

Chapter 8

Oromo Problem and the U.S. Foreign Policy

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INTRODUCTION

This essay is designed to revisit the conflict in the politically complex and culturally rich region during the post-Cold War era. We will closely examine the role of the sole super-power, the United States, in the conflict which has become even more complex than it was during the Cold War period. This examination takes place against the backdrop of the newly declared U.S. doctrine that it, as the sole superpower, will have a special obligation to support democracy and respect for human rights around the world.¹ In affirming this presumably new doctrine, the former President Bill Clinton, asserted, at his Speech to the UN General Assembly on 21 September 1999, that:

When the Cold War ended, the United States could have chosen to run away from the opportunities and dangers of the world. Instead, we have tried to be engaged, involved, and active. We know this moment of unique prosperity and power for United States is a source of concern to many. Instead of imposing our values on others, we have sought to promote a system of government-democracy that empowers people to choose their own destinies according to their own values and aspirations.²

More significantly, our examination of the U.S. foreign policy toward the Horn of Africa during the post Cold War will help us to discern whether the political attitudes and behavior have changed in dealing with the social conflict in the region where traditionally major world powers have collided as the result of perceived threats by the competing parties' external "enemy."

Historically, the main interest of the major powers in the Horn of Africa has been over concerns relative to their access to the Red Sea which is adjacent

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to the oil fields in the Middle East deemed by the West to be vital to its economic interests and national security. Our analysis will reveal that in the final analysis, nothing has changed relative to the western approach in their quest to "ensure" the security of the Red Sea. Neither has there been a change in the strategy nor in the tactics that have been developed and employed to protect the rich oil fields and the Red Sea.

Based on the evidence available, pitting one tyrant against another at the expense of populations and as such propping tyrants to maintain control in their respective states has been a well established strategy and is still alive and well and indeed, in some cases, even more aggressive and cavalier with damaging consequences at grass root levels. What even makes the situation more extraordinary is the fact that there is not another power able to challenge the U.S. in this sphere.

The implication is that the party the U.S. anoints for its policy objectives becomes the unchallenged winner while the parties the U.S. disapproves of will have to perish in shame and despair. In our examination of the U.S. foreign policy on the Horn of Africa during the period under review, it thus seems that all the laudatory pronouncement about U.S. foreign policy commitment to advancing the cause of democracy and respect for human rights during the post Cold War era is nothing more than a side show (Dagne 1995:5).

There is another factor that should interest us: the U.S. led air strike against Slobadan Melosevic to save two million Kosovo Albainians. By its action during that conflict, the U.S. has raised the expectation that its foreign policy toward ethnic conflict caused by a dominant group should reach a new threshold with respect to the standard of acceptability to the international community. Indeed, the view of Vaclav Havel, the President of the Czeck Republic and a leading political figure in post Cold War Europe, supports such a proposition. In his speech to the Canadian Parliament on April 29, 1999, during the Kosovo crisis, President Havel declared:

This war gives human rights precedence over the rights of the states. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been attacked without a direct UN mandate for the Alliance action. But the Alliance has not acted out to license aggressiveness or disrespect for international law. On the contrary: It has acted out of respect for the law—for the law that ranks higher than the protection of the sovereignty of states. It has acted out of respect for the rights of humanity, as they are articulated by our conscience as well as by other instruments of international law. I see this as an important precedent for the future. It has been now clearly stated that it is not permissible to slaughter people, to evict them from their homes, to maltreat them and to deprive them of their property. It has been demonstrated that

human rights are indivisible and that if injustice is done to some, it is done to all.³

Thus, according to Havel, the war against Melosevic set a new standard—that ethnic mistreatment by the government of a dominant ethnic group is no longer tolerable. Indeed, he spoke to the unresolved dysfunctional relationships between the modern state and ethnic groups.

During the twentieth century, the U.S. has been involved four times in European wars caused by tyrants. Two of these wars took place during the 1990s. The main goal for its involvement was to stop ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and provide the necessary assistance for the purpose of stabilizing the social, economic, and political system so that all groups can enjoy economic and political security and peace.⁴

The central theme of this new doctrine was reiterated by President Clinton in his speech to the UN General Assembly. In fact he made a linkage between the new U.S. doctrine and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter which is to protect the basic rights of all citizens of the world. He said:

What is the role of the U.N. in preventing mass slaughter and displacements? Very large. Even in Kosovo, NATO's actions followed a clear consensus expressed in several Security Council resolutions that the atrocities committed by Serb forces were unacceptable, that the international community had a compelling interest in seeing them end. Had we chosen to do nothing in the face of this brutality, I do not believe we would have strengthened the United Nations. Instead, would have risked discrediting everything it stands for.... By acting as we did, we helped to vindicate the principles and purposes of the U.N. Charter the opportunity it now has to play the central role in shaping Kosovo's future. In the real world principles often collide, and tough choices must be made. The outcome in Kosovo is hopeful.⁵

The obvious question then is whether the U.S. government is going to apply the same standard when it comes to ethnic persecution by African tyrants. Thus far, it seems the U.S. State Department has been sending mixed signals on this subject. One signal came from Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State, during her speech at the NAACP Annual Conference in New York U.S. where she indicated that the U.S. may do more in resolving conflicts in Africa.⁶ A totally opposite signal came from her subordinates with respect to the current crisis in the Horn of Africa. Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in her testimony before the Congressional Sub-Committee, gave a standard Cold War style dogmatic and unreasoned, uncritical speech with a catalogue of the "bad guys" and the "good guys." In the list of the bad guys, she once again

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castigated the Eritrean government and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). According to her, the Eritrean government was bad because it allegedly gave weapons to the OLF. Furthermore, in her view, Isias Afeworki is going closer to Mommar Gaddafi, the "bad guy." She also believed the OLF was bad because it was going to use those weapons for violence (Rice 1999).

About three months later Mr. Tabor Naggy, the Ambassador Designee to Ethiopia, stated in his confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate Committee that Ethiopia is an important ally of the United States. Mr. Nagy added: "Ethiopia is one of the most important partners in Africa. Our bilateral relationship is founded on mutual strategic interests and the shared aspirations of our governments for the people of Ethiopia" (Nagy 1999). Even more startlingly, he justified the U.S. foreign policy toward the regime of Meles Zenawi by asserting that "since the fall of the repressive socialist regime of Mengistu Hailemariam in 1991, Ethiopia has made great strides toward building a democratic society" (Nagy 1999 *ibid*).

Consistent with this policy position, Mr. David Shin, the outgoing U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, echoed the same assertion that Ethiopia has been more democratic than in the previous periods. He even ventured to blame the victims for the conflict and devastation his government has sponsored: he specifically singled out the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) for convenient disparagement. He accused the OLF on two main grounds; namely for failing to renounce violence, and for not accepting the Constitution of Meles Zenawi.⁷ It is instructive to note that he conveniently refrained to make any references to the state sponsored violence against the other subordinate nationalities by the regime of Meles Zenawi. Neither was there any observation relative to the well-established fact that OLF was systematically prevented from full, free and fair competition during the 1992 election, and it was subsequently banned by Zenawi from legally participating in the political process. He also failed to point out that the Constitution of 1994 was drafted and ratified under political duress.

Our examination would reveal that these assertions about the democratic progress in Ethiopia could not be supported by the available evidence. This is so since the political policies of the government of Meles Zenawi in the areas of democratic processes and human rights violations against various subordinate ethnic groups should clearly demonstrate otherwise. Therefore, there are two dramatically opposing sets of views. The first set of views was expounded by the U.S. government with regard to the new doctrine of supporting democracy and human rights in the world during the post-Cold War. The second set of views was expressed about Ethiopia by the government representatives and their incongruence when compared with the evidence from the scene on the ground.

The U.S. foreign policy toward Africa's North East region can be viewed as the function of core versus periphery relations at various levels: global, regional and state.⁸ The core-periphery relationship is better unravelled through a personal narrative from the periphery and the author provided this in the epilogue in this book. More specifically, since the experiences of the peoples in the periphery, particularly those in the Ethiopian empire, their grievances, hopes, and aspirations have not been exposed to the outside world sufficiently, it is hoped that such a narrative will illustrate, in some small way, the depth of the crisis by exploring the dysfunctional relationships between the core and the periphery.

The central theme of this chapter is to provide a critical review of the U.S. foreign policy toward Ethiopia. With respect to the analysis about the post-Derg Ethiopia, three entities and the treatment the U.S. government attaches to these entities will be analyzed. The three entities are: the regime of Meles Zenawi, the Oromo people, and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Four areas are selected for further exploration where it is deemed that the U.S. foreign policy should be reconsidered in some fundamental ways. These are understanding the nature of the social system in Ethiopia, the possibility of democratizing an empire, the futility of suppressing national movements, and the need to consider alternative solutions including empowering the weaker parties.

THE POST-COLD WAR HORN OF AFRICA

This section will explore the nature of the post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy toward that region. In order to advance our thesis that the U.S. policies in that region are influenced by the post-Cold War, which I term as a "new Cold War," one needs to revisit the social phenomenon of the old Cold War and establish the similarities and the interconnections between them.

The Cold War was a social phenomenon which evolved during the four decades following the end of WWII. As conflict behavior, it commenced over policy disagreement between the West and the Soviet Union regarding the city of Berlin which resulted in one party unilaterally erecting the infamous Berlin Wall (Jenson 1993). It was a classic case of conflict escalation which evolves as the result of moves and counter moves by the parties in conflict. The conflict interactions between the superpowers during this period escalated and eventually encompassed the entire world community. Indeed, it was a classic case of conflict transformation. As a social behavior, conflict transformation leads to two major developments: escalation and enlargement of parties to the conflict (Rubin et al 1994:68-71). In general, in the process of conflict transformation, dramatic changes take place on three levels: cognition, attitude, and behavior of the parties both at individual and collective levels. One of the critical effects

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resulting from such changes in attitudes and the accompanying behavior of the parties in conflict is becoming blind to social realities—engaging in behaviors which are generated through tunnel vision—within the universes in which the social conflict takes place. During this process each party mobilizes sentiments and resources against each other (Rubin et al 1994; Kriesberg 1998:151-180).

The activities of the two superpowers during the period of the Cold War fit this frame of reference. As each superpower labored so feverishly in mobilizing sentiments and resources to undermine the other party, many societies around the world were encapsulated in a drama of social conflict which, for most part, had no connections with their direct basic interests.⁹

The Cold War had two critical dimensions. The first dimension is the one represented by the metaphor “Cold War” itself. In its conception, “Cold War” was meant to represent the non-violent aspect of the hostile activities, and those activities were limited to propaganda campaigns denigrating the ideology and political reality of the other. At the global level, the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Moscow were among the most effective tools to achieve the goals of the two superpowers in this ideological warfare. The ideological campaigns were coupled with activities which included posturing and staging the self. This line of behavior resulted in the biggest arms race in human history which eventually bankrupted the economy of the USSR.

The second aspect of the Cold War was the violent activities sponsored by each superpower. The venues for the devastating proxy wars were the developing societies (Folz and Beinen 1985). This chapter specifically focus of how Africa was conceived as an important venue for conflict by the two superpowers during the Cold War.

Although the Cold War encompassed the entire world, there were six regions that were chosen for intense violent confrontations between the two superpowers. These were Eastern Europe, Indo-China, the Far East (the Korean Peninsula), the Middle East, Central America, and the Horn of Africa. All six regions became targets based on some material and strategic values (real or perceived) attached to each one of them.

The struggle of the Western powers over the Horn of Africa predates the Cold War, and is a continuation of the longstanding rivalry between major world powers. On the eve of the 20th Century, they fought among themselves over the Horn of Africa, resulting in their occupation by partitioning the region and the peoples therein irrespective of their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities. The chief participants in the colonial scramble of that era were Great Britain, France, Italy, and Czarist Russia (Melba 1988:45-61). Contrary to the craftily constructed and successfully propagated myths by Abyssinian politicians, intellectuals, and their supporters in the Western world, that Ethiopia was

the bastion of anti-European colonial resistance and beacon of African independence, the Ethiopian Empire was a serious participant and beneficiary in the European colonial schemes in the partition of the continent (Melba 1988: 37).

When European global empires collapsed at the end of World War II, new leaders of independent African states retained the colonial boundaries as the legal demarcation of the decolonized states.¹⁰ Soon the emergence of the Cold War between the West, led by the United States, and the East, led by the Soviet Union, imposed itself on the fragile material and social ecology of the Horn of Africa region. During this period each of the three major states in the region—Sudan, the Ethiopian Empire, and Somalia—were a client of one of the two superpowers, and each of these states traded, at least once, its masters with the opposing state in the process (Shraeder 1995:114-188; Chaliand 1980). For example, the Sudan was a sort of client state of the Soviet Union during the early years of Nimeiri; then after wiping out the Communist party, it began leaning toward the U.S. (Brzezinski 1983:178,179; See Habte Selassie 1980:151-165).

Ethiopia, after serving as a client state of the U.S. for some two and half decades, switched to the Soviet Union during the 1977-1978 Ethiopia-Somalia War. This period was the height of the Cold War in the region. Somalia which essentially served as the client of the Soviet Union since its inception as a new state in 1960, switched to the United States during the same war (Brezinski 1983:129-149). Indeed, it is instructive to review, though briefly, the significance the two superpowers attached to that region during this period. Zbigniew Brzezinski who served as National Security Advisor in the Carter Administration wrote the following with respect to his views valuing the U.S. attachment to the Horn of Africa in the context of the Cold War:

However, in my view the situation between the Ethiopians and Somalis was more than a border conflict. Coupled with the expansion of the Soviet influence and military presence to South Yemen, it posed a potentially grave threat to our position in the Middle East, notably in the Arabian Peninsula. It represented a serious setback in our attempts to develop some rules of the game in dealing with turbulence in the Third World. The Soviets had earlier succeeded in sustaining, through Cuba, their preferred solution in Angola, and they now seemed embarked on a repetition in a region in close proximity to our most sensitive interest (Brzezinski 1983:178).

Chester Crocker who served as the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs in the administration of President Ronald Reagan, in his address before the Washington World Affairs Council, outlined the reasons why the U.S. was deeply involved in the conflict of the region. He stated:

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The Horn of Africa...has considerable strategic importance for the United States as it is relevant to both the security of the Middle East and to Africa. We seek access to airfields and harbors for our military forces should they, in times of crisis, be required to defend against Soviet expansionism in the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean.¹¹

Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet Union Ambassador to the United States has allocated six pages in his memoirs on the subject of superpower rivalry and the ensuing conflict activities in the Horn of Africa. He vividly recorded the events which led to the dramatic escalation of the conflict both at regional and super power levels. He wrote:

As the Soviet Union shifted its support toward Ethiopia, the United States, in its turn, accelerated the process by stopping its military assistance and accusing Mengistu's new government of human rights violations. (The real reason, of course, was the overthrow of the emperor and a clear left wing takeover.) Washington then turned its attention to Somalia, the more so because Somalia cancelled its treaty with the Soviet Union at the end of 1977 after Moscow refused to provide more arms. The Soviet Union then signed a similar treaty with Ethiopia. By the end of 1977 about two thousand Cuban troops and one thousand Soviet military advisors were sent to Addis Ababa. Somali troops were forced to retreat in Ogaden province but still held a considerable part of it.

From the long-term geopolitical point of view, the developments in that part of Africa were unmistakably of local importance, and the political leadership in Moscow regarded them as such. Nevertheless, the Soviet and Cuban interference and the deployment of Cuban task force in yet another country just two years after they had gone in Angola, plus Soviet transports and other logistic supports, caused uproar in the West, especially the United States. Suspicions were aroused that the Soviet Union had adopted a new strategy of challenging and outflanking the West in the Third World. This quickly became a priority in relations between the Carter administration and Moscow for much of the year, further complicating our relations and provoking serious discord within the administration itself (Dobrynin 1995:403).

Then, in a reflective moment reviewing the key events during the Cold War years in that region, Dobrynin wrote the following:

In retrospect, I cannot help being surprised at the amount of energy and effort spent almost entirely in vain by Moscow and Washington on these so called African affairs. Twenty-one years later (expect historians) could as much as remember them. Even when the American marines were sent to Somalia in 1992 by George Bush to join United Nations forces to help feed the starving there, no one in the

U.S. government and a very few in the press remarked that the seeds of the anarchy then prevailing in Somalia had most probably been planted by the great power's engagement there fifteen years before. Somalia was only one of a number of countries whose local quarrels became enmeshed in the Cold War— Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, among them, and all of them worse off for their involvement with two superpowers (Dobrynin 1995:407).

THE POST-COLD WAR AS A NEW COLD WAR

Ironically, as the human community was bidding farewell to the old Cold War which was fought between the East and the West, a new form of Cold War emerged; this time it took the form of religious nationalism which is to thought to pose challenge to the western sponsored state system. Religious nationalism, as a new social force, expressed itself in the form of mobilization of resources and sentiments under the broad rubric of ideology of organized religions—Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, etc. While these religious based movements have different historical origin, and operate under varied social settings, they do manifest certain conflict behaviors which have common features with the old Cold War. Sociologist Juergensmeyer, in comparing the old Cold War and the new Cold War wrote:

Like the Cold War, the confrontation between these new forms of cultural-based politics and the secular state is global in its scope, binary in its opposition, occasionally violent, and essentially a difference of ideologies; and, like the old Cold War, each side tends to stereotype the other. According to a major Islamic political strategist in the Sudan, the post Cold War West needs a new "empire of evil to mobilize against." Similarly, he and other religious politicians need a stereotype of their own, a satanic secular foe that will help them mobilize their own forces (Juergensmeyer 1993:2).

The exaggerated projection of the enemy in the new Cold War becomes clearer in his observation when he states, "Unlike the old Cold War, however, the West (now aligned with the secular leaders of the former Soviet Union) confronts an opposition that is neither politically united nor, at present time, militarily strong."¹²

Professor Noam Chomsky, a critic of U.S. foreign policy, adds another dimension to this complex social phenomenon. In comparing the world order during the Cold War and the post Cold War, he makes two interrelated conclusions: The U.S. foreign policy is the most significant factor in determining the "New World Order;" and American economic interest is paramount in shaping the "New World Order", and more specifically, the consideration of

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the U.S. weapons industry leads the priority in this policy enterprise (Chomsky 1994:101, 190-206).

He suggests that the current extraordinary focus on Islamic fundamentalism as the "new enemy" during the post Cold War stems from the fact that the U.S. policy makers were looking for potential "sources of threats" to the U. S. and its allies' economic interests.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism, in the face of the failure of secular nationalism in the Middle East, made the former fit the new image of the new enemy of the West (Chomsky 1994:3,227). Dr. Trevor Trueman, a British physician and a human rights activist, using Chomsky's thesis as a frame of reference, has presented a coherent analysis relative to the rationale of the new Cold War and its intricate connection to the old Cold War. Accordingly, the West invented and overwhelmed an enemy, with dreadful consequences to the poorer sections of its societies under the onslaught of Ronald McDonald and large "investors" in the "economic miracle" of the East. After the collapse of communism the West was left without a foil to justify its support of its arms manufacturers and without a reason to endorse its profitable economic and political manipulation of world markets. Ready to fill the gap, waiting in the wings of the world stage was Islamic Fundamentalism. It was already blessed with growing unpopularity in the West, thanks in part to U.S.-sponsored Israeli interstate terrorism. Pieces in the puzzle of the "New World Order" fell into place. Islamic Fundamentalism has replaced communism as the antithesis of the western way and the excuse for the U.S.A. to subsidize its arms industry and its belligerence in its efforts to control global resources markets. Using the threat of Islamic Fundamentalism the West is able to "manufacture consent" for its foreign policy among its population (Trueman 1996:22).

There are several factors which seem to have generated the intensity of the conflict in the Horn of Africa region in the context of the new Cold War. Four are the salient ones:

- a) The highly sought resources, more specifically oil and the Red Sea, are still critical factors relative to the Western security interests;
- b) The emergence of Islam as one of the most articulated ideological forces under which some political individuals and groups can organize their supporters in challenging the West;
- c) There are two major states in the region—Ethiopia and Sudan—whose histories have been shaped by the ideologies of Semitic religions; and
- d) The existence of super ordinate and subordinate relations in the state systems—this condition of social order is present both in Ethiopia and the Sudan—which serves as the basis for the elite of the dominant groups to

act as the saviors of the state (this gives them the motivation to seek outside support).

Since the selected venue for the dividing lines in the new Cold War have been the two major states, Ethiopia and Sudan, it is imperative that we review the contradictory policies of the United States government toward these two states.

THE U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE

Ethiopia is the last classic empire on the African continent. The very essence of dominance which has shaped the social order in Ethiopia, is rooted in the legacy of "the chosen people" ordained by the "divine" right to conquer, subdue and rule the indigenous African peoples in their surroundings (Markakis 1974:13-26). The Orthodox Christian Church dating back to the period of the Axumite kingdom, provided the ideological doctrine of the chosen people to the Abyssinian ruling class (Markakis 1974:27-42). As a literate segment in the society, the Abyssinian rulers and clergy were able to develop a coherent ideology which they later used to instill such values in its ethnic members; in due course, this carefully fashioned ideology would successfully penetrate the consciousness of the Western world (Greenfield 1965:22-44).

By the 16th century, the crucial linkage which would last until the present period, was made between the Abyssinian rulers and the then emerging Western imperial powers. Portugal, the first European imperial power to have developed overseas colonies, intervened on the side of the Abyssinians in the raging conflict between the Abyssinian kingdom and the Muslim forces led by Gagn. That act saved the Christian Kingdom from total obliteration (Abir 1968:xx). Since then, the Abyssinian rulers have always depended on the West to find a *deus ex machina* to save them from internal as well as external adversaries. Professor John Spencer, who served as advisor to Emperor Haile Selassie for over forty years, in his lamentation of the fact that Ethiopia fell to the Soviet Union orbit during the height of the Cold War in the Horn of Africa, provides a succinct summary of the patterns of dependence on external powers for the survival of *habasha* dominance since the 16th century. To this end he wrote:

Ethiopia's supreme crises were of external origin and were often resolved by foreign *deus ex machina*. The 16th century invasion, led by the Somali Gagn, was repelled by the Portuguese. The defeat of Italy at Adawa at the end of the 19th century was achieved in part with the French and German arms. The Emperor's rise to power in the early years of the 20th century had been achieved to a significant degree through the intervention of European states opposed to reign of Menelik's successor, Lij Iyassu. Haile Selassie fell from

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and the Emperor were partners in running the empire. For example, it was during this period that the Emperor incorporated Eritrea under some shady political manoeuvres (Habte Selassie 1982:51-63).

The U.S. played a critical role in supporting the Emperor against oppositions that were challenging his feudal regime. For example, U.S. planes bombed the Bale armed movement in conjunction with the Israeli government.¹³ Furthermore, the U.S. pressured Somalia to stop support for the movement, resulting in the surrender of the leadership, of course after some negotiation and symbolic concessions from the Emperor (Habte Selassie 1982, *ibid*). The American embassy in Addis Ababa intervened on the side of the Emperor during the 1960 attempted *coup d'etat* against the Emperor (Agyeman-Duah 1994:80-85). In return for unconditional American support for his regime, the Emperor gave the U.S. government the right to build the Kanaw air base in Asmara (Yohannes 1997:61-67). The main function of that military base was to spy on Soviet Union activities in the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea and the adjacent regions (Agyeman-Duah 1994:25-29). As discussed previously, during the seventeen years when the Derg ruled Ethiopia, the U.S. government sponsored various activities with the intention of snatching it, as it were, from the Soviet Union Orbit or to topple it.¹⁴ Likewise, the Derg on its part, elevated its anti-U.S. rhetoric on its daily political menu (Korn 1986:87-116; Wolde Giorgis 1986:48-53; Spencer 1984:348-356).

The U.S., after interacting with Ethiopia for some four decades when it was under Amhara dominance, in May 1991 inherited Ethiopia which would be ruled by a Tigrayan power (Tuso 1997:355-357). Upon examining the U.S. government relations with the regime of Meles Zenawi, one finds astonishingly remarkable similarities with the policies it had with the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie. It is instructive to summarize the key policy areas the U.S. has adopted with respect to the government of Meles Zenawi.

First it endorsed the TPLF/EPRDF to enter Addis Ababa and take power in 1991, and it in effect surrendered the entire population of some 60 million in Ethiopia to the hands of a guerrilla fighter whose power base is a tiny ethnic minority; the international community knew very little about him. To be sure, at the London Peace Conference, Mr. Herman Cohen, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and the Chairman of the Conference, announced to the international community that U.S. support for the new regime would be contingent on two conditions: support for democracy and respect for human rights.¹⁵ However, as the records would show later with respect to the failure of the U.S. administration in dealing with human rights violations by the Meles Zenawi regime, the U.S. was not serious about the preconditions it had articulated at the London Peace Conference (Ottawa 1995:67-84; Vestal 1996:21-38).

Second, the U.S. was involved in orchestrating and managing the July 1991 Addis Ababa Conference. Third, it dispatched experts to write the New Charter. Fourth, in the diplomatic arena, it elevated the Addis Ababa post to ambassadorial level, and also allowed the Tigrayan regime to have an ambassador in Washington. Fifth, the U.S. State Department recommended to Congress the revocation of the Brooke Amendment which had prohibited foreign aid to Ethiopia during the Derg. Sixth, both the Bush and Clinton administrations supported the applications of the regime of Meles Zenawi to the international lending agencies (e.g. the World Bank, IMF). Seventh, when the Meles regime conducted fraudulent elections of June 1992, the U.S., instead of taking appropriate actions against systematic rigging and sabotaging of the internationally publicized elections, continued uncritical support for his regime.

And finally, every time the oppositions, particularly the Oromo Liberation Front, has become stronger militarily, the U.S. government conducted joint military exercises with the military of Meles Zenawi.¹⁶ When Meles Zenawi declared war against the Oromos subsequent to those fraudulent elections, his apologists argued that he had to take such "tough measures in order to keep the unity of Ethiopia." (Bichburg 1992:A24).¹⁷ He even reportedly claimed that he was doing what Abraham Lincoln did during the American Civil War—to save the union of the American Republic from falling apart.

In the light of such considerable investment on the part of the U.S. government and its western allies in the persona of Meles Zenawi and his government, with the specific proposition that the empowerment of him and his regime would bring about democratic traditions and more respect for human rights in Ethiopia, it is legitimate to review the performance of his regime relative to the above indicated areas.

First, all the elections conducted during the period under review have been rejected by the international community as neither free nor fair (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs 1992:6-7; Norwegian Institute of Human Rights 1992:3-4; Pausewang 1994:1-4; Tronvoll and Aadland 1995:1-3).

Second, the constitution which was drafted in 1994 and ratified in 1995 has been dismissed by external observers as a veneer for the purpose of legitimizing minority Tigrayan dominance and exclusive control over resources (Vestal 1996:21-38; Ottaway 1995:67-84).

Third, freedom of expression has been under very serious attack; according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Ethiopia ranks first in Africa with respect to the number of journalist in jail (CPJ 1998). The CPJ has also listed Meles Zenawi among the top ten worst enemies of the press.

Fourth, the regime's record on human rights violations is equally bleak. According to several organizations which monitor human rights conditions in

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post Cold War Ethiopia, the recorded violations include: imprisonment without due process, denial of rights of public demonstrations and exacting severe penalties for those who dared to assert their basic rights to undertake public demonstrations; extraordinary killings; systematic persecution of artists, intellectuals, elders, students and political leaders of the major ethnic groups—the Oromos, Amharas, Somalis, and Sidamas.¹⁸

Fifth, in the words of Tecola Hagos, “...the democratization process has collapsed with no prospect of revival under the present leadership of the Ethiopian government.” (Hagos 1995:15). The Transitional Government commenced at the Addis Ababa Conference of July 1991 where the representatives of 29 liberation front organizations who participated and ratified the New Charter has, for all practical purposes, collapsed due to the systematic mistreatments prosecuted against members of non-Tigrean ethnic groups led by Meles Zenawi and his inner-circle (Hagos 1995:4, 5; 175-188; Lata, 1998:51-77; Mutua 1993:31).¹⁹

Sixth, the military is controlled by the TPLF and Meles Zenawi controls the military (Hirst, op.cit.; *The Economist*, 1995:46; 1992:50).

Seventh, the regime has targeted persons of certain ethnic descent for deportation (e.g. persons of Eritrean extraction) (Legesse 1998). And finally, the regime has plundered resources from the periphery and directed them to Tigray, the home base of Meles Zenawi and TPLF.²⁰

In our view of the above facts, and based on his own deeds since 1991, it is legitimate to conclude that Meles Zenawi is neither a liberator nor is he a unifier. Based on his policies of gross mistreatment of various ethnic groups, Meles Zenawi is not Abraham Lincoln, neither is he Mikhail Gorbachev; he is not even W. F. de Klerk. At least all three distinguished political leaders who were confronted with inequalities in a multi-ethnic state, Lincoln, Gorbachev, and de Klerk, demonstrated having two critical qualities in common. First, all three had abiding faiths in some notion of democratic principles in the arena of governance. Even more significantly, their policies altered the balance of power in favor of the subordinate ethnic groups in their respective states. Lincoln emancipated slaves; Gorbachev, with full knowledge that the Russians would lose the historic position of dominance over the devolution of the Soviet Union in favor of democratic resolution to the historic ethnic inequities which existed between the core and the periphery of the Russian empire for centuries, allowed the process of democratization to proceed, even at great personal risk (Gorbachev 1991) and de Klerk dismantled the abhorrent Apartheid system so that the African majority could legally participate rightfully in a democratic political process in the governance of South Africa (Ottaway 1993:1-19; *The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopaedia*, 1994, 263-264; de Klerk 1999:149-341).

Meles Zenawi's policies toward various ethnic groups in the Ethiopian Empire stand in marked contrast to the demonstrated policies of Lincoln, Gorbachev, and de Klerk. To be sure, Meles neither created ethnic inequalities in Ethiopia, nor did he treat their concerns fairly and democratically. Instead, he employed the mischievous and cynical ploys from Lenin and Stalin in his creation of "ethnically-based federalism." The apt analysis by Theodore Vestal supports this observation. He wrote the following on the political reasons behind the creation of "ethnic federalism" in the post Derg Ethiopia:

The credo of the EPRDF is rights of nations, nationalities, and peoples to self-determination, the Charter's obfuscated declaration of governance based on ethnicity. The high-sounding principle is more Machiavellian than Wilsonian however. If the outnumbered Tigreans who direct the EPRDF/TGE can keep other ethnic groups divided and roiled against each other in ethno-xenophobia or content to manage affairs only in their own limited bailiwicks, then larger matters can be subsumed by the one governing party. Thus what EPRDF views as the false ideology of nationalism for a "Greater Ethiopia" can be kept in check and its proponents divided and conquered, *ex uno plura* (Vestal 1994:21).

THE OROMO PROBLEM AND THE NEW POLITICAL ORDER

The Oromo question has come to the forefront since the fall of the Derg and the formation of the transitional government of July 1991, and the participation of the Oromo political organizations, most notably the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in that government. It would be recalled that the mistreatment of the Oromo people and the 1992 fraudulent elections compelled the OLF to withdraw from the government. Subsequently, all the genuine Oromo political organizations, along with other authentic ethnic organizations, were expelled from the government.²¹ Before we proceed with our analysis about the Oromo question in the new political order, it is appropriate that we address one critical issue: since Ethiopia is an empire which contains about eighty (80) ethnic groups, why should this essay focus on one group? Indeed, this is a legitimate question deserving serious consideration.

We have indicated throughout this work that the imperial system oppresses all ethnic groups in the periphery in significant ways. Also we will indicate when discussing the next section on "understanding the political dynamics in Ethiopia" that there is the tradition of hierarchical legacy within the Abyssinian core that favors the winner vis-à-vis other members within the system.

In our effort to further address this issue, we need to frame it in the context of internationally accepted principles on two critical issues: the principle of

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democracy and majority rule, and the right for self-determination for colonized nationalities.

In our view, the most critical issue regarding U.S. policy toward the regime of Meles Zenawi vis-à-vis the Oromos lies in this: if there is any legitimacy to the two international principles listed here, then supporting an ethnic minority regime in Addis Ababa which oppresses the majority Oromo is tantamount to willingly participate in conspiratorial political schemes which systematically deprive the majority Oromo of its unalienable rights. Also, we believe this question should be considered in the context of the larger dynamics evolving in the Oromo society itself—of course, in the context of colonial experience—which have propelled the question to the forefront. There are several reasons as to why the Oromo issue has become prominent since 1991. Seven are very critical.

First, as indicated previously, the Oromos are the single majority nationality in the region, and it is estimated that they constitute more than half of the population in contemporary Ethiopia—it is estimated that they constitute around 45 per cent of the population in contemporary Ethiopia. Out of the current estimated 70 million population of Ethiopia the Oromo number more than 30 million.²² Yet they have been the most oppressed, the most deprived, and the least exposed to modernity due to the century-old colonial subjugation and relentless exploitation (Tuso 1982:27-294).

Second, as indicated previously, the conflict in Ethiopia is essentially over power and privilege and which ethnic group and political figure is going to have exclusive control.²³ Power is based on the amount and extent of access one has to resources (Folger, Poole and Stutman 1999:70-71; 100-101). Most of the significant resources are in the periphery of the Ethiopian empire, and the Oromos are the overwhelming majority in the periphery. Thus most of the resources (e.g. coffee, gold, granary, arable land, etc.) fall within the Oromo country, Oromia (Melba 1988:25-27).

Third, the Tigrean minority regime being conscious of its own inferior numerical status has developed a scorch earth policy in dealing with the two the largest ethnic groups—the Oromos and the Amharas. In general, there has been a well-established social phenomenon that when a government inflicts increasingly harsher policies on aggrieved ethnic groups, the tendency to resist increases.²⁴

Fourth, there has been a fundamental psychological transformation among the Oromos with respect to their basic demands for self-determination since 1991. In many respects, the fall of the Derg during the last week of May 1991 was the most significant event in the modern political history of the Ethiopian Empire. With the demise of the Derg, the fall of the century-old Amhara power was consummated. It seems that at a subconscious level, the Oromo populace

had believed for years that the Amhara power was invincible. The earth shaking political developments of May 1991 proved otherwise. They witnessed the EPLF marching into Asmara with a triumphant victory; they watched with a great sense of envy the TPLF invading Addis Ababa like a mighty army; and of course, they observed the largest army in Sub-Saharan Africa crumbling so hopelessly like a powder house in a span of one week. Then it seems that they began to believe deep in their conscious that they too could do it. Since then, the Oromos, by and large, have shown their determination to reject the Tigrayan rule.²⁵ For example, the majority of the Oromos have rejected the TPLF created and managed OPDO (Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization). The Oromo professional class, some of whose members have traditionally sided with the Abyssinian successive regimes, has for the first time rejected becoming members of OPDO.²⁶

Fifth, the Oromo mistreatments in the hands of the new dominant masters, the Tigrayans, have become more transparent than any time before in their colonial experience. For example, during the June 1992 elections, it became clear that the regime of Meles Zenawi did not want the Oromos to have a chance to vote for a political party of their choice; therefore, the government, in an open manner, interfered with the process through intimidation, deprivation of the appropriate logistics to facilitate the voting process, imprisonment, and extraordinary killings. Indeed, these are infractions and gross violation of human rights known to the international community.²⁷

Sixth, the Oromos are the only nationality group that has a relatively more organized armed liberation front. And finally, there exists a general view that if Oromia becomes independent there will be no Ethiopia. In our view it is partly due to this scenario that the regime develops and employs such harsh measures against the Oromo people.²⁸ In our view, it is these set of factors which have made the Oromo question more visible during the 1990s.

In spite of legitimate grievances the Oromos can rightfully claim concerning their subordinate status in the new political order, they still receive negative reviews from the West. It seems that such negative reviews about the Oromo people in general are based on some basic serious misconceptions about the Oromo people on the part of the Western powers. There is a common social phenomenon that occurs in all classic cases of dominant vs. subordinate interrelations by which the dominant group defines the subordinate group in the most negative light. The image of the Oromo is the one defined and perpetuated by their Ethiopian oppressors (Bosmajian 1993:356-371).

The state power holders in the modern state system usually project the subordinate groups as inferior or evil or nuisance or all of the above and that they need to be controlled by the dominant group (Adam 1978); Albert Memmi

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calls this social phenomenon "the mythical portrait of the colonized" (Memmi 1965:79-83). This pattern of political behavior on the part of the dominant group emanates from the fact that dominant groups need some ideologically rooted justification to continue keeping subordinate groups in perpetual subjugation (Mannoni 1964:32; Memmi 1965:xii). Throughout the known history of Abyssinian-Cushitic interrelations, the Abyssinians have always depicted the Cushitic as savages who needed to be conquered.²⁹ The Oromos were singled out in particular because of their superior size.

Abyssinian rulers depict the Oromo in some seriously negative light. Three are significant:

- 1) They were called "Gallas," a name that was imposed upon them by the Abyssinian dominant group; the term "galla" in Amharic means savage, cruel, evil, subhuman, etc;
- 2) They were portrayed as savages who are incapable of developing, and who deserved to be controlled by the Abyssinians. The typical metaphors which the Abyssinians used to address Oromos included "qoshasha Galla" (dirty Oromo) "tebtaba Galla" (incoherent Oromo), etc;³⁰
- 3) To delegitimize their rightful claims to the territories they occupy, biyya Oromo (the Oromo country), intellectuals of the dominant group and a significant segment of the Ethiopianists have claimed that the Oromos are newcomers to Ethiopia. (There is a lucid discussion on this subject in Melbaa, 1988:4-8). Indeed, this has been disproved by more recent scholarship (Levine 1974:78; Lewis 1966:27-46). In this political game of negative projections, the Oromos have had a distinct disadvantage on several fronts. First they remained, for the most part, primarily an illiterate society, due in part, to the colonial legacy which deprived them of the opportunity to develop their language. Second, unlike many other societies around the world which were colonized by European powers, the Oromos were colonized by a backward feudal imperial system. Finally, Europeans in the process of colonization created a new history for the societies they subjugated; also, the very act of colonization provided legitimacy for those communities in the post WWII international order. None of these avenues were available to the Oromos.

More recently, new sets of negative ways of depicting the Oromos have emerged. Two such newly invented depictions are significant. For example, they have been described as a potential "breeding ground" for Islamic Fundamentalism.³¹ This is not only a misrepresentation of a serious scope with respect to the nature of the Oromo society, in the context of the post Cold War global poli-

tics, potentially, it is a lethal designation in the light of the fact that the West has identified in some clear terms that its chief enemy during the post Cold War is Islamic Fundamentalism. There is nothing in the Oromo national character nor in the history of the Oromo national movement for self-determination which in any way suggests the presence of Islamic fundamentalism nor the ideological orientation which can be linked to such religious based political movements. Many reasons can be listed in support of this position. Four are critical. First, the Oromos, like many other African societies, have three African souls—the indigenous African belief system, Islam, and Christianity (see Mazrui 1986; Nyang 1984).

In general, an African does not become a Christian or a Muslim with the intent of renouncing his/her past (Olupona and Nyang 1993). To an African, accepting any of the Semitic religions is just another virtue which he/she hopes will fulfil his/her aspirations contained in the original indigenous paradigm. Thus an African reaches out to the indigenous doctrine as well as to the doctrine of the new religions for spiritual enrichment. Second, since 16th Century, the Oromo paradigm which is rooted in the African worldviews has mediated between the Abyssinian state and the Islamic forces from the East. Professor Donald Levine of the University of Chicago made an interesting observation relative to the role of the Oromo paradigm in mediating the devouring conflict in the Horn of Africa during the 16th Century. He wrote:

The warfare between the Amhara kingdom and the Afar and Somali tribesmen under Gran was in some respects a clash between similar antagonists. Both were groups of Semitized Ethiopians, adherents of a Semitic religion and followers of political leaders who sought legitimacy through identification with Semitic ancestors. By contrast, the Oromo expansion represents a novel element in the politics of the empire—the assertion of a pagan, purely African force. And a remarkable force it was (Levine 1974:78).

Abbas Ganamo, a contemporary Oromo anthropologist, speaking about Oromo beliefs, writes:

...the Oromo society functions, in large measures, according to its customary laws, Seera, although the Shari'a is applied in some aspect of social life. The exclusive applications of Shari'a in a society where strong tradition persist cannot be materialized despite the Arabising efforts of some religious leaders. In other words, in spite of their endorsement of some Christians or Islamic ethics, after their conversion, the Oromo are still attached to their beliefs, traditional religion, culture and ancestral laws.³²

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Marina Ottaway, in her testimony before a Congressional Committee on Africa, indicated that the conflicts in Ethiopia during the post Cold War period are based on ethnicity rather than religion.³³

Third, all three recent Oromo organizations—the Bale armed struggle (1963-1970), the Match Tuluma Association (1963-1967), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) (1974-present) have constructed their political ideology in the Oromo cultural tradition not in any of the Semitic religions.³⁴ Fourth, during the transitional period of 1991/92 when the Oromos were given relative freedom, Oromo elders, after a century of separation from each other by government policy, instantly formed Waldaya Jarsota Biyya Oromo, the national Association of Oromo Elders.³⁵ The representatives to Jarsa Biyya Oromia were selected from every Oromo district from Wollo to Borana from Wollega to Harar, and from Illu Babor to the Somalia border. This act in itself was a clear demonstration of Oromo national resilience, for they rose from the ashes of the Derg and embraced each other, irrespective of diversity of region, religion, class, and the idiosyncrasies at sub-group level which had evolved as result of century long separation. One of the main objectives of this organization was to ensure that Oromo political leaders would not cause conflict among the Oromo people by using regional and religious affiliations.³⁶

Is the OLF a terrorist organization or a freedom fighting force? The characterization, by the U.S. State Department, of the OLF as a terrorist organization is another area of misrepresentation about the Oromo people.³⁷ Indeed, this has become a source of sadness to all Oromos around the world. They are angry, and they protest when they witness representatives of the U.S. State Department regularly trashing the OLF in the U.S. Congressional corridors of power as a violent or terrorist political organization. To the Oromos, the OLF has become the embodiment of the Oromo national liberation movement.³⁸ Nothing in its political agenda nor its actual practice supports the allegations that the OLF is a terrorist organization. As the case has been with the other two Oromo organizations—the Bale armed struggle and Matcha Tulama—the OLF political goals have been guided by the burning desire of the peasant masses who have been yearning for freedom from the Abyssinian colonial yoke.³⁹

It is instructive to examine the social context in which the Oromo Liberation Front emerged in the Oromo national history. When Emperor Menelik II conquered and incorporated the Southern peoples in the peripheries, the Oromos lost all their basic rights—political, cultural, language, land, religious liberty, etc. Haile Selassie upon his rise to power promised that he would modernize Ethiopia whereby all peoples in Ethiopia would become citizens of the Ethiopian state and enjoy all the basic rights. The Oromos waited for five decades for some meaningful reforms concerning their subordinate status in

the Empire. However, there were no meaningful reforms in any areas where the Oromos were affected the most as the result of the conquest and subsequent colonization (Lefort 1983:37; Gilkes 1975:101-136). To the contrary, for every step in the modernization of Ethiopia, the Oromos were becoming increasingly marginalized on a grand scale. The escalating level of the marginalisation of the Oromo people took various decisive policy forms. They include the resettlement of *naftanyas*, systematic confiscation of land, cultural genocide, prohibition of the development and use of Oromo language for official and educational purposes, deprivation of access to modern education, discrimination relative to job opportunities in the modern economic sectors (See Melba 1988:62-124; Tuso 1982:270-293).

The contradictory Imperial policies regarding agricultural development amply illustrate this point. When the Western powers gave generous foreign aid to the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie to upgrade its agricultural productivity, the government used the assistance to dispossess the Oromo peasants from the land and gave it to the various strata of *habasha* establishment—the royal family, the church, aristocracy, the military, and the newly burgeoning educated middle class. Also, these segments received assistance in various forms from the government to introduce modern agricultural methods of farming (Stahl 1974:62-146).

For example, during this period, three distinct yet interrelated negative policies were implemented in Arsi Province. First the Province was partitioned into three parts: a new province (of Bale) was created; the Rift Valley area was transferred to Shawa Province; and some parts were transferred to Hararge province. A relatively reduced territory remained carrying the name "Arusie" (See also Tareke 1991:125-159). Second, the land was taken from the Oromos in Bale to be given to new *naftanya* settlers. Third, in the Rift Valley, Oromo peasants were evicted from their ancestral land by the absentee landlords. It was under this particular social environment that the Bale arms struggle commenced in 1963 and lasted until 1970 (Tareke, 1991, *ibid*).

When Matcha and Tulama was formed in the 1963 it was essentially a civic organization. For the most part, it was organized by educated Oromos. Indeed, it was the first pan-Oromo organization in modern Oromo history. Alarmed by its successful outreach to the most oppressed rural areas such as Shawa, Arsi, and Hararge, the Haile Selassie regime banned the organization, and subsequently dismantled its leadership through intimidation, imprisonment, and physical liquidation (Human Rights/Africa Watch 1991:68, 69). When the Derg came to power in 1974, the Oromos were the first nationality group which responded positively to the changes initiated by the Derg (Rights/Africa Watch 1991:69, 70). Indeed, between 1974 and 1976 the relationship between the Oromos and

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the Derg were rather positive though all that changed after the 1977-1978 war with Somalia.

In due course, the Derg conceived and executed the most brutal policies toward the Oromo people. Resettlement and forced villagization represent such negative policies. (See Rights/Africa Watch 1991:211-236; U.S. Committee for Refugees 1988:14-16). It was under this milieu that the OLF emerged as a national liberation front. Its political program stipulates that its goal is to establish a non-sectarian state. Ironically, in spite of such clearly stated political objectives, some in the West, even in the intellectual circles, have unfortunately, of course, and erroneously recorded in their writings that OLF's political objective is to establish an Islamic state. For example, Halperin et al (1992:126) in their book, *Self-determination in the new political order* state that the goal of the Oromo Liberation Front is to create an Islamic state.

This, obviously, is an egregious act of misrepresentation. The OLF since its inception has been a secular and nonreligious patriotic organization. The composition of its members and leadership is highly diverse and representative by any standard. Promotion to higher positions of responsibility has been, for the most part, based on commitment to Oromo national cause and competence. To suggest that the Oromo Liberation Front is somehow linked to Islamic fundamentalism is as erroneous and as serious a misrepresentation as labeling Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) as "Communists" and "terrorists."

Throughout human history, liberation fronts have risen to emancipate their respective peoples from national oppression. The American Revolution and many other armed liberation fronts in human history belong to that legacy. Political leaders who have earned their fame in human history such as George Washington and Nelson Mandela, in absence of any other options, have also resorted to armed struggle for the purpose of emancipating their respective peoples from the bondage of national oppression and the accompanying human misery—physical persecution, psychological injury, cultural genocide, and material deprivation. Robert Asprey, a contemporary American historian, was correct when he wrote the following regarding the role of liberation fronts—he referred to them as "guerrillas"—in human history:

a historical sampling of guerrilla warfare should claim more than academic interest, for within the context of our day a knowledge of this history, even sharply abridged, is vital to the understanding and further study of a disturbing fact: For a number of reasons guerrilla warfare has evolved into an ideal instrument for the realization of social-political-economic aspirations of underprivileged peoples. This is so patently true as to allow one to suggest that we may be witnessing a transition to a new era in warfare, an era as radically dif-

ferent as those which followed the writings of Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Clausewitz, and Mahan (Asprey 1994:x).

Basil Davidson, a veteran Africanist, and author of *The People's Cause: A History of Guerrillas in Africa*, writing in the same vein observed, "that such well-directed war of self-defence has been governed by an overall political and moral concept which was always paramount" (Davidson 1981:1). Thus, it can be argued that the contemporary Oromo national movement for self-determination is not a social anomaly; indeed, it is a manifestation of a social phenomenon with historically based legitimate grievances, and it deserves not a condemnation from the western powers but a better understanding and support toward the achievement of social justice for the abused and underrepresented majority in the region.

POLICY OPTIONS

In this section, we will attempt to discuss areas which need fundamental reconsideration in U.S. foreign policy toward the Horn of Africa. This effort is based on the belief that conflict is not inevitable. Conflict is a culturally constructed social phenomenon (Lederach 1995:9-10).

In this context we should challenge a view commonly held, in some quarters which suggests that in certain regions the people have been fighting each other for centuries and that the hate is so deep that it is not worth intervention for social change and peaceful co-existence. Such comments have been made about the conflicts in such places as Indo-China, the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Horn of Africa.

In our view, no individual or group is born with the love for conflict over peace or genetically programmed to engage in perpetual wars. It is our belief (supported by evidence) that those regions which have been embroiled in a vicious cycle of conflict came to this state of paralysis because the peoples of such regions have been subjected to the imperial powers which have pitted peoples against peoples leading to inequalities, and exploited sentiments such as religion and ethnicity, for political reasons. In our view, the experience in the Horn of Africa fits this pattern of social conflict. Thus we believe that with appropriate policies and constructive modes of intervention, the peoples of the Horn of Africa can work out their differences based on equity and mutual respect.

The purpose of our discussion on new approaches to the conflict in the Horn is to afford external powers as well as the peoples of that region a new vision with respect to their basic values, interests, and their relationships with each other in these matters so that they will be able to control their own affairs in a more constructive and predictable manner as they confront the 21st century.

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The following five issues have been selected for our consideration: (1) The need to understand the multi-dimensional internal dynamic in the empire state of Ethiopia; (2) The theoretical question: is it possible to democratise an empire; the futility of suppressing national movements; empowering the weaker parties and some alternative ideas.

UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN ETHIOPIA

As has been indicated previously, since the 16th century, the West has invested considerable resources (financial, military, technical, and diplomatic) in the support of the Ethiopian Empire. While the West has procured some strategic benefits for such support for the backward and hellish empire at particular periods in history, such support did not contribute toward the internal development of a healthy and stable political system; neither did they contribute toward the development of an equitable economic system. They did not help to foster tolerant, respectful, and appreciative attitudes, the necessary qualities for a multi-ethnic state.

To the contrary, deadly social conflicts have been increasing with each decade. The exclusive support to a particular ruler has been inextricably linked with supporting one ethnic group over other ethnic groups. This, in turn, has generated resentment and rebellion against the beneficiary ruler as well as his ethnic group. The negative impact of such selective exclusive support of one ethnic group manifests at several levels. Here we will make some brief comments about three levels where conflicts have been generating. The first level is within the Abyssinian core society.

Three communities constitute the Abyssinian core society: (1) Tigray which included the Christian highland of Eritrea, (2) Northern Amhara (Gondar and Gojam), (3) and Shawa Amhara (Tareke 1965:1).

As the result of the exclusive support given by the West to Emperor Menelik (he is a Shawa Amhara) toward the end of 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, the Shawa Amharas became dominant political actors in the most critical areas of governance and resource control during the last century (Greenfield 1965:85-95,131-146; Lefort 1983:34-37).

For example, all the heads of states during the last century originated from Shawa Amharas. The conflict within the Abyssinian core has found much more demonstrable expression in the perennial rivalry between Amharas and Tigreans. The Tigrayan resentment against the Amhara hegemony which had been manifesting itself in various forms over the century found a new and invigorated expression in the formation of the Tigray People's Liberation Front in 1975, leading to deadly violent conflict within the Abyssinian core society (Firebrace and Smith 1982:1-19; Inquay, 1983/84:5-14; Tareke 1983/84:15-29). Essen-

tially the struggle has been over four fundamental issues, namely, control over the resources in the periphery, control of access to the Red Sea, control over access to external support, and determining which *habasha* group and which *habasha* ruler will have exclusive control over these resources.

Indeed, we can argue that the policies of Meles Zenawi and his TPLF in the post Cold War Ethiopia are more aptly designed to inflict revenge against the Amhara power for outmaneuvering the Tigreans during the last century than their claimed political objectives of introducing democracy and social justice to the peoples in Ethiopia (Hirst op. cit).

The Tigrayan grievance, perceived or real, against Amhara dominance can be categorized into six broad areas.

First, the Tigreans resent the fact that modern Ethiopia has been shaped more by the Amhara image and less by the Tigrean image. This sentiment is rooted in the Abyssinian social hierarchy. Historically, the Tigreans considered themselves more authentic *habashas*, the pure Ethiopian (*nestuh Ethiopiawi*) than the Amharas, particularly Shawa Amharas whom they consider not to be of pure Abyssinian blood since they are supposed to have been mixed with the Oromo blood through intermarriage, a sentiment shared by the Northern Amharas, (Gondar and Gojam). (See Tibebe 1995:174-176; Bauer 1977:15-18; Markakis 1974:47-49).

Second, they feel that the successive Shawan Amhara rulers, used the resources (human and material) from the South to consolidate their position of dominance at the expense of Tigray, and deprived the Tigreans of the appropriate share of the spoils extracted from the conquest and colonization of the South (Abraham 1994:159-164).

Third, Emperor Menelik II betrayed Emperor Yohannes IV in his struggle against the Mahadist Sudanese regime in 1889 by not coming to his rescue at a critical time, and upon the death of Yohannes declaring himself the Emperor of Ethiopia (Abraham 1994, *ibid*).

Fourth, Menelik gave Eritrea to Italy and in return secured arms to conquer the South. In the process he divided the Tigrean society (the highland section of Eritrea is inhabited by Tigreans).

Fifth, they (Tigreans) feel that he made Tigray a reduced and landlocked territory (Abraham 1994; See also Firebrace and Smith 1982:18). And finally, they feel that the Shawan Amhara rulers, particularly during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, imposed Amhara dominance on Tigray through the Amharic language policy in schools, and when the Tigrean nationalists rebelled against unfair rule, or when they sought regional autonomy, they were treated harshly and with great cruelty, including economic deprivation through the neglect of the Tigray Province (Tareke, 1983/84:17-19). These facts are relevant to the

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history of the conflict within the Abyssinian core society, and it can be argued that the U.S., by supporting the regime of Meles Zenawi, is fully participating in the revengeful political activities of the new Tigrean elite against its arch-rival, the Amharas, within the Abyssinian core.

David Hirst of *The Guardian*, a British paper, captured this sense of revenge as manifested by the new Tigrean ruling group when he wrote the following astute observation:

The collapse of the Mengistu regime was so complete that, with Eritrean help, the Tigrean could take over and dominate the Ethiopian state. They ended the "chauvinist" supremacy of ethnic Amharas through whom the Emperor Haile Selassie and then Mengistu ruled. In theory they replaced it with "unity based on equality." In practice their multi-party system, constructed on rigidly ethnic lines, was but a thin democratic façade for a Tigrean supremacy that was even more extreme than that of the Amharas. "The essence of democracy is majority rule," said a former Ambassador to Addis Ababa. "But here we have 4 million Tigreans lording it over 18 million Amharas, and 20 million Oromos—always the most oppressed." The Tigreans dominated the administration, security services, police and army. Bitter memories of Amhara chauvinism seemed to pervade and envenom their new sense of mastery. The Ethiopian state in their hands, they persisted, if surreptitiously, with a Tigrean agenda. The right of secession was enshrined in the constitution while they diverted state resources to their own people and region, and enlarged Tigray province at the expense of others (Hirst 1999).

The second level of the conflict which the outside world, including the U.S., does not understand, is that which comes from the resentment, alienation, and rebellion from the historic periphery against the colonial rule from Addis Ababa. As indicated previously, about two-thirds of the territory of contemporary Ethiopia was acquired through conquest during the late 19th century and early 20th century (Greenfield 1965:108-110; Keller 1988:36, 37).

Thus at the present time, about 70 percent of the estimated 70 million estimated population in Ethiopia reside in the periphery. By their very nature, conquest and dominance naturally generate resistance from its victims. Since the days of conquest there has been a dysfunctional relationship between the Abyssinian empire-state and the peoples of the periphery. They gallantly fought against their conquest and since then have rebelled against the Addis Ababa rule. In fact, it can be argued that the underpinning cause for all the major social conflicts since the 1960s in Ethiopia can be attributed to the unjust social system imposed on the periphery and the resistance emanating from it (Tadesse, 1993:21-27; 51-56; 1998:XXV- XL). For example, the Bale armed

struggle which commenced in the mid-1960s, the Gedo rebellion of the 1960s, the Somali resistance in the Ogaden, and the Sidama resistance movement of the 1970s, are all manifestations of this social phenomenon. None of these nationalities, save the Somalis, have managed to mount major decisive wars against the government in Addis Ababa.⁴⁰ However, the disaffection and a sense of alienation is much deeper among the peoples of the periphery than the West can ever fully comprehend.⁴¹

The third critical element which the West has never understood about Ethiopia is the nature of the Abyssinian paradigm with respect to the creation of social order. In the Abyssinian worldview, social order is created and maintained through the application of power which is predicated on vertical relationships without compromise. Thus, for example, a ruler has to either subdue or submit. There is no concept of horizontal relationships. This practice is rooted in the Abyssinian feudal political system (see Habte Selassie 1980:11-21; Levine 1965:245-253).

A typical practice of capturing political power is by eliminating, through any means including physical, one's potential rivals at the local level, then at the regional level, and finally at the state level.⁴² Once a leader reaches that level, the common practice is to seek "divine approval" through the Orthodox Church.⁴³ In the more recent history, the second source of approval for legitimacy has been the external world powers.⁴⁴

Thus we can argue that it is for this basic reason that a democratic tradition which by its very nature requires the acceptance of rival parties as legitimate political entities, respect for their rights, and the necessity to make reasonable compromise with them, has failed to take root in Ethiopia.

It is in this historical context that we argue that the Western blind support of the eventual winner in the struggle to win the highest prize (i.e. the exclusive control of power) in effect has contributed toward the intensification of the vertical power relationships in the Abyssinian political systems leading to protracted social conflicts. This crisis has been aptly captured by Tekie Fessehazion, in his reflective essay.

Who would have thought that a quarter of a century after the Emperor was deposed, the Lion of Judah's reign, in retrospect, would look the most enlightened (for Ethiopia) when compared to the last two that followed? And who would have thought that Ethiopia would suffer more bloodshed the past year and a half under TPLF than it did under the seventeen years under the Derg? These things do not add up. Only in Ethiopia does each tyrant look worse than the previous tyrant whom he deposed in the name of the people. This is Ethiopia's curse.⁴⁵

THEORETICAL QUESTION: IS IT POSSIBLE TO DEMOCRATIZE AN EMPIRE?

An empire by definition is predicated on vertical ethnic social order: the super-ordinate nationality (the imperial core society) over sub-ordinate nationalities—the periphery (Katz 1996:25-35). Thus, social inequalities are rooted in the structural arrangement itself. It is the inherently unequal relationship between the core and periphery that generates antagonistic social conditions leading to resistance from the periphery (Memmi 1965). Throughout history, empires have collapsed, in part, as the result of rebellion from the periphery (Tilly 1997:1-16). In modern times, all empires have collapsed; the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, European global empires, and more recently, the Soviet Union Empire, are relevant examples.⁴⁶

Are we to assume the Ethiopian Empire possesses some unique properties and as such it is somehow immune from such ultimate fate? Then there is the corollary question: at what expense should the U.S. try to keep Ethiopia together? Or stating it differently: how long should the West continue to sponsor minority ethnic dominance in Ethiopia? If the United States government finds it fitting to orchestrate a war against Slobadan Melosevic to save two million ethnic Albanians in the Balkans which it did so magnificently, how could it justify sponsoring minority ethnic dominance and all the accompanying mistreatments against the subordinate ethnic groups in Ethiopia? If the minority rule in South Africa was unacceptable to the U.S., which it was, then why should it be acceptable in the case of the Tigreans in Ethiopia? Other related questions should include: what can be done so that the Western world can understand the perspectives from the periphery relative to the protracted saga of the devouring social conflict in the Ethiopian Empire?

THE FUTILITY OF SUPPRESSING NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

Nationality movements have shaped the history of the 20th century, in large measure. Indeed, the century commenced with a war in the Balkans which eventually led to the collapse of two empires—the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungarian Empire—giving rise to a new political doctrine, self-determination, in the international legal system (Halperin, et al. 1992:20-25). Ironically, the last century is ended with violent conflicts in the Balkans, all emanating from the dysfunctional relationships between ethnic groups and the modern state, leading to the collapse of Yugoslavia. Much more significantly, a great deal more has taken place around the world in terms of ethnic related conflicts since the end of WWI. The global European empires collapsed, in large measures as the result of rebellion from the non-European colonized nationalities (Laue 1987:239-271). However, while decolonisation ended direct rule from European metropolis,

ironically, in a rather remarkable way, it further legitimized the modern state—a uniquely European institution—globally (Mazuri 1990:54-58).

Nevertheless, contrary to the predictions by Western scholars—both liberal scholars as well as Marxist scholars—ethnicity did not wither away with increased modernity and the proximity of peoples of different ethnic backgrounds as the result of modern communication (Connor 1972:319-355; McGarry 1995:121-142). Instead, ethnic conflicts have increased greatly since the era of independence. As an American sociologist, Donald L. Horowitz observed:

Ethnicity is at the center of politics in country after country, a potent source of challenge to the cohesion of states and of international tension. Connections among Biafra, Bangladesh, and Burundi, Beirut, Brussels, and Belfast were at first hesitantly made—isn't one "tribal," one "linguistic," another "religious"—but that is true no longer. Ethnicity has fought and bled into public and scholarly consciousness (Horowitz 1985:xi).

A more cogent explanation has been suggested for such widespread dysfunctional relationships between the modern state and ethnic groups by another scholar, McIver J. Weatherford, who wrote:

The nation-state absorbed the remaining "tribal" people but has proven incapable of incorporating them fully into the national society as equal members. The state swallowed them but could not digest them. The state could destroy the old languages and cultures, and it easily divided and even relocated whole nations. But the state proved less effective at incorporating the "detrribalised" into the national culture. Even though the state expanded across the frontier, it could not make the frontier disappear. The frontier moved into the urban areas with the "detrribalised" masses of defeated nations, emancipated slaves, and exploited laborers (Weatherford 1994:289).

The newly emerging field of conflict resolution has developed even a much stronger theoretical concept—the human needs theory—which attempts to explain the reasons why ethnic-based deeply rooted conflicts have persisted around the world. Simply stated, the human needs theory posits that there are certain basic needs universal to every individual and group which are non-negotiable (Burton 1988:187-204). There are several elements constituting basic human needs.

Azar has identified five such elements. They are: identity; recognition; security; participation; and control of environment (Azar and Burton 1986). Paul Sites has made a successful linkage between these basic needs and indi-

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vidual allegiance to identity groups (Sites 1973). Proponents of the human needs theory indicate that the social phenomena associated with ethnic groups can be identified with the above listed basic elements. John Burton, one of the most influential intellectuals in pioneering the field of conflict resolution (in the western historical context), has forcefully argued that no amount of force exerted by the state can succeed in suppressing these basic human needs. Expounding his views on this subject he wrote:

The implication of this observation is that there are needs of individual development and control that will be pursued, regardless of consequences. State manipulation, socialization, coercion and repression merely postpone the inevitable. The inevitable is foreseeable, given the universal availability of the means of violence. There is a historical continuity in protest against authoritative controls. The state has the means of repression and can survive for a long period of time at great cost; but finally suitably led peoples' power, reflecting human needs that will be pursued, prevails (Burton 1988:193).

Burton further articulated on the futility of the power holders in the state and international systems in controlling the ethnic identity-based conflicts. He wrote:

In the international and inter communal fields we are dealing with issues for which men and women are prepared and give their lives. We are dealing with conflicts that are protracted and even institutionalized, with no end in sight. Our task is not to find means of containment and suppression, as done by traditional efforts of conflict settlement, but to determine the hidden data of motivation and intentions, and thus seek to resolve conflicts (Burton 1988, *ibid*).

It has only been about half a century since the U. S. became a global power. However, during this short history, in the name of national security interest, it has participated in the suppressions of nationality movements in various regions in the world; invariably, the failures in these endeavors have been demonstrated, resulting in serious implications. It suffices to cite the following few examples in support of this observation: Indochina, Southern Africa, the Middle East, and Horn of Africa (Burton 1988 *ibid*).⁴⁷

EMPOWERING THE WEAKER PARTIES

Power is the most significant factor in dominant-subordinate interrelations. The dominant ethnic group, with its ability to control the state resources, controls the events on their own terms. In addition, the ruling class of dominant groups controls communication with the international system (Yetman 1975:1-

8). The subordinate nationalities engage in various forms of resistance to balance those power relationships (Himes 1966:1-10).

The U.S. government and Western allies have established the tradition of empowering the weaker parties in situations where the conflicts are between the state power holders and the less powerful entities—such as human rights activists, members of persecuted religious groups, members of subordinate ethnic groups, etc., when the conflicts involve the violation of the basic rights of the disadvantaged parties.

The forms of empowerment have included symbolic gestures as well as substantive steps. Symbolic gestures include having audience with prominent members of the aggrieved parties, issuing statements of support for their cause and demanding the respect of their basic rights. Substantive actions have included cutting foreign aid, initiating economic boycott, putting diplomatic pressures including the severing of relations, maximally providing resources for the aggrieved parties to empower themselves in the manner which will enable them to defend their basic interests, and intervening militarily to create a balance of power in the conflict. For example, the U.S. and its Western allies have participated in one form or another in both the symbolic and substantive actions in supporting the disadvantaged parties in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.⁴⁸

More recently, the U.S. and its allies have formulated much more open and discernable policies in the empowerment of the weaker parties in Balkan conflicts.⁴⁹ In our view, the U.S. and its Western allies should do the same in the Horn of Africa with all the manifestations (symbolic gestures and substantive steps) to empower the weaker parties (i.e. the peoples in the peripheries) who have been paying a heavy price in these protracted conflicts. As our review in this essay has shown, the Western powers bear more responsibility in the creation of the conflicts in the Horn of Africa than in the Balkans.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The central theme of this essay is to critique the U.S. foreign policy toward the Horn of Africa during the post-Cold War years. The discussion, in main, focused on the U.S. relations towards the Tigrean dominated regime in Addis Ababa and the implications for the basic rights of the Oromo people. We selected to use the concept of the new Cold War as a frame of reference for our analysis. Three other interrelated concepts—state structural system as source of social conflict, nationalism, and human needs theory—were employed for the purpose of explaining the dysfunctional relationships between the modern state and various ethnic groups leading to protracted and deep-rooted social conflicts.

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More significantly, viewing U.S. foreign policy toward the Horn of Africa during the post Cold War era on its own merits (i.e. considering the U.S. national interest), we are compelled to conclude that, by and large, it has been a dismal failure. For example, democratic tradition has not taken root in Ethiopia during the last fifteen years. Instead, there have been established substantive reports of gross human rights violations perpetrated against members of different ethnic groups by the government of Meles Zenawi.

Ethnic conflict has proliferated by government policy design. Ironically, the strategy of using Meles Zenawi and Isaias Afeworki against the current regime in Khartoum has not worked. In fact, the conflict between TPLF and Eritrea has strengthened the regime in Khartoum.

Two other ironies with respect to the U.S. foreign policy toward the Tigrean dominated government were noted. First, the unconditional support for Meles Zenawi has not made him a loyal ally of the U.S. for he has been touring the capitals of the states such as Libya and Iran whom the U.S. considers "rogue" states. Second, lately, Mr. Mesfin Seyoum, the Foreign Minister of the Addis Ababa government has been bashing the United States for not taking a more aggressive stance against Eritrea.⁵⁰

And finally, recently it has been revealed that there is a distinct fear on the part of the U.S. government that Meles Zenawi, having occupied a half of Somalia, may launch another attack on Eritrea which will create a military monopoly in the region.⁵¹ It is based on this line of concern that Mr. Benjamin A. Gilman, a Republican from the State of New York, the Chairman of the International Relations Committee of the U.S. Congress (House) has called on the U.S. government to condemn the regime of Meles Zenawi for refusing to sign a peace treaty which has been supported by the U.S. and OAU. In his article which appeared in the Washington Post, he stated:

By rejecting this plan, however, Meles has dashed hopes to a peaceful resolution to the war. The time has come for the United States and the international community to condemn the Ethiopian's intransigence and urge them not to launch an attack (Gilman 2000:A19).

In light of these stark contradictory policies with serious consequences for the peoples in the periphery, the following five areas which the U.S. government should reconsider relative to its foreign policy toward the region were explored: the understanding of social dynamics in the Ethiopian empire; the perils of reforming empires; the futility of suppressing national movements; empowerment of the weaker parties; and alternative approaches to dealing with Sudan.

The author preceded this critical essay with a personal narrative (in the epilogue). This technique was employed in the hope that it may advance our effort to demythologize the Ethiopian Empire State and, in some small ways,

assist the reader to comprehend the stark social contradictions in the relationships between the core and the periphery in the states in the Horn of Africa in general, and the Ethiopian empire in particular. We deem appropriate that we conclude this essay with voices of oppressed human communities which have elevated their grievances against systems of repression and control by placing their legitimacy in terms of human needs, before scholars ever recognized the validity of the human needs theory in matters relating to social conflict. Since we wish to place this crisis—the dysfunctional relationships between the core and the periphery in the modern states system—in historical and global contexts, we will present selected voices from the past and present. One such voice from comes European history—it was a Jewish voice through the brilliant pen of William Shakespeare. In *Merchant of Venice*, he captured with his magnificent imagination the plight of the Jewish community in Continental Europe during his era. He wrote:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Has not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you the rest, we will resemble you in that.⁵²

The European political, religious, and community leaders did not heed the central message in that voice; mistreatments of the Jews continued in one form or another, and eventually culminated in the Holocaust of the 1930s and 1940s.

Another significant voice comes from North America, the voice from a freed slave. It was the eloquent voice of Frederick Douglas. He roared in indignation in his speech of 1862 entitled, *No Man is by Nature a Slave*:

We ask nothing at the hands of the American people but simple justice and an equal chance to live, and if we cannot live and flourish on such terms, our case should be referred to the Author of our existence. Injustice and oppression has been tried with us during a period of more than two hundred years. Under the whole heavens you will find no parallel to the wrongs we have endured. We have worked without wages, lived without hope, wept without sympathy, and bled without mercy. Now, in the name of common humanity, we simply ask the right to bear the responsibility of our existence.⁵³

America did not heed the plea of Frederick Douglass, and African Americans had to endure another century of racism and the resultant brutalization and

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human misery before they were accorded equal status in American society. Even after emancipation which was a significant achievement from the status of slavery, they were allowed to live in subjugation which manifested its negative effects in various forms—deprivation of basic needs as the result of legal segregation, physical violence in the form of lynching, and psychological violence as the result of the cruel nature of the prejudice they experienced on daily basis.

Turning to the voices of the contemporary scene, we will conclude this section with three representative voices from peoples in distress. The first one comes from the Americas, the voice of the indigenous people. It was contained in the Manifesto of the Zapatista of the National Army, issued on January 8, 1994, at the occasion of the implementation of the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). The Manifesto declared:

We are the product of 500 years: first against slavery; then during the war of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, later the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Vila and Zapata emerged, poor men like us. We have been denied the most elementary preparation so they can use us as a cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They do not care that we have nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no lands, no work, no health care, no food, and no education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children.⁵⁴

Equally as eloquent and as relevant is the voice from the Kurdistan country which came from Leya Zana, a Kurdish woman, a member of the Parliament in Turkey, who chose imprisonment over renunciation of her Kurdish identity and forsaking her friends and her Kurdish people who had been under attack by the Turkish dominant ethnic group. Zana wrote the following exactly three days before the above cited Zapatista Communiqué was issued:

I am 33. For 14 years I have lived with persecution and watched many friends tortured or killed for wanting to live in peace and democracy with Turks on the sole condition they respect Kurds' identity and culture. I have two children, a husband and many dear friends. I love life. But my passion for justice for my people, who are suffering for dignity and freedom is greater. What value is a life of slavery, humiliation and contempt for what you hold dearest—your identity? I will not knuckle under Turkey's inquisition (Zana, 1994:A23).

Now we conclude this line of observation with a representative voice from the periphery in the Horn of Africa. This particular narrative is from Oromia, the Oromo country. It stated:

The Abyssinian government is always advocating Ethiopian superiority over other nations and nationalities, whereas Ethiopia means actually the Abyssinia culture and tradition, while a liability to all conquered nations, is masked. In Africa Watch report, it was clearly stated that, to be a "genuine" Ethiopian you have to follow Orthodox Christianity and have Amahra or Tigre names. In short to be an Ethiopian you will have to wear Amhara and Tigre masks. Oromos were and are subjected to such empty superior mentality and destruction of cultural heritage and traditional invasion of the *habashas*. This may not be a big deal when compared to the regular harassment, torture, imprisonment and rape. Oromia is a common place for such activities by the *habasha* and their henchmen. Being an Oromo in itself is crime enough to be put in jail or be killed under *habasha* repressive rule. It is not today that we became the target of cultural destruction and replacement; the tragedy started when the Oromo lost their independence to Menilik and Haile Selassie who unsuccessfully tried to Amharanize and Orthodoxize the Oromos. The repression in all aspect has continued from the early Amhara colonizers to the present Tigre colonizers. The systematic identity destruction of both colonizers of is the same; their interest is to destroy you beyond recognition of yourself, through abolishment of cultural heritage, traditions and ritual Oromo ceremonies.⁵⁵

Of course, the subordinate status of the Oromos in the new political order of post-Cold War Ethiopia has been confirmed by independent sources, *The Economist* being one of them. In its reflective analysis with respect to the results of the internationally publicized June 1992 fraudulent elections, and the negative consequences for the Oromo people, *The Economist* wrote:

The well being of the passion lies in a tangled and unhappy history. The people who now feel themselves most aggrieved speak for the Oromos, some 40% of the Ethiopia's population, inhabiting the centre of the country. For more than a century they were ruled and despised by autocrats from farther north: first by feudal emperors, then for 17 years by military Stalinists. Both autocracies ruled through, if not openly in the name of, the Amharas, highlanders with ancient Christian tradition. Last year guerrilla soldiers from another northern group, the Tigreans, seized Addis Ababa and ousted the dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam in the name of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. History weighs heavily. For now, Ethiopia is run by an army of Tigrean farm boys, while the Oromo dwell on humiliations, past and present (*The Economist* 1992:47).

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The relevance of presenting these five representative voices from the peoples in distress from the past and present lies in this: each of these cases has had some connections with the policies of the American government. The U.S. helped the Jews to rise from the ashes of the Holocaust and build a powerful state in the Middle East. Today the U.S. pays to the tune of 5 billion dollars for the security of Israel a year (Israel receives 3 billion and Egypt, the chief partner in the U.S. sponsored peace initiatives receives about 2 billion/year) (Ball and Ball 1992:255-282).

Representatives of American Jews play significant roles in running the federal agencies including the State Department. The African Americans in whose behalf Frederick Douglass pleaded some 144 years ago have been sufficiently empowered through a series of civil rights legislation and many other enabling provisions made in the American systems (governments and business) to participate productively in the American dream. Today they play a critical role in the formulation of the U.S. foreign policy including matters relating to the continent of Africa. However, the contrast is disturbing when one compares these remarkably successful achievements by the two oppressed nationalities (the Jews and African Americans) as the results of U.S. government positive policies with the negative records the U.S. has accumulated with respect to the oppressed nationalities in developing societies; in most cases, the U.S. government has sided with regimes headed by dictators and tyrants belonging to the dominant ethnic groups ostensibly in the presumed pursuit of "national interests." Interestingly, the situation in Kurdistan has changed since the recent American war in Iraq. Today Kurdistan is an autonomous region and it is a Kurd, who is the current president of Iraq. Only a few years ago no one thought of such a possibility. What brought about such dramatic change is the fact that Kurdistan has been seen as furthering American national interest in Iraq. Thus, it is not surprising that the other two voices—Chiapas, Oromia—share one thing in common: these nationalities in these territories have been further marginalized in all significant aspects of their lives as the result of U.S. support for the oppressors in the name of "national security interests." Currently, about two-thirds of the conflicts around the world are connected in one form or another to group identity-based conflicts (Rasmussen 1997:23-50).

These human communal groups do not have effective constituencies within the power centers in the modern global system. Thus, they are the faceless and voiceless masses around the world condemned for neglect, abuse, and exploitations by the tyrants who occupy the seat of power in the modern state system. Neither the promise of democratization (Zakaria 1997:22-43) nor globalization (Black 1999; Holm and Sorensen 1995), nor the civil society paradigm,⁵⁶ nor the free market economy (Ibister 1998; McMurtry 1998). is succeeding in mitigating the compounding effects of marginalization on such groups.

The fundamental problem centers around the issue of power— that the marginalized groups lack sufficient power to protect their basic interests. The U.S. and its allies, deeply fearful that the potential of ethnic based social movements around the globe may lead to the break-up of the states system resulting in many more states, thus undermining their basic “national interests”, have engaged in supporting twin policies—pseudo conflict resolutions activities and military solution. These proposed solutions are usually made for the purpose of maintaining the sovereignty of the states rather than genuine empowerment for the aggrieved ethnic groups.⁵⁷ Undoubtedly, the ruling class of the dominant groups find solace in this pattern of policy propositions. This may be the gravest crisis facing the human community during the 21st century. The peoples of the periphery of the Horn of Africa share the burden of this crisis.

Notes

1. The Congressional Record, Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1997, House of Representatives, Washington, D. C. June 5, 12, Jun 12, 1996; See also, Madeleine Albright, “Sustaining Democracy in the Twenty-First Century” *The Rostov lecture series*, School of International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., 18 January 2000; “Statement on U.S. Commemoration of Human Rights Day” December 10, 1999, Washington, D. C.
2. Presidential Document, Administration of William J. Clinton, Vol. 35, No. 38 (27 September 1999), pp. 1783, 1984.
3. Vaclav Havel, Speech before the Canadian Parliament on the subject of human rights over the state rights, 29 April 1999, Ottawa, Canada.
4. For a detailed philosophical position of the U.S. foreign policy toward the conflict in the Balkans, see *Time Magazine*, 17 May 1999, pp. 27-35.
5. Presidential Document, op. cit., p. 1782.
6. A speech by Madeleine Albright at the NAACP Annual Conference, New York. See *Agence France Presse*, 13 July 1999.
7. The views of Ambassador David Shin on this subject were summarized in *Ethiopian Register*, September 1999, pp. 8-10.
8. The concept of core-periphery is also used interchangeably with “center-periphery.” This has evolved to constitute a model of analysis relative to the structural relationship between the advanced or metropolitan “center” and a less developed “periphery” within a state. It is also applied to describe the relationship between the industrialized capitalist states and the developing societies. The concept is used to describe the structural relationship between the imperial core society and the subordinate societies in classic imperial systems. This model assumes that power is the most critical factor—the core has the military, economic, political, trade power to impose its will on the periphery (see Marshall 1994:47-48).

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9. The literature on the subject of the Cold War is voluminous. Since we are not interested in the discussion of multi-dimensions of the Cold War, we only cite sources which support the major points in this article. The seminal work of H. Von Laue presents a coherent historical evolution of the Cold War with its significance to the entire global community. See his work, *The world revolution of Westernization: The twentieth century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
10. The OAU Charter Article II, No. 1, c; III, No.1, 2, 3.
11. Chester Crocker, "U.S. interests in regional conflicts in the Horn of Africa," address before the Washington World Affairs Council, Washington, D.C. November 13, 1985, p. 3.
12. Ibid. Juergensmeyer does strongly argue that these religious nationalist movements should be taken more seriously not for the purpose of military confrontation but for the purpose of recognizing the values attached to these ideological paradigms. See pp. 26-41; 193-202.
13. Interview with Adam Jillo, 23-24 July 1999, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
14. For example, Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), a political organization which had ties with the royal family and the nobility was funded by CIA.
15. Herman Cohen, Press Statement, May 28, London, UK.
16. Confidential Sources.
17. See also, Lucy Hanson, "Ethiopia: Democracy or Deception," *Focus on Africa* (nd).
18. Many reports about the human rights violations under the current regime have been issued by various organizations. The following reports are representative of such records. Amnesty International. *Ethiopia: Accountability, past and present-Human rights in transition*, April, 1995; Amnesty International, *Report on Ethiopia for 1995*, London, July 1996; Abdullahi An-Na'im, *Human Rights in Ethiopia*, Testimony Before U.S. Congress (House) Sub-committee on Africa, July 27, 1994 (He gave the testimony on behalf of Human Rights/Africa Watch); Sue Pollock, *Ethiopia: Human Tragedy In the Making [A Report]*, Glasgow, Scotland, March 1995. Also, Oromo Support Group (OSG), UK, has produced press releases which contained credible information on human rights violations in Ethiopia.
19. See also *Africa Confidential*, Vol. No. 19 (Sept. 22, 1995), p. 5
20. See Sagalee Haaraa, *OSG Newsletter No. 29*, (August-October, 1999), p. 7; Sue Pollock, *Ethiopia: Tragedy in the Making*, op. cit. pp. 10-12.
21. See the Central Committee of the OLF, Memorandum, On "Why the OLF was forced to withdraw from elections," 17 June 1992, pp. 2, 3; Interview with Beyene Petros, published in *Ethiopian Review*, November, 1993, pp. 14-18; SEPDC, [North American Office] *A Statement by the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition on its "Expulsion From the Transitional Council"*, 16 April 1993.
22. It is predictable that in a political system where a minority ethnic group is dominant, the population number of the subordinate majority becomes in question. Thus, this has been the case with respect to the Oromo population in the Ethiopian empire. With respect to the Oromo population in Ethiopia, it has been consistently estimated to be about 50-60 percent. For example see Grey 1927:35-45.

23. See Hamdesa Tuso, "Ethiopia: Conflict within the Abyssinian core and the fall of Amhara power" (part I, and II) Unpublished paper, 1997.
24. Oromo Support Group (OSG) has documented serious human rights violations against the Oromos. Some of the reports on this subject have appeared in its newsletter, Sagale Haaraa.
25. This became more distinctively clear to this author during the last week of May 1991. The Oromos were calling each other around the world. For example, I was in London to attend as an advisor to one of the parties at the London Peace Conference; the OLF leaders informed us that they were receiving calls from Oromos around the world. This was a great surprise to the OLF leadership for they had never received so much attention from the Oromo people. In Oromia itself, we also learned from the grass roots level that expectation was for the OLF to march to Addis Ababa and declare independence for Oromia. Indeed, during the subsequent months, the Oromo elders confirmed this sentiment when they recommended to the OLF essentially to reject the Charter—this was the legal document ratified during the July 1991 Addis Ababa Conference upon which the transitional government was supposed to govern Ethiopia and pursue activities which would ensure self-determination for the Oromo people.
26. Hassen Ali, whom the TPLF used as the President of Oromia and then demoted to the Vice Presidency later, had a unique experience with Oromos in the Diaspora. When he came to Minneapolis to recruit members for OPDO in 1997, the OLF supporters overtook the meeting and dressed him up with the OLF flag. About two years later, he defected to the U.S. and applied for political asylum.
27. For example, Sue Pollack, a human rights activist from Scotland (UK) produced a detailed account of human rights violations against the Oromos (cited previously). In addition, her interviews and articles have appeared in several papers and magazines. Other reports include: Guddaa 1997:23; Packer 1996:117-127).
28. The OLF, since the reorganization that followed its Extra Ordinary Congress of May 1998, has repositioned itself to wage armed struggle against the Ethiopian Empire; indeed, it has reformed its organizational structure and began working with the Oromos in the Diaspora and at home more effectively. The Sidama Liberation Front and the Ogaden National Liberation Front are the other two fronts currently waging armed struggle against the Addis Ababa regime. Both of these have collaborative working relations with the OLF.
29. It was British Historian, Margery Perham, who captured the essence of the Abyssinian attitude toward the Oromos. Of Emperor Tewodros, she wrote, "He showed a fierce hostility toward the Galla people, and a large number mutilated and thrown over the towering natural fortress of Maqdalla, which he made his headquarters" (Quoted in Melbaa, 1988:46).
30. See Hamdesa Tuso, "The colonizer and the colonized: An exploration on the psychology of oppression and psychology of liberation-Abyssinians vs. the Oromos," unpublished paper, 1997.
31. This designation emerged during the post Cold War. It became popularized by the members of the naftnanya (colonial settlers) during the aftermath of the demise

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of the Derg which was accompanied by the fall of Amhara power and the ensuing uprising for self-determination by the Oromo masses. For example, Tamene Amare, the editor of the Ethiopian, [An Independent Newsletter] promoted this propaganda in his editorial page. See the February 15, 1992 issue. Also, some western reporters became hooked to this line of projection. See the articles by the reporter for the New York Times, Jane Perlez, "Ethiopia, Islam's tide laps at the rock of ages" New York Times, January 13, 1992, p. A2; "New glance for a fractured land" New York Times Magazine, September 22, 1991, pp. 49-85.

32. Abbas H. Ganamo, "Islam, the Orthodox Church, and Oromo Nationalism" (unpublished paper) 1998, p. 15.
33. Marina Ottway, Testimony before U.S. Congress Committee on Sub-Sahara Africa, May 5, 1993. To be sure, both Abbas Genamo and Marina Ottaway do state the possibility that the Moslem population may use Islam as an ideology for political goals should not be ruled out. Both make a reference to the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia (IFLO). However Abbas goes further and explains that even the leader of this political organization has adopted an Oromo name, Jara Abba Gadaa. Three more points should be added: First, the conflict between Jara the OLF was a political one, not a religious one; indeed, he is one of the founders of the OLF. Second, Jara never received large support from the Oromo masses for his organization. And finally, several small organizations in the region have a history of taking names which has connection with Islam for the purpose of obtaining resources from some quarters in the Middle East.
34. Adam Jillo, who participated in the formation of all of these organizations informed me that in all three cases, the leaders made Oromo national cultural values to be the corner stone of these organizations.
35. Interviews with B. Badasso (Summer 1994, Portland, Oregon); Leencho Laata, (Toronto, Canada, May, 1999); and Adam Jillo (Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 22-24) on the peace activities of the Jarssa Biya Oromo (the Oromo Elders) during the transitional period (1991-1992).
36. Leenco Lata generously shared with me rather extensive written official documents by the Jarssa Biya Oromo during the 1991-92 period.
37. On 29 July 1998, Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, in her testimony before the House of Representative Committees on International Relations—Africa Sub-committee, listed the OLF as one of the "terrorist" organizations sponsored by the NIF regime in Khartoum. The protest was universal and immediate from the Oromos around the world. Then on May 25, 1999, in her testimony before the same body, she repeated a similar accusation against the OLF. Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, in her testimony before the House of Representative Committees on International Relations—Africa Sub-committee, listed the OLF as one of the "terrorist" organizations sponsored by the NIF regime in Khartoum. The protest was universal and immediate from the Oromos around the world. Then on 25 May 1999, in her testimony before the same body, she repeated a similar accusation against the OLF.

38. The unconditional support the Oromo people gave to the OLF was rather a surprise to many parties including the OLF itself. For example, the U.S. government has been putting pressures on Oromos to join the sham elections which Meles Zenawi has been conducting. The Matcha and Tulama Association refused to participate in it. The others such as the OPDO and Oromo National Congress have not won the confidence and support from the Oromo populace.
39. This urgent need to organize for armed struggle was well captured in the historic document, "The Oromos: Voice Against Tyranny" in 1971. The document served as the blue print for the OLF. It was reprinted in the Horn of Africa, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1980), pp. 15-23.
40. The struggle of the Somali people in the Ogaden predates the creation of newly independent state of Somalia. However, with the independence of Somalia, the liberation activities took on state to state conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia. Thus, commencing with the early 1960s, there were a series of wars between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden which culminated in the 1977/78 war. However, since the demise of the Somali state, the struggle has been directed by the Ogaden Somalis themselves.
41. For example, when the Derg deposed the ailing Emperor in 1974, it declared self-determination "within Ethiopian unity." It was very clear that it did not anticipate the real challenge which would emerge from the periphery. It was thought that because the Derg had abolished the feudal system which included the ending of the absentee landlords would solidify the support of the populace from the periphery for the Derg. However, the events during the subsequent months and years proved the contrary. For more detailed discussion relative to the responses of the periphery to the Derg policies (see Ottaway and Ottaway, 1978: 82-98).
42. All modern emperors of Ethiopia-Tewodros, Yohannes IV, Menelik II, and Haile Selassie I came to power through this process.
43. Berry B. LaVerle's study of the Solomonic Monarchy at Gondar during the 17th and 18th centuries suggests this pattern of seeking legitimacy by the eventual winners of the power struggle by the emperors. See his work, "The Solomonic Monarchy at Gondar, 1630-1755: An Institutional, Analysis of Kingship in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia," Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1976.
44. Commencing with Emperor Menelik II, all the heads of states in Ethiopia had to depend on external powers for resources and legitimacy. After the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie the Orthodox Church ceased to serve as a source of legitimacy for the heads of states in Ethiopia. The Derg depended on the Soviet Union, and the TPLF currently depends on the U.S.
45. Tekie Fessehazion, "Pity the accursed land", Dehai-The Electronic Network of the Eritrean Community, October 6, 1999.
46. The authors of the above referenced book focus on comparative analysis relative to the collapse of the four contiguous classic empires listed here.
47. In Indochina, the nationalists fought against Japanese imperialism, French imperialism, and then the two decades of American war during the Cold War. They eventually won their independence. In southern Africa, the U.S. sided with the

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minority white regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa vis-à-vis the black majority. It sided with the Portuguese in Angola, Mozambique. Eventually, it was the nationalists who won the struggle of self-determination. In the Middle East, the Israeli government with the support of the United States laboured to stem out Palestinian national movement; in particular, every effort was made to destroy the PLO. Yet, in a dramatic reversal of policy, the government of Itzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accord with the PLO. In the Horn of Africa, a similar case can be cited with respect to the Eritrean struggle. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union sided with the Ethiopian empire. However, after three decades, in May 1991, the EPLF marched to Asmara with a military victory; the Eritrean struggle for self-determination culminated in their attaining formal independence in 1993.

48. The remarkable collaboration between Pope John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan in undermining the Communist party in Poland eventually leading to the fall of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union has been well documented by Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, in their book *His Holiness: John Paul and the Hidden History of Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).
49. The NATO policies to empower the parties to the conflict in the Balkans were articulated by Dr. Javier Solana, the NATO General Secretary. See his remarks made at his news conference on April 12, 1999 as in <http://www.nato.int/doc/speech/1999/s990412a.htm>.
50. Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), pp. 51-64. His remarks on this subject originally appeared in *Tigrigna quarterly magazine "Azer"* and was translated by Walta Information Centre.
51. See "Somali wars: US fears Ethiopian aggression confirmed." Sagalee Haaraa, OSG Newsletter, No. 28, (May-July, 1999), pp. 7, 8. Trevor Trueman, "Time to reflect: OLF at threshold," Sagalee Haaraa, OSG Newsletter, No. 28 (May-July, 1999), pp. 9, 10; Kevin Kelly, "U.S. criticizes Ethiopia over Eritrea conflict," *The East African* [Distributed via Africa News Online (www.africanews.org)].
52. *The Merchant of Venice*. Act iii, sc. I, l. 61. [Shylock]
53. Rictchie 1968:90.
54. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation Declaration, "Today we say enough is enough", January 8, 1994. (Unpublished policy statement).
55. A statement of appeal by the Oromo people (elders, professionals, women, etc.) posted on O-Net (Oromo internet community).
56. The concept of civil society is a relatively new theoretical construct to be applied to practical social policy. In particular, it has become more popular during the post Cold War era. The central thesis of this concept is that in order for the citizens to maximize their potential there should be a space between the state and the individual. Then the individuals can come together and create and control productive activities without the interference of the state. However, recent experience in a variety of settings is showing that there is more complexity to the basic proposition. For example, the issue of a differential power base in a given social order has not been addressed. In the burgeoning corruption in the post Soviet Union Russia where the former elite in the Communist system took advantage of the new liberty

and developed a scheme of kickbacks and money laundering the funds which were generated internally as well those which came from outside as foreign aid. Neera Chandhoke, in his book *State and Civil Society* (London Sage, 1995) argues that the existence of civil society does not ensure the evolution of a functioning of democracy.

57. See David Callahan, *Unwinnable Wars: American Power and Ethnic Conflict* (New York: The 20th Century Fund Book, 1997), pp. 3-43; David Bandler with Barbara Crosette, "As Ethnic Wars Multiply, U.S. Strives for Policy," *New York Times*, February 7, 1993, p. A1.

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