity of the situation from the facts that between 1769 and 1851 there were thirty Emperors, including one (Takla Giorgis) who was deposed and restored five times, and another (Sahela Dengel) whose reign was interrupted three times, that the longest period of uninterrupted rule was seventeen years (Egwala Seyon, 1801-1818) only, while between 1794 and 1801 Emperors succeeded each other at an average interval of less than ten months. All of them except the first three were 'shadow kings nominally ruling'.<sup>83</sup> Thus,

[I]n Ethiopian history the period called *Zamana Masafint* is understood ... to be the era of the judges, in the biblical sense.<sup>84</sup>

according to which,

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81 *ibid.*

82 David Mathew, *Ethiopia* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1947), pp.vi-viii, 39.

83 *ibid.*

84 *ibid.*

In those days there was no king ... every man did that which was right in his own eyes.<sup>85</sup>

During the *Zamana Masafint* the deeply divided Christian Amhara-Tigrean Ethiopia, i.e. the Core faced threat of 'submersion'.<sup>86</sup> The gravity of the situation becomes yet more evident if one takes into account the sacredness attached to the office of the Emperor and the tradition of absolute loyalty given to him by the Ethiopians. Though some form of imperial order was restored, later, under Tewodoros (1855-66) and his successors, the crises and the tendencies of rivalry, intrigue and clash of personal, regional and religious nature - characteristic of this long period of anarchy, had been, by that time, incorporated into the pattern of events within the Core's body politic.

#### Continued Struggle: The Galla Onslaughts

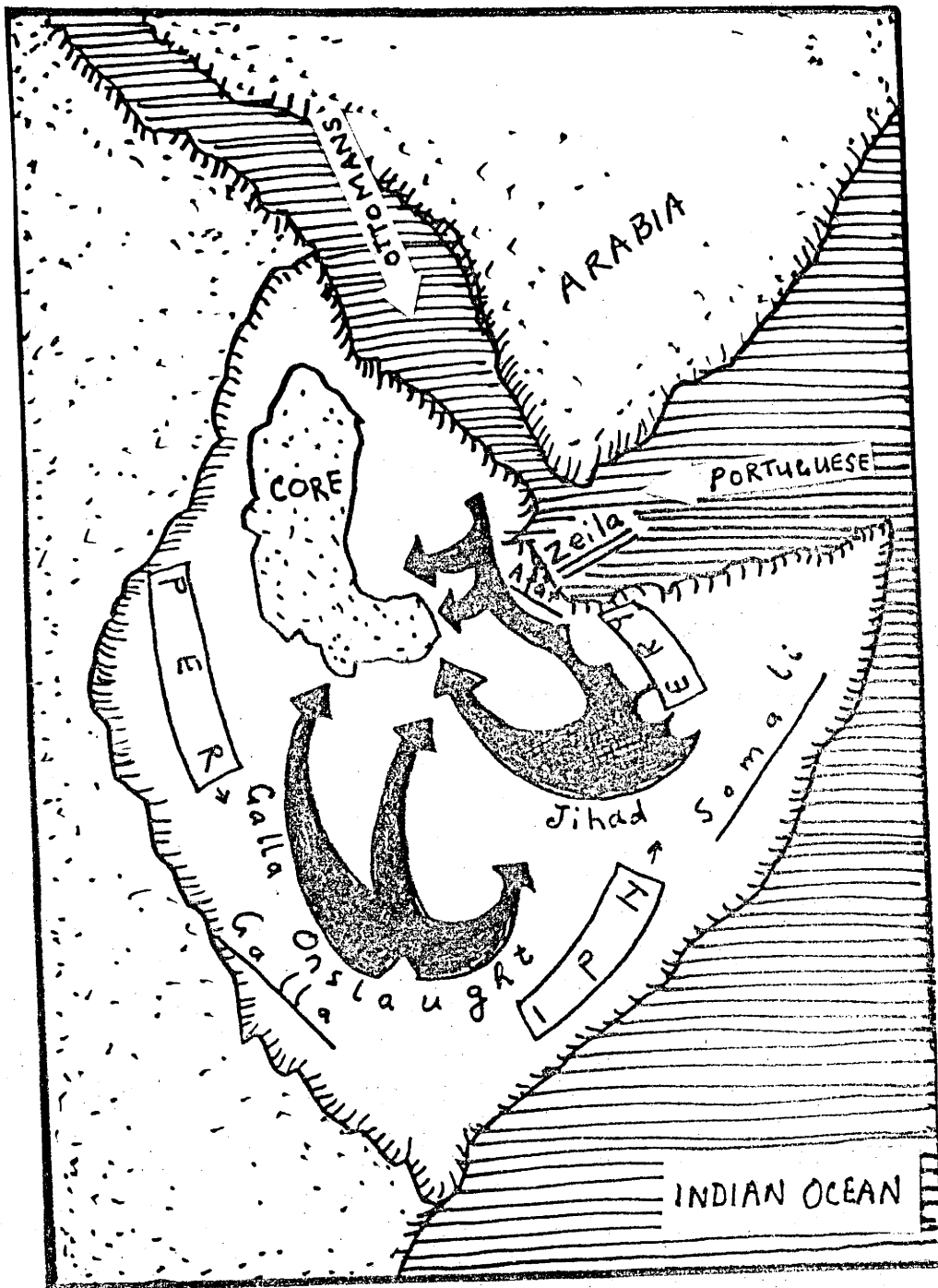
The Core-Peripheral struggle did not cease with the defeat in the 1540s, of the Moslem forces of the northern and eastern parts of the Horn. It continued, though the initiative on the Peripheral side shifted from the north to the south: from among the Danakil and the Somalis to the Gallas (map, pp. 91-92).

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the massive Galla onslaught, in successive waves, took over a third of the empire by 1533, i.e. even before the destruction of the threat from *Jihad* in the north. By the time this Moslem threat could be destroyed, Ethiopia herself was left able

<sup>85</sup> *Book of Judges*, Ch.21, verse 25, King James edition.

<sup>86</sup> Abir, *Ethiopia ...*, op.cit., p.xxiii.





Core Peripheral Struggle: The Jihad  
 (16th. century) and the Galla Onslaught  
 (16th. century - ); p.91.

to offer only much weaker resistance to the Galla onslaught, which finally resulted in Galla settlement of the outer areas of the Ethiopian highlands and their penetration into all its parts excepting only Tegra.<sup>87</sup>

The Galla migrations had far reaching consequences for the Ethiopian Empire. The permanent settlement of the Galla at the Core sowed seeds of a permanent contradiction within the Core's polity. Their entry into the elite became a source of weakness for the Ethiopian state. Their role, at times, have been that of treachery with decisive effects for Ethiopia's fate.<sup>88</sup>

### Conclusion

The above examination of the role of historical process in shaping contemporary conditions on the Horn of Africa, leadsto the following conclusions:

1. This process points to the evolution of two broad, distinct and, in general, conflicting socio-political units on the Horn of Africa. These units roughly coincide with the units identified in the previous chapter, viz. (a) the Peripheral Lowlands and (b) the Highlands' Core. The former has grown as a loose confederation of Cushitic, Moslem, nomadic societies; the latter, as a centralistic, Semitic, Coptic Christian, feudal society. Both the units tend to be expansionist.

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<sup>87</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., pp.12-13. Darkwah, op.cit., pp.3-4.

<sup>88</sup> Darkwah, op.cit., p.4.

2. The Ethiopian system has grown to tend towards crises characterised by personal, regional and ideological rivalries and conflicts.
3. The above system, in general, has grown to be conservative. When forced to deviate from its traditional course, it would do so to the minimum possible extent, and, whenever possible, reverse towards the original course. This leads to an inherent proneness on the part of the society towards revolutions and counter-revolutions.
4. The Ethiopian society has grown to be legitimist and has developed a tendency for mythical falsification of actual conditions to fit into prototypes accepted as 'legitimate', i.e. 'proper' order. Tradition is the generally accepted source of legitimacy or propriety; but, the society tends to be prepared for ideological submission, if necessary, in the interest of more concrete political goals.
5. The Peripheral 'unit' is likely to suffer from internal disunity and contradiction owing to un-uniform historical development of its various constituent societies.
6. The Peripheral societies' unity tends to increase with the degree of hostility involved in their relations with the Core.

## CHAPTER IV

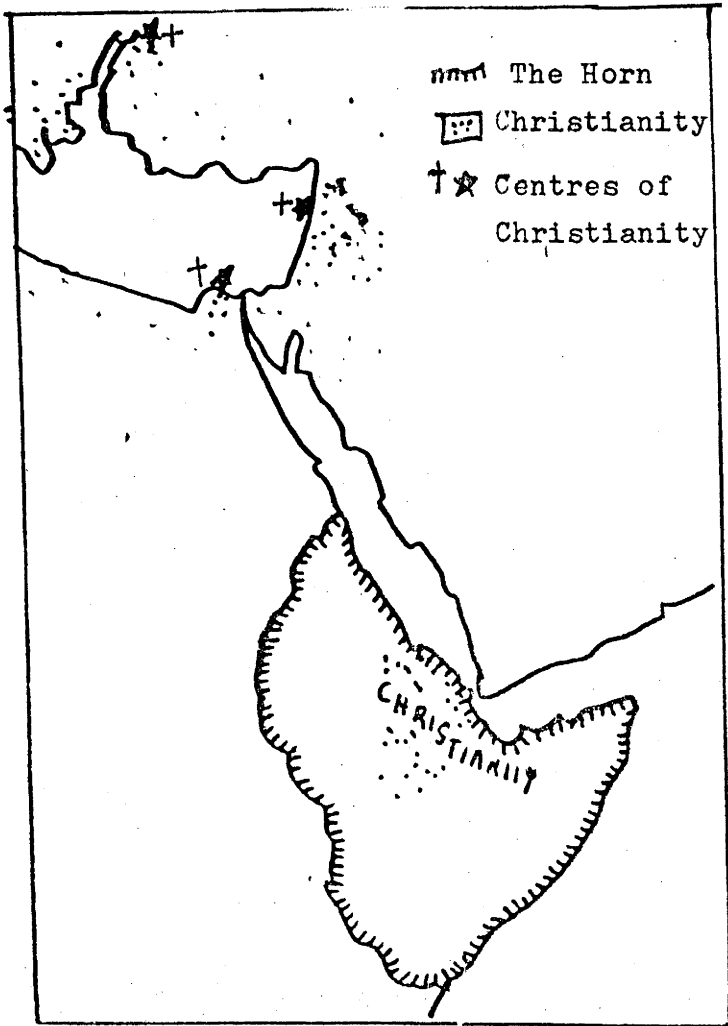
THE HISTORICAL PROCESS IN THE GLOBAL SETTINGIntroduction: Advent of Global Politics on the Horn

The spread of Islam had brought in direct extra-regional politico-military involvements into the Horn of Africa. This was because, unlike Christianity at the time of its introduction to the Horn, Islam had a strong and expansive base in its ascendancy just on the frontiers of the area (map, pp. 94-95). This had made the Islamic entity on the Horn a virtual protectorate of the Islamic state. A similar situation of virtual hegemony of an external power had arisen at the time of the introduction of Christianity also. But since the then Christian base, unlike Islam, was neither a state, nor in its ascendancy, nor 'just on the frontiers' of the Horn, its *protection* declined almost immediately in favour of the Horn's independent role as an outpost of Christianity in the area. Very soon it was not Christendom that championed the interests of Ethiopia, but Ethiopia that championed the cause of Christendom. But in the case of the Islamic connections, the role of the Islamic Caliphate as the protector of the Moslem entities on the Horn strengthened with the passage of time as the Caliphate continued to rise in power for a number of centuries.

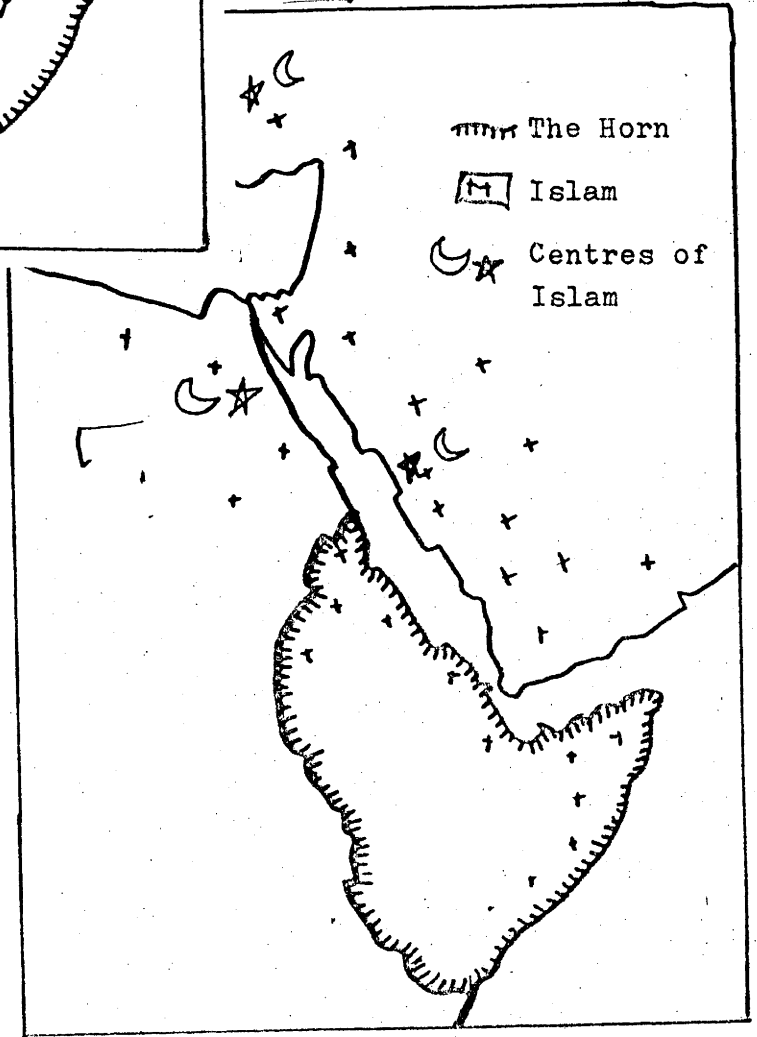
Apart from the facts of power political configuration, the Islamic doctrine also made it incumbent upon all Islamic societies to belong to, and be protected by, the single Islamic

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM ON THE HORN - EARLY PERIOD:

PROXIMITY TO THE GLOBAL CENTRES OF THE FAITHS



CHRISTIANITY



ISLAM

State.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in their struggle against the Christian Highlands, the Lowlanders had sought and obtained the protective assistance of the Ottoman Empire. This Empire being a major actor in global politics, in its own right, had essentially brought in, as has been seen, this element of international politics into the Horn's affairs. Then, the Portuguese had intervened to save the collapsing Christian Highland Empire of Ethiopia from the fatal onslaught of the Moslem Lowland societies supported by the Ottomans. Hitherto, the conflicts on the Horn had been essentially of a regional nature, at least since very ancient times. External involvements, if any, had been only very limited and, in relation to the whole course of the region's history and its outputs, negligible. But now, international power political involvement to balance the two conflicting units, became a part of the region's pattern of international relations. Whenever the balance would become fatally disturbed at the cost of one or the other of the contenders, from now on such external involvement will be seen to come in to restore the balance.

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<sup>1</sup> Thus, such outlying Moslem states as that in India, even if virtually independent, theoretically were autonomous units of the Islamic State. The Sultans of Delhi usually sought and obtained ratification for their regimes from the Abbaside Caliphs to attain legitimacy under Islamic Law.

The doctrine of belonging to and being protected by a single Islamic polity has always been a strong motivator in the history of the Moslem peoples. Cf. for recent examples, its role in the rise of Pan-Islamism in the early 20th century; neo-Pan Islamic movement of the '60s and '70s and the birth of the Islamic Secretariat; and the Libyan and other Islamic countries' intervention in the Philippines civil war as protectors of the Moslem South.

This factor, since then, became a constant in the pattern of events in the region. The Islamic power, in one form or another, would remain, from now, a constant on the flanks of the Horn. Its role as a *protector* of the Moslem societies as well as a global actor, though perhaps with minor or sporadic interruptions, also would remain a constant in the region's affairs. The constancy of these factors essentially leads to the constancy of their resultant - the factor of involvements in favour of regional balance.

In a way this first global encounter on the Horn had also set the general geostrategic pattern of the Horn's powers' foreign alignments for the future. In this 'pattern', Peripheral entities would align with the foreign powers in the immediate neighbourhood, while the Central Highlands would rely on assistance from powers beyond those immediate neighbours - usually overseas powers.<sup>2</sup>

The global involvement had brought in a two-level complex of rivalries and conflicts. The same region from then on experienced sets of conflicts, which though interrelated, nevertheless, were to be separate systems with their own independent existence, characteristics and patterns. A set of global political rivalries was superimposed upon the existing intra-regional contradictions. Though either could offset the other, both would have their own reasons for existence in the region and also their own independent basic courses. This made the situation on the Horn complex and to an extent confused. The apparent inseparability of the two completely different, independent sets of rivalries in

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<sup>2</sup> This aspect has been dealt with in greater details below, pp.101-102, 106, 108-114, 116-117, 121, 131-132, 162-164, 177. Also, Ch.V.

the region, made it very easy for observers to confuse the two different courses and try to interpret and predict one in terms of the dynamics of the other. This very confusion is responsible for the tendency to see the present confrontations on the Horn as resulting from such recent global political factors as the renewed American preoccupation with a missionary role in world affairs, or current Soviet attention towards gaining influence in Sub-Saharan Africa after losing it in the Middle East and India,<sup>3</sup> or the Arab states' bid to control the Red Sea by extending their sphere of influence into Eritrea and Somalia. These factors only form an extended part of the supra-regional pattern, which may have added to the contradictions inherent in the regional pattern of the Horn's relationships, but in no case are they the regional pattern itself. Nor can one explain this pattern of regional contradiction with reference only or primarily to those global political factors.

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<sup>3</sup> The view that the Soviet Union has lost her influence in India following the dramatic change in India's internal political conditions owing to the Parliamentary elections of 1978, is contestable. While, in domestic matters, the new coalition regime is obviously right-wing as compared to the previous regime led by Indira Gandhi, there are indications that, in foreign policy, India still leans towards the USSR. For example, India allowed Soviet craft, probably with some decisive effect, to use the Calcutta airport in their aid missions to Vietnam during the Sino-Vietnamese border war in early 1979. There have also been talks in March 1979 of forming a block, apparently of a functional nature, of Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and India. Inclusion of Iraq and Afghanistan marks the proposed block as pro-Soviet, and India's proposed involvement seems to be significant. *Vide: The Daily Ittefaq, Dacca, January-March, 1979.*



### Portuguese Hegemony

It has been said, above, that the protective assistance from the Ottomans, in favour of the Peripherals, and European assistance to counter it in favour of the Core, had brought in the element of direct global political involvement on the Horn. This was because this global encounter in the Horn left the area divided into two spheres of influence, each under a global political actor. While the Periphery owing to reasons mentioned above, turned, virtually, into a Protectorate of the Islamic Power, the Core turned into a Protectorate of the Catholic Europe. The European assistance in the restoration of the balance on the Horn in the Core's favour was not without price. The Ethiopian (Coptic) Emperor, Lebna Dengal, had to accept, around the mid 1530s, the religious jurisdiction of the Pope. Abuna Mark had, on the order of Emperor Lebna Dengel, appointed John Bermudez, a Catholic, as his successor. The next emperor, Claudius was forced by his total dependence on the zealous Catholic Portuguese, to acknowledge the authority of this Catholic patriarch and his demand for submission to the Pope.<sup>4</sup>

The acceptance of Roman Catholic jurisdiction at Portuguese will was significant in two ways. First, it brought the element of European colonialism to the area. The Pope had already allocated Africa to Portugal in a series of 'Bulls' issued between 1455 and 1781. Thus, by accepting the religious jurisdiction of Rome, Ethiopia accepted, in

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<sup>4</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., p.12; Rey, p.256.

effect, the temporal jurisdiction of Portugal. This recognised the fact that the Portuguese had, in course of their active military assistance in Ethiopia's war against the Moslems, already, set up some form of rudimentary colonial regime over parts of the region: after the tide of the Moslem onslaught was turned in favour of Ethiopia,

[t]he King of Portugal ordered the surviving Portuguese, who numbered about a hundred, to remain in the country.<sup>5</sup> After the defeat of Ahmed Gran [The Moslem Peripheral confederacy's general], Bermudez began to press his claims, demanding that the Roman rite should be enforced throughout the country and that all the clergy should be re-ordained by him. When the king refused these preposterous demands ... [t]here was ... a battle between the royal forces and the Portuguese ... and after a ... submission [, the Ethiopian King] scattered the Portuguese by granting them estates in different provinces.<sup>6</sup>

Thus,

[m]ost of the survivors of Da Gama's expedition [that turned the tide of the Peripheral Moslems' 'jihad' against Ethiopia Proper in the latter's favour] had settled down in the country and had received grants of land and gold ...<sup>7</sup> [W]hen King John III of Portugal suggested the despatch of a Latin patriarch to Abyssinia, the Pope determined to entrust the mission to the Jesuits ... the King of Portugal despatched them to India on way to the Horn ordering his viceroy to install them with a force of five hundred men at their back.<sup>8</sup>

However, the force could not be sent. Notwithstanding this failure, the Portuguese established themselves in the area and pursued a policy of enforcement of their will on

<sup>5</sup> A.H.M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Abyssinia* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), p.85.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.87.

<sup>7</sup> Rey, *op.cit.*, p.242.

<sup>8</sup> Jones and Monroe, p.88.

the local system. Jesuit missionaries had arrived in 1557, and helped by the Portuguese colony, were making strenuous efforts to convert the country to Roman Catholicism and overthrow the old national Church.<sup>9</sup> A quasi-colonial regime, comparable to the European system in China in the 19th and early 20th centuries, was in the making. This was the beginning, which, though temporarily thwarted by Claudius in the latter part of his reign, and by his successors, Basilides, and Johannes I,<sup>10</sup> nevertheless, later led, as elsewhere, to the 'New Imperialism' under which the colonial process was fulfilled by occupation of vast areas of the Horn.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, this Ethiopian acceptance of the European hegemony showed, like the Peripheral societies' earlier acceptance of Islamic protection that, conflict between the Core and the Periphery of the region is likely to be so strong and primary to the behavioural character of both of them as to override even considerations of security against extra-regional encroachments upon their sovereignty. They would rather bring in outsiders than unite to fight for collective independence from external control. This supports the

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<sup>9</sup> Rey, op.cit., p.242. Jones and Monroe, p.88.

<sup>10</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., p.13. Jones and Monroe, op.cit., p.88.

<sup>11</sup> European colonialism/imperialism as a worldwide phenomenon had proceeded through two stages, viz. (i) old colonialism, and (ii) new imperialism. In the first stage, colonial powers only established a few posts, usually on the coasts, and extended only a vague, quasi-colonial control into the interior. In the second, the colonial power converted their quasi-colonial regime into a full-fledged effective imperial order over the whole area concerned.

proposition that it is the local contradictions rather than the dimensions of global politics that stand primary in shaping the intra-regional relationships on the Horn.

The advent of European colonialism was different in significance from that of the non-European external interference from the immediate neighbourhood. There could not be a sharp distinction between the expanding external and the subjected local actors in the latter case, because, being immediate neighbours, the two actors were in fact parts of a social continuum. Thus, for the dark Moslem Beja tribesmen of Eritrea, there was not much difference between a local prince and a similarly dark Moslem, and perhaps, also Beja, Mahdist governor from the Sudan or a Moslem *naiib* of the Ottoman administration. But the colonisers from Europe presented a very readily visible and sharp distinction. For the same Eritreans, or the Somalis for that matter - a governor from Europe or even his subordinate body of Europeans was a sudden shocking novelty. These Europeans were different from them in most visible respects, obvious intruders, and of course, a target of *jihad*, the compulsory war against the infidel ruler.<sup>12</sup> This difference between the European and the local colonial regime perhaps largely explains the difference in the Horn's reaction to the two kinds of imperial expansion. While this reaction was immediate, very strong, and generally on a mass level in the case of European expansion, in that of the Ottoman or even the Mahdist and

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<sup>12</sup> Moslems are bound by faith to be prepared for *jihad* against alien rulers. *Vide: Koran, 25:52.*

Omani expansions, it was at times, lacking - or, at other times, not in the shape of a popular resistance. The Peripheral masses never seem to have resisted the Moslem imperial control from without. Whenever there was any resistance to this control, it was from ambitious local nobles, and usually, not to directly oppose that control but to obtain autonomy under its shadow.<sup>13</sup> In case of the Core, the resistance to this extra-regional Moslem expansion was greater, because of religious animosity and the power-political interests of the royalty and may be regarded as an extension of the Core - Peripheral conflict as observed in the pattern of intra-regional relationships on the Horn.

This anti-European tendency on a mass level was strengthened by a combination of the particular nationality and the particular timing of the first European expeditions to the Horn. As has been seen, these expeditions were Portuguese and the timing was the early part of the 16th century. The Iberian Peninsula, the homeland of the Portuguese, had only recently been liberated from Moslem domination; secularization of politics as an impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation was still to come, meaning that many were still living in a crusading mood; and the Iberians [both the Portuguese and Spaniards], owing to their immediate past experience, were yet more zealous in this crusade. The

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<sup>13</sup> For further discussion on the difference in the Peripheral societies' reaction to European imperialism and that to the Ottoman etc. *Vide: infra*, pp. 115-117.

legend of Prester John, supposedly a rich and strong Christian King living somewhere at the rear of the Moslem Empire, was well known to Europe and the Ethiopian Core had just been 'identified' as his Empire and seemed to be an obvious source of wealth, strength and possibly, even a military alliance in this crusade. Alliance, however, in the existing mood was of course subject to conversion of the 'Core' to the Portuguese version of Christianity, i.e. Catholicism.

All these combined to make the early European expeditions to the Horn particularly aggressive and brutal, obsessed with excessive religious fervour and intolerance, and with such short term profit motives as plunder - rather than much long term ideals of the other, latter day colonial missions as the integration of the colonial areas into an imperial political system, or, a civilizing mission.

Thus, on the introductory contacts, the Europeans appeared almost solely concerned with plunder and destruction, had no regard for the local people's emotional attitudes, and enraged them by their disregard for local places of worship.<sup>14</sup> As a result, local resistance to the European was strong and total, in terms of both participation and cost, and the whole of the population participated in it. For

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<sup>14</sup> For a description of a typical Portuguese raid of this period, *vide*: Justus Strandes, *The Portuguese Period in East Africa* (Germ.; translated by Jean F. Wallwork; Ed.; J.S. Kirkman, Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau; for the Kenya History Society, 1961), pp.76-78. Also Robert L. Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp.6-7.

instance, Brava was defended by 6,000 men while the total population of the city was 4,000 of whom only 200 were under arms.<sup>15</sup> The rest must have come from the neighbourhood. Obviously it was a *levee en masse* - a popular uprising. The degree of the people's commitment to resistance and the costs they were prepared to pay are apparent from the fact that the entire male population was prepared, either to die or to desert the city, leaving their women to be - as they could imagine from their earlier and frequent experiences with the invaders - violated and mutilated, rather than surrender. They could have surrendered in peace, as the Portuguese had been conducting quite long negotiations to that end.<sup>16</sup> But, they would not do so.

Popular hatred of Europeans was not much weaker in Christian Ethiopia than in the Moslem Peripherals. This may be sensed from, among many other specimens of Ethiopian folk culture, the following folk song, chanted by the masses on the occasion of the banishing of the Jesuits in 1632:

At length the Sheep of Ethiopia freed  
 From the Bold Lyons of the West  
 Securely in their Pastures feeds  
 St. Mark and Cyril's Doctrines have o'ercome  
 The folly's of the Church of Rome  
 Rejoyce, rejoyce, Sing Hallelyah all,  
 No more the Western Wolves  
 Our Ethiopia shall enthrall.

On that occasion,

[t]he promiscuous Multitude of them and  
 Women danc'd and caper'd; the Soldiers wish'd  
 all happiness to the Commanders; they broke to  
 pieces their own and the Rosaries of all they

<sup>15</sup> Castan Leda (August 1833), II, p.124; cited in Strandes, op.cit., p.81.

<sup>16</sup> Strandes, op.cit., p.76.

met. Others ran about Singing for joy  
that *Ethiopia* was deliver'd from the  
*Western Lyons* ...<sup>17</sup>

It is not intended here to engage in detailed discussion on the existence or nature of anti-European feeling amongst the Horn people. This will be further discussed. But the above shows that this anti-European feeling came into existence very soon after the advent of the Europeans, that it existed in both the Periphery and the Core, and that it was a direct result of Portuguese policies.

#### Beginnings of the Modern Horn

The local anarchy and the external involvement supplemented and facilitated each other. The intertwined growth of these two factors led, by the early parts of the present century, to a strong Core and a colonized Periphery. Emperor Tewodoros (1855-69) and his successors emerged as supreme authority in Ethiopia through an intelligent exploitation of the local contradictions and external involvements. One by one they reduced the competing claimants to imperial authority and sought to strengthen and expand the Ethiopian polity through obtaining favourable European connections. The aims of Ethiopia's European connections and their impact, when these were obtained, were mainly two:

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<sup>17</sup> J. Ludolphus, quot. in Pankhurst, op.cit., p.89. Emphasis added.



- (a) radical improvement of the strength and cohesion of the Ethiopian polity, particularly in military terms, enabling it to conquer parts of the Periphery by force;
- (b) acquisition of other parts of the Periphery through partition agreements with the European powers.

The former of these two aspects was perhaps also meant to, and surely did, enable Ethiopia to talk from a position of greater strength vis-a-vis the European powers in negotiations in connection with the latter aspect.

Thus, Tewodoros 'had intended ... to conquer the whole world'<sup>18</sup> and pursued a 'policy ... to crush the Turks and the Egyptians [Protectors of the Peripheral societies]' for that reason.<sup>19</sup> With '[e]xtravagant visions of brilliant conquests', Tewodoros, intent upon his own plans, thought that Britain as a Christian power would come to his aid against the Moslems. In 1862 he, accordingly wrote a letter to Queen Victoria proposing a thoroughgoing alliance.<sup>20</sup> Writing 'as a Christian sovereign to another', he suggested to Queen Victoria and to the Emperor Napoleon, an Abyssinian embassy to Great Britain and France respectively.<sup>21</sup>

Tewodoros did not succeed in his efforts. The British Foreign Office, who had just concluded a treaty with Turkey against Russia, simply 'pigeon-holed' this letter. Neither

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<sup>18</sup> Emperor Tewodoros, letter to Sir Robert (later Lord) Napier, 13 April 1868, quot. in Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.134.

<sup>19</sup> Emperor Tewodoros's statement to Capt. Cameron, British Consul in Ethiopia (1862), cited in Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.132.

<sup>20</sup> Doresse, op.cit., p.189.

<sup>21</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.132.

did the French respond favourably.<sup>22</sup> On the domestic scene also, he was not very successful. Though he became the supreme emperor, the bases of his power were very weak. '[M]ost groups in the country ... [were] alienated and even his hold on his military forces was weakened'. When a British punitive expedition marched to his capital, in 1868, its leader, Napier 'found plenty of willing helpers all along the road to [the capital] Magdala'. The centralized system was still not stable, and, after Tewodoros's suicide following the above expedition, the country was plunged back into the old-time chieftains' rivalry for succession.<sup>23</sup>

Though Tewodoros himself did not succeed completely in his policy, he set the pattern which was gradually consolidated through the successive reigns. The same policy was pursued, with greater success, by his successors - Johannes, Menelik and Haile Selassie.

European contacts over the years had sown seeds of reformative new ideas. With the consolidation of the polity itself started under Tewodoros and its bid for admission into the Eurocentric world society of the time, these new ideas also could be put into application. Thus, under Tewodoros started a threefold process of (a) imperial centralization, and consolidation of the system; (b) expansion into the Peripheral areas through partitioning arrangements with the European powers, and (c) internal reforms with modernizing efforts. For an example of this last aspect of the trend,

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<sup>22</sup> Doresse, *op.cit.*, p.199. Lipsky, *op.cit.*, p.15. James & Monroe, *op.cit.*, p.132.

<sup>23</sup> Lipsky, *op.cit.*, p.15. Jones & Monroe, *op.cit.*, pp.133-134.

Tewodoros had also 'discussed the advantage and pursued the practice of breaking up the larger provincial units into smaller ones over which he could establish governors loyal to him personally'.<sup>24</sup>

While all the above three aspects of the imperial policy were logical, none could be easily accepted by Ethiopia, as they clashed with the conservative essence of its history, and could not be pursued without constant contradictions and crisis. Thus the whole course of modern Ethiopian history is saturated with contradiction between reformist efforts and opposition to them; centralist moves and opposition to them; and involvement in global politics and introvertist tendencies.

Tewodoros could only initiate the policy but his successors presided over the implementation and thus mobilization of the process. It was not until Emperor Menelik's time that a serious Euro-Abyssinian cooperation leading to conquest and partition of the Periphery could take place. Yahannes IV (John IV) had succeeded Tewodoros after a war of succession in 1872. 'Throughout the period of his reign he was almost ceaselessly distracted by [i.e. was attentive to] the aspirations, military and commercial, of outside powers',<sup>25</sup> and intended to secure favourable European connections. His interest in these connections existed even from before his ultimate success in the struggle to become Emperor. Thus, for instance, 'He

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<sup>24</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., p.15.

<sup>25</sup> James & Monroe, op.cit., p.135.

[Kassa, later Yohannes IV] sent Mirtcha Worge, [in late 1860s] one of his principal secretaries, with two letters to Senafe, where [British] Colonel Merewether and the advance party had already encamped. In them Kassa offered 'friendship and assistance' and proposed '... cordial relations ...' After having become Emperor, he sent, in 1872, emissaries with letters to Austria, Russia, Germany, Britain and France soliciting help in gaining the port of Amphilia and the plains of Anku - both in the Periphery.<sup>26</sup>

But, like his predecessor, and the initiator of the policy, Tewodoros, Yohannes also failed in securing any favourable European connection in this regard.

The reason was a general European lack of interest in Ethiopia.<sup>27</sup> But notwithstanding the failure, Yohannes IV continued the efforts at winning favourable European connections. He kept on repeating claims on the Peripheral territories and as late as in 1884, more than a decade later, he wrote to Queen Victoria, stating that he hoped 'the gates of heaven would open for her as she had opened Massawa for him'. He was at pains to emphasize the ancestry of the Ethiopian claim to the port. This was in spite of the fact that Britain had done, and as it stated in reply to the above letter, would do, 'no more [only] ensure free transit through Massawa'.<sup>28</sup> Yohannes IV obviously was trying to

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<sup>26</sup> Gabre-Selassie, op.cit., pp.27-28.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, pp.49-50. Russel to Stanton, *dispatch* of 5 October 1865, referring to the Anglo-Abyssinian treaty of 1849, BPP, *Correspondence respecting Abyssinia 1846-1868*, quot. in Gabre-Selassie, op.cit., p.30.

<sup>28</sup> Gabre-Selassie, op.cit., p.152.

flatter Britain into greater cooperation with Ethiopia for Ethiopia's own ends of expanding into the Periphery.

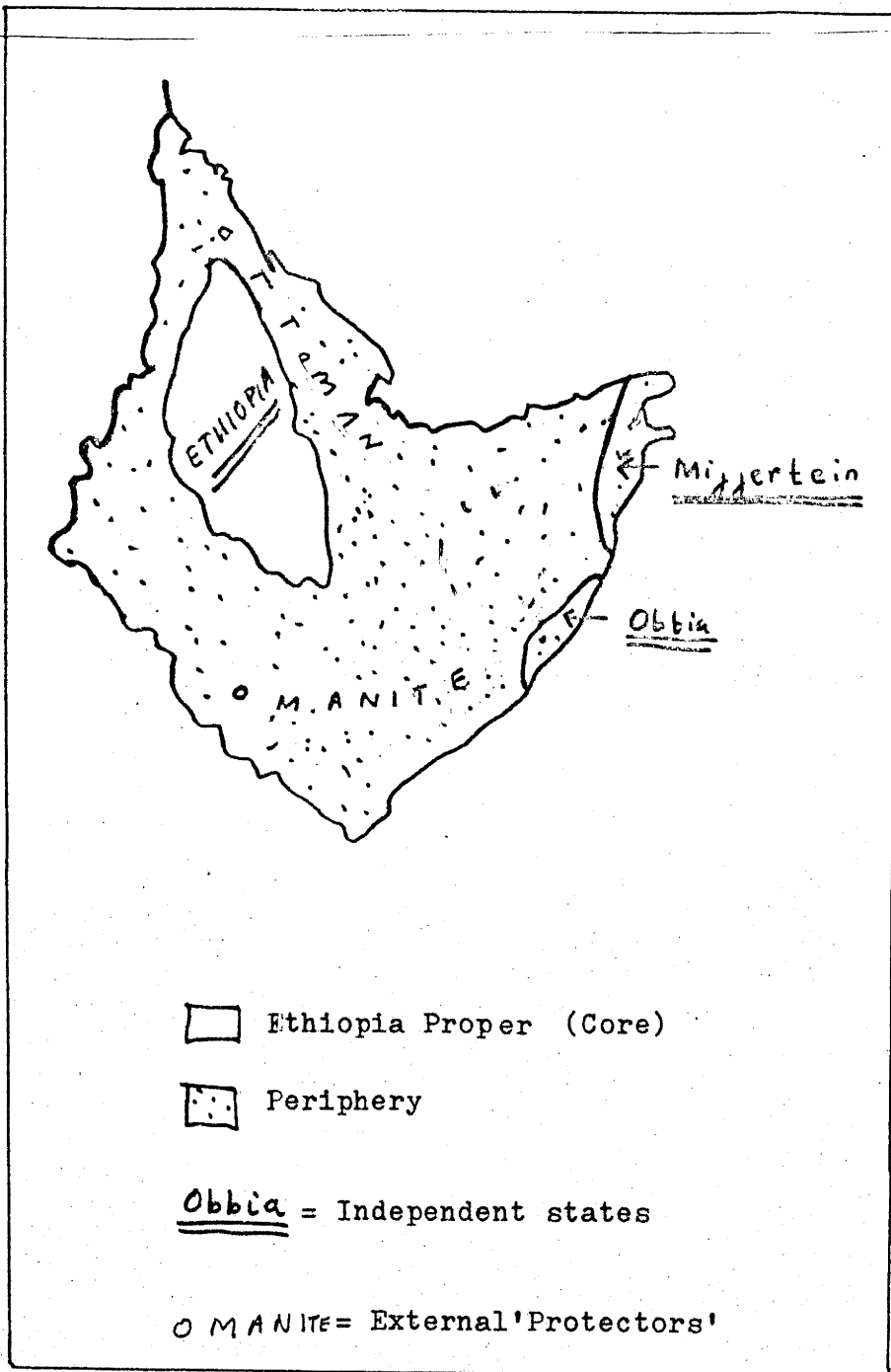
### Power Political Vacuum in the Periphery

The violent struggle of the early 16th century, the *Jihad*, while it brought in European involvement and modernising trends for Ethiopia, had consequences for the Peripheral societies also. The base of the Peripheral power which has been in general in the north and east of the Periphery had suffered a serious blow as a result of this, 16th century Core-Peripheral struggle. The strong sultanates of Zeila, Adal, and Harar had crumbled and the Periphery was left with weak sultanates on the coast, weak city states, or in certain areas, virtual anarchy though under nominal suzerainty of the Core's governors. For their security against Ethiopian occupation, they became dependent on Ethiopia's own internal problems and, in some cases, particularly in the south western Horn, distance from the Core's centre of gravity. But the most reliable single factor providing this security was external Moslem Protection. In the south and on the eastern coasts, this was provided from 1823, in differing degrees, by the Sultanate of Oman;<sup>29</sup> in the north and eastern interior, including Tadjowa, Zeila and Harar, first by the Ottomans, and after the mid-1870s, by Egypt.<sup>30</sup> The Sultanates of Mijjertein and Obbia, on the

<sup>29</sup> Hess, op.cit., pp.78. This Sultanate has been also known as the Sultanate of Zanzibar, since the shift of its capital to Zanzibar in 1840, *ibid*.

<sup>30</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.135 and Hess, op.cit., p.11.

HORN OF AFRICA: SECURITY OF THE PERIPHERY,  
c. late 16th.-late 19th. centuries (p. 111)



eastern tip of the Horn, could maintain their independence because of the *cordon* of external Moslem protectorates between them and Ethiopia (map). A similar *cordon* was provided by the rising Galla power for the south western Peripheral coast, over which, Oman's protection, though existent, was weak.

Moslem Protection along with other factors such as conditions in Europe, had helped to keep the Periphery free from European control. Thus, the Periphery was kept, until the withdrawal of the external Moslem Protection, free of both Ethiopian and European control. But,

[i]n 1884 ... when they [the Egyptians] evacuated Harar and the coast, it looked as if the obstacles to Abyssinian aggrandizement were melting unaided.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, this withdrawal facilitated the extension of European control in the area.

The Omani protectorate as a politico-legal regime, so far spread vaguely all over the south eastern and south western Periphery, also, was almost dismantled in 1886, by an Anglo-German Agreement which limited the Omani Sultan's suzerainty to an area of 10 miles around five ports, viz. Warsheik, Mogadishu, Merca (Merka), Brava and Kismayu.<sup>32</sup> The protectorate was completely abolished when the Omani (Zanzibari) Sultanate itself became a British protectorate on 14 June 1890.

<sup>31</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit.

<sup>32</sup> Information Services of the Somali Government, *The Somali Peninsula/A New Light on Imperial Motives*, op.cit., p.1 and Map II.

### Partition of the Peripheral Areas: The Beginnings

Thus the Periphery was gradually abandoned by its traditional protectors. Ethiopia had by that time recovered to a great extent from the blows of the 16th century struggle and was emerging once again as a strong polity - and with deliberate efforts at establishing and using European connections to obtain as much as possible of the Peripheral areas. Europe, by that time, due to the dynamics of its own developments, had become interested in the African coastal areas, including the Peripheral areas of the Horn. All these factors combined to lead to the partition of the Peripheral zones during the latter parts of the 19th century.

The revival of trade in Arabia in the early decades of the nineteenth century resulted in a renewed international interest in the Red Sea, which provided a channel between Africa, Europe and Arabia. The British, French, and later, Italians, tried to improve trade with the ports in the area, through measures including establishment of bases on the Periphery of the Horn. Franco-Ethiopian deals resulted in French acquisition of Ait near Massawa (1830s), Bay of Adulis (1859) and Obock, on the north of the Bay of Tajura (1862). A series of British-Ethiopian dealings starting from 1810 culminated in the establishment of a British Consulate at Massawa in 1847. Italy, though a late-comer in the race for the Peripheral bases, began to play 'an increasingly important role'<sup>33</sup> both on the Red Sea and the Somali Coast, by late nineteenth century. The European

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<sup>33</sup> Darkwah, op.cit., pp.61-62.



and Ethiopian expansion into the Periphery will be discussed in greater detail in the following pages.

### Menelik II

As mentioned earlier, it was only with the succession of Menelik to power that the course of modern Ethiopia, including the partitioning pattern, took full force. Menelik succeeded Yohannes IV as Emperor in 1889, following a confusing war of succession in accordance with the pattern that had already become established. The factor that the scene was set favourably for Euro-Abyssinian cooperation in colonizing and partitioning the Peripheral areas was supplemented by the fact that Menelik had already had some success building a set of European connections, even before becoming Emperor. This state of affairs, strengthened his kingdom of Shewa within Ethiopia, leading to his and Shewa's ultimate success in dominating Ethiopia, strengthening Ethiopia vis-a-vis the Periphery and partially conquering the latter, and finally to the Euro-Ethiopian partition and colonization of the rest of the Periphery.

Two missions from Menelik to Europe, under Abba Mikael in 1872 and a Frenchman, Pierre Arnouz, in 1876, resulted in the beginnings of Franco-Ethiopian co-operation on the basis of converging French and Ethiopian interests. The most significant aspects of the co-operation included systematic equipment of the Ethiopian Shewan army with modern European firearms, the birth of an important, if small corps of Ethiopians able to interpret European negotiators and a French

interest in building up a commercial route between the Ethiopian interior and the French coast on the Horn (later Djibouti).<sup>34</sup>

It is interesting to note the course taken by Menelik in his struggle for the imperial office. Traditionally, Ethiopia has been a collection of kingdoms wherein the several kings mutually rival for the office of the Emperor of the whole of Ethiopia. To become Emperor himself, Menelik, still only the king of Shewa - one of the constituent kingdoms of the Empire, had to struggle against the established Emperor, Yohannes. It would have been most natural for him to join hands with the Emperor's Egyptian enemies on the Periphery in his own bid for succession to the imperial power. But he not only refrained from doing this but also sought European assistance, like his enemy, Yohannes, against the Egyptians. Thus, though

[i]t has been assumed [wrongly, by some] that Menilek cooperated with the Egyptians against Yohannes ... nothing more [than mere exchange of a couple of missions] appear to have happened between Menilek and the Khedive [Egypt]. The Egyptian blockade [presence] at the coast [Periphery] hit Menilek hard and in his letter to the Khedive in 1876 the Shewan king complains bitterly about this. In fact he continued to complain to the European powers about this blockade throughout the period of Egyptian occupation of the Somali coast.<sup>35</sup>

This course of Menelik's action suggests that this pattern of conflict between the two geopolitical bodies or sets of bodies and their behaviour has been so deep-rooted and strong that it could not be overcome even by more concrete immediate considerations of self interest of one or other of

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<sup>34</sup> Darkwah, op.cit., pp.60-65.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, pp.61-65, 76.

their constituent units. Menelik's course also strengthens the proposition regarding the pattern of external alignments of the units of the Horn. Fitting in with the general pattern of Ethiopia's alliances set by now.<sup>36</sup> Menelik, like his enemy Yohannes, sought European assistance against the Egyptian power in the Periphery. It also is interesting to note that the Ethiopian societies became bitterly engaged in conflict with even the European powers, whose alliance they traditionally tended to seek, when these powers established themselves on the Periphery and thus virtually turned into Peripheral actors in the local context. This was true, first and more seriously with Italy, and later, and with a lesser degree of intensity, with Britain and France.<sup>37</sup> This also points to the strength of the pattern of Core-Peripheral contradictions, to which all other dimensions of the region's politics seem to concede.

### Italy on the Horn

In 1869 a private Italian company bought the Red Sea port of Assab from a local Sultan, and with this Italy made her entry into the Abyssinian stage. The port was bought by the Italian government in 1882. In 1885, Italy occupied the port of Massawa some 275 miles to the north.<sup>38</sup> Mention has already been made of the anti-European feeling of the Horn's peoples. As pointed out earlier, their reaction,

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<sup>36</sup> *Vide: supra*, p.96.

<sup>37</sup> This aspect has been discussed further, below: *vide: pp.*

<sup>38</sup> Ernest W. Luther, *Ethiopia Today* (Stanford: Stanford University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp.16-17.

especially in the Periphery, to European expansion has been different from their response to the expansion of a non-European neighbouring external power, e.g. the Arabs. Thus, in 1884, Nubar Pasha, the Egyptian statesman, observed that

Italy would have no trouble in occupying *Beilul at least*, if she could use Sheikh Saad to help *prepare the local population to accept her as a protector rather than a conqueror.*<sup>39</sup>

That this statement was made by the Pasha of Egypt, who was still in control of the area and well informed on the situation within is significant. That the Pasha was sympathetic to the Italian takeover is also significant. Obviously, he feared that Italy could not take the area over even if Egyptian forces withdrew because of local resistance - hence his assurance that 'at least' Beilul could be taken over, if the local population could be prepared to accept the Italians. This could be done, the Pasha warned again, only through the local peoples' *own leader*, the Sheikh, Saad. And finally, this all could have any credibility, only if the Italians could come as a protector, not as a sovereign, conqueror.

Recognition of the area's anti-Europeanism and its strong loyalty to the Ottoman-Egyptian colonial regime was reflected also in the extraordinary care taken by the Italians and others facilitating their takeover, in wooing the local people into submission rather than conquering them. The British Resident and Consul General in Cairo, Baring, advised that 'the Italians ought to leave the Turkish flag flying ...

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<sup>39</sup> Gabre-Selassie, *op.cit.*, p.162. My emphasis.

if only temporarily', if their attempt at taking over the area was to have any chance of success.<sup>40</sup> The Italians, following this advice, left the Egyptian [Ottoman] flag flying even after they took over Massawa. 'By the afternoon of 5 February the Italian flag was flying side by side with the Egyptian one over the palace and forts of Massawa'.<sup>41</sup> The commander of the Italian naval force that took over the port proclaimed to 'the people of Massawa':<sup>42</sup>

the Italian Government, *in accord with the ... Egyptian [approval]* have ordered me to take possession of the Port of Massowah [Massawah] this day and to hoist the Italian Flag *by the side of the Egyptian.*

By this occupation our Troops *will protect you, and we are ready to pay for all we want. We shall respect your customs and religion.*

No obstacle shall be put by me to your trade, on the contrary all my exertions shall aim at facilitating it, and I can assure you of the *friendship of my Government.*

We beg that you will *consider us as friends* and carry on your ordinary business and feel in perfect security.<sup>43</sup>

Italy was subsequently encouraged by Great Britain to extend her hegemony inland,<sup>44</sup> and proceeded to do so, thus becoming, by 1887, a Peripheral power. Significantly the Italo-Ethiopian relationship changed around this time from initial cooperation into direct military confrontation. Thus

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p.152.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p.164.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p.165. (My emphasis)

<sup>43</sup> Quot. in *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Gabre-Selassie, *op.cit.*, p.168.

Italy fought the battle of Dogali in 1887, its first serious military clash with Ethiopia.<sup>45</sup>

The change in the pattern of relationship was gradual rather than sudden.<sup>46</sup> Thus, there remained elements of co-operation even after the battle of Dogali. The two signed the Treaty of Ucciali in 1889, formally affirming, in a vague way, specially co-operative relationship between themselves.<sup>47</sup> The Italians consolidated their coastal and inland positions in the north, formally giving the area the name Eritrea in 1890, and all this, without any military opposition from Ethiopia.<sup>48</sup> But during this same period the growing hostility could be sensed from the dispute over the interpretation of the Treaty of Ucciali, and its consequent denunciation by Ethiopia, at one stage, after the formal proclamation of the Italian colony of Eritrea in 1890.<sup>49</sup>

The new pattern of Italo-Ethiopian relations emerged finally through the battle of Adowa in 1896, and the two countries were never again to co-operate in any way until the

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<sup>45</sup> Luther, op.cit., p.17.

<sup>46</sup> Any social change has to be gradual.

Even a revolution is a process of transformation. It is different, in this regard, from evolution only in terms of the speed of this transformation. Revolution is an accelerated process of transformation while evolution is a slow and gradual one. Even a *coup* causing sudden overthrow of a regime involves a process of transformation, the 'sudden overthrow' being only the climax in the process.

<sup>47</sup> The Italians claimed the Treaty accorded an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. According to the Ethiopians, it was nothing more than an agreement that Ethiopia might use the Italians in negotiations with other powers. Luther, op.cit.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

final withdrawal of Italy from the Horn after the Second World War, and thus, her loss of the status of peripheral power.<sup>50</sup> The change in the pattern of Ethiopia's relations with Italy with changes in the latter's position on the Horn's Periphery is significant. It supports the proposition that the Core-Peripheral pattern of relations on the Horn is the most important single factor in the external relations of the Horn's politics. Similar conclusions may be adduced from the history of Ethiopia's relationship with other colonial powers, as may be seen in the following sections of this chapter.

#### The Advent of the British

British relations with the Horn started on a non-Governmental level, through individual explorers and minor private commercial deals. The first of these was the visit to the area by a Scot, James Bruce, who stayed there from 1768 to 1772 or 1773.<sup>51</sup> His description of and comments on the area, however were not taken seriously in London at that time,<sup>52</sup> but under a Treaty concluded in 1840 between the Sultan of Tajura and the British East India Company, the

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, pp.17-22 and 95. *Infra*, pp.165-169. However, a treaty of cooperation was signed between Italy and Ethiopia in 1928. This never became significantly effective. For this and the surprising attitude of cooperation between the Ethiopians and the Italians immediately after the expulsion of Italians from the Horn *vide*: Leonard Mosley, *Haile Selassie/The Conquering Lion* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964). Also, E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *Eritrea on the Eve* (Essex, 1952), pp.45-49.

<sup>51</sup> Jones & Monroe, *op.cit.*, pp.101, 72, 127.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p.127.

Sultanate became an English Protectorate and the island of Mussa, off Tajura was sold to the English for the harbour of the company's ships 'without any prohibition' on 'the coast opposite Aden' i.e. on the north Somali coast.<sup>53</sup> The British, however, did not attempt to penetrate into the hinterland.<sup>54</sup> In 1843, Chichele Plowden, an Englishman of twenty-three was persuaded by another Englishman, John Bell, to join him on an expedition into Abyssinia. In 1847, the stories with which he returned to England persuaded Lord Palmerston that a mission to the Horn was called for, and in 1848 Plowden returned to the court of Ali, ras [chief] of Gondar, with whom he concluded a trade treaty in 1849. Thus, British relations with the area were elevated to the governmental level, for the first time in the middle of the nineteenth century. But the British did not yet consider them important. The *ras*, upon signing the above treaty remarked that it would do no good as he was certain that no English merchant would ever come to Abyssinia.<sup>55</sup> He was correct at least for a considerable period.

Both Plowden and Bell died in the Horn during the Tigre rebellion of 1860. The British Government decided that Plowden must have a successor. Thus, in 1862, Captain Cameron arrived bearing a letter from Queen Victoria thanking

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<sup>53</sup> Information service ..., op.cit., pp.13-19, and Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.14.

<sup>54</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.141.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p.129.



the Negus (king) for ransoming Plowden's body.<sup>56</sup> This was followed by the Ethiopian King's request for British alliance against the Moslem power on the Periphery, British rejection of it, and consequent events leading to a British punitive expedition which has already been mentioned.<sup>57</sup> The episode starting from Ethiopian request for alliance and ending with British withdrawal after having fulfilled its mission, was significant in three ways. It showed first, that Britain was not yet very interested in the Horn. The expedition withdrew immediately after fulfilling its mission even though it had captured the Ethiopian capital and could, very likely, have imposed a British protectorate. Secondly, as already noted, it reflected Ethiopian aspirations for European alliances against the peripheral areas. Thirdly, it confirmed the proposition that the general pattern of relationship between Ethiopia and European powers remains non-hostile until the latter becomes seriously established on the Periphery. The British punitive expedition, though hostile, did not change the *general* pattern. It did not lead to serious and long term hostile relations between Britain and Ethiopia. As in their policy towards Ethiopia '[t]he British ... in their Somaliland settlement [also] ... were less acquisitive than Italy', as they were busy 'digesting new possessions elsewhere'.<sup>58</sup> British policy towards the

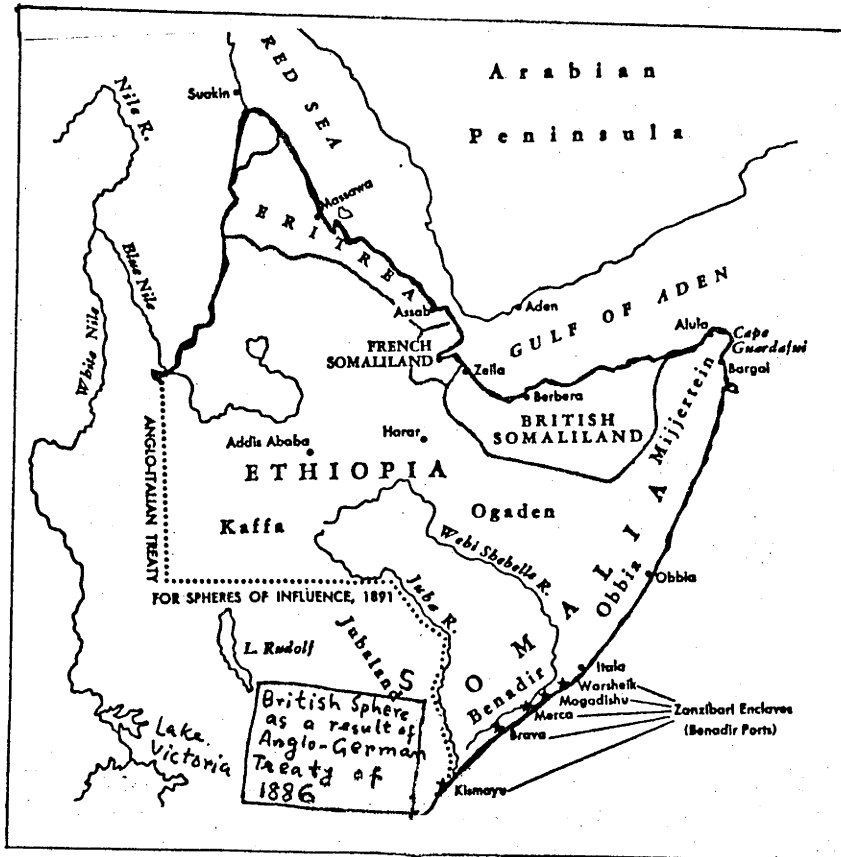
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<sup>56</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.32.

<sup>57</sup> *Supra*, p.107.

<sup>58</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.141.

The British in the South Somali Areas,  
Late 19th. Century



Adapted from: Robert L. Hess, Italian Colonialism in Somalia (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p.5.

Horn at this time, in short, was characterised by what has been termed of 'casualness'.<sup>59</sup>

But, it was not very long that two factors combined to make the British take the Horn more seriously. One was the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The other was the rise of Germany in Europe and of German imperialism in East Africa in the 1880s. While the first factor brought the British into the northern Peripheral areas of the Horn, the latter brought them into the south and the south-east.

The opening of the Suez Canal had drawn Britain's interest to the Red Sea area. Being basically a mercantile nation, and dependent, at that time, to a great extent, on her colonial empire in the East, specially India, Britain was naturally interested in any feasible trade route from Europe to the East. After the opening of the Suez, the best of such routes, if simply because of its shortness, was the one through this canal and its southern outlet, the Red Sea. Egypt, as an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire, controlled this whole area, and thus, Britain, particularly after having bought a share in the Suez Canal Company, became involved in Egyptian politics. One of the results was the succession of events which led, through the Egyptian revolt led by Arabi Pasha in 1882, and increased a more direct British control over Egypt, to the Mahdist revolt in the then Egyptian hinterland of Sudan.<sup>60</sup> The Mahdist revolt had

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<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> There were other factors responsible for the Mahdist revolt. But British control and consequent acceleration in Egypt's westernization were perhaps the most important single factor in this regard.

forced Egypt to withdraw from the Horn in order to be able to concentrate all her forces on the threat nearer to home. And then,

this [British] casualness [as regards policy towards the Horn] turned to concern when the Mahdist victories in 1884 caused the withdrawal of the Egyptians from Harar. The British suddenly uncertain as to the future of the hinterland, began to make treaties first with the Somalis, then with the French, then with the Italians [April 1891].<sup>61</sup>

On 8 February, 1884, the British Government announced its intention of 'protecting' Suakin [Eritrea].<sup>62</sup> At the same time, Britain was preoccupied with the disposal of Harar and with the occupation of Berbera and Zeila.<sup>63</sup>

She restored the Emirate of Harar with Abdillahi Mohammed, the son of the last Emir as its Governor, with the instruction 'Be obedient in all things in our [British] representative ... at Harar'. In effect, Harar also became a British protectorate. Then first, British troops were despatched to Zeila, and then, through a series of stereotype agreements between 1884 and 1896, and a 'Notification' in 1887, Somaliland from Ras Jiburti to Bunder Ziadeh and Tana to the Juba basin was brought under British 'protection'.<sup>64</sup>

In the south east of the Horn also, by this time, the British involvement had become serious. Germany emerged as

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<sup>61</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit., pp.141-142.

<sup>62</sup> Information Service ..., op.cit., Appendix VII, p.97. Technically, Suakin is a part, now of Sudan. But for this area's treatment as part of the Horn, vide: *supra*, Ch. I, p. 3

<sup>63</sup> *ibid*, p. 22

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, pp.22-24. Appendices IV, VII and VIII(a, b), pp.88-89, 98-100. Major Hunter, British Consular Agent on the Somali Coast, *Correspondence* with Abdillahi Mohammed, *Foreign Office Paper*, 141.

the most powerful state on the European continent with the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. She therefore became Britain's major potential rival, as the pattern of British policy had generally been to preserve the continental balance by taking sides against the most powerful nation on the continent, if necessary.<sup>65</sup> With the German move to build up her naval power and overseas empire in the middle of the 1880s, this potential rivalry became actual. Germany acquired territory in Tanganyika, opposite Zanzibar, a strategic port on Britain's route to the east via the Cape of Good Hope - and British commercial and imperial interests on that route appeared to be under threat. Thus, a sense of insecurity led to negotiations, and finally, in 1886, to the British-German arrangements regarding East Africa. The British received the area north of a line running northwestwards from the mouth of the River Wanga to the eastern shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza. Two years later, in 1888, the Imperial British East Africa Company, 'formed primarily as a trading venture' was charged with the administration of a

vast but ill defined territory [in East Africa] to be governed on the lines of a crown colony.<sup>66</sup>

In effect, the south and south-east Periphery became subject to British administration (map).

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. for instance, Britain's role against Spain (the Spanish Armada period), France (Napoleonic Wars) and later, against Germany (First and Second World Wars). Also, along with the U.S., against the USSR (the post-World War period).

<sup>66</sup> Information Services of the Somali Government, op.cit., pp.1-2.

The British position in south-eastern Somalia was further consolidated in the next five years. Under the British-German arrangements of 1886, certain parts of the coast to the depth of ten miles and including such south Somali ports as Warsheikh were left under the sovereignty of the Sultan of Zanzibar.<sup>67</sup> In 1890 Germany, in consideration for Britain's cession of the Heligoland, withdrew her protectorate over the east African coast adjoining with Kismayu in Somalia, and surrendered her claims to territories north of the river Tana. Following Germany's withdrawal, the Company, by agreement with the Sultan of Zanzibar, assumed responsibility, in 1891, for the 'whole of Jubaland' i.e. south Somalia. Having already transferred to Italy the Sultan's lease of the Benadir ports to the north of Kismayu i.e. in south east Somalia, the Company delimited its North Eastern frontier with Italy along the middle of the Juba river to the Blue Nile. This way a vast area, reaching to the western watershed of the Nile, fell into the British sphere of influence - an influence then exerted by the Imperial British East African Company.<sup>68</sup>

However what began then as a trading venture in south Somalia ended in a colonial war; and the Company, having been vested with political administrative functions that were beyond its capacity, surrendered its charter in 1895. Shortly afterwards, the establishment of British colonial rule was proclaimed. During succeeding years the new

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<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>68</sup> Information Service of the Somali Government, *op.cit.*, pp.1-2.

administration was almost entirely preoccupied with colonial 'pacification' measures and 'punitive expeditions'. For the British '[t]he era of colonialism had begun' in south Somalia also.<sup>69</sup> Thus, by the mid 1890s, British 'casualness' as regards policy towards the Horn had been transformed into serious involvement in the southeast of the region.

Thus, by the turn of the century, Britain, like Italy, was becoming established as a Peripheral power on the Horn, both in the north and the south east. Fitting into the basic pattern of geopolitical relationships in the region, the British-Ethiopian relationship also underwent a transformation from an air of amity on both sides into a situation of rivalry and conflicts. Thus, 'although an agreement about British East Africa's northern boundary, including south Somalia with Abyssinia was arrived at in 1879',<sup>70</sup> the British had to worry about 'Abyssinian raids in British territory'.<sup>71</sup> Ethiopians on the Highland kept on sending 'detachments of armed marauders' challenging British administration in the Galla and Somali inhabited lowlands during the 1890s, and a British Government report in 1903 had to warn about an 'Abyssinian invasion to the south' potentially leading to the occupation of the [British] district between Dana river and Wajheir'. The British Commissioner dealing with south Somali areas, Sir Charles Eliot, was worried that

the southward movement of the Abyssinians  
[was] a serious matter,

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>70</sup> Information Service ..., *op.cit.*, p.9.

<sup>71</sup> Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District (Nairobi 1917), p.90. Quot. in Information Service ..., *op.cit.*, p.9.

and finally, the British had to take measures to counter the challenge.<sup>72</sup> In that year the Ethiopian King, Menelik incited the French to acquire Harar, seen by the British as within their sphere of interest, and two years later, in 1886, the Ethiopians occupied the British protected city. Britain on her side, did 'everything' to prevent Menelik from obtaining arms from the coast. The following year, the Ethiopians sent forces to Jigjiga, sixty miles west of Harar and well within the Somali country. This was a significant move, as a control over Jigjiga meant controlling trade in northern Somalia as the point was the meeting place for caravans from Harar, the Ogaden and Berbera.<sup>73</sup>

Obviously, British-Ethiopian relations had become conflicting with Britain's establishment on the Peripheral areas.<sup>73</sup> Never again would Britain and Ethiopia cooperate or even maintain a friendly indifference towards each other, except during such periods as that of the wars of the 'Mad Mullah', when Britain, though temporarily, ceased to be the real power on the relevant Peripheral areas. During these periods the two would revert to the pattern where Ethiopia would seek overseas alliance against the power on the Periphery and the two might cooperate in that regard. For instance, during the first two decades of the present century, the British and the Ethiopians cooperated in

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<sup>72</sup> Information Service ..., op.cit., pp.9, 11, 13-14. Jubaland ... op.cit., quot. in Information Service ..., op.cit., p.13.

<sup>73</sup> E. Stankie, *Arthur Rimbaud in Abyssinia* (1937), cited in Information Service ..., op.cit., p.23. Also, *ibid.*, pp.29-30.



military campaigns against the Dervish power under the Mullah.<sup>74</sup>

### The French Position

The French, contrary to the Italians and the British, never established themselves as a serious territorial entity on the Periphery: they, on the Horn, were 'without territorial designs'.<sup>75</sup> It is true that they acquired, through a 'Convention' with three Danakil chiefs in 1862, 'the harbour, roadstead, and anchorage of Obock, situation near Cape Ras Bir, with the plain extending from Ras Aly to the south, as far as Ras Dumeirah to the North'.<sup>76</sup> But in terms of territorial establishment, this was negligible. So unheard of, and obviously insignificant at the time was the area acquired, be it marked, that it had to be identified through a reference to another, nearby place (Ras Bir), which in itself could never become well known. Even more than a century later, when the French left the area in 1977, the extent of the Territory was insignificant. The French had not shown any serious expansionist tendency towards the interior. Whatever minor tendencies of that kind were shown were directed against the British and the Italians - the Peripheral powers, rather than the Core.

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<sup>74</sup> For details of this cooperation, *vide*: Douglas Jardine, *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland* (London, 1923). Also, Information Service ..., *op.cit.*, p.30.

<sup>75</sup> Jones & Monroe, *op.cit.*, p.142.

<sup>76</sup> Convention between France and the Danakil, for the cession of Obock and its Territory to France. Paris, 11 March 1862, in Information Services ..., *op.cit.*, Appendix VI(a), pp.90-91.

Interestingly, though not surprisingly, the Franco-Ethiopian relations never became seriously hostile. The pattern of relations remained that of the typical cooperation between Ethiopia and the overseas Europeans against the Peripheral powers. The French presence on the Horn and Franco-Ethiopian relations started through private individual Frenchman and remained all through primarily of a non-military, peaceful, functional and commercial nature, and centred round the idea of a railway which would turn their port at Djibouti(near Obock) into the principal outlet for Abyssinia - an outlet very much required and appreciated by Ethiopia herself.<sup>77</sup> France also assisted Ethiopia, mainly through advice, in the latter's struggle against the Peripheral Powers, including Italy and Britain. French advice led to Ethiopian repudiation of the Italian version of the Treaty of Ucciali, which, otherwise, would have led to the consolidation of an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. French arms, along with arms from other sources, contributed to the Ethiopian victory over Italy at Adowa in 1896, following the above repudiation and confirming, in the consequent treaty, the independence of Ethiopia.

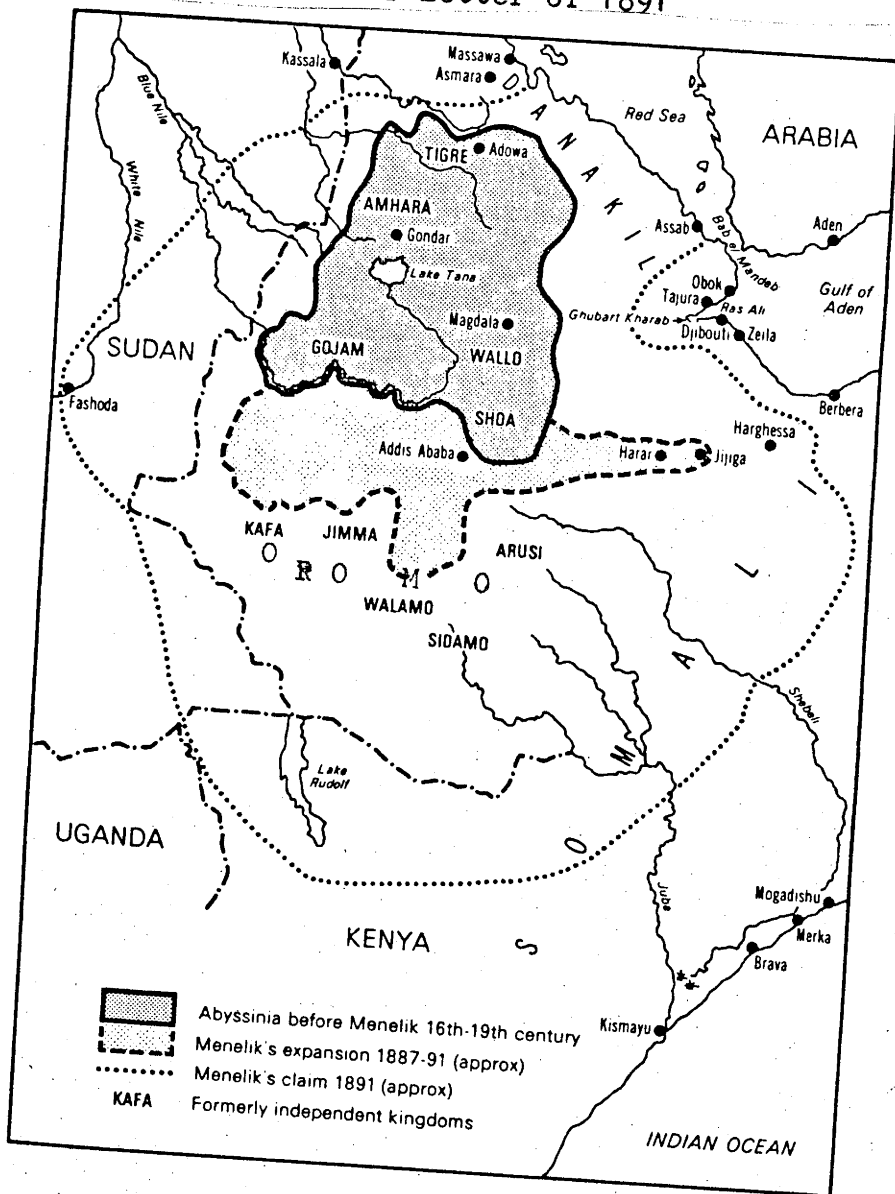
This led to further French involvement in Ethiopian affairs. Friendly gestures and high level negotiations finally

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<sup>77</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.142. Ethiopia's craving for an outlet has been recurrently apparent throughout her history and has been discussed at other places in this work. *Vide*: Ch.II.

Menelik's Claims for a Greater Ethiopia:

Circular Letter of 1891



Adapted from: Mohammed Ayoob, The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Super Power Involvement (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1978), Appendix II.

led to the acquisition of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway concession by a French company in July 1896.<sup>78</sup> The French also encouraged the Ethiopians in their expansionist ambitions against the Peripheral areas and advised them to write the circular letter to the European Powers, asserting their claims on extensive parts of the Periphery 'including also the Province of Ogaden [a serious bone of contention between Ethiopia and Somalia at present]', 'the Essa Somalis [Djibouti]' and 'the coast of the sea', and telling of their ambition to expand the 'frontiers of Ethiopia upto Khartoum [Sudan], and as far as Lake Nyanza [Uganda] with all the Gallas' - and to acquire, 'our seacoast line, at any rate, certain points on the coast' (map).<sup>79</sup>

France remained, all through, a good friend of Ethiopia. The closest to something like unfriendly relations between the two occurred when, in 1902, the French Government showed some disregard for Ethiopian sovereignty and what could be interpreted as signs of expansionist tendency in the area. Following the bankruptcy of the private French company entrusted with the building of the Djibouti railway, after having completed only a section of it, the French Government, under the pressure of French public opinion, took over virtual control of the line in 1902. On learning of this, the

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<sup>78</sup> Jones & Monroe, op.cit., pp.142, 146-47. Also *supra*.

<sup>79</sup> Circular letter sent by the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik to Heads of European States in 1891: Public Records Office (London), Foreign Office 1/32 Rodd to Salisbury, No.15, 4 May 1897, quot. in Information Services ..., op.cit., Appendix II, pp.86-87.

Ethiopians refused the French government permission to go on with the railway and blocked the scheme for several years.

However, later, with reassuring gestures from the French, the railway was completed.

### Colonization and Partitioning of the Periphery

The Periphery was colonized and partitioned during the latter half and particularly the last quarter of the last century, and the first decade of the present, through treaties with local societies already noted, conquest by force and finally, treaties of partition between the European powers and Ethiopia. The period marked with the earlier treaties, i.e. those between the colonizing European Powers and the local, Peripheral societies may be termed the 'earlier colonial period' in the Horn's Periphery, while, the one marked with the latter agreements i.e. those between Ethiopia and the European powers as well as those amongst the European powers themselves, may be termed as the 'latter colonial period'.

The latter colonial treaties may be divided into two categories: (a) Euro-Ethiopian, partitioning the Periphery between Ethiopia and the European powers, giving the Ethiopians *de jure* control over parts of the Periphery; and (b) Intra-European, partitioning the European occupied Periphery amongst the European powers themselves. There were seven significant agreements in the first category during this latter colonial era and five in the second.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> For a list of these Treaties, *vide*: Appendix at the end of this paper.

These treaties of partition are a significant fruit of this period of colonial deliberations on the Horn. It was through these instruments of collaboration between Ethiopia and extra-regional powers in partitioning the Peripheral areas between themselves that, for the first time in history, parts of the Periphery were *ceded* with the consent of their ruling authorities, to the Core. For the first time the Core obtained not only a *de facto* but also a *de jure* control over these areas. This fact brought about later serious complications in the region's situation. As shown elsewhere in this work, these complications led to the most serious and longstanding of the international security problems of the area, viz. the Somali irredentism and the Eritrean insurgency. Some of the other problems in the region also derive from these complications.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, it was during this latter phase of colonization that some societies of the Periphery were put, for the first time, under different ruling regimes (e.g. Italian, British, French) and divided by rigid and arbitrary boundaries. Previously, whenever the Periphery experienced extra-regional colonial regimes, most of these societies remained either autonomous or under the same colonial power. More important, the boundaries were never rigid. In fact, there were no defined boundaries but *vague* frontiers that merged into one another.<sup>82</sup> The rigidly defined political boundaries set by the colonial and

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<sup>81</sup> *Vide: supra*, Ch.II, pp.23-33.

<sup>82</sup> *Vide: supra*, pp.110-11.

partition arrangements were initially kept functionally flexible to a degree through explicit agreements.<sup>83</sup> But with the passage of time and advent of indigenous nationalist regimes at the wake of decolonization, this flexibility waned and brought about the same kind of complications and consequent crises situation as resulting from the constitutional cession of Peripheral areas to Ethiopia.<sup>84</sup>

These partition treaties, supplemented by three more subsequent instruments of agreement, fixed the international boundaries on the Horn.<sup>85</sup> These boundaries were fixed by parties external to the area concerned, i.e. to the Periphery. This was done in collaboration with Ethiopia, the traditional adversary of these societies concerned. Naturally, the boundaries were drawn more on the basis of the contracting parties' own power-political interests than on considerations of the basic realities of the partitioned societies, or their welfare. The result is that, the Horn, at the withdrawal of the European powers, was left with a superimposed system based on artificial boundaries. As has been noted in the previous chapter, this presents us with a potentially dangerous situation in the area.

#### Modernization of Ethiopia: The Military Machine

Before we proceed with further discussion on the consequences of the colonial period for the present security

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<sup>83</sup> For the details of these treaties *vide* Information Services..., op.cit., Appendices, pp.86-90, 100-115, 118, 121-128

<sup>84</sup> *Vide: supra*, Ch.II, pp.27-28, 34-36; Ch.V, pp.184-186.

<sup>85</sup> *Vide: Appendix II.*

situation and international relations on the Horn, the survey of this particular period of the Horn's history which can be identified, internally, with the rise and reign of Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia, and externally with the conclusion of the colonial treaties will be concluded with a brief examination of two particularly important aspects of this period, viz. (i) modernization in the area, particularly of Ethiopia, and (ii) the reaction to the colonial partition arrangements amongst the peoples concerned, i.e. those in the Periphery.

Four particular aspects of modernization during Menelik's reign merit mention. These are: (i) the growth and modernization of the military machine; (ii) the building of the new capital, Addis Ababa;<sup>86</sup> (iii) building of the Djibouti Railway; and (iv) introduction of the concept of public utility and welfare in government.

The modernization of the military machine had three aspects of significance. First, this modernization gave Ethiopia such a military strength that could be challenged by none of the other entities on the Horn. At the same time it made Ethiopia comparable to the European colonial regimes in the area, in terms of strength, and hence, political power and standing.<sup>87</sup> This situation facilitated Ethiopia's

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<sup>86</sup> Spelt also as Addis Abeba.

<sup>87</sup> Ethiopian military strength has been tested at least with one of these regimes. Ethiopia defeated Italy in 1896 and Ethiopia's Patriot Army and other Ethiopian troops played an important part in the liberation of Ethiopia in 1941. *Vide*, L. Mosley, *op.cit.*; Preston King, forthcoming book (title yet not known).



expansion into the Periphery through conquest as well as through partition treaties negotiated with the European powers from a position of strength quite respectable from the European point of view. Then, the way in which this modernization was carried out, had two significant results, viz. (i) the growth of militarism in the Ethiopian character, and (ii) the growth of elitism within the Ethiopian military.

Militarism, like its source - the growth and modernization of the military machine, was evident in Ethiopian society even before the reign of Menelik and increased with his policies. Thus, for example, in Shewa, every subject, notwithstanding his normal profession, was a soldier. Right from the time of the earliest rulers, Shewa was 'on the offensive'. The organisation of the state was closely linked with that of the military. Soldiers, while off duty, were expected to be available at a moment's notice: obviously, the whole society was on constant military alert. The spirit of the whole society was militant and the society seemed to enjoy war: large crowds would gather immediately at the beating of the war drum and the flavour of the declaration of war would be very militant and boastful. The Ethiopian war was total in terms of participation. Even the women and the children would join the campaign. Now under Menelik, a deliberate effort was made at enhancing this subconscious militarism of the Ethiopian society through such calculated devices as hosting of massive feasts following battles and awarding of the greatest rewards for courageous display in war. Military campaigns were conducted as many as two or three

times in the few months left before and after the rainy season each year. There was punishment for not rising up to the demands of military duty, but it was not very high compared to punishment for such a failure in any modern army. This simply shows that there was not much apprehension of such failures: people were usually willingly ready to fight.<sup>88</sup> The modernization and strengthening of the military led to strengthening of the Ethiopian monarchy as absolute, and since development of '*corps d'elite*' seems to be

a process inherent in the development of states with absolute rulers. Thus, the modernizing process led, at the same time, to the growth of an elite within the armed forces, which decided the issue.<sup>89</sup>

Both militarism and elitism within the military had their own consequences. Mass militarism bolstered the already existing military expansionist tendencies of the Ethiopian polity. Internally, it not only ensured a sense of admiration for force and the military but also made all the individual members of the society, in general, temperamentally violent. This aspect of the national value system might have had something to do with the ease with which the military could take over the leadership of the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 - initially spear headed by the civil elite, particularly the students; stay in power; and raise the masses, particularly the peasants, in its own support.

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<sup>88</sup> Darkwah, op.cit., pp.180-182, 186-199. Charles Johnston, *Travels in Southern Abyssinia through the country of Adal to the kingdom of Shoa during the years 1842-43* (London, 1844), Vol.II, pp.76-77.

<sup>89</sup> Darkwah, op.cit., pp.81-83.

Elitism (meaning an oligarchist system), within the military in particular, sowed the seeds of professional rivalry within the armed forces and the tendency towards eliminating the rivals to make or secure one's own position in the elite. This has contributed to the intra-military politics of elimination in Ethiopia, particularly since the army took over power in 1974.<sup>90</sup>

One more significant aspect of the way in which the growth and modernization of the military took place is the fact that recruitment into the army and promotions, after the initiation of the modernistic policies, took place on the criteria of military merit and not, as before that, on that of birth, e.g. ethnic, regional or class identity. This meant, the army provided a serious means of infiltration of elements from the non-Amharic groups and areas, and the lower classes into the otherwise closed circle of the ruling elite. Thus, many persons from the lower classes, subject peoples and the outlying areas rose to high positions in the army, and, for example, by the 1880s, i.e. even before Menelik's modernizing campaign, the 'backbone of the provincial garrisons' were mostly Galla.<sup>91</sup>

The fact that elements from without the Amhara nobility could infiltrate into the Ethiopian military introduced a significant element of tension within this dominant circle

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<sup>90</sup> For the politics of elimination in the Ethiopian army elite, *vide: Africa Confidential* (London), 22 July 1977; 9 September 1977. *Africa Report* (Washington, D.C.), July-August 1975; March-April 1979. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, pp.28761-62, 28221. Also, Mosley, *op.cit.*, 'Epilogue'.

<sup>91</sup> Darkwah, *op.cit.*, Ch.VI.

of the polity. The interests of the holders of political power and legal authority, now, differed from and even clashed with those of the military forces. This led to a kind of continuing crisis within the ruling circle. This infiltration of the Galla and other 'lesser' people into the army owing to recruitment policy - and the consequent conflict within the elite may be seen, as on numerous earlier occasions, also in the recent Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 which has led to the present military distatorship of Mengistu - originally a son of a Galla gate-keeper. Many of the other members of the junta that initially took over also were from without the Amhara nobility.

The growth of militarism had one more important consequence. The administration became, gradually, a military one. The most distinguished soldiers started to be appointed governors of the provinces. This could have several reasons. A genuine admiration for the military as well as their strength might have required to reward them with positions of importance; as the supreme at the centre was the emperor himself, the military heroes could be made so only in the provinces. One reason could be that the emperors felt threatened by the military heroes and chiefs and thus wanted to keep them at safe distance from the centre of power. Whatever be the reason, while the centre remained a political government of the aristocracy, though supported by the military, the provincial administration became, in effect, predominantly military. The struggle between the nobility and the military discussed above, put in this context, led to a conflict

between the centre and the provinces. In case of such provinces as Harar or Eritrea - that are part of the Periphery this contradiction simply supplements and strengthens the basic tension between the Core and the Periphery of the Horn of Africa.

It is not surprising, therefore, that most of the members of the 'Committee' that brought about the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 were military leaders of the provinces, and those from the Peripheral provinces were the most prominent of all (Aman Andom from Eritrea, Mengistu Haile Mariam from Harar).

For the Ethiopian military rulers of the provinces, in each case, where an Ethiopian has been appointed a governor of a Peripheral province - this appointment presents an internal contradiction. Appointments to the provinces would be usually accompanied by rewards of provincial estates. The rulers would then find themselves split in their loyalty between the Core and the Periphery. While their vested interests and long term settlements - sometimes over generations - tie them to the Periphery, their ethno-cultural background and emotional attachment tie them to the Core. This dual loyalty presents the area with an additional factor of instability and tension.

#### Building of the Capital - Addis Ababa

The building of Addis Ababa, near Entoto, as a permanent capital city under Menelik and its development under Haile Selassie I was important in more than one way. First, with it, for the first time, the Ethiopian polity received an urban elite or the *bourgeoisie*. So far,

the [Ethiopian] elite was not an urban elite; for there were in Ethiopia prior to the present century [prior to Addis Ababa] virtually no cities, with their attendant occupational specialization, their doubting intellectuals, their scholastic skeptics, and their independent commercial classes

in short, with a *bourgeoisie*.<sup>92</sup> The only other urban centres during the whole period of Ethiopia's traceable history were Axum and Gondar. Axum had collapsed more than a milleneum ago and never formed an urban centre for Ethiopia as presently conceived, i.e. as an inland, highland, agrarian society. After that, no urban centre existed in the Ethiopian polity, until after the growth of Addis Ababa as such.<sup>93</sup> Gondar was developing as something close to such an urban centre 'briefly in the seventeenth and eithteenth centuries'. But it could not retain its position as the centre of gravity of the polity, as the empire whose capital it happened to be, was being, simultaneously 'eroded by subinfeudation, internecine strife, and the inroads of Galla tribesmen from the south'.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, Addis Ababa with its creation and development became the cradle of the Ethiopian bourgeoisie and thus, the source of a break with the feudal past. The immediate seeds of the next class revolution were sown with those of Addis Ababa. Revolution had been common to the course of Ethiopian history, as already noted.<sup>95</sup> But class revolution is far less common a phenomenon as it is

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<sup>92</sup> Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure Among the Amhara of Ethiopia/The Dynamics of Cognitive Descent* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p.4.

<sup>93</sup> Pankhurst (1961), Ch.VI.

<sup>94</sup> Hoben, op.cit., p.4, fn.6

<sup>95</sup> *Vide: supra*, p.93.

not only a political but an overall revolution perceived and organised on the basis of the class struggle and resulting into a 'jump' from one stage of development (e.g. feudal) to the next one (bourgeois). Thus while class struggle may be discerned in the past history of the Ethiopian polity, it could never produce a class revolution, after the one with the Sabaeen settlements that transformed the pre-feudal society into a feudal one - until the development of Addis Ababa as the seat of a bourgeoisie in the twentieth century. All other revolutions were mainly political. These struggles were, in general, within the same upper class and were neither aimed at, nor resulting in any fundamental changes in the structure of the society and its polity.

The building of Addis Ababa had other aspects of significance also. For example, with the growth of Addis Ababa and other cities on its pattern<sup>96</sup> the society took the shape of a dichotomy of conflicting units: the country and the city. This would have serious consequences in the long run. In fact, it is worth reflection that the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 started with agitations demanding redress for certain grievances of the country people.<sup>97</sup> However, in a way, this aspect can be taken as only a facet of the class revolution. This was the struggle between the rising

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<sup>96</sup> Menelik started a deliberate policy of building up cities on the pattern of Addis Ababa, one at least in each province. Moreover, certain other cities (e.g. Harar, Assab and Massawa) came within the Ethiopian frontiers with conquest or partition treaties.

<sup>97</sup> My interview with Fessahai Abraham, Eritrean exile, Sydney, 1978.

bourgeoisie and the crumbling feudal base. This country-city contradiction was to become inevitable, because, with the passage of time, the people in the country and those in the city became, in effect two different peoples. Prior to the growth of the urban elite, '[t]hough there were great differences in power, honour and wealth between the peasantry and the elite, the cultural distance between them was not so great ...'<sup>98</sup> But now, the urban elite and the peasant masses looked at life and everything including their mutual relationships through two different cultural perspectives. The Ethiopian society was culturally split.

Then, the turning of the Shewa capital into the permanent capital of the whole of Ethiopia 'confirmed the southern orientation of the empire'.<sup>99</sup> This orientation, among other consequences, became 'a source of Tegreran disgruntlement'. It simply fuelled the already existing regional conflict between the three sub-cores of the society of the Core, viz. Tigre, Gojjam and Shewa.<sup>100</sup>

The building of a permanent and proper capital city was important also in view of the centralistic nature of the Ethiopian polity, as these two factors - a capital city, and centralistic tendencies of the polity - when combined, can make the polity more prone to revolutionary crisis. This is so because of the fact that

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<sup>98</sup> Hoben, op.cit., p.4.

<sup>99</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., p.18.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.* This conflict continues. For recent examples, *vide: Africa Confidential*, V.18, No.16; V.18, No.23.



[I]n a centralistic state ... the *place d'armes* of a revolution in the capital city is much more crucially significant than revolutionary outbreak in a provincial town. In such a political structure, revolution in the capital ... can paralyze the state. On the contrary in a federal and democratic state, the outbreak of a revolution in a capital city has different significance because of the relatively decentralized power structure.<sup>101</sup>

Thus, in a centralistic state with a capital city the credibility of staging a revolution and its success is, when other factors are the same, higher than that in any other kind of polity. This makes attempts at staging revolutions more likely. By adding a capital city to an already centralistic polity, chances of such revolutionary crisis were increased in Ethiopia.<sup>102</sup>

#### Djibouti Railway

The Djibouti railway, built under Menelik, as originally planned, turned out to carry a high percentage of Ethiopian international trade.<sup>103</sup> In fact, at present at least sixty six percent of this trade is carried by the Djibouti railway.<sup>104</sup> This fact has two aspects of significance. First, the control of the railway, and particularly of the area through which

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<sup>101</sup> Felike Gross, *The Seizure of Political Power: in a Century Revolutions* (N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1958), p.180.

<sup>102</sup> This, however, is not to say that a centralistic state with a capital is sure to have a revolution. There are many other factors which come into shaping the milieu and thus may enhance or limit the chances of revolution in a given society.

<sup>103</sup> Jones & Monroe, *op.cit.*, pp.142-48.

<sup>104</sup> Peter Robbs, 'Africa and the Indian Ocean', in *Africa Report*, May-June 1976, p.42.

it passes, became an important strategic issue (map, pp. 2-3). Secondly, the port of Djibouti, the international terminal of the line, itself became important and its control also became an important matter. It not only assured high transit revenue from the Abyssinian international trade but also gave a strategic command on the whole of the Horn of Africa, as, in many ways, control of Abyssinian economy and thus its polity gives special leverage in the region. Ethiopia Proper for its highland topography, central location, settled society, advanced position in terms of stages of historical development and in relation to the other parts of the Horn, and relatively greater economic and military strength might serve as a promising base for expansion, at least in terms of influence and pressure into the rest of the area.

The enhanced importance of the Somali inhabited area including Harar through which the railway passed, made Ethiopia particularly obstinate as to her continued control over it.<sup>105</sup> For the external powers involved also, this area became of particular concern. Thus, control of the railway and sphere of influence over the adjacent areas was one of the issues that had led to the Franco-Italo-British tripartite colonial arrangements of 1906.<sup>106</sup> During the Second World War and immediately afterwards, the Allies, the British in particular, treated this area with special care. Thus, while Ethiopia Proper, liberated with help of the

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<sup>105</sup> See also, Ch.II, pp.30-32.

<sup>106</sup> This included, along with a Tripartite Agreement, an agreement on the railway. Jones & Monroe, op.cit., p.148.

British forces, was soon restored to Ethiopian authorities, this area i.e. the Ogaden, Haud and the 'Reserved Area' was not. This separate treatment of this area and its consequent effects have been used later by the Somalis as one of the justifications for their irredentist claims for its independence from Ethiopia and caused serious troubles, and even war.<sup>107</sup>

The enhanced importance of Djibouti also created later complications and made the area a subject of international as well as intra-regional rivalry.<sup>108</sup>

#### Public Welfare in Ethiopian Government

The concept of public utility and welfare introduced during this transitional period of modernization, particularly under Menelik, was something new in Ethiopian government planning. Not that Ethiopian emperors or individual high officials had never shown any concern for the welfare of their people at all. One can, possibly, find instances of such kindness from the long history of Ethiopia. But, as an organised, deliberate government policy, it never existed before. Government planning was primarily concerned with the continued supremacy of the imperial government, collection of revenues and exacting obedience, conquest and defence of the empire - a policy, in which the most that the public could expect was - protection, welfare being left to the individual members of the public. The modernizing regimes,

<sup>107</sup> *Vide:* Information Services ..., op.cit., Ch.VII. Also, *supra*, Ch.II, pp.23-30.

<sup>108</sup> *Vide:* Ch.II, pp.34-35.

particularly that of Menelik and subsequently Ras Tafari/ Haile Selassie took up plans and projects which mobilised the state machinery for provision of such utilitarian and welfare facilities as postal service, health measures, electrical and telephone systems, education, broadcasting system etc. for the benefit of the general public. Among the abovementioned facilities, all but the last two were introduced under Menelik.<sup>109</sup> The last two, under Haile Selassie I.<sup>110</sup>

The introduction of this new concept and the consequent reforms had dangerous consequences, from the point of view of the imperial, *ancien regime*. The taste of new amenities and privileges brought about, particularly among the educated commoners - themselves a product of these reforms, a 'revolution of rising expectations'. This in turn, with the passage of time, posed a challenge to the very basic doctrine of state and the legitimacy of the imperial order of Ethiopia. It became a fundamental question, with the passage of time and through the questioning mind of the Western educated, that whether or not public owes to the government and the state, as a matter of right and not favour, such public utilities. Posing this question, in effect, meant a challenge to the unquestionable and absolute supremacy of the imperial government over the state i.e. a challenge to the doctrine that it is the divine Emperor's absolute right to dispose of it in whatever manner and for whatever aim he

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<sup>109</sup> Lipsky, op.cit., p.20.

<sup>110</sup> *Vide*, also: *infra*, pp.159-162.

may decide to be right.<sup>111</sup> The welfare concept, an element of the popular systems of Western Europe, was introduced to a polity organised on autocratic lines and thus, naturally, was an anomaly that could not but result in contradiction within the polity. Consequently, the Ethiopian imperial order headed for exactly what the benevolent but absolute monarchies of central and eastern Europe of the 18th and 19th centuries had suffered for similar reasons. It took time, and the results came out too clear only recently, particularly in the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974.

Apart from what has been said above, the public welfare concept and the associated reforms sowed seeds of more contradiction in a society already suffering from chronic contradiction, in certain other ways also. The fruits of the reforms, very limited as these were, could not reach everybody in the society. The introduction of these 'fruits' could bring about radical changes in the way and standard of life of those few fortunates who could avail them. This, coupled with the fact of the 'limitations' of these 'fruits' resulted in a sharp division of the society in yet one more way: into a fortunate minority and a jealous and disgruntled majority.

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<sup>111</sup> The fact that the Ethiopian monarchy was based on the doctrines of divine monarchy has been already discussed. *Vide: supra*, Ch.III, pp.82-83. For the doctrines of divine monarchy, *vide: J.N. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings* (Cambridge, 1914).

Of all the reforms carried out in this spirit, perhaps, the most significantly consequential were those in the fields of education and mass media. This aspect will be discussed later in this Chapter.<sup>112</sup>

#### Periphery's Reaction to Colonial Occupation

The Peripheral societies' reaction to the colonial regimes, both European and Ethiopian, in general, were strong and hostile. As already noted, these societies had historically developed as strongly resisting overseas intrusion into their areas. It was only through a posture of a friendly protector on an equal standing, and not as a sovereign conqueror, that the European powers could have signed the various treaties with the local societies that, however, in effect and ultimately, had resulted in colonial subordination of these societies. As soon as the foreign authority became effective and was realised as such by the local societies, the anti-foreigner tendencies re-emerged. Thus, vast areas of the Somali inhabited eastern Peripherals, for over twenty one years, remained in a formidable state of rebellion led by Mohammed Abdullah Hassan, the so-called 'Mad Mullah'. This rebellion, starting formally with the declaration of a *jihad*, at Burao in British Somaliland in August 1899, 'spread like wild fire and became very powerful in the north'<sup>113</sup> and soon, 'throughout Somalia', meaning all

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<sup>112</sup> *Vide: infra*, pp.159-62. Also, *supra*, pp.146-47.

<sup>113</sup> Jardine, *op.cit.*, p.42. Hess, *op.cit.*, p.138.

the Somali inhabited areas.<sup>114</sup> It, as viewed by a responsible officer of the then British Colonial Office, 'had been a thorn in the side of the British administration for [all these] more than twenty years'.<sup>115</sup> For the officers responsible for the administration of the British Somaliland, it was 'seldom out of ... official thought',<sup>116</sup> and no less a person than the Secretary to the Administration of Somaliland seems to have been driven by it into a paranoia of having been put to 'roasting ... [as] an infidel over a slow fire'.<sup>117</sup>

The position of the Italians in their section of Somalia was not better. The Italian Consul at Aden, Eugenio Capello, 'who had long experience in Somalia',<sup>118</sup> observing the effects of the rebellion, declared, 1906, '... our position [in Somalia] could not be worse'.<sup>119</sup> Few months later, after having visited the area, he felt the situation to be yet worse as he wrote, '... not only is our present position in Somalia false, but it is also beginning to be ridiculous'.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hess, op.cit., p.134.

<sup>115</sup> Rt. Hon. the Viscount Milner, K.G., G.C.B., of the British Colonial Office (during the period of the revolt), *Foreword* in Jardine, op.cit., p.vii.

<sup>116</sup> Jardine, op.cit., p.16.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>118</sup> Hess, op.cit., p.135.

<sup>119</sup> Capello, Aden, to Foreign Minister, 20 March 1906, Archives Storico dell'en Ministero dell'Africa Italiana, Rome (ASMAI) Pos.59/4, f.59, quot. in Hess, op.cit.

<sup>120</sup> Capello, Aden, to Foreign Minister, 15 August 1906, ASMAI, pos.59/4, f.59, Hess, op.cit.

The position in the Ethiopian section was not good either. Even the very first attack by the rebels on the Ethiopian fort at Jigjiga within only a few months of the outbreak of the rebellion 'caused great alarm at Harar [the relevant Ethiopian military centre]',<sup>121</sup> and a force of over sixteen thousand was sent to crush the rebels.<sup>122</sup>

This rebellious reaction was confined neither to the Mullah's movement nor to the areas under his influence. The Sultanates of Mijjertein and Obbia, which have been entities independent of the Mullah's control, usually hostile to his regime, and technically protectorates of the colonial powers, also, showed signs of uneasiness with their protectors and rebellious tendencies against them. Thus, from the very beginning, Italy's co-operation with the British against the rebels disturbed whatever 'loose agreements' she had with the northern Sultans. Her popularity in Obbia diminished greatly and, at one stage, the Italians faced a threatened rebellion by the Obbians.<sup>123</sup>

At the same time, the Mijjertein Sultan, 'a possible ally against the "Mad Mullah" ... [who even] expressed his willingness to cooperate in their [colonial powers'] plans' against him,<sup>124</sup> also, nevertheless, 'refused to yield' to colonial pressures which went to the extent of even military

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<sup>121</sup> Hess, op.cit., p.131.

<sup>122</sup> ibid., p.130.

<sup>123</sup> ibid., pp.131-132.

<sup>124</sup> Hess, op.cit., pp.132-133.



actions including a blockade of the Sultanate's coasts and bombardment of its villages.<sup>125</sup> His opposition to the Mullah, finally, could only be manipulated and not forced into action in favour of the colonial powers. The ultimate success in this regard was due to British diplomatic skill.<sup>126</sup>

The tribes in the south, particularly the Wadan and the Bimal, similarly, independent of the Mullah's *de facto* regime also recurrently showed rebellious tendency both before and after the rise of the Mullah. In the latter case, they, at one stage, joined the Mullah against the colonial powers. From as early as 1893 rebellious acts, and later, since 1903, widespread revolt became a constant source of problem for the administration in the southern Somali area including European strongholds along the coast, e.g. Kismayu, Merca and Mogadishu.

The rebellion continued, even after the decisive Italian victory at Dadane in 1907 and pacification measures could be abandoned not until the late 1920s, when, under the new Fascist policy, Italy presented itself as a protector and benefactor for the Moslem peoples of the Periphery in general, against the Christian Core - rather than as a colonial sovereign in league with the Ethiopian enemies.<sup>127</sup>

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125 *ibid.*, p.132.

126 *ibid.*, pp.132-133.

127 Hess, *op.cit.*, pp.41, 45-47, 87-90, 92, 134. Eduardo Ruelle (Commander of the Italian gunboat *Voltorno's* exploratory mission to southern Somaliland), *Report*, to the Italian Naval Minister, Zanzibar, 1 December 1893, Libro Verde, doc.83, pp.187-88.

In the north, Eritrea also experienced serious revolts and anti-colonial wars, inspired mainly, like the revolt in the Somali areas, by the religious nationalistic doctrines of the Sudanese Mahdists. In Eritrea, the rebels in most cases were directly linked with the Mahdists. The existence of anti-colonial tendencies in this area has been discussed above.<sup>128</sup> Here only one letter will be quoted which, however, being typical of the communications of the local rebels, adequately reflects the existing mood in the area and the pattern of relationships between the rebels on the one hand and the colonial powers and their collaborators on the other. The letter, dated 29 August 1885, was sent by Mustapha Hadel, commander of anti-Ethiopian anti-Anglo-Egyptian rebels to Ras Alula, the Ethiopian governor of Eritrea. This reads as follows:

From the slave of God and faithfully Mustapha Hadel to the king of infidels [Ethiopian king] to Ras Alula his devil, and to Mussa Mohammed, Chief of the Beni Amer tribe ... This is to tell you that I know you said you would bring English troops to fight against the servants of the Prophet ... you say you will fight me with an Abyssinian army; but in this you cannot succeed. The Emir of Emirs, Osman Abu Bakr Digna [Chief of the anti-colonial forces], has now decided to conquer every province, he came to Kassala, where *all the inhabitants joined him* (: rebelliousness on mass level), and now we have come down to the hills in your neighbourhood. Therefore come out and meet us. Do not delay but if you cannot come and are afraid then let me know by the bearer of this and I will come to you with my *ansars* [*literally: volunteering assistants*; troops], and will fall upon you and utterly exterminate and destroy you and all

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<sup>128</sup> *Vide: supra*, pp.115-17.

those who do not believe in God and his Prophet, and all your souls shall go down straight away to hell.<sup>129</sup>

The situation was so grave that the Ethiopian Governor, even after a decisive victory in the battle of Kufit following the above letter, could not dare to re-enter his own capital and base in Asamara without

sending a *Muslim Sheikh* to warn all the rebels to obey the Mudier [Governor] of Kassala, that is to say not to obey the King of Abyssinia whom he serves, but the [local] ally ...<sup>130</sup>

Less noted but significant are the facts of similar tendencies of anti-colonial hatred and rebellion in such other parts of the Peripheral belt as the south and south-western Oromo lands and the Peripheral areas close to the Core like Wollo. Thus, the anti-Ethiopian anti-European Mahdists were particularly active amongst the people in such south and south-western parts of Ethiopia as Kaffa and Goffa. Obviously, they had found the area particularly fertile for their anti-Ethiopian anti-colonial rebellion. The people in these areas were regarded, by the Mahdists, as put in one of their handouts, as 'friends and brothers'.<sup>131</sup> During the same period, areas close to the 'Core' in the north saw recurrent rebellions amongst the Wollo, who

held ... their hatred of the conqueror, in common with their 'love of independence'

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<sup>129</sup> F.R. Wingate, *Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1891), pp.250-51 quot. in Gabre-Selassie, op.cit., p.177.

<sup>130</sup> Gabre-Selassie, op.cit., p.178.

<sup>131</sup> Ibrahim Fawzi, *Al Sudan bayn yaday Ghurdun Wa-kitshanar 2* (Cairo, 1901-2), p.120, cited in Gabre-Selassie, op.cit., p.159, fn.1.

and the districts of Crerfa, Rique and Woreqalu became 'centres of dissent'. The *jihad*, proclaimed 'as a pretext for a politically based revolt', spread along with the disciplines of its leader, Tolha ben Gieafer, over more distant Moslem areas amongst the Galla and the Gurage.<sup>132</sup>

It is desirable here to make two points. First, it is true that in all the abovementioned rebellious areas there have also been forces that joined the colonial forces. Thus, for example, the Sultan of Geledi, chiefs of the Shidle, Hawadleh and Mobilen, the Warsangli Sultan Mahmoud bin Ali Shirreh, Abdulla Shahari, Musa Fara *et al* in Somaliland, Ras Mikael in Wollo, Chiefs Musa Muhammad and Muhammad al-Fil of the Beni Amer in Eritrea, had, one time or other, fought against the rebels' cause.<sup>133</sup> But this should not lead to doubts as to the conclusions we derive from the facts of the widespread tendencies of anti-colonialism and rebellion in those areas in general. No rebellion can claim a total support of people whose interests it claims to serve. The acts of anti-foreigner rebellion were widespread and not localised; were recurrent; and the calls for such action were made through an appeal to *mass sentiments* against the out-group and were popular amongst the masses - as in contrast to the loyalist efforts, which rested, mainly on the manipulation of personal and dynastic rivalries and concerns of concrete immediate self interest - and usually, popular less among the general masses and more with the nobles and groups

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<sup>132</sup> T. Noldeke, *Orientalische Shizzen* (Berlin, 1892), cited in Gabre-Selassie, *op.cit.*, p.195. Gabre-Selassie, *op.cit.*, p.196.

<sup>133</sup> Gabre-Selassie, *op.cit.*, pp.177, 196. Hess, *op.cit.*, p.90. Jardine, *op.cit.*, pp.78, 183-186, 256-258.

immediately involved in the particular rivalries. This suggests that the hatred against the out-group and rebellious tendencies represented the general pattern of behaviour of the societies involved, while acts of loyalty to such out-groups were mere exceptions.<sup>134</sup>

Secondly, the various revolts and similar acts as well as acts of loyalist nature have been attributed to different motives and different causes by different writers. Interpretations are controversial in this regard. But the fact remains that whatever be the motives and causes, revolts and similar acts took place, hatred against the out-group and rebellious tendencies were visible, and these were widespread throughout the Peripheral areas. This strengthens the already noted support for the proposition that the Peripheral societies tend to have a strong tendency to resist out-groups, and to rebel against external, particularly overseas colonial control. The above discussion also reconfirms the proposition that the Peripheral societies are inherently in conflict with the Ethiopian Core and any attempt by the latter at controlling the former, or any part thereof, is likely to meet the rebellious reactions.

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<sup>134</sup> The various rebellious and other acts of the type in the Peripheral areas during this period, and measures taken to counter them have been dealt with in some detail, in Jardine, op.cit.; Gabre-Selassie, op.cit.; Hess, op.cit. However, these writers, particularly the first one, have their own bias and their books are useful more as a source of information than as a reliable presentation of history. The bias, given the personal background of the writers concerned, is natural. Jardine himself, as he tells in his book, was directly involved in the counter-insurgency in Somalia. Gabre-Selassie is from the Ethiopian imperial dynasty. *Vide*: Jardine, op.cit., Edward Ullendorf, Preface to Gabre-Selassie, op.cit., p.vii.

### Menelik to Haile Selassie I: A Test Case Period

The next and the last of the great imperial statesmen who may be called the forerunners of modern Ethiopia, was Ras Tafari, who assumed power as Regent to Empress Zauditu in 1916 and formally became Emperor Haile Selassie in 1930. The period of transition from Menelik's rule to that of Haile Selassie I is marked with events which simply reaffirmed the pattern of events concerning succession, as well as the socio-political tendencies, deeply set in the body politic of Ethiopia Proper.

The period following Menelik as an effective Emperor, was marked with 'political confusion' and 'determined intrigues' and Ras Tafari/Haile Selassie could become the supreme authority only after going through four serious revolts (1916, 1928, 1929, 1930).<sup>135</sup> This reaffirms that succession in Ethiopia is likely to involve a transitional period of crisis.

At the same time, events of this period provide yet another confirmation also to the proposition that any effort at imposing a system on Ethiopia that does not conform to her natural tendencies that evolved through ages is likely to fail in the face of strong opposition from within. Menelik was succeeded by his nephew, Lidj Yassu, who having been attracted to Islam and converted, proceeded to turn Ethiopia into an Islamic state. In effect, he, like one of his predecessors, Armah (7th century), was trying to impose upon

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<sup>135</sup> Menelik lost effective control of the imperial affairs during his last days, i.e. the first decade of the present century. For details of the succession struggle leading to Ras Tafari/Haile Selassie's accession, *vide*: Leonard Mosley, *op.cit.*

the Ethiopian polity what was in contradiction with its basic socio-political tendencies that partly originated from, and went with the Coptic Christian value system. While he found his support amongst the Peripheral and 'lesser' peoples, the Core itself rose against his regime and overthrew him. Thus, when the Emperor was away to Jigjiga, in the Periphery, to gather supporters and troops to aid him in his pro-Islamic struggle, the Shewan nobility marched into Addis Ababa, and proclaimed Zauditu, daughter of Menelik, Empress, and Ras Tafari Makonnen, regent and heir presumptive. The archbishop confirmed their decision and excommunicated Lidj Yassu, who then fled into the Danakil region.<sup>136</sup>

Failure of Lidj Yassu's efforts, like similar results ensuing from similar efforts at going against the tendencies of the polity, confirmed the proposition that such attempts are likely to fail.<sup>137</sup>

Apart from affirming the strength of Ethiopia's socio-political tendencies, the failure also affirmed, once more, the strength of the pattern of relationships on the Horn: the dichotomy had remained insurmountable as the effort of unification of the Core and the Periphery like other particular similar efforts, utterly failed.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Lipsky, *op.cit.*, p.21.

<sup>137</sup> See also, *supra*, Ch.II, p.36-39.

<sup>138</sup> Only three times in history the whole of the Horn came close to something like complete unification under a single sovereign system: in the 16th century, under the Adalite forces of Ahmad Gran; in around 1916, under Lidj Yassu; and in late 1930s and 1940s, under first the Italians, and then, the British.

The Core-Peripheral struggle within Ethiopia did not cease even after Lidj Yassu's failure. Soon after the replacement of Lidj Yassu by Zauditu, rebellion broke out in such Peripheral areas as Arussi, Semyen, Wolkait, Wojju, Dessye, Pinor, Dola and the Wollo territories - against the Core. Both Moslem and pagans of these Peripheral areas rose against the Christian Highlands.<sup>139</sup> Such tension between forces based on the Peripheral areas and those on the Core continued in the subsequent years and flared up into violent clashes, whenever the suppressed forces on the Periphery could perceive an opportunity to revolt. Such opportunities were continuously sought after and presented by internal conspirations and external interference.<sup>140</sup>

#### Haile Selassie I

Ras Tafari, Haile Selassie,<sup>141</sup> pursued the policies outlined by Tewodoros and put into effect as an overall broad, vigorous movement with some success, for the first time, under Menelik. If these policies started under Tewodoros and Yohannes like a rudimentary spring, under Menelik they turned into a forceful river and continued

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<sup>139</sup> Leonard Mosley, op.cit., p.114.

<sup>140</sup> Mosley (op.cit.) deals with this tension in some details throughout his book. Also, *vide: infra*, pp.166-68.

<sup>141</sup> It is very difficult to separate his virtual rule as Regent, Ras Tafari (1916-1930) and formally acknowledged reign as Emperor, Haile Selassie I (1930-1974), particularly in terms of policy trends. Thus, no such distinction will be made in this work in discussing the policies pursued by him and, he will be referred, in this connection, now onwards, as Haile Selassie irrespective of the policies being initiated during his regency or the imperial reign.



through the reign of Haile Selassie. Haile Selassie introduced nothing new of significance to the *essence* of the course of history of his country. He advanced the same trend signalled by Tewodoros and ably set in motion by Menelik. The range of internal reforms as well as external links and activities were broadened, but the basic principles and characteristics of the trend remained the same. In short, Haile Selassie was to Menelik in the history of modern Ethiopia what King Frederick the Great was to Frederick William the Great Elector in the history of modern Germany. He consolidated the achievements of his predecessor, and built upon the foundations laid by him. Thus, though very long (fifty eight years) and eventful, his regency and reign<sup>6</sup> will not be dealt with in any great detail in this work. However, a few aspects of this period require mention. First of these aspects is the reforms in the fields of education and mass media.

Haile Selassie took education as 'a prime concern'.<sup>142</sup> His interest in education may be gauged from the fact that he served as his own Minister of education.<sup>143</sup>

Traditionally education in Ethiopia was a concern of the Church and theological in nature. The very fact of establishing a secular ministry of education and putting it under the direct control of the State, represented by the Emperor, indicates the secular direction of the policy as regards education. This secularization of education

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<sup>142</sup> Andrew Jaffe, *Haile Selassie's remarkable reign/The Emperor at 78 seeks to keep up with forces of change*, Africa Report, May 1971.

<sup>143</sup> Luther, *op.cit.*, p.51, fn.6.

coupled with the policy of its universalization in terms of access to academic institutions, contributed, in the long term, to the revolutionary forces in a serious way. Secularization of education meant, in effect, its Westernization, essentially leading to inclusion of Western ideas in its substance. These Western ideas, be these liberal, democratic or radical, are based on the concept of popular sovereignty and popular rights. The newly educated, thus, in most cases, came out as disgruntled idealists feeling a need for change. The policy of universal right to access to education meant free education and an unrestricted entry to the institutions for all.<sup>144</sup> Many from the less privileged sections of the population could have access to these revolutionary ideas. These young people, with genuine reasons to be disgruntled, now having been awakened to this fact by these ideas, became a potential base for genuine revolutionary efforts. It is no wonder that the Revolution of 1974 started with agitations at schools and other academic institutions.<sup>145</sup> Then, while the policy of universality of access to education gave a sense to all Ethiopians of a right to this access - due to lack of resources and efficiency as well as naturally urban orientation of the city-dwelling policy-makers, not all of them could receive adequate facilities for this education. This brought in a sense of alienation and anger amongst the areas with lesser facilities

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144 My interview with Fessahai Abraham, exile from Ethiopia, Sydney, May 1978.

145 *ibid.* Also, my interview with Rowie Dillon, Australian volunteer nurse in Ethiopia, 1973-74; Sydney, May 1978.

for the academic institutions, particularly the countryside. This anger was more prominent, amongst the educated section - the students and the teachers - in short, the intelligentsia or the thinking section of the less privileged people. This section could, and, in the final run did, trigger agitations and uprisings. The agitations that led to the Revolution of 1974, not surprisingly again, had started in the rural areas, in the shape of the rural institutions' demands for parity with those of the cities, in terms of facilities.<sup>146</sup> The education policy, thus, in a way, intensified the already existing contradiction between the country and the city.<sup>147</sup>

The introduction of a broadcasting system, under Haile Selassie, had a somewhat similar impact. With this, radio sets became increasingly common in the country and these sets would catch broadcasts not only from local stations but also from stations in various other sources - meaning that the people were left, to a greater degree, susceptible to broadcast from foreign countries. As a consequence, it made it very easy for people in one part of the country to know of the privileges enjoyed by people in another part; similarly, this enabled the Ethiopian masses to know of the privileges enjoyed by the peoples in other countries. This resulted in an intensification of the internal contradiction

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<sup>146</sup> Interviews with Abraham and Dillon, op.cit.

<sup>147</sup> *Vide: supra*, pp.141-42.

on a regional level as well as a 'revolution of rising expectations' throughout Ethiopia, in general. These expectations could not be sufficiently met, due to reasons already noted and thus resulted in increased dissatisfaction, i.e. increased potential for conflict and revolutionary crisis. The broadcasts from such neighbouring radical sources as Egypt, Sudan and later, Somalia along with Ethiopia's own broadcasts, did for the masses what the policy of secular universal free education did for the students and the educated. Liberal and even radical ideas reached the masses and affected the psychological milieu in a way as to be relatively more conducive to conflict and revolutionary crisis. Somali broadcasting went as far as directly inciting the Somalis inhabiting areas under Ethiopian control, into secessionist uprising. These Somalis, now with radio sets, could listen to the broadcasts and be affected.

Haile Selassie, proceeding ahead with the policy of building up relations with the overseas European powers, aspired for, and succeeded in obtaining a seat for Ethiopia in the League of Nations. Though nothing new in terms of Ethiopian policy orientation, the event was significantly novel in terms of implications and consequences. It had far-reaching effects, both on a global level as well as for Ethiopia and the Horn.

This was the first time that a non-white underdeveloped state was formally accepted into the comity of nations. Since there is no scope for a detailed discussion of the global implications of developments on the Horn in this work,

this aspect will not be discussed here any further. For Ethiopia herself, membership in the League provided her with an international forum to be heard at, in such times of distress as that following the Italian invasion and occupation of the country in 1935-36. This made it possible on her part to attract some international support and to be treated as one of the Allied powers during this episode.<sup>148</sup> This was significant, as it meant not only a kind of guarantee for her independence after liberation - instead of being put under trusteeship like other colonies of the vanquished powers, but also a claim to the administration of territories liberated from such powers, particularly such adjacent territories liberated from Italy as Somaliland and Eritrea. Ethiopia did advance such claims, on both the territories.<sup>149</sup>

Though she failed in the case of Somaliland, in that of Eritrea, ultimately, she succeeded. The United Nations put Eritrea under Ethiopian administration in 1952. This aspect was significant. The very act of showing an interest to administer Somaliland only added to the traditional Somali suspicion of Ethiopian ambitions against their interests, and thus strengthened the factor of Somali-Ethiopian contradiction on the Horn. The putting of Eritrea under Ethiopian administration facilitated, later, the complete incorporation of

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<sup>148</sup> *Vide*: Mosley, *op.cit.*, p.285. This, however, was not without opposition from within the British administration. *ibid.*, pp.273-285.

<sup>149</sup> Ethiopia's claim to Eritrea was advanced as a claim for 'compensation to Ethiopia for her invasion by Italy in World War II' and Haile Selassie had laid claims on Somalia also. Anonymous, 'From the pages of Eritrean History: the Eritrean Question in the U.N. in 1950' in *Eritrea in Struggle/News Letter of Association of Eritrean Students in North America*, Vol.II, No.9, June 1978, p.4.

the territory into the Ethiopian empire, thereby giving rise to Eritrean resentment and the consequent insurgency.

By being able to be considered as an Ally, Ethiopia could manage to receive some of the spoils of war, from the ex-Italian territories. Apart from Eritrea, she also regained the Ogaden as well as received new territories of the Somali inhabited Haud. The Ogaden and the Haud have later caused serious problems, including secessionist movements, and irredentist wars between Somalia and Ethiopia.<sup>150</sup>

The entry into the League of Nations, and later, as a consequence of that, her emergence as the most prominent indigenous diplomatic power on the continent, gave Ethiopia the status of the *doyen* of the African states. This status was significant in two ways. First, it gave Ethiopia an extra edge of diplomatic strength vis-a-vis the Periphery, to counter which, the Peripheral societies had to seek such 'respectable' links as those with the Arab world or the socialist bloc. Given the strength of both Arab and radical states in Africa, a special link with the Arab World and a recognised championship of the socialist cause could give such an extra amount of diplomatic strength, that could possibly balance the 'extra edge' enjoyed by Ethiopia for other reasons. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that Somalia, obviously not Arab and hardly Marxist in terms of social psychology, became an Arab League member as well as the most vigorous champion of Marxism on the continent.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> *Vide:* Ch.II, pp.22-32.

<sup>151</sup> This is, however, not to suggest that these considerations were the only or certainly the cause behind Somalia's Arab oriented and socialist policy.

The Eritrean struggle also identified itself with the Arab world and became increasingly Marxist in rhetoric. Djibouti also, immediately after independence, applied for membership of the Arab League. These affiliations in turn strengthen the pattern of Core-Peripheral contradiction as well as bring in external factors in the region's affairs. Both increase the region's conflict potentials.

#### Italo-Ethiopian Struggle of 1934-41<sup>152</sup>

Another aspect of importance of this period was the Italo-Ethiopian struggle that started in 1934 and culminated with the liberation of Ethiopia in 1941.

From the view point of this work, the most important aspects of this struggle are the local reasons behind its outbreak, its geopolitical as well as strategic nature and its consequences.

The struggle started with a dispute involving the crossing of an international boundary to use the few wells around Wal Wal, in the Somali country. Given the topography and the local way of life, as already seen in the previous

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<sup>152</sup> It is more common, while discussing this point of history, to refer to the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935-36, as if the fighting started in 1935 and ended in 1936. It is true that full scale fighting that may be termed as a 'war' in the conventional sense, did start in 1935 with 'an Italian invasion [of Ethiopia] on October 1935 and lasted seven months' ending with 'the formal annexation of the country' on 9 May 1936. But, actually, fighting had already started at Wal Wal on 5 December 1934 and continued, in the guerrilla form, even after the 'formal annexation'. Thus, it is more appropriate to look at the phenomenon as a military struggle stretching from 1934 to 1941.

chapter,<sup>153</sup> any boundary dividing the Somali country is likely to affect the normal life in the area and thus bring about contradiction. The fact that the struggle did break out with a dispute involving the crossing of the boundary to use water across it confirms that particular proposition about the conflict potentials inherent in the boundaries cutting across the Somali country. It has been argued that the Wal Wal water right dispute was only a pretext, used by 'the Italian Fascist government, determined to create a *casus belli*', and that the war had other, more serious reasons behind it. Not denying these arguments, though some of them may be controversial, one can still see some point in the capability of a minor dispute on use of water from a few wells across the imposed boundary, to lead, even if only as a pretext, to a full fledged war.

Geopolitically speaking, the Italo-Ethiopian struggle was, apart from being an imperialist war of expansion on Italy's part on the global level - also, on the regional level, a struggle between the Core i.e. the Ethiopian Empire and the Periphery, i.e. the Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland. The fact that local Peripheral population, in the form of regular troops and otherwise, took an active part in the war against Ethiopia is also significant in this respect. In fact, in cases, especially in the crucial initial conflict at Wal Wal, the local people's enthusiasm

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<sup>153</sup> *Vide: supra*, Ch.II, pp.25-27.



in the struggle against the Ethiopians was significantly greater than that of their Italian commanders and administrators. Equally significant was the pro-Peripheral stance of Italy's colonial policy in her treatment of Ethiopia. It was not just an Italian war launched from the Periphery, annexing Ethiopia. It was as much a regional war of the body politics of Eritrea and Somalia, including of course, and inevitably, the component of Italian administration - against that of Ethiopia - as an Italian international war of colonial expansion.<sup>154</sup>

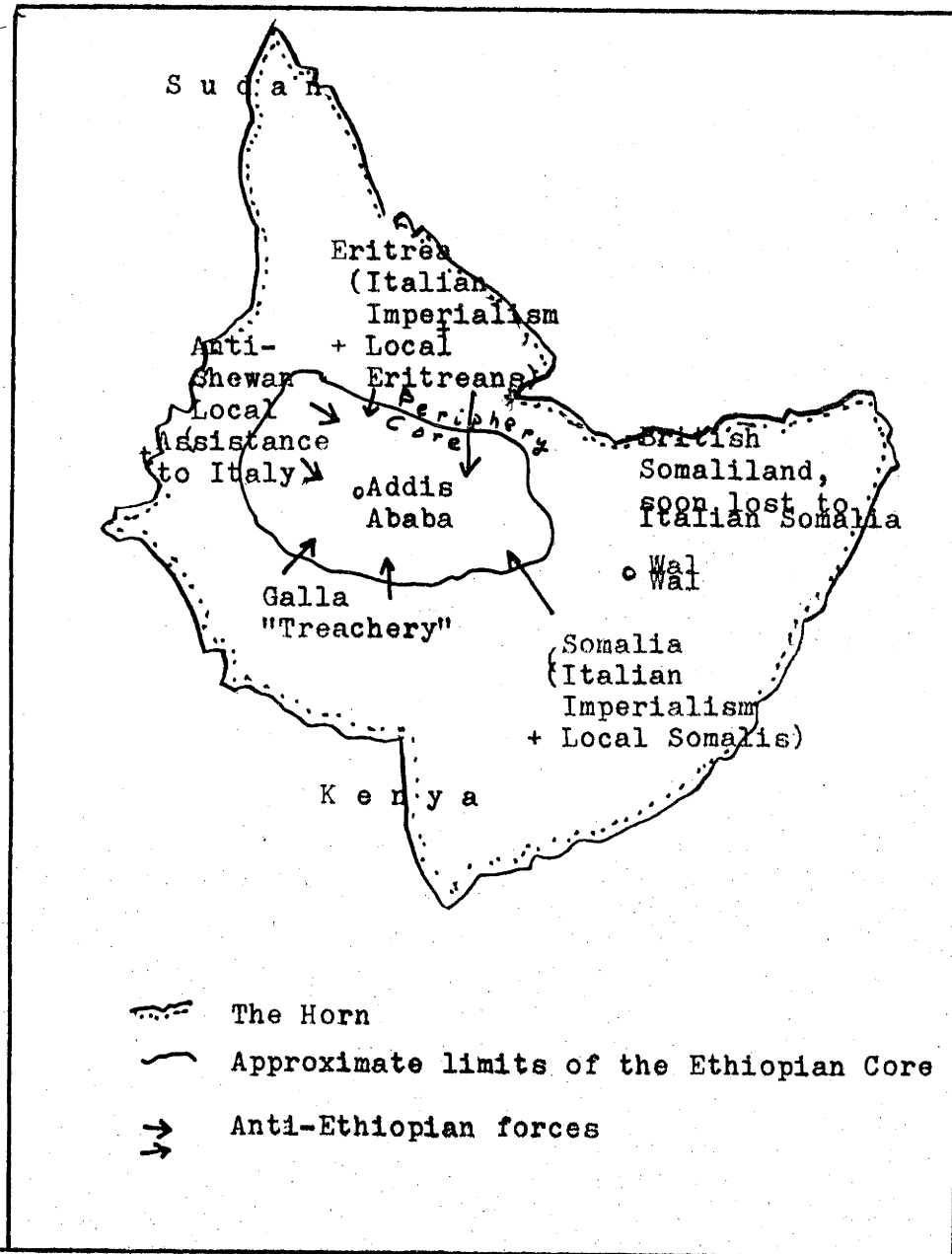
Thus, the Italo-Ethiopian struggle of 1934-41, once again confirmed the Core-Peripheral conflict pattern of relationships on the Horn of Africa (map),

Strategically, the war very soon became a subconventional, guerrilla war. This meant, the war for the most part, was not a non-political functional operation of the relative organ of the state - as it is normally in the case of a conventional war - but, a political war, with the active participation of the people within Ethiopia. In contemporary jargon, it may be termed a 'people's war'. This signifies the strength of the anti-foreign tendencies and obstinate love for independence of the Ethiopian people, to which reference has already been made.

It also is interesting that the Peripherals, notably the Somalis, who themselves had been in constant rebellion

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<sup>154</sup> For a discussion on this struggle, *vide*: A.J. Barker, *The Civilizing Mission: The Italo-Ethiopian War* (London, 1968); Mosley, *op.cit.*; Thomas M. Coffey, *Lion by the Tail/The Story of the Italo-Ethiopian War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974). Significantly, the Galla (Southern Periphery) also helped the Italians against Ethiopia. Mosley, *op.cit.*



CORE-PERIPHERAL CONFLICT: THE ITALO-ETHIOPIAN  
STRUGGLE, 1934- '41.

in anti-foreign uprisings against the European occupation until very recently, and could be crushed only with much difficulty and only as late as 1927, generally cooperated with the Italians at this point. This also may serve to confirm the strength of the pattern of the Core-Peripheral struggle. However, this also suggests the ease with which one can play upon the general hatred of the foreigners amongst the Peripherals, notably the Somalis. In fact, it is the use, by the colonial powers, of this factor of the Peripheral behavioural tendency that played a crucial part, along with others (especially these people's reverence for religion), in bringing about the final defeat of the formidable anti-colonial rebellions in the different parts of the Periphery, including both Somalia and Eritrea.<sup>155</sup>

In terms of consequences, the Italo-Ethiopian struggle caused fundamental damage to the office of the Emperor. The effects of this on that office in Ethiopia was similar in some way to that of the Second World War on that office in Japan. For the first time, the Emperor, some kind of a God incarnate in his own times,<sup>156</sup> was seen so publicly and so obviously to be utterly humiliated in the hands of mortals, that, again, of the 'lower kind', the 'ferengie'. Notwithstanding the publicity the Ethiopian Emperor received during his exile and the international stature that went with that - at home, his unquestionable 'divinity' was hurt. Though he still remained, as observed as late as in 1971,

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<sup>155</sup> *Vide: supra*, p.151. The reverence for religion was manipulated by the colonial counter-insurgency authorities against the rebellion. *Vide*, also: Jardine, *op.cit.*

<sup>156</sup> *Vide: supra*, pp.82-83.

'something like God',<sup>157</sup> with the general population, he was perhaps no more seen to be as inviolably divine in himself as he was traditionally regarded. More important, with the educated, including an important section of the elite, he was proven to be violable by and, given the right circumstances, which can be created - even subject to worldly forces. These realizations, shaking the abstract but ages long and thus, strongly entrenched restraints of culture and value - with the force of the tangible and concrete proof, strengthened the conviction and commitment to the need as well as credibility of change in favour of populism in Ethiopia - with the educated in particular, and further prepared the grounds for initiatives in that field - with the population in general.

#### Effects of European colonialism

It has been seen that European colonialism had, though with much difficulty, entrenched itself in the Peripheral areas, excepting those left to the Ethiopians, by the middle of the 1920s. The Peripherals left to the Ethiopians i.e. those in the Ogaden and the Oromo lands, also, eventually, came under European control since 1935 - first under the Italians, and later, the British. The impacts of the colonial rule in the area, in spite of its briefness, were great and significant. Apart from the widespread manifestation of anti-colonial hatred, confirming this aspect of the

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<sup>157</sup> Jaffe, op.cit.

societies' behavioural traits, and strengthening it, as well as organisation and conversion of that into modern nationalism, the colonial period had other significant consequences also. For one thing, it changed the landscape of the area as well as the quality of life therein. The Italians, like their Roman ancestors everywhere, were great road builders and constructors of public utilities like schools, hospitals and other public buildings.

The British, who initially held only a section of the whole area and later succeeded (temporarily) to the entire Italian East African Empire of the Horn- in pursuance of their welfare oriented colonial policy and in view of the military necessities and strategic importance of the area during the Second World War, followed in this respect (road building etc.), in the footsteps of the Italians. The French, as already noted, concentrated most of their energy in the area in the building up of communications including the Djibouti railroad and the Djibouti port. In short, the European colonial regimes resulted in the building up of better and faster communication systems. This factor helped integrate various sections of the relevant societies and thus forge their respective nationalisms. As the European colonialism had a longer period of functioning in the Peripheral areas than in the Ethiopian Core, and, as the lowland and coastal character of the Peripheral areas made them more suitable as well as more immediate a target of communications build-up, these works of construction were greater in extent in the Periphery than in the Core. This

meant that the integrative impact of these works were greater in the Peripheral lowlands than in the highlands of the Core. Thus, the constructions integrated, primarily, the Peripheral groups into each other rather than integrating them into the Ethiopian imperial system centred at the Core's highland polity. This strengthened the bases of Peripheral nationalisms, particularly Somali, also Eritrean, and potentially Afari, as well as the relevant irredentisms.

While communications have obvious integrative effects, hospitals, schools, and administrative buildings also help a function of integration of all those different groups, which avail themselves of these amenities. This way, not only the communications build-up, but also other welfare oriented constructions contributed to the rise of the Peripheral nationalisms. The rise of the modern nationalisms in the Periphery (Somali, Eritrean) was facilitated by European colonial powers not only indirectly through the general impact of their rule on the area but also directly through their encouragement in the creation and activities of such organisations as the Somali Youth League in the Somali areas and the Muslim League in Eritrea.

The strengthening of Somali and Eritrean nationalisms strengthened the potential for conflict between Ethiopia Proper and the Peripheral areas. The consolidation of Somali nationalism and in consequence, the growth of Somali irredentism, due to, among other factors, the impact of colonialism, contributes to the conflict potentials on the Horn, not only on the inter-actor level in the shape of

Somali-Ethiopian, or more precisely, the Core-Peripheral contradiction, but also on an intra-actor level, within Somalia. As has been already noticed, the Peripheral Somali society tends to be an egalitarian, open and pluralistic system of loosely bound units. But, the growth of irredentism creates a new situation in which the same society also tends to favour a centralistic and dictatorial system, since,

When irredentist objectives are given priority ... the internal power structure of the country is likely to develop in such a way as to favour those advocating order and unity at home and militancy abroad. Such groups generally include the military ... or some single leader with dictatorial tendencies. There is a strong tendency for the military to assume political power in irredentist political systems. There is a tendency for voluntary institutions and the mass media to become subservient to central authority, and a tendency on the part of the central government to resist genuinely free elections and a representative process that might change the existing power structure. Frequently opponents of the regime will be arrested and charged with espionage and collaboration with the enemy.

In short, an irredentist society tends to be dictatorial, repressive, closed and centralist.<sup>158</sup>

This way, the consolidation of nationalism, through the growth of irredentism as amongst its highest-priority public policies, has put the society of the Somali state confronted with a basic internal contradiction. Both the tendencies, basic as those are, direct the Somali society in two opposing directions. The society has, obviously taken

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<sup>158</sup> Myron Weiner, 'The Macedonian Syndrome/An Historical Model of International Relations and Political Development', in *World Politics*, Vol.23, No.4, July 1977.

to the direction of centralistic military dictatorship in the recent years, showing all the characteristics of an irredentist state turned to such dictatorship as in the above quotation. The state machinery was taken over by the military in 1969 and since then, democratic pluralism has been suppressed and replaced by centralistic military dictatorship. The Somali government's policy of hanging on charges of 'tribalism'<sup>159</sup> are but signs of centralism as against the autonomous functioning of the tribes which essentially involves the sense of belonging and favouring one's own respective tribe. The curtailing of tribal autonomy and all that goes along with it, in the Somali context, is tantamount to the curtailing of pluralism, as the tribe and tribe alone is the basic social unit of the Somali society:

... the so-called 'dia-paying groups' ... composed of men descended from a common ancestor from four to eight generations removed from living men ... is ... politically and legally a corporation [and, the] ... political entity which is the basic unit of ... Somali political structure.<sup>160</sup>

and

it is through his genealogy of birth  
[i.e. tribal or clan-based identity]  
that the individual is placed in society.

<sup>159</sup> President Barre declared, on 16 July 1971, that 'anyone who ... promotes tribalism should be hanged', quot. in *The Standard*, Nairobi, March 1, 1978.

<sup>160</sup> I.M. Lewis, 'Historical Aspects of Genealogies in Northern Somali Structure', in R.A. Oliver and J.D. Fage (eds), *The Journal of African History* (Cambridge, The University Press, 1962), Vol.III, No.1, p.38.



As Somali themselves loosely put it, what a person's address is in Europe, his pedigree is in Somaliland.<sup>161</sup>

### Intra-Peripheral Apathy and Conflict

The above presentation of the area's history, drawing attention to the pattern of Core-Peripheral conflict as it does, however, should not convey any idea of a perfect unity of the Peripheral societies as a single unit in the dichotomy. While these societies have a degree of unity in terms of their objective characteristics and behavioural tendencies, particularly as in contrast to and in conflict with those of the Highlands Core, a complete and conscious unity of all these societies as one single political unit comparable to the Ethiopian polity of the Highlands could never become a fact. However the unity in terms of characteristics and tendencies, particularly in relation to the Highlands Core have led to recurrent occasions of partial and *ad hoc* unification of significant parts of the Peripheral areas and a permanent, but vague and mostly unconscious co-operation of most, if not all, these areas

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<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, p.39. For the purpose of this study, 'tribe' and 'clan' will be used loosely and interchangeably. The Somali authorities convicting on charges of 'tribalism' also (above), obviously, use the term in this manner, as, nothing like a tribal difference in the rigid sense, or comparable to that in the sub-Saharan context exists in the Somali society. However, given their size in relation to the whole Somali population; the extent of area they occupy; the extent and intensity of their mutual distinction and rivalry; and the basic identity of the tribe and the clan in their being based on lineage - the Somali clans may be loosely termed also as tribes.

in actions against the Highlands. Notwithstanding this qualified unity of the Peripheral societies in relation to the Core-Peripheral conflict, however, these societies have a history of conflict amongst themselves. The most serious of the examples of such intra-Peripheral conflict may be found in the long term conflicts between the Galla and the Somali in course of the Somali migration southward from northern Somalia, evicting the Galla and later, Galla migrations from the south into the western parts of the Somali inhabited area.<sup>161a</sup> Even within the broad ethnic group within the generally Cushitic Periphery, such as the Somali for instance, internal feud has been a matter of tradition. Thus, for example, even during the hey days of the Somali's nationalist struggle under the 'Mad Mullah' - one of the rare times when the normally individualistic and mutually apathetic Somali families could be seen consciously united in as broad a unit as stretching all over the Somali inhabited areas, Somali groups fought each other. In fact this intra-Somali feud had been used as one of the major weapons in the long and ultimately successful counter-insurgency war against the Dervish movement. There is no scope here for greater elaboration of the intra-Peripheral conflicts. But it is a fact that the Peripheral societies have had a history of recurrent conflicts amongst and within them, and this, unlike the case of intra-Ethiopian struggles, neither for the capture of, nor under, any centralistic system superceding the struggling groups.

<sup>161a</sup> Starting in the 10th and the 16th centuries respectively. Vide: I.M. Lewis, "The Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa" in *Journal of Africa History*, I (1960), pp. 213-30. There is some controversy regarding the patterns of Somali and Galla Migrations. For a view opposing the generally accepted theory, vide: H.S. Lewis, "The Origins of the Galla and Somali" in *Journal of Africa History*, VII, I (1966), pp. 27-46

This has two implications, viz. (a) the Periphery did not develop, unlike Ethiopia, as one centrally organised single polity, and (b) in this case - like Ethiopia - is likely to have developed a tendency for internal feuds due to repeated engagement in such feuds and consequently, form, what may be termed, a 'social habit'.

All this means that in view of its historical developments, the Periphery, while in relation to the pattern of relationships on the Horn of Africa in general, may be treated as a unit in the dichotomy of the pattern - in terms of its own internal conditions, it is a unit only at the minimal level, being nothing more than a pluralistic system of a very loose, incomplete, vague and unconscious confederation of highly unindividualistic, mutually apathetic, and at times hostile, groups.

### Conclusions

The above examination of the historical process on the Horn of Africa after its being brought into the global power political system, leads to the following conclusions:

1. The Horn of Africa tends to experience a two level complex of rivalries and conflicts at the same time. A set of global rivalries and conflicts is superimposed upon a set of intra-regional contradictions. Though either could offset the other, both would have their own reasons for existence in the region and also their own independent basic courses.
2. It is, generally, the local pattern of relationships and contradictions, that generally prevails, notwithstanding external involvements, in shaping the inter-actor relationships on the Horn.

3. The Core-Peripheral balance of power tends to persist. If and whenever this balance is fatally threatened, it tends to be maintained or restored through external intervention, invited by one or the other of the local actors.
4. The Horn's societies are characterised by a strong feeling against foreign, particularly European domination. However, as an important exception to this, the Peripheral societies, in general, do not tend to resent foreign 'protection' from the immediate extra-regional neighbourhood.
5. The Peripheral societies tend to seek protection and support from extra-regional powers in their struggle against other regional actors. They tend to prefer protection from the immediate extra-regional neighbours, particularly the Moslem ones - over that from the overseas powers, but tend to accept the latter if the former is not forthcoming or satisfactory.
6. The Central Highlands tend to seek and receive assistance from powers beyond the Horn's immediate neighbours.
7. Ethiopia Proper tends to seek and obtain overseas assistance in the interest of its own policy of expansion into the Periphery and retaining the fruits of any successes for this policy. For this, Ethiopia is likely to compromise, if necessary, with the overseas powers, at the expense of the Peripheral societies. However, she tends to prefer direct, unilateral, military expansion over such diplomatic arrangements.
8. Overseas powers, if and when established on the Periphery, tend to fall into the regional pattern of relationships and to come in conflict with the Core.

9. The Ethiopian society has developed as militarist. The society tends to admire the military and force. This provides a popular base for the military in its bid for power and in pursuance of its policies.

10. The military in Ethiopia provides a means of infiltration of the 'lesser' peoples and classes, including those from the Peripheral areas under Ethiopian control, into the ruling elite. This sows seeds of contradiction within the ruling elite, between the political authority and the military force.

11. Administration in the Ethiopian system tends to be political, closer to the centre, and military in the outlying areas. The politico-military contradiction translates into Centre-Provincial conflict of interests.

12. The Ethiopian military is characterised by elitism and internal rivalries.

13. Modernization increases internal contradictions within Ethiopia. One such contradiction characterizing the state is that between urban and rural interests. With the rise of a small but significant bourgeoisie, the Ethiopian society has developed as pregnant with potential for exploiting the many and ever increasing internal contradictions for a revolutionary change.

14. Modernization increases potential for Core-Peripheral conflict also, by consolidating modern, conscious nationalisms and, consequently, relatively stable and stronger, and territorially wider, states/entities on the Periphery as well as by enhancing the value, both actual and perceived, of the Peripheral areas, particularly the ones under Ethiopian control.

15. Unresolved irredentist questions tend to subject the relevant Peripheral societies to dictatorial, centralist systems. This causes fundamental internal contradictions in these societies, adding to potential for revolutionary crises on the Horn.

16. The polities on the Horn tend to follow the socio-political tendencies set by their respective long historical experiences. Any effort at imposing systems on them that do not conform to these historically evolved tendencies of theirs, is likely to fail in the face of strong opposition from within their respective polities.

## CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONIntroduction: Potentials for Crisis on the Horn

The study of the local milieu of the Horn of Africa, in terms of the most permanent of its factors - the geographical setting, and its past history, leads to a number of conclusions, which are supported by recent developments. The study indicates that there exists a basis for international conflict and revolutionary crises in the Horn's local milieu as independent of, though not necessarily unaffected by or unrelated to, the dynamics of global politics. These indigenous potentials require to be understood as a prerequisite for an understanding of the strategic situation on the Horn of Africa.

A number of factors contribute to this situation: traditionally landlocked Ethiopia's concern for an outlet to the sea and an unsatisfied Eritrean demand for self-determination; arid resource poor Somalia's irredentism aiming at uniting the Somali inhabited areas lying under Ethiopia and Kenyan administration - and Somali-Ethiopian competition for natural resources in the south eastern areas of the state of Ethiopia; contradiction between the interests of the various classes, regions and ethnic groups in each of the three states of the region; modernization infused to the traditional societies in piecemeal measures instead of in an overall, well-coordinated movement; difference in

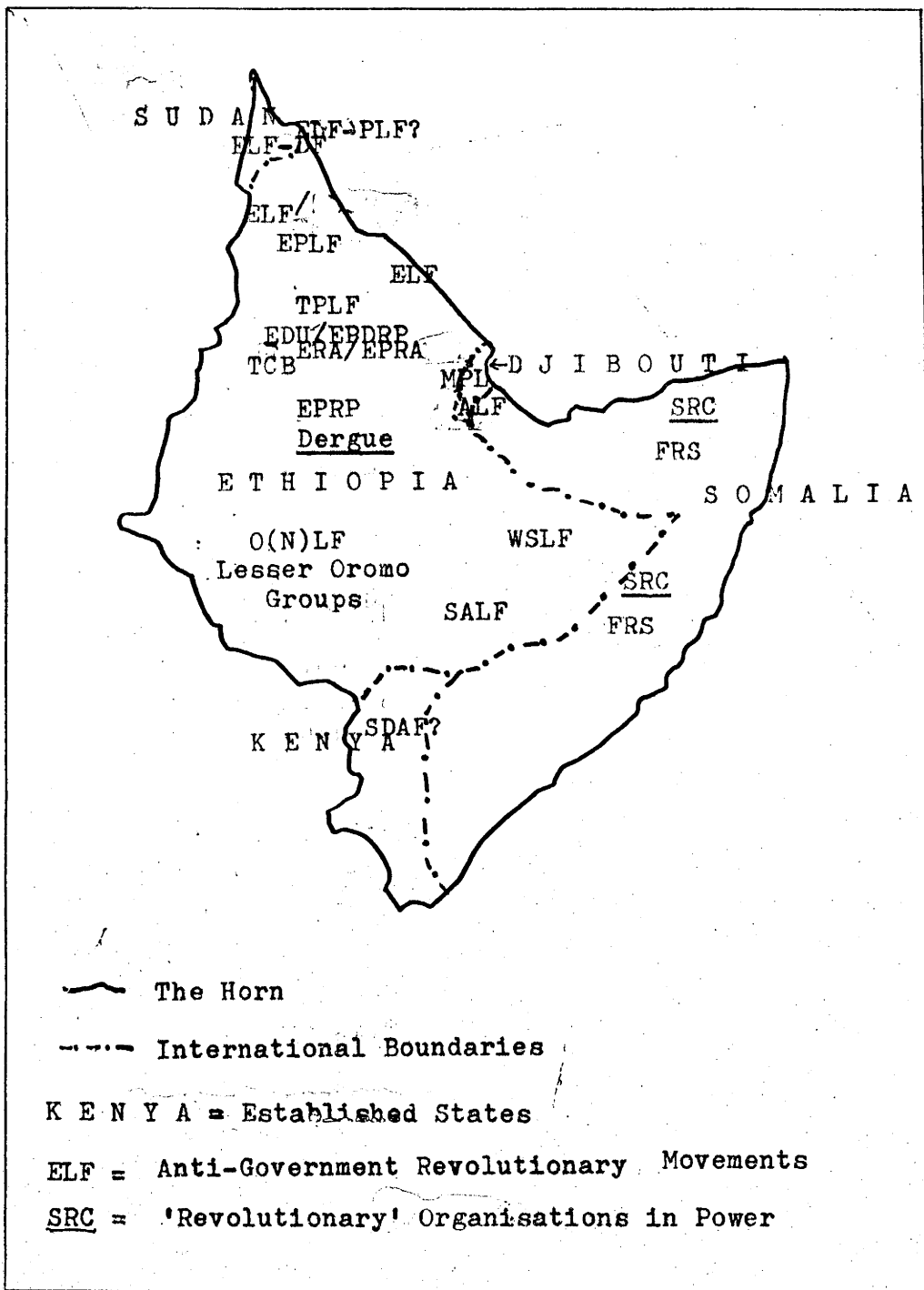
the levels of historical development of Ethiopia Proper and the Peripheral societies - all these factors combine to serve as bases for both international conflict and revolutionary crisis in the area. One other major factor presenting the potentials is the general pattern of naturally evolved socio-political behaviour and strategic relationships that is presented by the Horn's geopolitical setting and centuries of its historical development. This 'general pattern' which may be termed, for convenience, as 'the Pattern', is in fact an integrated composition of the geopolitical and the historical patterns.

#### The Horn's 'Pattern' of Strategic Relationships

The Pattern presents the Horn's system of strategic relationships and behavioural tendencies as a dichotomy of two distinct and generally contrasting as well as conflicting sets of actors. These two sets roughly coincide with the Peripheral Lowland's Moslem, non-Amhara, generally Cushitic, pastoral-nomadic societies on the one hand, and the Highland's Coptic-Christian, Amharic and Semitic/Semitized, feudal societies on the other. These two sets may be termed conveniently as (i) the 'Periphery', the 'Peripheral Lowlands' or simply the 'Lowland(s)', and (ii) the 'Highland's Core', the 'Core' or the 'Highlands', respectively. Extra-regional powers, if and when they become established on either the Periphery or the Core, are likely to fit into the local Pattern in terms of the regional alignments.



Revolutionary Movements on the  
Horn of Africa: Scenes of Operation



The Core coincides with Ethiopia Proper, i.e. the traditional Empire of Abyssinia or Ethiopia. This includes the highland parts of Eritrea. The Periphery includes the states of Somalia and Djibouti as well as the Lowlands of Eritrea, the Somali inhabited parts of the present state of Ethiopia, her Galla inhabited southern provinces and a narrow fringe of her territory in the west, bordering on the Sudan. Given the mutually distinct and generally contrasting and conflicting nature of the Core and the Periphery, this means that there is a tendency rooted in the area's geopolitical and historical realities for the lowland Eritrea, the Somali inhabited areas of Ethiopia (e.g. the Ogaden), her Galla inhabited southern provinces and her Western borderlands to seek an identity distinct from Ethiopia Proper and to engage in conflict with it.

Thus the present movements in Eritrea, the Afar areas of the Ogaden and the southern provinces of Ethiopia for independence and autonomy, and the respective relevant guerrilla struggles have roots deep in the area's indigenous milieu, rather than being the creation of foreign intervention or of a reaction to certain recent reformative measures - as has been sometimes suggested.

At the same time, for example, there is nothing much surprising, in view of the observation made above, in the 'dramatic' switch in the Soviet position on the Horn. Following the Somali 'Revolution' of 1969, Soviet power had become well-established in Somalia on the Periphery. The Soviet Union, through its support to the Eritrean

insurgents, had become a power in Eritrea, in the north of the Periphery, also. After the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 and the Marxist orientation of the Revolutionary regime, the USSR gradually became established on the Core. Following the Pattern, the Soviets had to withdraw from the Periphery. Like a number of other efforts in the past, the recent Soviet effort at unification of the Core and Periphery, this time under Soviet influence, also failed.<sup>1</sup>

#### Intra-Peripheral Co-operation Against the 'Core'

The various Peripheral units appear to tend to co-operate against the Core. Thus, it is likely that some, if not all, of the insurgent movements and established states on the Periphery will co-operate in their common struggle against the Ethiopian Core.

Contemporary conditions on the Horn also, like the past history, support this proposition. Thus the West Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) of the Somali inhabited areas of Ethiopia have won open and active support of Somalia, who went

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<sup>1</sup> For the past efforts at unification of the Horn, *vide: supra*, Ch.II, p. and Ch.IV, p.157. For contemporary Cuban initiated efforts (March and September, 1977) and its failure, *vide: Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, p.28402. For a general discussion on the realignment of powers on the Horn, and particularly, the switch in the Soviet position, *vide: Colin Legum, 'Realities of the Ethiopian Revolution' in The World Today, Vol.33, No.8, August 1977. Mohammed Ayoob, The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Super Power Involvement (Canberra: The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, 1978), pp.14-18. 'Special Correspondent', 'Indian Ocean/The Spectre of Big Power Rivalry' in Africa Magazine (London), No.83, July 1978, pp.81-82.*

to the extent of engaging in a full fledged war with Ethiopia, even if at the cost of dislocating her own longstanding international military and other alignments - in this support.

At the same time, Somalia has been supporting the guerrilla movement in the Galla areas and also that in Eritrea.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Eritrean and the West Somali guerrilla movements have been supporting each other.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Afar rebels of Ethiopia have found a safe refuge and base in Somalia and Djibouti while these latter two have shown mutual affinity.<sup>3a</sup>

#### Intra-peripheral Disunity and Conflict

However, the 'Pattern' of intra-Peripheral co-operation against Ethiopia does not relieve the several Peripheral entities of their own mutual contradictions. Thus, quite

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<sup>2</sup> There have been indications of Somalia's support for the Eritrean insurgents as well as that of these latter's trust in, and support for the former. For instance, cf. 'A very important historical fact to us [i.e. Eritrean insurgents] is that Somalia was the first country to allow the ELF to open an office. Our relations with that country remain excellent. We know that Ogaden is part and parcel of Somalia, even though it was colonised by Ethiopia': *Statement* by Ahmad Nasser, leader of the ELF Revolutionary Council in his *interview*, *New Africa* (London), December 1977. Also, the fact that on 13 September 1969, in one of their earliest hijackings, the Eritrean terrorists directed the pilot of an airliner to fly to Mogadishu - displaying a measure of the terrorists' trust in Somalia. *Keesing's*, p.23604. The existence of an 'Eritrea-Somali Friendship Association' also is known. Catherine Hoskyns, *Case Studies in African Diplomacy: 2/The Ethiopia-Somali-Kenya Dispute, 1960-67* (Dar Es-salaam, 1970), p.19. For Somalian support of WSLF and Oromo 'liberation' movements, *vide: Africa Confidential*, Vo.18, No.24, pp.2-4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 'We [i.e. the Eritrean insurgents and W. Somali guerrillas] have a very good political co-ordination at military level': Ahmad Nasser (1977), *ibid.* Reportedly, the WSLF, the ALF and the ELF-PLF concluded an agreement of military cooperation on 29 May 1978, *Keesing's*, p.29359.

3a. Legum, *op.cit.*, p.309. Anthony Hughes, *Djibouti/France: The Reluctant Colonialist?* in *Africa Report*, November-December 1975. Also, *Africa Confidential*, Vol.16, No.17, pp.2-4.

parallel to the likelihood of the different Peripheral entities co-operation against Ethiopia, exists a likelihood that these entities will experience tension, both mutually and internally. Thus, these entities, while co-operated, as seen above, against the common 'enemy', they took care enough to point out or maintain their separate identity, and signs of contradiction between as well as within some of them have been apparent. Thus, Eritrean rebels point out that the Eritrean struggle is completely different from that of the WSLF.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Djibouti leaders have shown apprehension about a possible Somali absorption of their entity. The Eritrean movement is fragmented into at least three public factions,<sup>5</sup> a record of full fledged civil war between

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<sup>4</sup> My interview with Tadesse Kahsai, Eritrean in exile, Sydney, 1977.

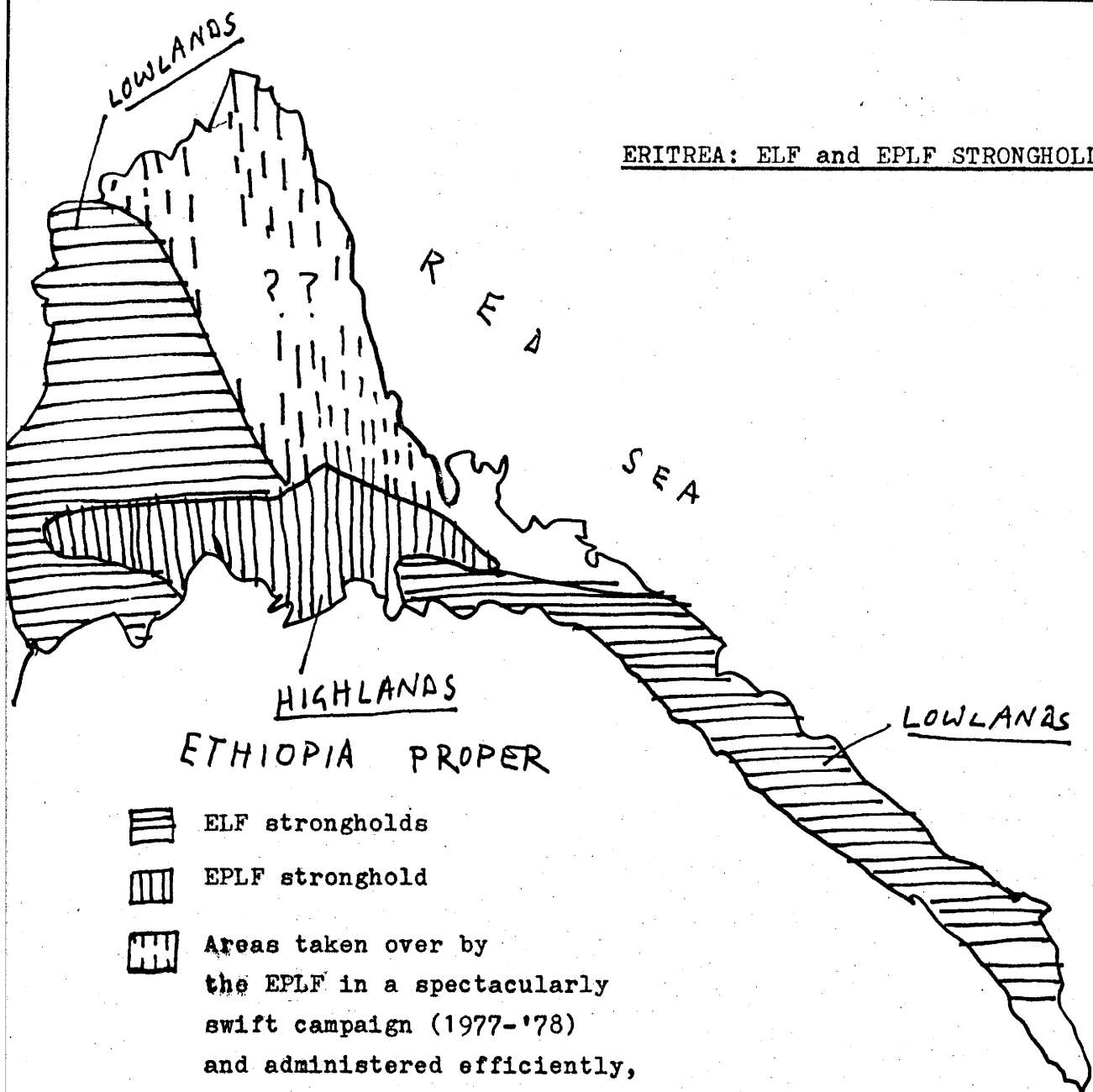
<sup>5</sup> At least six names have come to notice as representing Eritrean insurgent movements. These are: (1) the Eritrean Liberation Front; (2) the *Mahber Showate*; (3) The Arab Front for the Liberation of Eritrea; (4) the Eritrean Popular Liberation Armed Forces; (5) the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front; and (6) the Eritrean Liberation Front-Popular Liberation Forces. *Vide: Keesing's*, p.23306. Also, Jim Paul, *Introduction to his interview with Amdemichael Kahsai, EPLF Central Committee Member, 31 August 1977, in Upheaval in the Horn/ Somalia-Eritrea-Ethiopia (Middle East Research & Information Project Report No.62), Washington D.C., November 1977, p.19.*




The intra-Eritrean contradiction is contributed to, also, by the fact that, in terms of the 'Pattern', Eritrea includes parts of both the two fundamentally contrasting and conflicting units viz. the Periphery and the Core. *Vide: supra*, p.182. This basis of contradiction is reflected also in the contrasting treatment, by the Ethiopian counter-insurgency forces, of the highland and the lowland parts of Eritrea. For example, when military rule was imposed on Eritrea on 16 December 1970, certain parts of the territory were exempted. These parts were the primarily Christian districts, identical with the 'Core'. *Keesing's*, p.24507.

It has been observed that the 'Eritreans ... practised at least two major religions, and lived under markedly different social conditions ... the armed struggle did not unite

(cont'd)

ERITREA: ELF and EPLF STRONGHOLDS



-  ELF strongholds
-  EPLF stronghold
-  Areas taken over by the EPLF in a spectacularly swift campaign (1977-'78) and administered efficiently, carrying out symbolic reforms - but lost in the face of the next massive Ethiopian operation (1978).

Based, primarily on: Africa Confidential, 3 March 1978; Impact International, 9-22 September 1977; Keesing's Contemporary Archives, pp. 29357-58.

two of these factions, a likelihood of renewed civil war, in an independent Eritrea, if this ever becomes a reality.<sup>6</sup> Djibouti's internal system shows signs of contradictions between the Afars and the Issas;<sup>7</sup> the Ogaden struggle has experienced at least two separate movements;<sup>8</sup> so does the struggle in the Oromo lands, and Somalia experiences - as observed in the preceding chapters - a cleavage between the north and the south as well as other lesser contradictions.

#### The Peripheral's Source of Support

One may discern, from the preceding chapters, a geopolitical pattern of the region's foreign relations also. It

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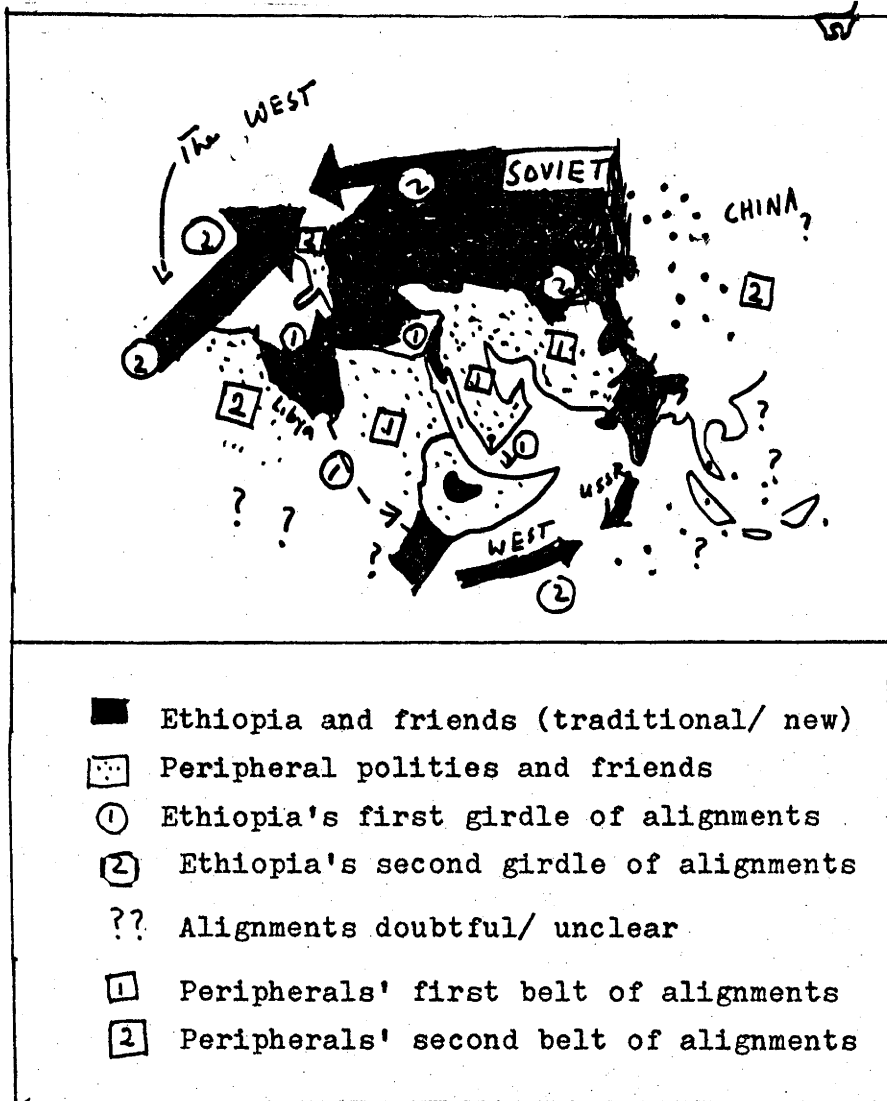
all Eritrea. It was based mainly on the Muslim population of the coastal lowlands and took the form of a ... rebellion, with a strong emphasis on Muslim opposition to the domination of Christian Ethiopia'. The Christian highland parts of Eritrea also joined the secessionist movement, later. But still, perhaps one can discern the difference and contradiction between the two in the pattern of affiliation of the populations of the two parts with either of the two major guerrilla organisations - predominantly Moslem ELF and the 'Marxist' predominantly Christian EPLF. *Vide: Jim Paul, 'Struggle in the Horn: A Survey' in Jim Paul, Upheaval in the Horn..., op.cit., p.4. Also, Appendix, infra, Africa Confidential, 18 November 1977, p.3.*

<sup>6</sup> *Vide: Appendix III, map, pp. 185-186, infra. For apprehensions of civil war in an independent Eritrea, vide: 'Eritrea Emergent', interview with Ahmed Nasser, leader, ELF Revolutionary Council in New African, December 1977, pp.1183-1184. Also, Statement by Osman Saleh Sabbe, leader of the ELF-PLF in Impact International, 26 May-8 June 1979, p.3.*

<sup>7</sup> For example the recent 'great concern' over the 'alarming atmosphere' due to 'upsurge of a virulent and widespread of atrocity in Djibouti' owing to the 'negative ethnicity ... eschewed between the Issas and Afars'. A.O. Chienjina, 'Djibouti on tightrope' in 'Letters to the Editor', Africa Magazine (London), No.83, July 1978, p.11.

<sup>8</sup> WSLF, Statement (reprint) in Young Pakistan (Dacca), Vol.XXI, No.385, 24 August 1969.

The Horn's Pattern of Extra-regional  
Alignments





appears that the Peripheral entities generally, seek and obtain protective assistance from the immediate neighbourhood of the region, particularly, the Moslem powers.

Thus, it should not be surprising that all the neighbouring Arab countries (excepting Libya and doubtfully, South Yemen) and Iran, with all their numerous longstanding mutual conflicts, seem to be in unison in supporting the Peripheral entities - against the Ethiopian Core. Such strange bedfellows as radical Iraq and Syria on the one hand and the conservative Gulf States and Saudi Arabia on the other, such longstanding rivals as the Saudis and the Iranians, such old enemies as Syria and Iraq, and Iraq and Iran - all have joined each other in assisting one or the other of the Peripheral entities - Somali, the WSLF, the Eritrean insurgent movements.

On the global level, the Eritrean insurgents have identified themselves with the Arab world and have viewed it as their patron, protector and spokesman. It is not without significance that in their earlier handouts and similar papers, the Eritrean insurgents called themselves as the '*Arab* Liberation Front for Eritrea' or the '*Arab* Front for the Liberation of Eritrea' (emphasis mine). As an instance of the Eritrean insurgent's view of the Arab world as their protector and spokesman, one may note ELF's request on 29 December 1970 to three *Arab* (and not any other - not even any of the African) states - Libya, Syria and Iraq, to call an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to halt 'the mass annihilation of Eritrea's population'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *ELF Statement*, 29 December 1970, cited in *Keesing's*, p.24507. Also, *Keesing's*, pp.23306 and 23604.

At the same time the ELF threatened to 'annihilate the Ethiopian economy' and to extend its fight - against Ethiopia *with help of Iraq, Syria and Libya* (emphasis mine).<sup>10</sup>

The Arab world also acted as a protector of the Eritrean interests. As far back as the late 1940s and the early 1950s Egypt showed tendencies of treating Eritrea as a sphere of her influence and acted in the UN in favour of the Eritrean nationalists' stand against Ethiopia. Later, after these nationalists rose in armed struggle, the Arab world became increasingly active as a protector and patron of the struggle. Thus, Cairo, Damascus and the Sudanese towns became the earliest external bases of the Eritrean movements<sup>11</sup> and Iraq was reported, as far back as in 1966, to be supporting the 'Front for Liberation of Eritrea'. Egypt was reported in January 1967 to be sending help to the Eritrean insurgents.<sup>12</sup> By 1967 Sudan was serving as a shelter for 7,000 Eritrean 'nationalist' refugees<sup>13</sup> and by 1970, the number had risen to over 16,000.<sup>14</sup> Damascus has been a public base for the Eritrean terrorists at least since 1969.<sup>15</sup> Iraq, Syria and South Yemen have been training Eritrean guerrillas with new

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<sup>10</sup> *ELF Statement*, 3 January 1971, cited in *Keesing's*, p.24507.

<sup>11</sup> My interview with Johannes, Eritrean exile, Canberra, 1978. Amdemichael Kahsai, EPLF Central Committee Member, interview with Jim Paul, o.p.cit., p.20.

<sup>12</sup> *Keesing's*, p.2166.

<sup>13</sup> Government of Sudan, estimates, cited in *Keesing's*, p.24507.

<sup>14</sup> Osman Saleh Sabi, Secretary General of the ELF: *Statement* (Beirut), 13 January 1970; cited in *Keesing's*, p.24507.

<sup>15</sup> *Keesing's*, p.23604.

small arms on credit.<sup>16</sup> Saudi Arabia and Sudan were assisting the Eritrean insurgent in early 1977 and Sudan pledged support to the movement at the same time. Kuwait decided, reportedly in May 1977, to donate \$1,500,000 to the ELF-PLF.<sup>17</sup> In August of the same year, the Iraqi Baath Party warned the USSR against assisting Ethiopia in its counter-insurgency war in Eritrea.<sup>18</sup> By June of 1978, Iraq had threatened to sever diplomatic relations with the USSR if it would not listen to her warning.<sup>19</sup> Even Libya, who switched against the Eritreans at a later stage due to reasons quite peculiar to its own particular conditions, had been sending arms to the insurgents as late as the middle of 1976.<sup>20</sup>

The particular pattern of relationship between the neighbourhood of the region and its peripheral areas, appears to be true in case of the Somali areas also. The Somalis, like the Eritreans, have identified with the Arabs and, the Somali insurgents, in their earlier handouts and similar papers, have looked upon the Moslem states as patrons and protectors.

It has been observed that, for the Somalis, the 'Arabs had been significant even before [they] joined the Arab League in February 1974'.<sup>21</sup> During and following the War

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p.24507.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p.28635.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p.28636.

<sup>19</sup> *Facts on File*, (New York: Facts on File, Inc.), 2 June 1978.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 24 July 1976.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Lavrencic, *Somalia/Living without Russia*, in *Africa Magazine* (London), No.83, July 1978, p.40.

in Ogaden, Somalia sought protective assistance from the Arab states and also from Iran. Thus, the Somali President visited the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar and Syria during June-August and September 1977, some of the countries more than once - asking for protection and assistance. Another Somali high official visited Oman and Kuwait in August, and later, Iran in November of 1977 to the same end. The President once again went on a tour of most of the Arab countries and also Iran during the period between December 1977 and March 1978, with the same aim.<sup>22</sup>

All these Arab countries and also Iran responded favourably. The Egyptian President sounding like a 'protector', spoke in February 1978, of the Horn of Africa as an Egyptian sphere of interest.<sup>23</sup> At the same time Egypt indicated her will to intervene in Somalia's favour<sup>24</sup> and promised to send an armoured brigade to that end.<sup>25</sup> She had already sent weapons worth \$30,000,000 to Somalia by that time, by airlifts and otherwise.<sup>26</sup>

Saudi Arabia also took the stance of a 'protector'. In July 1977 she assured Somalia of her security<sup>27</sup> and in

<sup>22</sup> *Keesing's*, p.28993.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p.

<sup>24</sup> *Facts on File 1978*, pp.99-100.

<sup>25</sup> *Africa Report*, March-April 1978, p.31.

<sup>26</sup> *Keesing's*, p.28992; *Facts on File 1978*, p.99; *Africa Report*, March-April 1978, p.31.

<sup>27</sup> *Keesing's*, p.28636.

September 1977, offered 300 million in general aid<sup>28</sup> and \$400,000,000 for arms in particular, to that end.<sup>29</sup> By March 1978, Saudi Arabia was supplying limited amount of weapons<sup>30</sup> and at least a substantial part of the Egyptian arms aid was being financed by her.<sup>31</sup>

Sudan, also, like Egypt, had, by March 1978, pledged a brigade to Somalia's defence.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Iraq decided, by August 1977, to contribute \$700,000 and 3,000 men to the same end. Both Iraq and Syria, traditionally hostile towards each other, were sending arms to Somalia.<sup>33</sup>

Iran also has acted as a Protector for Somalia. On 1 January 1978, the Shah commented that Iran would not stand idly by if Somalia were invaded, and later supplied weapons for Somalia's defence,<sup>34</sup> supplied Somalia with anti-aircraft guns and pilots. Even Pakistan has been reported to have supplied Somalia with anti-aircraft guns and pilots.<sup>35</sup>

Military assistance was supplemented by economic protection also. Thus, since November 1977, Somalia's economic development

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<sup>28</sup> *Facts on File*, 24 September 1977, p.715.

<sup>29</sup> *Keesing's*, p.28636.

<sup>30</sup> *Africa Report*, March-April 1978, p.31.

<sup>31</sup> *Facts on File*, 10 September 1977.

<sup>32</sup> *Africa Report*, March-April 1978, p.31.

<sup>33</sup> *Facts on File*, 1 September 1977.

<sup>34</sup> *Keesing's*, pp.28992-3; *Africa Report*, March-April 1978; also, November 1977; *Facts on File*, 27 January 1978.

<sup>35</sup> *Editorial: 'The Source of Somalia's arms'* in *The Standard*, Nairobi, 13 February 1978, p.4.

planning became based on Arab aid. Symbolic of this position is the \$200 million sugar project financed by Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi and the \$21 million 'Rangeland Conservation Project' to set up 'thousands of kilometres' of grazing reserves with a soft loan from the Kuwait Fund.<sup>36</sup>

#### The Geopolitical Pattern of Ethiopia's Alignments

On the other hand, Ethiopia appears to tend to seek and obtain assistance from powers across these immediate neighbours of the region who support the Periphery, and particularly, from overseas powers. Thus again, it is not very surprising, that Ethiopia should seek and obtain support from both Libya and Israel, two very strong in their mutual enmity, but, geopolitically lying beyond the *cordon* of the Periphery's apparent 'Protectors' in the immediate neighbourhood of the region - composed of the Sudan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Then, beyond, the second line of the Periphery's 'Protectors' enveloping this (broken) line of Ethiopia's supporters, lies Ethiopia's own second line of sources of support: traditionally, the West, particularly the US; and since 1974, the USSR - this latter's own system extending over Eastern Europe, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and possibly, also, India (map, pp. 186-187).

It is interesting to note here, that Ethiopia recognised Israel and sought her assistance in training Ethiopian forces

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<sup>36</sup> Karl Lavrencic's interview with a Somali 'planner': Lavrencic, op.cit., p.41.

in counter-insurgency in 1961, remarkably just after the establishment of the Somali Republic with its irredentist moves and the beginnings of the armed struggle in Eritrea.<sup>37</sup> Israelis have been alleged to also have piloted Ethiopian planes shelling in Eritrea, during the recent years.<sup>38</sup>

Ethiopia's traditional affinity towards the West, particularly Western Europe, has already been discussed.<sup>39</sup> Following the Second World War, with the shift of the West's centre of gravity from Europe to the US, Ethiopia became very closely attached to the latter. She became the greatest recipient of American military aid in Africa and received, between 1953 and 1969, US military aid worth \$147,000,000. In early 1970s this aid was, at the rate of, on average, \$12,000,000 per annum.<sup>40</sup>

The Soviet position has been discussed, above, though only briefly.<sup>41</sup>

#### Global Alignments and the Local 'Pattern'

Whatever may be the system of global political alignments of the various entities on the Horn, these are likely to be determined among other things, by the local pattern of intra-

<sup>37</sup> *Keesing's*, p.2166. For the establishment of the Somali Republic, its irredentism, and the Eritrean insurgency, *vide, supra*: Ch.II, p.22-30, 32-33.

<sup>38</sup> *The Baghdad Observer*, the 1978 file.

<sup>39</sup> *Vide: supra*, Ch.III and IV.

<sup>40</sup> *Keesing's*, p.24507.

<sup>41</sup> *Supra*, p.192. For greater details, *vide*: Legum, 'Realities of the Ethiopian Revolution', *op.cit.*; Ayooob, *op.cit.*

regional relationships. This has been observed during the recent international realignment on the Horn.

Prior to the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974, the system of international alignment on the Horn was marked by Ethiopia's co-operation with the West notably the US on the one hand, and Somalia's friendship with the socialist states, notably the USSR and such other radical states as Libya and South Yemen on the other. With the Soviet pledge of support for Ethiopia after its socialist Revolution (1974), Somalia swung sides, broke off with the USSR, sought US support, and received assistance from such pro-Western sources as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, Ethiopia, while breaking off with the US - her traditional ally, built up a military alliance with, not only the USSR but also with such of her traditional enemies as Libya and South Yemen.

#### Ethiopia's Pattern of Internal Developments

There appears to be a pattern of behavioural tendencies of the region's entities. Ethiopia Proper tends to be a centralist hierarchical, expansionist polity, torn by internal rivalries



and conflicts, both horizontally - between regional interests, and vertically - between classes and other interest groups transcending the regional limits. One important aspect of these internal conflicts is that within the military, owing to its elitism.

The polity also tends to be conservative, but to divert from its original course when forced, but that again, only to the minimum possible degree, and - to revert to its original course, whenever and to whatever degree possible. At the same time, the polity tends to be concerned with legitimacy, which its authorities tend to derive from identifying their own position and the polity's conditions with some accepted prototype - usually something regarded as 'the original'. The polity also has inherent tendencies towards a constant succession of revolts followed by crises, particularly with each succession.

Thus it is not surprising to find that, these fundamental tendencies of the Ethiopian polity remain visible even after its Revolution of 1974 and its being subjected to an order, apparently committed to a radical change of the polity.

The polity has shown its centralist tendencies and its proneness to internal rivalries and conflicts of the kind mentioned, in the fact that the originally multiple leadership of the Revolution has been reduced through the above kind of internal rivalries into a narrow dictatorship centred on one single person, Mengistu Haile Mariam.<sup>42</sup> The concern for legitimacy and the tendency to derive it from self-identification

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<sup>42</sup> *Vide: supra*, Ch.II.

with prototypes is apparent in the efforts of the Revolutionary regime in equating the Ethiopian post-Revolutionary conditions with those of the post-Revolutionary Russia.<sup>43</sup>

The current counter-revolutionary moves and crises also are perfectly to be expected and originate from the indigenous 'Pattern' and milieu, rather than being due to any kind of foreign interference. However, this is not to deny that these moves and crises may be supported and aggravated by foreign interference, as much as they may be opposed and contained by the same factor.

#### The Peripheral's Pattern of Internal Conditions

The tendencies of the Peripheral societies appear to be not only distinct from, but also, in many ways, opposite to those of the 'Core' or Ethiopia Proper. These societies tend to be pluralistic and loosely organised. At the same time, Somalia and Djibouti tend, simultaneously, as long as reasons for their irredentist aspirations remain alive - to be subject to centralised dictatorial systems. This means, both the states, at present, suffer from fundamental internal contradictions, presenting a likelihood of a constant struggle for and against their present orders. This has been reflected in contemporary developments, particularly in Somalia and can be expected in Djibouti also.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Vide: supra*, Ch.III, pp.80-85.

<sup>44</sup> *Vide: Ch.IV*, pp.172-174.

The Peripheral societies, in general, also tend to be strongly Islamic, which in turn, means that the Marxist regime of Somalia and the Marxist movements in Eritrea can expect continued popular support, if any - in their respective 'terrains', only at the cost of modifying their commitment to Marxism in the light of the demands of the Islamic principles.

This proposition also finds support in the fact that the Somali regime and the Marxist faction of the Eritrean struggle (EPLF) seem to have realised this as a significant truth, and have consequently modified their Marxist orientation accommodating Islam within its framework.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, to sum up the major conclusions of the study - the local milieu of the Horn of Africa at present holds high potential for international conflicts and revolutionary upheavals, which may lead, even in the absence of any world-political contribution, to international crises. The general pattern of relationships and conditions identified above will certainly be of help in understanding not only the present crisis on the Horn, but also its future strategic situation.

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<sup>45</sup> For Somalia's position in this regard, *vide: supra*, Ch.II. For that of the EPLF, *vide: National Democratic Programme* (in Tigrinya), published by the EPLF; Translation of the relevant section: Fessahaie Abraham (*interview*, Sydney, 1979).

APPENDIX I  
BASIC STRATEGIC INFORMATION ON THE STATES  
OF THE HORN OF AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

Ethiopia:

Area: 457,000 sq.miles.  
 Population (estimated, early 1977): 29,330,000  
 Total armed forces (early 1977): 53,500  
 GNP (estimated, 1975): \$2.9 billion  
 Defence expenditure (1976): \$103.4 million

Somalia:

Area: 246,000 sq.miles.  
 Population (estimated, early 1977): 3,335,000  
 Total armed forces (early 1977): 31,500  
 GNP (estimated, 1972): \$300 million  
 Defence expenditure (1976): \$25 million

Djibouti:

Area: 8,500 sq.miles  
 Population (estimated, 1976): 220,000  
 Defence (at independence, June 1977): Dependent of French troops (5,000) stationed in Djibouti under the *Franco-Djibouti Provisional Military Protocol* of 27 June 1977. Djibouti Army being raised with the assistance of French military instructors (strength unknown).

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: IISS, *The Military Balance 1977-1978* (London, 1977; Moshe Sacks (ed.), *World Encyclopaedia of Nations/Africa* (New York: World Mark Press, 1971); *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* (London), p.28499; John Paxton (ed.), *The Statesman's Yearbook 1978-79* (London, 1978).

## APPENDIX II

COLONIAL AND PARTITION AGREEMENTS  
REGARDING THE PERIPHERAL AREAS OF THE HORN

A. Euro-Ethiopian Agreements:

- (i) Italo-Ethiopian 'Treaty' of Ucciali, 2 May 1889.
- (ii) Italo-Ethiopian 'Additional Convention', 1 October 1889.
- (iii) Franco-Ethiopian 'Convention' on 'Somaliland', 20 March 1897.
- (iv) British-Ethiopian 'Treaty' on 'Somaliland', 28 July 1897.
- (v) British-Ethiopian 'Agreement' on the 'frontiers of British East Africa' [including south Somaliland], 6 December 1907.
- (vi) Italo-Ethiopian 'Convention' on Somalia, 16 May 1908.
- (vii) Italo-Ethiopian 'Convention' on Eritrea, 16 May 1908.

B. Intra-European Agreements:

- (i) Italo-British 'Agreement' on the 'Spheres of Influence in East Africa', 5 May 1884.
- (ii) Franco-British 'Agreement' on 'the Somali Coast', February 1888.
- (iii) Italo-British 'protocol' on the 'Spheres of Influence in East Africa', 24 March 1891.
- (iv) Italo-Franco-British Tripartite 'Agreement' on 'Abyssinia', 13 December 1906.
- (v) Italo-British Exchange of Notes on Sheikh Mohammad Abdille Hassan [the so-called 'Mad Mullah'], 19 March 1907.

C. Supplementary Instruments:

- (i) British-Ethiopian 'Agreement' on 'The Ogaden and Reserved Area', 19 December 1944.
- (ii) British-Ethiopian 'Agreement' on 'Britain's Withdrawal from Ogaden and Reserved Area', 29 November 1954.
- (iii) UN Resolution on Eritrea, 1952.

## APPENDIX III

REVOLUTIONARY<sup>1</sup> MOVEMENTS ON THE HORN OF AFRICA

Apart from the two "revolutionary" organisations, the *Dergue*<sup>2</sup> and the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC),<sup>3</sup> in power in Ethiopia and Somalia respectively, there are at least eighteen other, anti-government movements on the Horn of Africa. These are :

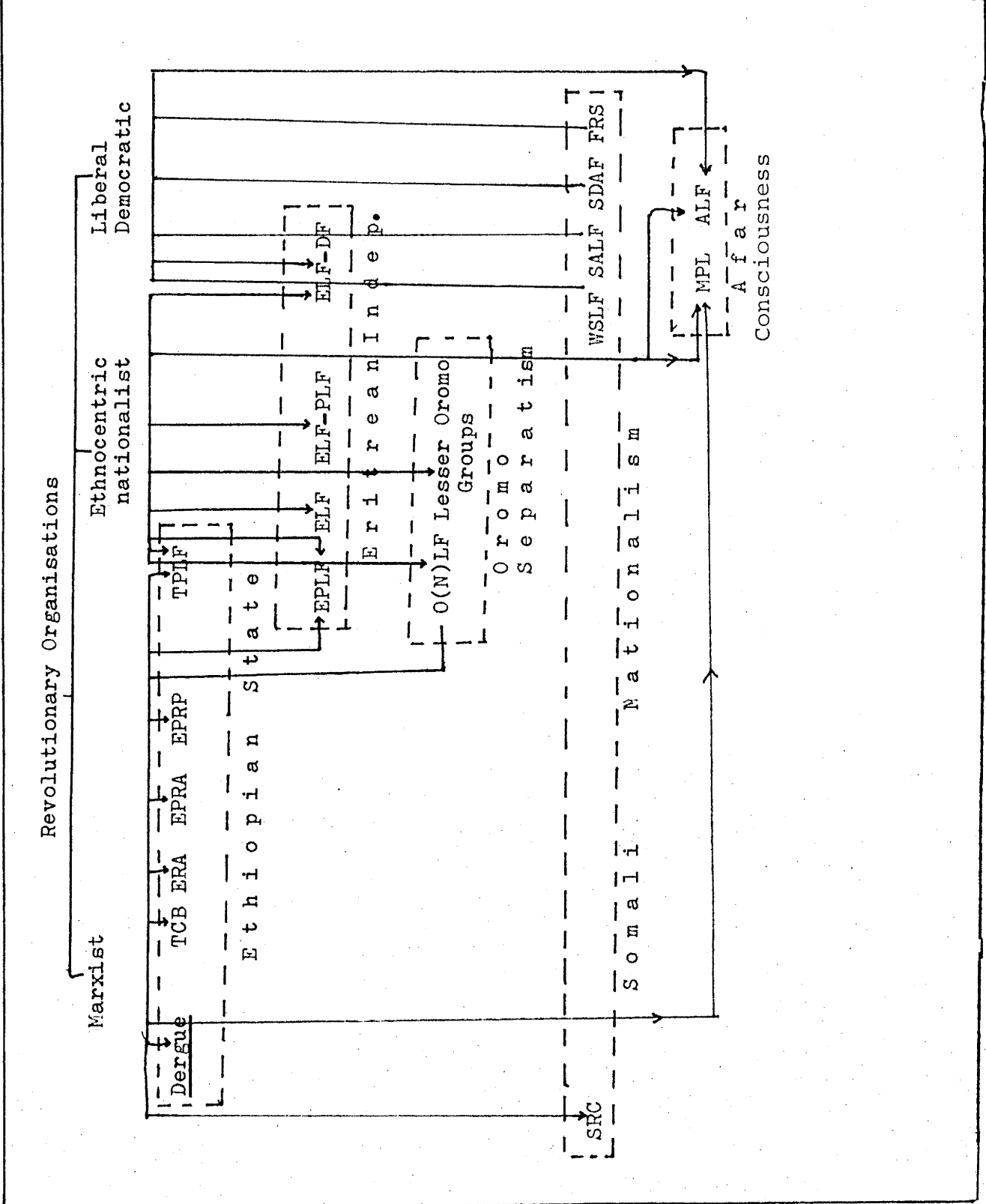
1. Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)
2. Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Army (EPRA)
3. Twentieth Century Bolsheviks (TCB)
4. Ethiopian Revolutionary Army (ERA)
5. Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU)
6. Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Party (EPDRP)
7. Tigre People's Liberation Front (TPLF)
8. Oromo (National) Liberation Front (ONLF/OLF)
9. West Somali Liberation Front (WSLF)
10. Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF)
11. Somali Democratic Action Front (SDAF)
12. Front for the Redemption of Somalia (FRS)
13. Afar Liberation Front (ALF)
14. People's Liberation Movement (MPL)

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<sup>1</sup> 'Revolutionary', here, is defined broadly as one committed to a violent change of the status quo and would refer primarily to anti-government forces.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, the "shadow"; refers to the ('Revolutionary') Armed Forces Co-ordinating Committee. Tom J. Farer, *War Clouds on the Horn of Africa - A Crisis for Detente* (New York and Washington, D.C. : Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1976), p. 15

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 93



Revolutionary Organisations on the Horn of Africa: Ideological Inclination.

15. Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)
16. Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)
17. Eritrean Liberation Front-Popular Liberation Forces (ELF-PLF)
18. Eritrean Liberation Front-Democratic Forces (ELF-DF)

While the greatest numbers of the above anti-government guerrilla movements are ethnocentric nationalist, aiming at independence (e.g. ELF, ALF) or at autonomy (e.g. TPLF, ONLF), most of the major ones are Marxist in inclination (EPRP, EPRA, EPLF). Two of the major movements aim at liberal democratic ideals (EDU, SDAF).

Following is a brief resume of whatever introductory information could be available<sup>4</sup> on the above underground movements on the Horn.

EPRP : The major Marxist underground opposition to the Ethiopian Government in Ethiopia Proper. Regards the *Dergue's* concept of a Revolution through military

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<sup>4</sup> Sources : *Africa Confidential* (London), 4 November 1977, p.8; 7 October 1977, p. 4; 18 November 1977, pp. 1-3; 9 September 1977, p. 6; 3 March 1978, p. 3. Colin Legum, "Realities of the Ethiopian Revolution" in *World Today* (London), Vol. 33, No. 8, *standard* (Daily, Nairobi), 19 December 1977; 1 March 1978. *Impact International* (London), 9-22 March 1979, p. 4; 12-25 May 1978, p. 8; 23 December - 12 January 1977. My interviews with Kahsai, Dillon, Alazar, Abraham, Yohannes (for detailed reference, vide : *infra*, Select Bibliography, p. 212); also, with Preston King, Sydney 1978 and Ansera from Somalia, Sydney 1978. *Keessing's Contemporary Archives* (London), 1969-1979. *BBC Summary of World Broadcast*, 1974-78. *WSLF Statement*, quot. in *Young Pakistan* (Weekly, Dacca), Vol. XXI, No. 385, 24 August 1969. *EPLF handouts*, 1977-78. *News Letter of the Eritrean for Liberation in North America*, 1977-78. *Africa Report*, 1973-1978.



government as "adventurism", and aims at re-establishment of a Parliamentary government as a prerequisite for the creation of cadres for a genuine Revolution. Strategically, seems to rely mainly on urban terrorism. Its subscription to the idea of class struggle constitutes the main reason of its clash with the other major underground movement operating in Ethiopia Proper, the EDU.

EPRA : The military wing of the EPRP. Operates primarily in East Tigre and maintains close relations with the EPLF.

TCB : Breakaway (1978) from the EPRP due to strategic doctrinal controversy; disapproves of the EPRP-EPRA's *coup d'etat* strategy, and professing the Maoist line, wants a protracted people's war in the countryside in Ethiopia.

ERA : Much smaller compared to the Horn's major underground movements (EPRP-EPRA, TPLF, ELF, EPLF). Operates in the north of Ethiopia.

EDU : The only major trans-Ethiopian underground organisation other than the EPRP-EPRA. Operates as an umbrella organisation seeking to unite all opponents of the military regime on a national front basis for a Constituent Assembly. Is regarded as conservative and suspected of being royalist due to its refusal to commit itself against any effort at a royal restoration; its leadership's containing members from the royal family (e.g. Gen. Nega Tegagne, grandson-in-law of Emperor Haile Selassie); its supporters including such persons as

Ras Mangasha Seyum (traditional King of Tigre) and Ali Mirreh (exiled Sultan of the Afar). The movement's position is that it wants to avoid predetermination and would accept whatever system (royal or otherwise) a popularly elected Constituent Assembly would decide upon. It has contacts with the royal family in exile; its chairman, Gen. Yasu Mangasha had resigned as Army Chief of Staff under Haile Selassie in opposition to imperial policies.

The organisation carries out guerrilla activities mainly in the northwest of Ethiopia Proper, in Begemdir, West Tigre and along the Sudanese frontier; however, membership is from all the provinces, except Eritrea. Enjoys some assistance from ELF.

EPDRP : Breakaway (1978) anti-royalist section of EDU. Co-operates with TPLF.

TPLF : The major, ethnocentric, local underground movement within Ethiopia Proper. Started in 1975. Demands autonomy of Tigre as well as its enlargement, including the Christian highlands of Eritrea.

The movement is popular along the Tigre-Eritrean border and particularly around Axum and Adi Addi area. Its strongholds are the local urban elites. Strength (1977, November) : 800 in arms; 1500 in reserve.

Co-operates with EPDRP on condition that it keeps its operations confined to Begemdir (i.e. leave Tigre to TPLF). Also with EPLF, which assists in TPLF's urban terrorism in Tigre in return for the latter's ambushes on Ethiopian advancement into Eritrea.

ONLF : Support mainly from the Galla; aims at autonomy for the Galla/Oroma areas, as well as social change. Leadership : 'Marxist-Leninist'.

Other Oromo groups : Ethnocentric autonomist; insignificant in strength.

WSLF : Started in 1960, became significantly active since 1964. Active in Hararghe, mainly Ogaden. Works in close co-ordination with the SALF. Openly supported by Somalia. Secretary General : Abdullahi Hassam Mahmoud.

SALF : Active in Bale Province; Supported by Somalia.

SDAF : Operates presumably from exile since early 1978. Includes Somali high officials in exile. Appears to command Kenyan sympathy.

FRS : Started in February, 1979. Claims to be a front of all those stand against the present military regime of Somalia. It operates a clandestine radio, "*Radio Kulmis*". The Secretary General is Mustafa Haji Nur.

ALF : Started operations around the middle of 1975. Led by Afar Sultan Ali Pierre, conservative, feudalist, very old, now in exile in Saudi Arabia. His heir, believed to be democrat, now in exile in Somalia. The movement opposed Ethiopian land reforms in the Afar areas. Ultimate aims not very clear.

MPL : Started terrorist activities against the Somali-dominated Government in Djibouti in December 1977 and is since banned. Aims at advancing Afar interests in Djibouti and maintains links inside Ethiopia.

ELF : The oldest and probably the most established of the revolutionary mass movements on the Horn. Started in late 1950s, but as a massive guerrilla movement, in 1962. Demands independence from Eritrea but reluctant to commit on the post-liberation social system of the country. Inclinations seem to be democratic, reformist. Wants a single national democratic front in Eritrea for her liberation struggle. Strength at least 4000 in arms. Founder, believed to be : Abdullah Idris, currently Head of the Military Bureau; Chairman : Ahmed Masser; foreign relations spokesman : Alzein Yassir.

ELF is the parent organisation of breakaway, but now strongly independent groups, EPLF, ELF-PLF and ELF-DF. The existing ELF also is divided in few factions, the strongest, led by Idris, leans towards Iraqi Baathists. ELF remained in a virtual civil war with EPLF since the latter's birth in 1969, until Coazien and Khartoum agreements (1975, 1977) led to end of hostilities and limited unity.

EPLF : Breakaway (1969) from ELF on doctrinal ground. Marxist and aims at, alongwith independence, a Marxist social system for Eritrea, but executes Maoists for "radicalism". Probably, the most organised and dynamic of the Eritrean revolutionary movements. Interested in United Front arrangements with other Eritrean movements rather than a complete merger, as proposed by ELF, ELF-PLF; however, accepted limited merger (1977).

In membership, it is the predominant representative of the Christian Eritreans, and the leadership appears to be predominantly Christian, the most prominent being the "extremely powerful deputy Secretary" Issayas Aferwerki. However, Moslems also are represented and the Secretary General is a Moslem, Ramadan Mohammad Nour.

EPLF co-operates with EPRP-EPRA and TPLF.

ELF-PLF : The third major guerrilla group in Eritrea; numerically not very significant (2000 in 1978, October), but well funded, particularly by non-Marxist Arab states. Breakaway from EPLF; leader : Osman Saleh Sabbi, once ELF Secretary for foreign affairs, then a leader of the EPLF.

Nationalist and non-Marxist. Wants a single national revolutionary organisation. Openly supports EDU.

ELF-DF : Breakaway (1977, July) from ELF presumably in protest of conservative sympathies of the latter. Based in Khartoum. Strength : around 1200. ELF regards them anarchist ("*fallol*").

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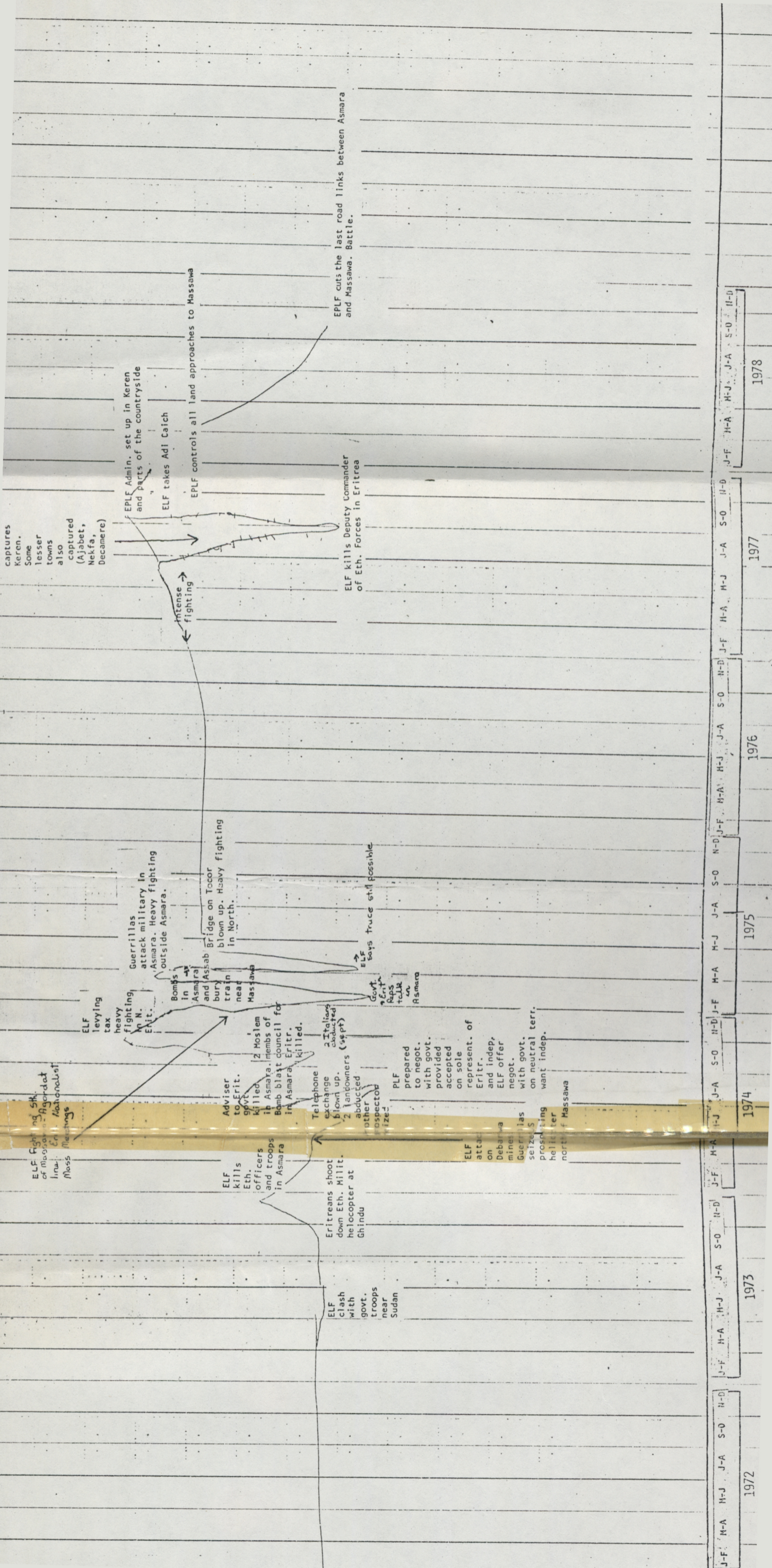
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<sup>1</sup> By the author, if not specified otherwise.



ELF fighting sik  
at Massawa - Agordat  
line. Erit. Nationalist  
Mass Movement

ELF levying  
tax  
heavy  
fighting  
in N. Erit.

Guerrillas  
attack military in  
Asmara. Heavy fighting  
outside Asmara.

Bombs  
in Asmara  
and Assab  
bury train  
near Massawa

Adviser  
to Erit.  
gov't  
killed.  
2 Moslem  
members of  
in Asmara.  
Bomb blast council for  
in Asmara. Eritr.  
killed.

Telephone  
exchange  
blown up.  
2 landowners  
abducted  
other  
inspector  
killed.

PLF  
prepared  
to negot.  
with gov't.  
provided  
accepted  
on sole  
represent. of  
Eritr.  
and indep.  
ELF offer  
negot.  
with gov't.  
on neutral terr.  
want indep.

ELF  
attack  
on Debarwa  
mines  
Guerrillas  
seize S  
prospecting  
helicopter  
north of Massawa

ELF  
kills  
Eth.  
officers  
and troops  
in Asmara

Eritreans shoot  
down Eth. Mil. Lt.  
helicopter at  
Ghindu

ELF  
clash  
with  
gov't.  
troops  
near  
Sudan

Intense  
fighting

EPLF Admin. set up in Keren  
and parts of the countryside

ELF takes Adi Caich

EPLF controls all land approaches to Massawa

ELF kills Deputy Commander  
of Eth. Forces in Eritrea

EPLF cuts the last road link between Asmara  
and Massawa. Battle.

captures  
Keren.  
Some  
lesser  
towns  
also  
captured  
(Ajabet,  
Nekfa,  
Decamere)

1972 J-F M-A H-J J-A S-O H-D  
1973 J-F M-A H-J J-A S-O H-D  
1974 J-F M-A H-J J-A S-O H-D J-F  
1975 J-F M-A H-J J-A S-O N-D J-F M-A H-J J-A S-O H-D  
1976 J-F M-A H-J J-A S-O H-D  
1977 J-F M-A H-J J-A S-O H-D  
1978 J-F M-A H-J J-A S-O H-D

ELF  
of miss  
lira  
Mass

ELF  
kills  
Eth.  
officer  
and troo  
in Asma

Eritreans shoot  
down Eth. Milite.  
helicopter at  
Ghindu

ELF  
clash  
with  
govt.  
troops  
near  
Sudan

By now  
ELF controls  
most rural  
areas, plan  
move on to  
cities

Eth. Div. commander  
troops killed  
in ambush, Asmara-  
Keren Rd.

ELF clash with  
Govt. troops

ELF aim by now:  
referendum to  
establish inde-  
pendent Eritrea

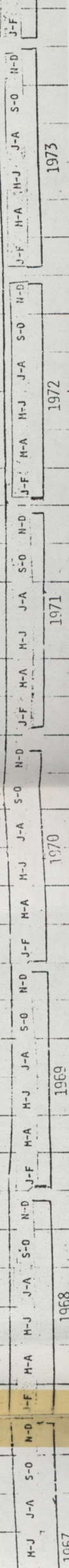
ALFE hijacks  
Eth. plane  
to Aden

ELF explosion  
on Djibouti  
railway

ALFE attack  
on Ethiop.  
plane, Karachi.  
Eritrean  
guerrilla  
killed preparing  
for attack on  
Ethiop. Embassy  
Rome.

Arab Liberation  
Front for Eritrea  
burns Ethiopian  
aircraft

ie  
e



ERITREAN REBELLION: DEGREE OF ACTIVITIES IN CONFLICT WITH THE GOVERNMENT

1961 - 1978

For sources of information: vide, p. 201, fn. 4.

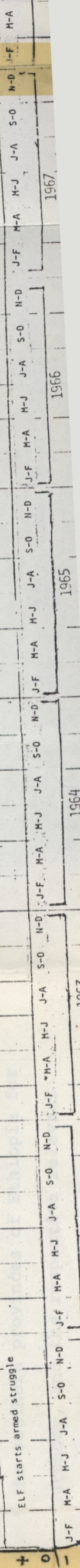
lower degrees ← CONFLICT → higher degrees

Haile Selassie speaks of the insurgents ('outlaws')

Existence known of Front for the Liberation of Eritrea

ELF increasingly active preparing for armed struggle

ELF starts armed struggle



1967

1966

1965

1964

1963

0 +