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The Horn of Africa

John Markakis

Some things have changed for the better since ROAPE’s last special issue (No. 44,1989) on the Horn of Africa. The continent’s oldest conflict ended when Eritrea won its struggle for independence in 1991. As a result, Ethiopia has known a period of relative peace since then. Some things have changed for the worse. Civil conflict, the scourge of the region, caused the collapse of the Somali state. It also spread to Djibouti, and to parts of northern Sudan, a country which now enjoys the dubious distinction of having Africa’s oldest conflict in its southern region.

Conflict has its creative side, as new states are forged in the anvil of war. Eritrea’s independence set a precedence for the continent, one likely to be followed by others in the Horn. The secession and de facto independence of Somaliland in 1991 is another alteration in the political map of the region. Dissolved with genocidal violence, the unhappy union between north and south in Somalia is not likely to be restored in its original form. The irony of it all, for those who decry colonialism’s political legacy is that, given a chance to design state boundaries, Africans in both instances have returned to the colonial blueprint. The disintegration of the Somali state, the only one in black Africa endowed with a national identity, raises a host of questions for theorists of nationalism. In this instance, the Somali reverted to the pre-colonial pattern of total clan autonomy.

More map changes are possible in the future. Endless, inconclusive conflict in southern Sudan has splintered the rebel movement there and forced it to reappraise its objectives. With self-determination now the main goal, secession appears a likely outcome, should the southerners win the military struggle. Last, the open clash between the two main ethnic groups in Djibouti augurs ill for the future of the mini-state, whose preservation thus far owes more to external propping than to internal political equilibrium.

Significant political change has occurred also within some countries in the Horn. The coming of the guerrillas to power in Eritrea and Ethiopia raised hopes of positive change in the tormented political life of these countries. It coincided with the rise of great expectations for political change-cum-democratization throughout Africa, encouraged by those who control the flow of foreign economic aid to the continent. Whatever they, themselves, may have preferred and planned, the new rulers of Eritrea and Ethiopia had little choice in the matter, having taken control of countries with bankrupt economies and stalked by famine. Totally dependent on aid from abroad, they were faced with the political implications of conditionality, even before they were confronted with its economic strictures. Democratization requires the adoption of all the institutional paraphernalia designed, as Hobsbawm observed ‘for the purposes of public life in bourgeois societies’ (1994:202). How suitable these are for Africa’s pre-industrial societies is a question rarely raised.
Certainly, it was not raised by the newly-installed rulers of Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) was the first to take the plunge into the uncharted waters of democracy. It needed to widen its political base and gain legitimacy for its rule at home in order to qualify for assistance from abroad. Having had no prior experience with western democratic institutions and procedures, Ethiopians were bemused when they were invited with very short notice to form political parties, to vote in a series of elections for local, regional and national administrations, to choose a constituent assembly, and to debate a draft constitution. There was a twist to the democratization project in Ethiopia. Its prime mover, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) is itself an ethnic movement and a champion of self-determination for ethnic groups, or nationalities, as they are called in Ethiopia. It energetically promoted political mobilization among Ethiopia’s many ethnic groups, and gathered a number of ethnic political factions under the umbrella of the EPRDF. Thus, the ruling front was able to claim a national constituency and the semblance of an Ethiopia-wide organization – two assets not matched by any other party in the country. With this organizational advantage and the resources of the state at its disposal, the EPRDF faced no serious threat in the elections, especially since most of the opposition parties boycotted them complaining of force and fraud. Foreign observers found the elections acceptable under the circumstances, and the government went on to design a federal constitution whose cornerstone is ethnicity. John Young’s article in this issue traces the path that led to this abrupt shift in the political direction of Ethiopia.

These days, constitution draftsmen are expected to meet the highest standards of contemporary moral, social and political correctness. Bulky documents are drafted, mainly by foreign experts, which are destined to become monuments of formalism and lack of realism. Nearly one-third of the articles in the Ethiopian constitution are devoted to human rights; among them the right of women to preferential treatment, of children to be free of corporal punishment, of nationalities to secession, and of all people to a clean and healthy environment. On paper, the powers of the central government in Ethiopia are severely limited. Whether this limitation will be sustained in practice remains to be seen. At one time or another, all regimes in the region made plans for decentralization and local self-rule, but none delivered it. The cost of decentralization in financial and efficiency terms is high, and one wonders how the poorest country in Africa will bear it.

Opposition to the EPRDF came from opposite ends of the political spectrum At one end are those who are opposed to the ethnic formula for fear it will lead to the break-up of Ethiopia. The All-Amhara Peoples Organization (AAPO), which claims to represent the former ruling ethnic group, is in this camp. At the opposite end are those who claim the ethnic formula is a ploy used to maintain Abyssinian rule, this time by the Tigray. The main party in this camp is the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), whose appeal for the largest ethnic group in the country is not to be underestimated. The gulf that divides its opponents, and the fact that none of them has produced a credible alternative to the EPRDF’s political initiatives, has allowed the government to largely ignore them.

Being in complete political and military control of the country it liberated in 1991, the nationalist front in Eritrea has moved with a measured pace towards democratization. The transitional phase, examined incisively by Fouad Makki in this issue, has not yet come to an end. No moves were made during this time to introduce political reform, although the ruling Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) began to
prepare for it. As a first step, the front renamed itself the Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice in 1994, and launched a constitution making exercise which is about to be completed. Quite similar though they are, the EPLF and TPLF adopted diametrically opposed policies on the thorny issue of ethnic and religious political mobilization. The history of Eritrea and its nationalist movement offer ample testimony of the political potency of religion. In the present climate of fundamentalist fervour, Eritrea’s leaders see religious and ethnic political mobilization as a recipe for disaster. Already, the newly-found peace in Eritrea is being disturbed by the activities of a Muslim fundamentalist group based in Sudan. By contrast, Ethiopia’s leaders believe to deny these groups the right to political expression is the true cause of conflict. By acknowledging cultural pluralism within the borders of the state, the Ethiopians abandoned the futile pursuit of ‘national integration’ and drew a distinction between national identity and citizenship; no mean innovation in a continent bedevilled by ‘the curse of the nation-state’ (Davidson, 1992). The Eritreans, on the other hand, hark back to the nationalist imperative of ‘one nation, one state’.

The third military coup d’état in the Sudan occurred in 1989, at a moment when negotiations between the southern rebels and northern politicians seemed about to bear fruit. Its purpose was to prevent any agreement involving concessions to the South, and it succeeded only too well. Seven years later, the conflict in that country is farther than ever from being resolved. The endless struggle to defend the Sudanese state and to preserve Arab hegemony demands commitment and great sacrifices from the people of the North. To stimulate them, successive regimes have had resort to ideology. Nationalism and socialism having failed the endurance test, the present regime in Khartoum has enlisted Islam in its current fundamentalist version, and brought in the National Islamic Front (NIF) as a partner in ruling the state. Despite the political prominence and widespread influence of the NIF, however, the Sudanese regime remains essentially a military dictatorship. When it passes from the scene, its political legacy will likely prove no more lasting than was the case with the late ‘marxist’ military regimes in Ethiopia and Somalia.

In making Islam the ideology of the conflict, Sudan’s rulers are unwittingly pushing the South towards secession – the worst outcome from their own point of view. Secessionism was never a prime motive in the southern resistance movement. The Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) expressly rejected secession, and defined its goal to be political reform for the whole of Sudan. The loss of Ethiopian patronage after the collapse of Mengistu’s regime in Ethiopia in 1991 was a major blow to the SPLA, provoking a crisis that led to multiple splits in the movement. Various factors were involved in this process, including power struggles among leadership factions and ethnic groups. Among the issues that were highlighted was the correctness of the movement’s goals. As the conviction took hold that the South can never expect a fair deal from the North, southerners began considering secession as an alternative, and the SPLA was forced to put self-determination first among its demands. These developments in the southern Sudanese movement are discussed by Peter Kok in this issue.

Following several years of SPLA reversals, including defections of splinter groups to the government camp, the military balance in the South is shifting once again. The regime in Khartoum managed to alienate not only Eritrea, but Ethiopia and Uganda as well. It was only to be expected that the hallowed tradition in this region of treating the enemies of one’s enemy as friends would work to the SPLA’s advantage. The shifting pattern of interstate relations in this region is depicted in this issue by Amare Tekle.
The disintegration of Somalia is hard to explain. Ethnic conflict, the all-purpose explanation of Africa's assorted political ills, obviously does not apply. The protagonists in this internecine drama are clans and their sub-divisions, whose political role, it seems, was little affected by more than half a century of colonial and three decades of nationalist rule. The clans may have adopted the modern technology of warfare but, as far as political practice is concerned, the Somali have reverted to the pre-colonial era. The bone of contention in Somalia, as elsewhere in Africa, is state power. The difference is that the contestants here define themselves in terms of clan and sub-clan, rather than ethnicity, region, religion, or class. The clans see the state as a source of revenue, much of it derived from abroad, and each demands a share. Things began to fall apart in Somalia when certain clans acquired a virtual monopoly of state power and resources, prompting others to take up arms to redress the balance. Amidst the ruins of the state, the clans are now contending for whatever liquid resources are still flowing: food aid, port and airport levies, road tolls, taxes on trade, and a flourishing protection racket that recalls Richard Burton's experience in northern Somalia in the mid-19th century.

There is another, far more important, though less advertised resource involved in the Somali clan mayhem, and that is land. Adequately watered, fertile land is at a premium in Somalia, and most of it is found in the Juba-Shebeli valley in the south, where both precipitation and irrigation water is available. This land is worked by sedentary Somali clans known collectively as Sab and a number of small groups of Bantu origin. Both suffered earlier under Italian colonialism, and later under the hegemony of the powerful nomad clans from the north – a little known chapter of Somali history summarized in the article by Mohamed Mukhtar. Promoted by the state since the advent of colonialism, commercial agriculture had become the main source of export value and foreign currency by the time of independence. As a result, land in the inter-riverine valley became the target of those who had access to state power. During the long reign of Siad Barré (1969-1991), the main beneficiaries were the clans that supported his regime, who used various means to dispossess the local peasantry. After Siad’s overthrow, a struggle has raged as other clans sought to confiscate land expropriated by the late dictator’s supporters, while at the same time they terrorized the indigenous population into abandoning their homesteads. Land expropriation is one of the main causes, and is likely to be one of the lasting consequences, of the civil war in southern Somalia.

Somaliland in the north has enjoyed relative peace since it pulled away from the wreckage of the Somali state in a bid for independence. Dominated by the Ishaq clan, it has been troubled mostly by feuding among sub-clans for control of the meagre resources available such as income from the airport in the capital, Hargeisa, and the port at Berbera. These feuds have kept the government headed by the veteran politician Ibrahim Egal off balance, and in constant need of intervention by the Ishaq elders who have managed thus far to prevent major conflict. Lack of funds has stymied the government's reconstruction efforts. Somaliland's dire economic woes are due partly to its failure to secure international recognition and aid. Despite the precedent set by Eritrea, and for obvious reasons, challenges to the existing state structures in Africa meet with little encouragement on the continent and abroad. Save for the export of livestock to the Arab market across the Red Sea, Somaliland has no other resources. While it is no longer fashionable to put the question of economic viability to candidates of statehood, one cannot help but fear for Somaliland's future.

Djibouti may be peculiar in many respects, but its slide to civil war follows an all too familiar pattern as described in this issue by Mohamed Kadamy. After independence
in 1976, the reins of power in this mini-state were gathered in the hands of a man who still occupies the office of president. Not surprisingly, monopolization of power for two decades was accompanied by an iniquitous distribution of resources controlled by the state. This worked to the advantage of the Issa, the president's Somali clan, and to the detriment of the Afar, the other main ethnic group in Djibouti. Not surprisingly also, having exhausted other methods of seeking redress, the Afar resorted to arms, and Djibouti was plunged into civil war. A fragile peace arranged with one rebel faction recently was endangered when an intra-Issa struggle commenced for the succession to the presidency, whose current occupant is seriously ill. The mini-state has reached a crossroads. If the issue of state power is not resolved equitably among ethnic groups and clans, Djibouti will go the way of Somalia.

Something that has not changed in the Horn is the economic plight of the region. Decades of war, destructive state intervention by the military regimes that ruled Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s, the flight of domestic capital, lack of foreign investment, an exodus of skilled manpower, environmental degradation, and frequent drought have wrought havoc. On the basis of conventional criteria, Ethiopia qualifies as the poorest country in Africa, and Eritrea is no better off. Sudan scores higher, but its resources are being eaten by the civil war and little provision is made for the country's future. Djibouti lives off the income from the port and the spending of a sizeable expatriate civilian and military population. Somalia's economy went the way of the state, although bananas once again are exported from the south by the warlords.

The most serious failure in the region is in food production. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, all the countries registered negative growth rates in food production per capita. High rates of population growth – around 3 per cent – contributed to this, but inadequate increase in food production per unit of labour and land is the main factor. The result is a serious and enduring food deficit, which makes all countries in the Horn dependent on food imports. The fact that they are not able to pay for them means they have become wards of international charity.

Another aspect of economic failure is unemployment especially among the youth that comprise an exceptionally large and expanding sector of the region's population. This group includes demobilized soldiers, former guerilla fighters, disbanded militiamen, and other youthful veterans of war. Unemployment affects the educated minority as well, who previously had a ready source of employment in the state sector. The political hazards inherent in this situation are well known, and have been repeatedly demonstrated in the recent history of the Horn.

Having achieved a measure of peace and political stability, the regimes in Ethiopia and Eritrea are trying to come to grips with the problems of the economy, albeit in conventional terms. On their way to power, the erstwhile radical marxist guerillas were converted not only to democratization but to neo-liberal economics as well; indeed, they had little choice in the matter. The economic plight of their countries made them hostages to the international donor community and lending institutions, and compelled them to embrace the free market as well as democracy. Eritrea and Ethiopia drafted economic plans that include many of the familiar nostrums of the IMF structural adjustment programme, from devaluation to denationalization. It is too early to evaluate their performance. However, rolling back the state sector – previously the main source of employment – has an obvious effect on unemployment. The disintegration of the Ethiopian army threw more than half a million men into the unemployment pool, where they were joined by police and security personnel, and
the civilian personnel of several disbanded ministries and state agencies. Eritrea dismissed ten thousand civil servants at one go, and demobilized nearly 50,000 fighters of the EPLF. The influx of destitute refugees exacerbates a serious situation in both countries.

Denationalization is proceeding slowly, partly due to limited investor interest, and partly due to government reluctance to dispose of state assets at knockdown prices. The ruling fronts in both countries are transferring some state assets to companies they own or control - a sort of half step towards denationalization. They have considerable experience in this field, especially the Eritreans who ran commercial and manufacturing enterprises during their long struggle. What the IMF thinks of this practice is not known. Both Eritreans and Ethiopians dug in their heels and successfully resisted pressure to privatize land. In both countries the issue was decided by decree, before the constitution-making process was concluded. Land remains state property, but continuity of tenure is ensured for the peasants. Provision is also made for leasing land to agri-business.

For three decades, the manifold conflict in the Horn was fought in the shadow of the cold war. Both the United States and the Soviet Union perceived the region as having strategic importance, and they took turns supplying successive regimes with military hardware for their internal wars. Both superpowers were committed to the preservation of the existing state pattern in the Horn, and neither showed any sympathy for the Eritreans and other rebels who were seeking to change it. The marxist professions of the rebels in Eritrea and Ethiopia cut no ice with the Soviet Union, although they did serve to harden United States hostility to them. In fact, through their satellites – Israelis, Cubans, Yemenis – the superpowers actively sought to defeat the dissidents. The scene changed with the end of the cold war. The United States abandoned Siad Barré to his fate in Somalia, while the Soviet Union did the same with Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia; both regimes collapsed within a few months of each other in 1991. Afterwards, the Soviet Union faded from the scene, while the United States emerged more prominent than ever as the patron and adviser of the former rebels in Eritrea and Ethiopia whose defeat it had sought unsuccessfully for so long.

This realignment has taken place in the shadow of an emerging confrontation between fundamentalist Islam and its opponents worldwide. Militant fundamentalist movements have appeared everywhere in the Horn, most of them formed on an ethnic basis. Small and ill organized, they command disproportionate attention because they are seen as part of a coordinated campaign directed and financed from abroad. As Amare Tekle notes in his article, the National Islamic Front in Sudan is accused of masterminding a campaign whose alleged aim is to destabilize its neighbours and prepare the way for the establishment of Islamic rule in the region. The fundamentalist challenge has compelled the orthodox Muslim establishment in some parts of the region, including Djibouti, Somaliland, and southern Somalia, to assert itself by demanding the strict enforcement of religious law. In the past, religion often served as the ideology of social conflict in the Horn, and history seems to be repeating itself.
Nationalism, State Formation and the Public Sphere: Eritrea 1991-96

Fouad Makki

This article attempts to situate the transition to statehood in Eritrea in the context of its time, culture, and political history. It argues that the transition is profoundly shaped by the international conjuncture within which it unfolds, as well as by the social and political experiences of the nationalist movements. The economic, social, and political aspects of the transition are highlighted with a view to illuminating their overall trajectory and complex dynamics. The establishment of national sovereignty, it is argued, does not entail some unproblematic process of national integration, but only creates a nationally defined public space through which the multi-faceted issues of post-independence Eritrea will be contested. State formation is therefore understood as a continuation of the nation-making process which cannot be reified as a finished project. The article concludes by examining the contradictory but pregnant possibilities for establishing a democratic political and social order.

The prolonged and bitter struggles which have culminated in the formation of an independent Eritrean republic represent the latest episode in a series of wars of national liberation inaugurated almost two centuries ago by the wars of Hispanic American liberation. These struggles of national liberation have profoundly reconstituted the political geography of the world. As with all the preceding assertions of national sovereignty, national liberation in Eritrea was widely recognized as a harbinger of a new era, in which the people of Eritrea would exercise their democratic right to have their own government and take charge of their own destiny. It is now five years since that historic moment, and in the light of the post-liberation dawn, it is important to begin considering how the hopes and expectations associated with independence are being met. What are the institutional contours of the new state, and what sort of substantive meaning is being given to the boundaries of the nation? How is the liberation movement dealing with the terrible legacy of war on the social and economic fabric of Eritrean society? If nationalist mobilization was the democratic expression of the people’s aspirations, and if the nation was understood as the product of active popular intervention in history, how can the primacy of this popular will and self-activity be secured in the transition to statehood? Will the expansive social base of the nationalist struggle – integrating workers, peasants, and other subaltern strata fully into the nation – be sustained? What, more generally, is the significance of the transition from nation to nation-state? If the nation is conceived as an ‘imagined community’ of deep, horizontal comradeship and, in contrast, the state is often hierarchic, regulatory, and coercive; what are the ramifications of nationalism becoming a state project?
It ought to be said at the outset, that a period of five years does not allow the sort of settled retrospect necessary for any adequate appraisal of such complex issues. The transitional period remains fluid, so that the reflections which follow will necessarily be tentative and the conclusions drawn provisional. They are offered here out of a conviction that a measured and sober analysis, that avoids either uncritical adulation or simple denunciation, can provide an estimate of the dynamics of the transition to statehood, bringing into relief both the possibilities and the limits within which it is unfolding. A point of entry into this exploration will necessarily have to be a historical sketch, however compressed it might be, of the evolution of Eritrean nationalism and its formative context on the political culture of the nationalist movements.

Historical Dynamics of National Liberation

A central contention of Eritrean nationalism is that the ‘Eritrean question’ represents a case of arrested decolonization, and that it properly belongs to the tide of anti-colonial nationalism of the post-World War II era. As with most African nationalist movements, the boundary of Eritrean nationalism coincided with the spatial limits of colonial military conquests and/or administrative convenience. Likewise, the process of constructing an inclusive political community was linked to the existence of self-conscious national movements intent on expressing a national culture which was not congruent with the culture or history of any single ethnic group. Eritrean nationalist discourses emphasized the fact that it was in the cauldron of war and revolution – which involved massive social mobilization across class, gender, religious and ethnic differences – that the culturally and socially diverse population of Eritrea was forged into a cohesive political nation. In this respect the establishment of national sovereignty is presented as the final triumph of the nationalist project that first began to cohere half a century earlier.

The decade of the 1940s was a formative period of nationalist politics. With the end of Italian colonial rule (1890-1941) and the gradual relaxation of controls under the British Mandate (1941-1952), a restricted but nevertheless vibrant public sphere emerged. British political concessions, the spread of education and print culture, and a war economy which witnessed a considerable expansion of the urban population, all created the social and political conditions for the emergence of the first generation of nationalist activists. Moreover, the global discourse of self-determination, now heightened by the political dynamics of the Second World War, was seized by colonized people in Eritrea, as elsewhere, as an entitlement that they could make claims on.

The subsequent era of the United Nations imposed federation with Ethiopia (1952-1962) was a crucial period in terms of the character of nationalist mobilizations. The growth of the public sphere, despite all its limitations, had created a political space for national self-affirmation through the voluntary initiatives of civic and political associations. But this ideal and practice of democratic affirmation was anathema to the unregenerate monarchy of Haile Selassie, which effectively stifled and choked it. Political parties, independent associations and labour syndicates were suppressed. Eritrea’s two administrative languages – Arabic and Tigrinya – were suppressed and substituted by Amharinya, and Eritrean officials were systematically replaced by the Emperor’s representatives from Addis Ababa. In 1959, following the suppression of political dissent – including a general strike in the towns of Asmara and Massawa during February 1958 – the Eritrean flag was lowered, to be followed three years later by the formal abrogation of the Federation and the incorporation of Eritrea into the anachronistic Ethiopian empire (1962-1991).
By the late 1950s, in conditions where political discussion or dissent was effectively banned, and after a period of underground political activity organized by the Hariket Tahrir al-Eritrea (the Eritrean Liberation Movement), the nationalist movement shifted its locus of activity to what was seen as the only remaining option: armed insurrection. This strategic shift was formalized by the formation of a second organization, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), which commenced the armed struggle in September 1961. In the subsequent decade, the nationalist movement went through a series of internal conflicts and transformations, culminating in 1970 with the breakaway formation of the Eritrean Popular Liberation Forces, later renamed the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) and hereafter referred to as the Popular Front (Said, 1994; Markakis, 1987). This passage into the clandestine and subterranean world of guerilla warfare shifted the centre of gravity of nationalist agitation away from the civic and associational dynamics of the public sphere, to the increasingly tightly organized and disciplined structures of the liberation fronts. Effectively extinguished within Eritrea, the associational and voluntary dynamics of the public spheres were now transposed into the guerilla camps and communities of the diaspora.

Within the constricted conditions of meydan – the Eritrean maquis – diverse forms of nationalist cultural and political projects were nurtured. Premised on the conviction that the development of national self-awareness had to be actively and systematically pursued, the nationalist movements used varied strategies of mobilization to fashion local solidarities into a society-wide, counter-imperial project. There was an attempt to transcend the conventional distinction between intellectuals and ordinary people by educating rank and file members into a more ambitious sense of their own political capacities. Through the new discourse of citizenship, the movements nurtured collectivist and cooperative ideals of solidarity, and promoted a non-competitive ethos of participation that opposed an individualist cult of achievement. More centrally, the struggle for national liberation entailed the creative engagement of rural peoples in the nationalist discourse, and nationalist leaders had to take peasant issues seriously if they were to build broad alliances. This political and cultural project found practical embodiment primarily within the liberation movements and, even today in post-liberation Eritrea, an extraordinary degree of collective self-reliance and resilience is evident.

There were limits to this nationalist pre-figurative political culture. In the absence of a civil society that could monitor and steer their dynamics, the liberation movements developed an autonomous and somewhat substitutionist political culture. The hierarchical organizational frames encouraged a compliant culture in which the ideal of a self-empowering citizenry was somewhat restricted, and political creativity was subordinated to the cult of efficiency and rationality. The sheer brutality of the war, and the massive social dislocation it occasioned, was understood as necessitating a movement that had to be exceptionally disciplined while also being intimately attuned to the sympathies of the people. Nationalism therefore became impregnated by the model of war, whose own specific culture and terminology it tended to assimilate into the ordinary language of nationalist militancy. One tragic upshot of this was that at two bitter moments in the history of Eritrean nationalism – the early years of the 1970s and the 1980s – the two main protagonists of Eritrean independence – ELF and EPLF – themselves crossed swords, in conflicts over competing perceptions of the future nation. Eritrean nationalism had always been a contested arena, with different movements promoting alternative conceptions of the nation, and the military triumph of the Popular Front over its rivals in the early 1980s, ensured that its conception of the nation would become hegemonic.
The period between 1961 and 1991 was therefore both a creative and a limiting one. On the one hand, the process of forging an Eritrean nation was well advanced. This process of national identity formation was clearly not without tensions, and much space is required to treat the unfolding of sub-national and other ideological disagreements in a larger study. In the end, however, neither the religious or ethnic hostilities, nor the pressures of the absolutist state, nor the initial promises of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974, were strong enough to contain the emergence of a widely diffused and popular Eritrean nationalism. At the same time, the character of the nationalism that emerged was increasingly conditioned by the imperatives of order and discipline, even if ultimately these imperatives did not cancel out its emancipatory impulse.

The end of the war once again shifted the field of political contestation back to the arena of an embryonic national public sphere. The sort of renascent public sphere – understood not as a Habermasian ideal-type of a space for rational deliberation, but as what Geoff Eley has called a zone of contestation between conflicting publics – that is likely to develop would form one of the central axis along which post-independence politics will be conducted (Habermas, 1989; Eley, 1992). Although it is impossible to predict its final contours, there can be little doubt that its evolving shapes will be the result of the interaction between the formal process of institutionalization, informed as it is by the Popular Front's own political culture, and the dynamics of autonomous social groups and movements within the wider public arena.

The Architecture of the Nation-state

By the early 1990s, three conjunctural developments had created a propitious context for the hegemonic construction of state power. The first was the changed international context, characterized by the end of the cold war and the attendant fact that Eritrea was no longer a strategic theatre of superpower conflict. The second was the complete destruction by armed insurrection of the coercive apparatus of the state, not only in Eritrea, but within Ethiopia proper as well. With the military defeat of the Ethiopian army, the whole state machinery in Eritrea effectively disintegrated, and tens of thousands of Ethiopian military and state personnel departed. Finally, there was the fact that by the early 1980s the Popular Front had managed to secure its ascendancy and hegemony over the national liberation struggle, organizationally and politically subsuming or marginalizing rival movements. Relatively freed from external dictates or internal contestations, and in conditions of popular legitimacy derived from its role in the struggle for liberation, the Popular Front was provided an auspicious opportunity to fashion a state structure to its liking.

If these were the conjunctural factors that influenced the process of state formation, there was also a temporal coincidence between liberation and an epochal shift in the global political order. The end of the cold war was accompanied by a spectacular transformation of the international political landscape, in which the collapse of the Soviet Union was by far the most dramatic episode. Like the nation-states that succeeded the demise of the large territorial empires between 1917-1920, and the plurality of nation-states that issued from the disintegration of the colonial empires after World War II, the upheavals between 1989-1992 constitute the latest wave of concentrated state-formation from which some two dozen states have emerged. But unlike the two earlier periods of state-formation, where a plurality of political and social projects competed for hegemony, the period following the end of the cold war
has been rapidly corseted into an orthodox neo-liberal framework. This has been somewhat contained by a partial rise in democratic struggles against all sorts of despotic regimes, but the sense of neo-liberalism's singular triumph overdetermines this latest wave of state formation, casting its long shadow over the entire process.

The formal declaration of independence came on 24 May 1993, two years after actual liberation and the holding of a referendum on national sovereignty. Based on a relatively broad and inclusive civic conception of citizenship, where it could potentially accrue to anyone born in Eritrea irrespective of descent, the referendum confirmed what was in actuality never in doubt: with 98.5 per cent of the 1,173,706 eligible adults participating, 99.8 per cent voted in favour of independence (AAI, 1995). With this fitting climax to a three decades long struggle for national liberation, Eritrea became part of the interstate system, accepting its covenants and protocols, and joined its central institutions: the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of African Unity and a host of other regional organizations.

After liberation, the Popular Front begun to construct a nationwide administrative order, which simultaneously guaranteed continuity with its past and the promise of a normalized future. The progressive assimilation of liberated zones during the armed struggle had resulted in the formation of a de facto territorial dual power. With the Ethiopian occupation confined to the major urban centres, most of the rural areas and some of the smaller towns had come under the effective jurisdiction of the Popular Front. This allowed the Front to acquire considerable experience in public administration, and the process of state formation partly expresses the systems and institutional patterns of governance that emerged in embryonic form during this period. However, cut off from the centres of the national economy and the large concentrations of the population, this administrative apparatus was not properly speaking a miniature version of what it would be after victory. Its isolation from the broader public and its emphasis on military discipline, which was a key mechanism of its efficiency and internal unity, conditioned its structure and conduct.

Between liberation and the holding of the referendum (1991-93), a Provisional Government was set up retaining the formal structures of the field administration, supplemented by a nationwide network of provincial People's Assemblies. The various administrative departments of the Popular Front, together with some 8,000 'fighters' that had worked in them, were relocated from northern Sahel to Asmara. After the process of demobilization began in 1993, another 4,000 ex-fighters found employment with the government bringing the number of Popular Front members in the state bureaucracy to 12,000 (Görke, Klingebiel, et al. 1995). At the apex of the new structure, a 24 member Consultative Council composed of the Secretaries of the various departments, provincial governors, and heads of Commissions functioned as an executive branch, while the Popular Front's central committee became a de facto legislative body.

Following the referendum and international recognition, the mandate and structures of a Transitional Government were delineated. The Transitional Government would have a duration of no more than four years, after which free and open legislative elections are to be held. During this transitional period, a Constitution will be drafted that will serve as the framework for a democratically elected government. The Transitional Government was made up of a National Assembly, a State Council, and an independent Judiciary. The 135 representatives in the National Assembly incorporated the 75 Central Committee members of the Front, thirty delegates from
the Peoples Assemblies, and another thirty citizens – including ten women – who were appointed by the Front’s Central Committee. Isaias Afwerki was elected President and, backed by a Secretariat, he headed the new State Council of seventeen ministers and ten regional administrators.

This two-tiered administrative structure remained in place until 1995 when the government decided to streamline the civil-service. The goal was to reconstitute the discipline and inner coherence of the administrative structure, and reduce the bloated bureaucracy of 30,000 by half, thereby substantially reducing the 250 million Birr budget outlay that it used to absorb. A first group of some 10,000 – including about 3,500 to 4,000 ex-fighters who were relocated to the ministries of Defence and Interior – were laid off in 1995, and an additional 5,000 are expected to be made ‘redundant’ by the end of 1996. Although the precise composition of the next phase of redundancies is not clear, it will very likely increase the relative weight of Popular Front members within the much reduced and reorganized civilian bureaucracy (Hadas Eritrea, 10 Ginbot 1995).

Similarly, the institutions of the army, police and security are all undergoing a transformation. With no meaningful indigenous military or police force to accommodate, the Popular Front set about transforming the liberation army into a small, well trained professional force, supplementing it with a national conscription in which the majority of citizens between the ages of 18-40 are required to undergo six months of military training. Together with the army, a navy and an air force are also being established. A mutinous demonstration by discontented rank-and-file members in April 1993 accelerated this process of transformation, as the government decided to downsize the liberation army by about half. In a first phase, 26,000 fighters that had joined the Popular Front since 1990 were demobilized, while another 22,000 veterans followed in the second phase during 1994-95.

The reorganization of the army entailed the formation of an eleven-tiered structure for commissioned officers, from the rank of Deputy Lieutenant to that of General. The Minister of Defence, Sebhat Ephraim – a member of the Political Committee of the Popular Front since 1977 – was promoted to the rank of General. Another eight former division commanders were promoted to the rank of Major General, twenty-two to Brigadier General, and thirty-four to the rank of Colonel (Hadas Eritrea, 10 Miazia 1996). The new structure of the liberation army has a peculiarly flat age-pyramid, with most of the officers in their forties. Seniority in terms of years served, so integral to the authority structure of standing armies, is largely absent. Given this age structure, the fact that it would be years before any officer retires can become a source of discontent among the lower ranks. From the broader perspective of a transition to a regular army, the long-term challenge for the liberation forces will be to maintain the close relationship with the populace that was cultivated in the struggle for liberation. In the post-liberation period, the army has not been confined to the barracks, but has been reoriented to peacetime tasks: clearing land mines and rebuilding the shattered transportation network. Within the guerrilla army itself, ranks had been kept to a minimum, and relations between the fighters and their commanders were for the most part egalitarian and fraternal. Preserving the democratic ideals which had fired the nationalist struggle, and avoiding the authoritarianism of traditional armies, will be an imperative if the army is to retain its popular designation as a liberation army.

In April 1994, a Constitutional Commission was established with a two year mandate to draft a framework of fundamental principles for the new nation-state. The constitution-making process was presented as more than a narrow technical matter,
and was to be symbolic of a wider social and political renewal. Composed of forty-two members, the Commission is remarkably representative of Eritrea’s cultural and social diversity, with women constituting about half its members. Bereket Habte Selassie, a distinguished scholar who had earlier penned his own thoughts on the likely political features of a post-liberation Eritrea, was chosen to chair the Commission (Habte Selassie, 1990). The Commission included several former members of the Eritrean Liberation Front; most prominently Azzin Yassin, who became the deputy chair (Azzin died in March 1996) and Zemheret Yohannes; who became its Secretary, Idris Gelawdios and Taha Mohammed Nur.

The draft Constitution was adopted by the National Assembly in July 1996. Among other things, it enshrines the rights and duties of citizens, and outlines the distribution of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. A 150 member unicameral legislative assembly elected by universal franchise is to serve as the supreme organ of a unitary state, with members elected for five-year terms. The President, who can serve a maximum of two five-year terms, is to be elected by the National Assembly. A pluralist political system is upheld, and several gender-specific provisions which guarantee the specific rights of women have been codified. Going beyond the conventional assertion of political rights, the Constitution also advances a concept of social citizenship which embraces economic and social rights.

These institutional and representational orders have their corollary in a new cultural sensibility. There is a profound belief within the administration that Eritrea’s small size allows for a simple and direct relationship between the leadership and the populace, unmediated by a huge apparatus. The absence of an official ideology contributes to a certain openness to practical proposals, and there has been a genuine attempt to explain what the government is doing. The absence of formalism and ceremony, and the reigning in of the traditional corruption and arrogance of the state bureaucracy, have all contributed to a widely felt sense of one’s own government. It would of course be a mistake to believe that this new political culture is free from paternalistic or intimidatory aspects, and in this sense any meaningful and enduring democratic political culture will have to be anchored in the wider extra-state societal dynamics.

Beyond these transformations, the new state had to design everything from school curricula, telecommunication systems and tax policies, to maps, passports, drivers licenses and postage stamps. The cumulative effect of all these institutional and representational changes has been to endow the new nation-state with a powerful phenomenological presence, over and above the transnational flows of people, commodities, and information that actually shape the lives of its citizens. As Timothy Mitchell (1995:147) notes:

-the apparent concreteness of a modern nation state, its appearance as a discreet entity alongside a series of similar entities, is the result of recent methods of organizing social practice and representing it: the construction of frontiers on roads and at airports, the attempt to control the movement of people and goods across them, the producing of maps and history books for schools, the deployment of mass armies and the indoctrination of those conscripted into them, the representation of the nation-state in news broadcasts, international sports events, and tourist literature, the establishing of a national currency and language, and not least, the discourse of ‘country studies’ and national statistics.
State Formation As Cultural Process

National state formation comprises not only the institutionalization of the commonly recognized administrative or coercive apparatuses, but just as equally entails the elaboration of cultural and moral frameworks for the enhancement of social cohesion. The transition to statehood immeasurably simplifies this process of cultivating a set of shared political loyalties within a putative national community. Various forms of festivals and public commemorations, together with the mass media and the educational system, are used to elaborate a collective imagery over and above existing social and cultural differences. The overriding emphasis in the process of state formation in Eritrea has correspondingly been on nationalism as an integrative force, and the assertion of the primacy of 'national' loyalties over 'primordial' affiliations deemed divisive or prejudicial to the 'national interest'. But what precisely are these contrasting cultural commitments against which the values of the nation are being asserted?

While the rapid socio-economic transformations from the 1930s to the late 1940s partially broke down and re-ordered the traditional patterns of agrarian social relations, the class structure of the society as a whole remained fluid. Thirty years of war further transformed Eritrean society, warping it from any normatively conceived social structure. On the one hand, successive colonial and imperial states had in different ways undermined the native landlord and merchant class, and the 'Jacobin' dictatorship that issued from the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 dealt a mortal blow to them. On the other hand, the decline of the economy during the past four decades witnessed a steady outflow of workers to the oil rich countries of the Middle East and to Europe and North America. The resultant structure was a social physiognomy characterized by the predominance of a rural population of peasants and agro-pastoralists, together with independent artisans, a tiny working class, and a diffuse middle class in the urban areas. These social layers constituted the social base of the national movement led by the urban intelligentsia. In the post-independence era, it is this nationalist middle class that has provided the cadres for the new state, and together with the upper reaches of the non-state professional strata, it constitutes the hegemonic bloc in Eritrea today. This social structure has afforded the state considerable autonomy to pursue policies independently of any dominant class so that, in the near future, it is not universally given categories such as class that are of concern to the state, but culturally relative ones such as ethnicity and religion.

Talk of sub-national identities is a politically charged topic in Eritrea, and evokes too much uneasiness for it to be squarely confronted. The tacit censure that prevails is largely due to a troubled history of sub-national ethnic and supra-national religious conflicts that profoundly affected the contours of the nationalist struggle, and shaped the composition of the nationalist leadership itself. These identities provided the most serious competing claim of loyalty to that of the nation, and the nationalist movements have viewed them as a debilitating force, whose political expression was congenially detrimental to the struggle. More or less evenly composed of Muslims and Christians, the Eritrean population comprises nine distinct ethno-linguistic communities: Afar, Bilin, Hadareb, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida, Saho, Tigre and Tigrinya; the last two together constitute around 85 per cent of the total. But the heterogeneity of Eritrean society is of course not simply one of cultural diversity, but is intimately related to contrasting economic and social conditions, and to a complex history of settlement and resettlement.

The Popular Front's leadership is clearly aware of the political ramifications of this cultural diversity and the unevenness in social and material conditions that
accentuates them, and has declared its intent to respect cultural pluralism while remedying the accumulated inequities through a concerted effort in the fields of education, health, and economic development. Various members of the government have repeatedly insisted that it is respect for cultural diversity, as well as social and economic redress, that will arrest a slide into religious or ethnic sectarianism. Illustrative of the glaring legacy of uneven development, exacerbated over the past decades by the spatially differential impact of the war, is the distribution of educational facilities in the country. Out of the 512 elementary schools, 354 teach in Tigrinya, 96 in Arabic, 25 in Tigre, 13 in Kunama and 14 in Saho; and this in a population where Tigrinya speakers are estimated to account for about half the population (Street, 1996). The same pattern prevails in the distribution of teachers, with the lowland provinces of Barka, Denkalia, Gash-Setit, Semhar and Senhit taken together employing a mere 15 per cent of all teachers (Ministry of Education, 1955:44).

In so far as the Popular Front succeeds in rectifying these inherited inequities, it will likely neutralize the potential for ethnic or religious conflict. This is not to underestimate the catalytic effect of fundamentalist movements in the region, or the belligerent policies of the National Islamic Front which dominates the Sudanese state, on the dynamics of cultural politics in Eritrea. But without a social base to nurture it, the political energy generated by the fundamentalist movements will in due time dissipate. After all, fundamentalist movements often come out of a broader alienation from modern society, even if they look backwards to 'tradition', or to some imaginary utopia for redemption. It is therefore important to relate the potential for ethnic or religious mobilizations to contemporary social, economic and discursive dynamics, rather than viewing them as mere manifestations of ancient enmities, or an expression of some transcendental struggle between good and evil.

Religious sectarianism in Eritrea has in fact a complicated history, dating back to the era of the British mandate which sought to partition the country between the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Ethiopia. Its subsequent potential was intricately tied with the vicissitudes of the nationalist movements, and the first manifestation of a properly fundamentalist movement only dates back to the period of the disintegration of the ELF in the early 1980s. Paradoxically enough, the Popular Front's expulsion of the ELF from Eritrea weakened the secular forces within that organization, unleashing sectarian forces that had previously been kept under tight control. In 1980 the Islamic Front for the liberation of Eritrea was created by Omar Haj Idris, who five years earlier had been expelled from the Eritrean Liberation Front for 'rightist deviations'. Supported by the Saudi monarchy, this group later fused with another Islamic organization formed by Hamid Turkay. It is under the latter's leadership that the reconstituted Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ) was formed, following the 1989 seizure of power by the military in Sudan. Although it had some marginal success in recruiting refugees in Sudan, the EIJ has so far not been of any fundamental political importance within Eritrea, and has itself been plagued by recurrent splits (Said, 1994:186-192).

The potential for a broader politicization of religion is there nevertheless. One way to think about this potential is along the axis of religion as belief versus religion as identity. The policies of the Eritrean state are geared to respect religion as belief while undermining its potential to become the basis for a politicized identity. Emblematic here is the policy of the Transitional Government towards the Orthodox Church in Eritrea, whose clergy in the 1940s was for the most part allied to the Ethiopian monarchy in opposition to Eritrean independence. In one of those ironies of history, the secular nationalists began to encourage the Eritrean Church to revive links with the Coptic Church in Alexandria broken in 1975 by the Christian monarchy of Haile
Selassie. The Eritrean Orthodox Church historically had been part of the larger Ethiopian Church, and with independence, the nationalist leadership sought to dilute this potentially problematic relationship by encouraging the emergence of an autonomous Church that is more closely tied to the Coptic Church in Egypt. By September 1994, the first bishops had been consecrated at a ceremony conducted in Cairo by the head of the Coptic Church, Shenouda III, effectively terminating the Eritrean Church's status as a diocese of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Another illustration of the same logic at work is the government's language policy. The nationalist leadership wisely chose not to impose any language as the 'official' language of state or the language of instruction in the schools. While Tigrinya and Arabic are considered to be working languages-of-state, the Constitution explicitly asserts that all citizens have a right to education and information in their native language. Thus, although the educational syllabus is being homogenized in terms of content, the medium of instruction remains refreshingly diverse. Beyond the commendable desire to respect the cultural and linguistic rights of all ethnic groups in Eritrea, the main argument for encouraging linguistic diversity has been an equally admirable contention that use of the mother-tongue for instruction in primary schools (all secondary school instruction is in English) is a proven means for the successful education of children.

There is another motive in the government's language policy: that is, to elevate particular ethnic languages alongside Arabic – the sacred language of Islam – thereby forcing it to mingle on equal footing with a series of vernacular rivals. The upshot would be to weaken the temporal power of Islam as identity, while in no way affecting its spiritual status as religion. This does not, as some have alleged, mean that the government is trying to undermine Arabic as one of the languages of Eritrea. Besides Tigrinya, Arabic is still the most widely used language-of-state as well as of the mass media. As the conference on Eritrean languages held in Asmara in August 1996 indicated, there will be an increased effort to promote Arabic simultaneously with other Eritrean languages that have in the past been denied an opportunity to develop in print (Hadas Eritrea, 21 Nehasie). In this regard, the government's stance on the language issue stands as a remarkable demonstration of its determination to respect cultural diversity, and not to use the extensive resources of the state to promote a top down policy of homogenization. But this motive and the desire to vitiate the politicization of sub-national identities are not mutually exclusive and, as far as the nationalist leadership is concerned, so much the better.

The government has also sought to weaken the potency of regional identifications by redefining the administrative boundaries within Eritrea. In May 1995, the National Assembly approved a proposal that to create six administrative regions to replace the ten that were in place in the immediate aftermath of liberation. The new boundaries are intended to facilitate planning for economic and social projects within broadly similar socio-economic and geographic zones. The reorganization will likewise facilitate another aim of the state: the undermining of particularism and regionalism by dissociating ethnic identities from given administrative territories. The nationalists are surely aware that map-making is more than simply a technical matter, and as the very example of Eritrean nationalism illustrates, territorial boundaries can, over time, create meaning and become incubators of new identities. By creating multi-ethnic administrative regions, the possibility of territorially based ethnic politicization is thus weakened.
Despite all these measures, the re-emergence of religious and ethnic fundamentalisms in many European societies militates against the assumption that sub-national cultural convictions are either ephemeral or simply part of the pre-history of the nation, now happily surpassed. The experience of the small community of Jehovah’s Witnesses is a reminder that particularistic cultural beliefs, and the challenge they pose to the nation-state, are far from a fleeting phenomenon. Basing themselves on their religious convictions, the Jehovah's Witnesses refused to vote in the independence referendum and have continued to abstain from the political life of the nation. Most recently, they have declined to participate in the National Service, and the state has responded by stripping many of them of their citizenship rights. Some have lost their jobs in the civil service, while others had their business licenses revoked. While the Jehovah's Witnesses clearly present a serious dilemma for the new state, the state's response appears excessively inflexible and hostile, and the draconian measures it enacted will most likely reinforce the very ideas and practices it seeks to submerge. After having fought for so long for the assertion of Eritrea's national rights, the nationalist movement in turn needs to be more respectful of minority rights within its own frontiers.

Of broader concern is the situation of the estimated half a million Eritrean refugees living in the Sudan – 200,000 of whom reside in refugee camps near the border. Most of these refugees, some dating from as far back as 1967, are living in difficult material conditions, and are easily exposed to the sectarian discourse of the Islamic Jihad. All this has put pressure on the government to expedite refugee repatriation. The process, however, will not be without tension. According to most reports, the majority of the refugees are Muslims from the lowland regions. Their return to their historical localities is bound to cause some stress, since the social composition of these areas has undergone a profound transformation due to the complex patterns of settlement and resettlement which accompanied the war (Killion, 1994; Woldegabriel, 1995).

The government argued that its policy on the repatriation of the refugees is not subject to narrow political calculation, and that it has continuously sought ways to facilitate their return, but has been hampered by a lack of resources and political difficulties with the Sudanese state. Following the war, it initiated a plan to return and resettle refugees under the Programme for Refugee Re-integration and Rehabilitation of Resettlement Areas in Eritrea (PROFERI). The phased repatriation plan was expected to cost $262 million, but a pledging conference generated only $32.5 million, and the plan was essentially scuttled. Unable to secure the necessary international funding, and in circumstances where the fledgling state is constrained by a scarcity of resources, mass repatriation has not seemed feasible. Assistance from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees has been sought, but UNHCR negotiations with the government have often stalled. As Ahmed Tahir Baduri, head of the Refugee Commission indicated in a three part article in the bi-weekly Eritrea al Haditha, the UNHCR insisted on limiting the issue to repatriation of the refugees from Sudan, and ignored the more complex issue of providing them with the means to reconstruct their lives in Eritrea (Eritrea al Haditha, December, 1994). After some difficulty in reaching a compromise, in 1995 the UNHCR agreed to support a pilot project to repatriate 25,000 people, and an additional 100,000 were expected to return during 1996. The break in diplomatic relations with Sudan in December of that year, however, has impeded this organized repatriation. According to the newly reorganized Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission, some 165,209 refugees had returned as of May 1996. All, except the 25,000 who came through the pilot project, have resettled spontaneously.
Citizenship and the Public Sphere

This array of inter-connected issues concerning the political salience of sub-national cultural attachments point to several conundrums: what is the legitimate place of ethnic or religious aspirations and demands within a larger concept of Eritrean nationhood? How can cultural diversity and a singular demand for unity be harmoniously accommodated? National independence has been achieved through a long drawn mass struggle, and in the process the need to appreciate the cultural plurality of the nation has been emphasized. In the post-independence period, the nationalist leadership has reaffirmed its commitment to cultural diversity, but has made it absolutely clear that there would be no place for a politics of sub-national identities. The draft Constitution has also reaffirmed this prohibition. But what is to guarantee the commitment to cultural pluralism if those very same communities are not provided a political mechanism to assert their collective rights if and when they are transgressed?

Historically, liberal constitutional frameworks have justified exclusionary practices by invoking the 'national interest', and have either made the exclusions absolute, or made them seem awkward and temporary, to be overcome with the working out of the grand narrative of modernity. Moreover, liberal discourses have often distinguished between political parties and sects by using the category of the 'public good', where sects are expected to yield their autonomy at 'critical moments'. The obvious danger with this practice is that it can easily slip into an insistence that loyalty to the 'nation' can only be measured in terms of loyalty to the established institutions of the state. Moreover, the rhetoric of the need to regulate ethnic or religious politics can be used to de-legitimize social movements whose demands are 'secular', yet are limited to particular segments of the national community.

These inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics point to the ambiguities between the requirements of state legitimacy and the nation conceived as an open and voluntary association. What is the appropriate framework in which to examine the contestation between these seemingly contradictory dynamics? In small peripheral societies such as Eritrea, economic and social conditions often become obstacles to the development of participatory democracy. Lack of resources, mass illiteracy, and the absence of democratic traditions all exert pressure towards bureaucratization, so that in the definition of the nation, the state is substituted for the people, bureaucracy for democracy, and passive obedience for active citizenship. Rather than the assertion of democracy from below, the nation instead becomes a pervasive organizing framework imposed from above, stressing the imperatives of obedience and loyalty to state institutions.

This pervasive political legacy has often led to a facile dichotomy in discussions of democratization between critics of an all-powerful and over-intrusive state, and advocates of a 'civil society' understood as an arena of freedom, with resultant calls for restraints on the state. But just as the state is not simply an embodiment of coercion, civil society is conversely not arena of unrestricted freedom, but is in fact structured by all sorts of social inequalities. Democratization, therefore, requires not merely the withdrawal of the state to allow the development of spheres of social autonomy, but also a positive and active state intervention of a particular kind: a constitutionally secured framework of rights and liberties, including the conventional rights of free speech, assembly, freedom of movement, and universal suffrage.

Even with the juridical codification of formal rights, however, the institutional balance between the different sectors of the state might limit the sphere within which
a popular will can assert itself. While the draft Constitution, for instance, formally recognizes civil liberties and social rights, the institutional framework it proposes tends to favour a strong executive at the expense of an elected legislature. This dualism between an Assembly which enacts laws, and a professional bureaucracy which administers them, characteristically leads to a shift in the centre of gravity of the state from an elected legislature to an unelected bureaucratic apparatus. It thereby grants a huge domain to the civil service, consolidating it as a central locus of decision making. At the same time, the powers of the proposed Assembly are circumscribed in a variety of ways: Parliamentary sessions will be restricted to prescribed dates, and can be convened outside the regular schedule only if called for by the President, the Speaker of the Assembly, or two-thirds of the deputies. Cabinet members do not have to be members of the Assembly, and Ministerial offices are not directly subject to parliamentary oversight. Such a broadly conceived executive power, which includes within its purview all local administration, can limit the zone of popular electoral control and neuter the democratic energies of citizens.

To extend democratic culture and practice, it is essential to go beyond these purely formal and juridical aspects, and recognize that a democratization of social life at large is necessary. As an early document produced by the Constitutional Commission (1995:14) notes:

> Democracy is best realized ... through the actual participation of people in political, social and cultural affairs and processes. The realization of this substantive democracy requires the empowerment of people ... This means that people should not only have the right to vote and other political rights, but must also have the right to equitable economic, social, and cultural development. In short, economic, social and cultural democracy has to be linked with political democracy.

The actualization of formal rights – be they political, social or cultural – has historically required that they be grounded in a dense network of citizen initiatives and autonomous organizations which can provide collective experience in the exercise of those rights. For if democracy is not to become a synonym for elite factional struggles, it has to be located in the self-activity of subaltern groups, in both urban and rural areas. Social movements can in this sense act as conduits for the expression and organization of citizen's demands vis-a-vis the state and the wider society, and protect their members from arbitrary administrative and political measures. In predominantly rural societies dominated by a subsistence economy, and in circumstances where the population is socially and culturally isolated from the mainstream of national life, this dynamic aspect of the realization of democracy is just as crucial as the formal declaration of democratic rights.

To point out the limits of a purely juridical approach to democracy is not to say that formal procedures are irrelevant, or that you can have substantive democracy without precise procedures to put it into consistent practice. It is important to stress this obvious point, because there is an unsettling and evasive trend within the state leadership in Eritrea that takes the form of criticizing the formal limitations of western democracy. This is done, however, not in the name of expanding formal democracy beyond the confines of a periodic casting of ballots to other arenas of the state such as the bureaucracy, the judiciary or the coercive apparatuses. Nor is the argument one of elaborating mechanisms of popular-democratic empowerment via the extension of democracy into the characteristic institutions of civil society: families, schools, religious institutions, and work places which exhibit a uniform lack of democracy.
The proposed constitution in fact does no more than advocate the formation of a representative assembly at the level of the nation, and civic rights at the level of the individual. In so doing, it systematically limits the basis of oppositional collectivities by individualizing people into the juridical objects of state regulation. The whole intermediary zone of the public sphere, where the interaction and contestation between the state and the citizenry, and between different publics is mediated, has a dynamic which is outside constitutional codification. Ultimately, therefore, it is how the Constitution is experienced and lived within this mediating public context that is paramount. By devising various modalities of empowerment within the public realm, it is possible to check abuses of power, ensure mutual respect of citizens’ rights, and demand accountability and visibility in the exercise of power. All these questions of the content of popular sovereignty inevitably lead to a consideration of the concrete forms of empowerment, and the relationship between the state, political parties, and independent associations.

The Dialectics of State, Party and Mass Organization

Established in the early 1970s in a merger of three factions that had broken off from the Eritrean Liberation Front, the Popular Front was born in a world context characterized by a discernible rise in revolutionary and nationalist mobilization. This international conjuncture was a formative influence on the Popular Front, which adopted a radical nationalist orientation that sought to combine the national struggle with a project for social transformation. As part of this orientation, an ‘unofficial’ political party was set up within the Front that included within it all key members of the Front’s leadership. According to a report by Isaias Afwerki at the Third Congress of the Popular Front in 1994, this Party was dissolved in 1989. No history of the party and its institutional relationship to the Front, or even an explanation of why it was dissolved was provided. But there seems little doubt that its dissolution represented a consummation of a trend away from the previously established marxist-leninist orientation of the leadership, for which the ‘unofficial’ party had been the organizing vehicle within the nationalist Front.

The political reorientation had been signalled two years earlier at the Front’s second congress, which declared a commitment to a market economy and a multi-party system, now espoused within a ‘non-ideological’ and ‘pragmatic’ framework. The new orientation reflected a profound disillusionment in the aftermath of the Soviet supported Ethiopian military offensives that set back the hour of liberation by a decade and a half. The latter part of the 1980s also made inescapably palpable the grim record of actually existing communism, and all lingering belief in marxism-leninism within the leadership seems to have melted away. Whatever might now be said of the nature of that appeal for the Front’s leadership – that is, whether it had more to do with the political resources it provided to construct a disciplined, multi-ethnic organization, than with the emancipatory project it proposed – that political experience was critical for the way in which the Popular Front organized itself. Based on the experiences of the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions, the Front advanced a notion of ‘people’s power’ that implied a distinctive set of relationships between a vanguard party, mass organizations, and the state. By the late 1980s, much of the revolutionary rhetoric accompanying that form of mobilization was gone, but the structures it promoted have remained.

In February 1994, the EPLF held its third and last congress under that acronym, and adopted a National Charter to serve as its programmatic guide in the post-liberation era (Markakis, 1995). In a symbolic gesture for a new start that leaves old political
divisions behind, it changed its name to the Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), and invited all Eritreans who accept the Charter to join it. At the Congress, Ramadan Mohammed Nur, who had first joined the Eritrean Liberation Front in 1963 and was a founding member and Secretary-General of the Popular Front, made a surprise appeal to be relieved of all senior positions within the Front and the state. The appeal was an exemplary gesture, with Ramadan stating it was time to make room for a younger generation. The Congress also called for a formal separation between state and party, and several leading members of the government, including Alamin Mohammed Said – the newly elected Secretary-General of the Front – resigned their governmental posts in order to direct the Popular Front. Despite the formal separation, the osmosis between the Front and the state continues, and this is partly due to a lack of cadres to make the formal separation of these institutions a reality.

Taking advantage of its unique position during this transitional period, the Popular Front is using an inclusionary and flexible discourse to recruit new members and reorganize its structure. With a current formal membership of some 600,000, the Popular Front presents itself as the only credible mass-based organization, possessing the necessary personnel and experience to assume the responsibilities of governing. And in the foreseeable future, given its aggregate power in the state apparatus, the mass media, and the economy at large, it is unlikely that any other political organization can seriously challenge it.

Nevertheless, despite the Front's antipathy for factional rivalries or internal debates, it would be a mistake to think that an organization of this size can ever be monolithic. Within a context of broader democratization, it will be difficult to maintain the pretence of unanimity within the Front itself. The dislocatory tendencies of a market economy, and the attendant social differentiation it will spawn, are likely to weaken the nationalist glue that now binds the Front together. As the April 1993 demonstration in Asmara (centred on questions of accountability and pay) and the Mai Haber incident (when a protest by disabled fighters culminated in the death of three veterans) signalled, many of the rank and file members of the Front are no longer willing to follow unquestioningly their leaders in the post-liberation era, as they had once followed their unit commanders out of the trenches.

Besides the Popular Front, several mass organizations linked to it, including the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW), and the National Union of Eritrean Youth (NUEY), have broadened the scope of their activity in the post-liberation period. The most active so far has been the 200,000 strong NUEW, whose strength reflects the degree of women's involvement in the national liberation struggle. Women comprised 33 per cent of the Popular Front's membership, and female emancipation was part and parcel of the struggle for national sovereignty. In the transition to statehood, the main objective of the NUEW has been to safeguard the gains made during the liberation struggle, and ensure that women's participation in the reconstruction and definition of the nation is firmly secured. The legal equality granted to women under the Constitution provides the juridical framework for assuring these rights are not circumscribed by social legislation privileging men in the areas of inheritance rights or family legislation. The ratification of the Constitution and the formation of an elected parliament, will likely see varied forms of struggle counterposing local particularisms to new forms of civic consciousness. In that context, an autonomous women's movement will become even more necessary, as calls to respect customary practices could lead to a curtailment of the gains women have made.
So far, there does not seem to be any backsliding by the nationalist government, and the agrarian reform law that was approved in 1994 explicitly grants women the right to land, even though there were attempts by groups of rural men to circumvent this (Connell, 1995). Under pressure from the NUEW, the nationalist government has agreed to reserve a third of all the seats in the zonal administration for women, and women constitute about 21 per cent of the National Assembly, and 50 per cent of the Constitutional Commission. The ministries of Justice and Tourism are headed by women.

Gender issues will also become important within the labour movement, as the adoption of a macro-economic programme oriented towards export-led development will likely increase the female labour force in the low-paid, casual and informal sectors of the economy. The labour confederation, representing some 129 industrial unions with a total membership of some 20,000, has been participating in the drafting a labour law that is expected to guarantee equal pay for equal work, prohibit child labour, protect pregnant women from overtime or unsafe working conditions, and provide sixty days paid maternity leave (RFA, 25). In the interim, the government has implemented a new wage policy, raising the daily minimum wage to 12 Birr and doubling the minimum civil service salary to 140 Birr. During the transitional period, major labour strife has been negligible, with the government statistics indicating a total of 1,044 labour disputes in 1992, of which 92 per cent were individual and 8 per cent collective in nature. The majority of these were resolved through processes of arbitration (Eritrea: Notes for Investors: 10).

Both these organizations, as well as the national youth organization, while nominally independent of the state and the Popular Front, remain closely tied to both. Askalu Menkerios of the NUEW and Mohedin Shengeb of the NUEY, are in fact members of the executive committee of the Popular Front. This has inevitably raised doubts as to the extent to which these mass organizations have a sense of their distinct collective interests and a capacity for independent action. Historical experience gives ample warning that lack of organizational and political independence can result in the transformation of mass associations into docile auxiliaries of the ruling party, emptied of democratic content and popular credibility. If the mass associations are not to become mere instruments of the party-state, controlled by time-serving mediocrities and serving as transmission belts for state policies, they must guard their autonomy and respect the plurality of opinions within themselves.

A democratic political culture within the mass organizations has to be underscored by national political pluralism. The vitality of a participatory citizenry, civic and mass associations is sapped in the absence of a fundamental choice between alternative economic and political projects. To date, with the singular exception of the constitution-making process which has reportedly involved over half a million Eritreans in the deliberations, the transitional period is characterized by the exclusion of organized movements outside the Popular Front and its ancillary organizations. The omnipresence of the state over any embryonic public sphere has meant that key issues of the transition have not been opened up to wider public debate. Without this context of subaltern self-activity and the expression of diverse views, popular sovereignty remains highly mediated. The ratification of the Constitution, the promulgation of the press law, and the end of the transition period will, it is expected, create the juridical and political framework that will give substance to the exercise of political and civil liberties. When that happens, and that time is not far off, the Popular Front will be subjected to a healthy contestation for hegemony. And if it is not to be
trapped in past successes and live on borrowed time alone, it will have to adopt to the institutional salience of political and social issues that are now outside public debate.

**National Developmentalism**

When the Popular Front marched into Asmara in May 1991, its leaders were aware they were inheriting a country in ruins. By 1991, Eritrea was a devastated land. Thirty years of war left the country with a per capita income that is one of the lowest in the world. A one time vibrant economy with an industrial base larger than that of Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti combined, the war had seen its light industries either relocated or destroyed, and its infrastructure in shambles. A brutal war had claimed the lives of over 150,000 civilians and 65,000 members of the liberation movements, while another 12,000 were permanently disabled (the figures for Ethiopia’s casualties runs to a ghastly total of several hundred thousand). Some 90,000 children were orphaned, while 750,000 to a million people were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring states. By the end of the war, over 70 per cent of the population was dependent on donated food aid, most of them subsisting on an average caloric intake of 1,750 kcal/person/day, which is equivalent to 93 per cent of the minimum requirements. Urban unemployment was above 30 per cent, while rural underemployment was pervasive. All social indicators revealed a dismal and stagnant situation (Table 1), and these statistics tell only part of the story, for the trauma of war and dislocation is not easily amenable to enumeration (Görke, Klingebiel, et al. 1995:18).

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<td>Life Expectancy</td>
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<td>Population per Doctor</td>
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<td>Population with safe drinking water</td>
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<td>Adult Literacy Rate</td>
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*Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs: (1993) Basic Facts on Eritrea*

In the transitional period, the government focused on improving and making accessible, in some cases for the first time, basic health and educational facilities. The Ministry of Education is expanding the provision of universal primary education, with a plan to increase enrollment for the first seven grades from 47 to 65 per cent by the year 2000. The number of schools have tripled since liberation, while the budget for education has increased from 34.7m Birr in 1992 to 91 million Birr in 1995, an expansion of 160 per cent (Ministry of Education, 1995:15). Similarly, there has been a concerted effort to improve the deplorable state of health care. Between 1991 and 1994, the number of hospitals went up from 4 to 17, those of health centres from 4 to 32, and those of health stations from 45 to 120 (Europa World Year Book, 1996:1151). These changes have indeed been notable, but they are far from meeting the needs of even half the population. The return of refugees and demobilized soldiers with high expectations will further strain this limited institutional fabric. The government is under pressure to provide basic necessities as a minimum basis for a substantive citizenship, and this has inevitably made the project of economic reconstruction a central political concern. In the post-liberation era, as in so many post-colonial states, it is the promise of ‘development’ that is being deployed as a legitimizing strategy for the state.
In formulating a plan for rebuilding the war-shattered society, a two-pronged approach has been devised. In the short term, given that both human and material resources are scarce, the effort to climb out of economic devastation has required the rigorous pooling of resources if any impact on the colossal task of reconstruction was to be made. In this mobilizational endeavour, the nationalist leadership is relying on the extraordinary energies the independence movement generated, encouraging habits of resourcefulness and self-reliance that were nurtured during the exceptional conditions of the armed struggle. Much of the road and rail reconstruction, as well as reforestation, terracing, small-scale canal and dam construction, is being done by peasants in food-for-work programmes. Fearing the cultural and social implications of dependency on food aid, recently the government decided to monetize this relationship, by first selling the donated grain on the market. Recruits in the National Service – which requires most citizens between the ages of 18 and 40 to register for one year of reconstruction work; members of the Liberation Army, and secondary school students recruited in the Summer Work Campaign also participate in the reconstruction effort. Overall, judged by its performance in relation to its scarce resources, the transitional government has demonstrated a remarkable ingenuity in this area, which won it international acclaim.

There is clearly significant room for expanding food production by the extensive methods this mobilization permits. Of the 12.4 million hectares of land area, 3.2 million hectares, or 26 per cent, is estimated to be arable, of which only 12 per cent is presently cultivated. But the war has also seen the environment degraded with the depletion of forests and the disintegration of soil and water conservation systems. Approximately 50 to 70 per cent of existing cattle were lost, and food production dropped to 40 per cent of its previous levels. Overwhelmingly dependent on rain-fed agriculture, food security is constantly threatened by the failure of rains, as happened in 1991 and 1993 when there was a 70 to 80 per cent crop failure. Eritrea’s annual average food needs are between 450,000 and 600,000 tons, and food deficits are often at least fifty per cent of needs.

One area where extensive growth can be registered to alleviate the food shortage is in fisheries, regarded as Eritrea’s greatest untapped resource. With 1,000 km. of coastline, Eritrea’s exclusive coastal waters cover around 60,000 sq. km. of the Red Sea’s as yet largely unexploited waters. The government is currently engaged in promoting the consumption of fish as a staple of the Eritrean diet, which requires a transformation of food consumption habits. It has concentrated on trying to expand production from the current 2,000 tons/year, which is only a tiny fraction of the estimated potential of 70,000 tons/year (IMF, 1995:6).

The second prong of the reconstruction strategy is concerned with longer term increases in productivity rather than the mere extension of underutilized capacity, and is heavily influenced by the current global celebration of the market. The macro-economic policies of the administration appear informed by the monetarist belief that growth in the economy is best achieved through the free operation of market forces and the removal of state interference. The goal of a reduced role for the state and the belief in a self-regulating economy dovetail with current neo-liberal discourses, and represents a break with the Popular Front’s earlier strategy which had insisted that self-reliance would be the secret to economic success. Despite the fact that the rhetoric on self-reliance had dubious foundations and smacked of misconceived autarkism, it also represented an attempt to escape from given models and to develop locally varied, popularly controlled projects for social transformation.
Such a reorientation is seen as a pragmatic adaptation which does not blindly succumb to the discourse of globalization, or to the Freidmannite enthusiasm displayed in the Russian and East European transitions. The nationalist leadership appears aware of the social consequences involved in the excessively rapid pace of marketization in Eastern Europe, and it is critical of the IMF's use of its financial power to pressure African governments to cut social services, food subsidies and real wages. And while it has sought access to the international banks and capital markets, the government has not allowed external contributions to divert it from its own chosen course. Its freedom from any external debt provided it with the necessary room for manoeuvre, and it has studiously avoided the trappings of the global tributary system which has reduced the economic sovereignty of many 'third world' states, crippling their development strategies through the onerous mechanism of debt service payments.

Despite this underlying caution, and the reluctance to dilute the state's regulatory levers, the self-consciously modernizing Eritrean state has clearly opted to swim along with the prevailing international thinking on development. Whatever elements of planning it may originally considered when it set up the Ministry of Finance and Development, the subsequent macro-economic programme indicates a clear desire to move away from any form of extensive planning. The economic programme has progressively been stripped down to a core belief in the removal of state and national barriers to capital movement and economic activity which will clear the path to a dynamic renewal of the Eritrean economy.

In an overwhelmingly rural society, it is primarily the agrarian policies of the state that are of critical importance for the mass of the population. An agrarian reform law was initially approved by the Third Congress of the Popular Front in February 1994, and was subsequently promulgated by the National Assembly. Under the new law, ownership of land – which cannot be sold or exchanged – is vested in the Eritrean state, with individual peasant households having lifetime usufruct rights. The reform allows holdings to be inherited, but reserves ultimate rights of dispossession for the state. Despite this provision, the government hopes that the enactment of the land reform, by overcoming the variety of local tenure systems, will enhance individual security of tenure, and lead to increased productivity.

Sandra Joierman has rightly identified the two areas in the agrarian reform law that can potentially lead to problems: 'the disregard for pastoralists and the investment policy for the countryside' (Joierman, 1996:275). The agrarian reform makes no provisions for safeguarding access to water and grazing areas for pastoralist communities, and subjects their historic access rights to cultivator enclosures. Moreover, the land law comes in the midst of demographic and ecological pressures in the central highlands that have been pushing many peasants to resettle in the western and eastern lowlands. Similarly, the desire for large scale commercial farming is bound to accentuate the pressure on pastoral groups, who might be forced into more marginal and diminishing pastures, within fixed and ever-narrowing boundaries.

The eventual aim of the government might be to settle the pastoral communities, but this desire is itself informed by a misconceived notion that sedentary farming is more 'modern' and 'advanced' than pastoralism. Nomadic lifestyles, however, are highly skilled adaptations to arid and semi-arid environments, ecologically and socially more sustainable than settled farming. As Mahmood Mamdani (1996:166) notes:
Mobility allows pastoralists access to short-term grasses while conserving wetter, longer-term pastures for the drier season. Pastoral boundaries were thus more ecological than physical, more flexible than fixed. Mobility was the precondition not only for the optimal utilization of resources, but also for their optimal conservation. It was central for the sustainability of a non-destructive pastoralism.

A prime stimulus for the agrarian reform was a desire to reorganize the complicated land-tenure system to permit large-scale mechanization. Rapid modernization of agriculture is seen as essential to achieving food self-sufficiency and for the diversification of the economy. Similarly, the government hopes the reform will facilitate the expansion of the domestic market and will increase the purchasing power in the countryside. With the eventual aim of privatization, it is also making a concerted effort to revive the three major agro-industrial complexes: the Elabert estate near Keren (1,200 hectares); the Alighider Plantation (5,000 hectares); and the Ghinda Farms (80 hectares).

The belief that agricultural mechanization and the introduction of bigger and better technologies will result in higher yields is nevertheless contradicted by evidence from other countries, which suggest there is no linear relationship between higher crop yields and mechanization (Binswager, 1986:30-32). If the experiences in much of the 'developing' countries is any indication, the attendant turn to commercial farming can actually result in the marginalization of domestic foodstuff cultivation. Moreover, it can accentuate the displacement of agro-pastoralist and peasant tillers from the land, as large scale farming incorporates more and more of the available arable land. Accentuated by a world trade regime which has massively subsidized and protected the agriculture of the advanced countries, this can impinge on subsistence farming, as it already has in many African, Asian and Latin American countries.

The precariousness of agricultural production, combined with the sheer narrowness of the domestic market, has exerted pressure on the government to devise an export-oriented industrialization project. The government places its hopes on the historical vitality of light industry in Eritrea. During the Italian colonial period, a relatively sophisticated manufacturing and trading base was constructed, with over 700 small and medium scale industrial establishments, and a similar number of construction, trading and transport concerns. This industrial infrastructure enabled Eritrea to export foodstuffs, beverages, building materials, tires and paper products. In the 1940s, the economy witnessed a frenzied expansion induced by Britain's war effort, which transformed the colony into a Red Sea staging post for British forces. Although the end of the war saw a decline in the rate of growth and the emergence of large scale unemployment, a rudimentary infrastructure had been created. Most towns in the country had running water, and the country had 750 miles of asphalt roads, and a 220 mile railway linking the Massawa port with Asmara and the western towns of Agordat and Barentu.

Difficulties began in the immediate aftermath of World War II, as Britain dismantled many of the wartime installations, as well as port, railway and construction facilities. This was followed by gradual economic stagnation and the emigration of much of the skilled workforce to the Middle East and Ethiopia. During the federation period, the Ethiopian imperial state undermined Eritrea’s economy by closing down industries; abrogating agreements such as one between FIAT and the autonomous Eritrean government to establish a factory in Decemhare; and cancelling projects involving the generation of hydroelectric power, cotton plantations, and a textile factory in the Western lowlands. In subsequent years, agricultural and industrial production
plummeted, and the infrastructure of roads, railroads and ports deteriorated. With some 336 small manufacturing enterprises, including forty-two medium-sized public firms, Eritrea today possesses an industrial infrastructure that is marginal even within the regional context. The composition of the Gross Domestic Product for 1992 indicates that industry accounts for about 19 per cent; while the share of agricultural production is around 29 per cent; and that of the trade and transport sector was about 34 per cent of GDP (IMF, 1995:3).

The government's short-term industrial policy aims to expand capacity utilization, and increase production to at least the base line of the early 1970s, when Eritrea's industries accounted for 35 per cent of Ethiopia's meagre industrial production, earning approximately $100 million worth of foreign exchange. The intensification of the war in the final phase of the liberation struggle saw a dramatic shrinkage of this capacity, as exports fell to somewhere between $2 to 20 million by 1992 (RFA, 199:15). Most industrial enterprises were operating at one-third of capacity, and required a new infusion of raw materials, spare parts and capital. The value of imports of machinery and transport equipment has increased fivefold since liberation, rising from 367 million to 2 billion Birr in 1994. Again, as with the agricultural sector, this phase of extensive expansion is registering some progress, and by 1995 capacity utilization in the public enterprises increased to about a 60 per cent in average (UNIDO, 1996:ix, 2).

The long-term industrialization strategy of the government indicated in the macro-economic programme focuses on the creation of a conducive infrastructural, social and financial environment for the promotion of an 'efficient, outward-looking, private sector-led market economy.' Within this broad framework, the government has promulgated investment guidelines which offer attractive incentives to potential investors in the form of tax shelters, unrestricted repatriation of profits, and export incentives, and has further eased exchange controls and dismantled restrictive export regulations. The guidelines give priority to the establishment of commercial agriculture, mining, capital goods and consumer industries, as well as to those sectors which concentrate on export-oriented production. In an attempt to promote growth in the rural areas, the government has also indicated a willingness to look favourably at proposed investments in areas outside the major urban centres. The fact that the Ethiopian Birr is still the legal tender has hampered the implementation of an independent fiscal and monetary policy, but a new currency, the Nakfa, is expected to be in circulation by early next year (UNIDO, 1995).

Entreport facilities are also being set up, and Massawa is designated to become an export processing zone. Prospecting for oil deposits continues, and an effort is made to restore the mining sector where the state is entering into joint partnerships with international companies. During the Italian period, mining of potash, magnesium, marble and copper was undertaken, and licenses have now been granted for the mining of gold in the vicinity of Asmara. There is large potential in metallic and non-metallic minerals, and there are substantial commercial size deposits of granite, marble, limestone, potash, sulphur, gypsum, and silica sand.

Despite the willingness to allow market forces to shape the economy, there has been little sign of an influx of fresh investments. Foreign investment has been scant, with the single largest externally financed project consisting of a $200-300 million casino and hotel complex on one of the Dahlak Islands. Actual investment in mining, fishing and tourism remains negligible (Financial Times, 1996:14). The scarcity of foreign capital inflows has heightened dependence on the financial remittances of Eritreans.
abroad. In terms of hard currency, these private transfers, are becoming an important source of foreign exchange, estimated in 1993-94 at 2.1 billion Birr, and have given Eritrea a current account surplus of 722 million Birr for 1994 (UNIDO, 1996:5). The critical role of Eritreans in the diaspora is part of a larger trend in the late twentieth century of what Benedict Anderson has called 'long distance nationalism' (Anderson, 1992). With its problematic transnational conceptions of citizenship that accompany a new portable sense of 'home', these new forms of nationalism can undermine the classical project of territorially based nationalism. But as long as this nationalism is working in favour of the current state project in Eritrea, the government is evidently unconcerned, and in fact seeks to expand the role of the diaspora community in the reconstruction process.

Clearly, if it is to command the necessary sacrifices, any sustainable programme of reconstruction has to have a holistic perspective, addressing itself not just to questions of production and purchasing power, but also to such matters as socio-economic power and gender discrimination. It must promote the assertion of the principle of democracy both at the level of politics and the economy. Instead of conceiving politics as an adaptation to the will of autonomous economic forces, an alternative has to use politics as a means of mobilizing the productive and social potential held back by the existing system of economic activity. By itself, such an alternative does not imply an a priori distribution between planning and market mechanisms, or between different forms of ownership. But what it does imply is that these matters, like the principal social and political questions, are the proper and legitimate province of democratic decision.

Conclusions and Prospects

It has now become commonplace to point out that the nation-state is being undermined by two simultaneous processes: rapid global economic integration from above, and sub-national ethnic and religious contestations from below. Moreover, it has been claimed that a commitment to viewing the formation of nation-states in Africa as historical progress can no longer be sustained. In the words of Basil Davidson, the nation-state has been a curse on Africa (Davidson, 1992). Certainly the record of the post-colonial states on the continent allow of no linear conception of historical advance. But when due account has been taken of cross currents and contradictions, the movements for independence and national emancipation do represent fundamental achievements, and the sacrifices of the anti-colonial activists were not in vain.

In a fin de siècle world characterized by staggering inequality and unevenness, Eritrea will have to chart its own way to an emancipated future. And as a small peripheral state, it is self-evident that it will have to adapt to the times. But whether adaptation means rising to new challenges, or simply assimilating into existing realities, is the question. In the region as a whole, the resolution of the problems of hunger and basic human needs, as well as the construction of adequate institutions for democratic participation, are still far away. The capacity of the states to meet such needs remains supremely circumscribed. Yet, if the region had in the past become a byword for sheer political instability, mass hunger and war, it is today a site of high expectations. Whatever the difficulties and obstacles, there are enough grounds for reasoned optimism.
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Hadas Eritrea, various issues.


International Relations in the Horn of Africa (1991-96)

Amare Tekle

The international relations of any region cannot be understood by reference to developments in that region alone, but must be viewed in the context of linkages between systems at various regions and levels. It is the combination of the dynamics within each system and its interaction with other systems – regional and global – that determine the pattern of inter-state relations. The Horn of Africa is not an exception. Thus, both Markakis, who emphasizes the predominance of internal factors, and Lefebvre, who gives prominence to external factors, each make valid points about the situation in the Horn of Africa (Endnote 1). However, it would be risky to accept either point of view to the exclusion of the other. Another point needs to be made clear. All too often, it is assumed that the interests of foreign powers – especially the superpowers – have determined the course of history in a given region; this is not entirely true. In fact, if one is to judge by the pattern of conflicts and alliances in the Horn of Africa, it is the local dynamics that have had more influence on the actions of foreign powers rather than vice versa. This article will focus on the states of the Horn of Africa – Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda – and the linkages between this region and other regions as well as the global system.

The Internal Setting

The Region

The Horn of Africa is as diverse as any other region of Africa. However, the states of the region share certain characteristics. Their societies are divided along ethnic and religious lines, and political loyalties often cut across state boundaries. It is hardly possible to talk of national cohesiveness or common political identity in any of the states, with the possible exception of the newest state of Eritrea where a long struggle for independence has forged a national consciousness. With the exception of Kenya, the states of the Horn are among the least developed in the continent and the region ranks as the poorest in Africa and the world. Since the heyday of African independence, the region has been savaged by the longest liberation (secessionist) war fought in the continent, several minor inter-state wars, several civil wars, one major revolution with implications far beyond the region, and countless coups d'état and insurrections. Violence and repression have been the main tools of politics, and human rights violations the rule rather than the exception. No wonder then that one writer refers to the region as a ‘Hobbesian world’ (Lyons, 1992). Such conditions still persist, in spite of some promising structural and political changes, which include the
independence of Eritrea, the reorganization of the Ethiopian state and the transformation of Uganda.

Some of the states of the region – Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda – have entered a new phase in their political history: a phase of democratic reform, undergirded by a new sense of nationalism. This new nationalism is manifested in different ways, and is at different stages of development in each of these countries. Yet, its values, principles and aspirations are similar. It advocates change in the character of the state, seeks to reduce socio-economic disparities between social groups and to ensure fair distribution of power within society. Above all, it is highly committed to development. This seems to have encouraged the emergence of a coalition of like-minded forces and the creation of conditions favourable to democracy, and to have produced what a senior Eritrean official has called a ‘generally positive and promising psychological climate – abhorrence of war, profound desire for enduring stability, broad vision and good will’ (Sudan Democratic Gazette, 1995).

The States of the Region

Eritrea became independent after thirty years of struggle and confronts more than the share of problems faced by equally small, underdeveloped countries at the time of their independence thirty or forty years ago. These include the need to effect a smooth transition from a liberation movement to a viable civilian government; the reconstruction of an economic infrastructure almost totally destroyed by thirty years of war and negligence; the satisfaction of high expectations of demobilized fighters and civilians, and the resettlement of half a million refugees.

To complicate matters, Eritrea had to postpone the declaration of its independence until a referendum was held two years after actual liberation, ostensibly to prove to an unbelieving world the legitimacy of its cause. This delayed international recognition and the infusion of much-needed external assistance and investment. Eritrea joined the international and regional systems at a time of great change, to which its own membership was also to contribute. For example, the Organization of African Unity has already modified some of its formerly sacrosanct principles, including the principles of non-intervention in the internal affairs of member states and respect for state sovereignty, and has made a commitment to democratic governance and human rights. During the transitional period that began in 1991, Eritrea has been ruled by the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front, now renamed the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). This has enabled its detractors to claim that the regime is intending on perpetuating its hold on state power. However, the long process of constitution-making has now reached its final stages, and political life based on the provisions of the new constitution is to commence soon after its adoption.

In Ethiopia, following the overthrow of the military dictatorship at the end of May 1991, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of ethnic movements, convened a conference of Peace and Stability in Addis Ababa. The conference adopted a charter committed to ethnic equality and democracy and set up a Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). Soon thereafter, the government proceeded to reorganize the state along ethnic lines. This reorganization was enshrined in the 1995 constitution which, inter alia, created a federal state reflecting the new arrangement and, equally importantly, gave each member of the federation the right to secede. A government was elected in 1995 on the basis of the new constitution.
Ethiopia is in the process of shifting from a thoroughly nationalized command economy to a free market. The new economic policy provides a climate conducive to investment and foresees the privatization of state-owned enterprises. Economic growth since 1991 has taken place at an average rate of 7 per cent of GDP, except for the drought-affected year of 1994. In 1995, it stood at 5.6 per cent. It is for this reason that the IMF has encouraged the government to adhere firmly to its reform programme. Then too, since its liberation in 1991, Eritrea has ceased to be a security concern and a financial drain for Ethiopia. The June 1991 Conference on Peace and Stability recognized Eritrea’s right to self-determination, and Ethiopia was one of the first countries to endorse the result of the Eritrean referendum and recognize the country’s independence in 1993.

In the Sudan, a military regime guided by the National Islamic Front is a cause of grave concern to the other countries of the region. Having enjoyed only brief spells of peace in four decades of independence, the Sudan is still locked in a ruinous civil war in the south. Now the oldest unresolved conflict in Africa, this is the most serious security concern in the region. Sudan is isolated internationally, and was recently included in the list of pariah states by the US for sponsoring and exporting terrorism. Sudan is also at odds with almost all its neighbours. Several of them have accused Khartoum of training, financing and arming groups to subvert them. Eritrea and Uganda have broken diplomatic relations and Ethiopia has downgraded its relations. The Sudanese government stands accused of gross human rights violations, and the United Nations has passed a resolution (2 March 1995) to allow monitoring of abuses even from outside the country. One report concludes the Sudan has been ‘the object of worse (UN) resolutions than South Africa and Israel’ (FBIS: 22).

Djibouti is a very vulnerable state. The relative peace and stability this small country enjoyed since its independence in 1977 has been threatened by the activities of two Afar movements opposed to the Issa-dominated ruling party, the Rassemblement Populaire pour Progress (RPP), which is led by the ailing President Hassan Gouled Aptidon. The smaller of these two, the AROD (Rebirth) party, has campaigned peacefully for greater political participation within the system. The larger Front Pour La Restauration de l’Unite et la Democratie (FRUD), led by former Prime Minister Ahmed Dini, launched an armed rebellion in the northern part of the country in 1991. Other opposition groups joined FRUD to form the Front Uni de l’Opposition Djiboutienne (FUOD) in 1994. A peace accord concluded with a FRUD splinter faction in December 1994 was rejected by other factions, and a tense situation persists with the potential of turning this country into yet another failed state in the region. A fierce intra-Issa struggle for the succession of Hassan Gouled further complicates matters.

Uganda was ravaged by more than two decades of civil war and corrupt government. Since Yowerri Museveni’s National Revolutionary Army swept into power in 1990, efforts are made the create a responsible government. The government has returned property confiscated by previous regimes, and embarked upon an economic programme which encourages private enterprise and provides incentives for investment. A novel political system introduced by the regime, which seeks to do without political parties, has been the target of much criticism. Competitive elections held in May 1996 had three presidential, and hundreds of parliamentary, candidates running as independents. It remains to be seen whether Uganda’s political experiment will lead to a democratic order in that country.

Uganda is still facing severe security problems, with two dissident groups – the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) – challenging
government authority in parts of the country. The former consists of supporters of former President Idi Amin Dada and does not pose a serious threat. Allegedly aided by the Sudan, the LRA poses the more serious challenge.

Kenya is peaceful but potentially explosive. In 1992, the government enacted mild political reforms after western donors had withheld assistance because of the country’s poor human rights record. Two years later, after the donors had decided to resume assistance, the government was being accused of closing ‘all avenues for dissent and independent political activity’; carrying out ‘arbitrary arrests and detention’, employing ‘error tactics’ against the opposition, and shutting down independent NGOs and human rights organizations (Makau Wa Mutua, 1995:54). While the conclusion that Kenya ‘is threatening to join the host of other failed state’ (Lefebvre, 1995) may be overly pessimistic and hasty, this cassandraiac message cannot be totally ignored.

Kenya, too, has its dissident movements. The February 18 Movement (FEM) is allegedly based in Uganda, while the Kenya Islamic Jihad (KIJ) is said to be financed by the Sudan. Neither of these pose a threat to the regime of arap Moi. The same is true of the thoroughly corrupt, ethnically fragmented and utterly disorganized political opposition.

Somalia has ceased to exist as a state since 1991. At present, there seems to be little hope for an early settlement of conflict and the resurrection of the Somali state from the ashes of civil war.

The External Environment

Despite its presumed marginalization as a region of strategic significance, the Horn of Africa remains important to the major powers. Since the end of the cold war, some western powers have been competing for regional influence. For instance, France is cultivating close ties with the Sudan, despite the fact that the latter is a bête noire to other western states. Sudanese assistance in the capture of Illich Ramirez Sanchez (a.k.a. Carlos the Jackal) in Khartoum in mid-1994 was reciprocated with French military collaboration (supplying French satellite photos of Southern Sudanese rebel positions; allowing the Sudanese army to attack southern rebel forces from the Central African Republic) and diplomatic support. France also intervened to block Sudan’s expulsion from the IMF and has offered direct financial assistance to the Sudan.

France’s close relationship with the Sudan is based on three considerations: (1) Sudan’s oil deposits, (2) its strategic position in Central Africa, (3) the National Islamic Front’s close relationship with the Front Islamique (FIS), the rebel movement in Algeria. In 1994, the French oil company, Total, raised the possible renewal of its concession in Southern Sudan with Sudanese officials. France also hopes its links with the Sudanese government might dissuade Sudan from aiding dissident forces in its client states in the region, and might even enlist NIF leader Hassan El-Turabi as mediator in the Algerian civil war.

The end of the cold war and the great changes that followed in global strategic alignments had serious implications for the position of the United States in Africa, particularly its relations with its European allies. The US has never had a special relationship with African, especially sub-Saharan, countries, and that included relations even with the client states of Liberia and Haile-Selassie’s Ethiopia. This was
because the US position was predicated on the global containment of communism, and as such its policies in Africa were not focused on Africa. By contrast, the former colonial powers, notably France, Great Britain, Portugal, Belgium and even Spain continued to have special interests in and relationships with their former colonies. In addition, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany now have major economic stakes in the continent. Thus, the end of the cold war, coupled with the new economic strength of Europe and Japan are threatening the US role in Africa. It is within the framework of new developments in the area, and competition with its old allies, that US foreign policy in the Horn of Africa has evolved lately, particularly since the Clinton Administration launched the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative.

Current US policy emphasizes economic imperatives (free market, access to resources, trade, investment), political values (stability, democratization, human rights), and humanitarianism (assistance to victims of famine and drought, refugees, and victims of civil conflict), rather than military concerns (alliances, defence agreements, military bases) as in the past. This is the focus of the Greater Horn Initiative, which includes Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania as well as the states covered in this article.

This does not mean that the Horn of Africa no longer has any strategic value. After all, the region still commands the Red Sea, the gateway to Africa, the Middle East and West Asia. Accordingly, having branded the Sudan a terrorist state, the US has moved to strengthen the military capability of neighbouring states, especially Eritrea and Ethiopia. This, of course, puts the US on a collision course with France, and one may conclude that the priorities of most European countries and the US in this region are not entirely compatible.

US policy emphasizes ‘involvement’ rather than ‘intervention’, and seeks to bolster ‘an indigenous capacity to act’ rather than military intervention from abroad. Thus, for example, in passing the African Conflict Resolution Act (HR 4541), Congress earmarked financial assistance for the OAU and sub-regional organizations to improve their conflict resolution capabilities. The French, on the other hand, are not loath to intervene politically and militarily in their client states, as shown in the latest incident involving the Central African Republic (May, 1996). All things considered, the US may be at some disadvantage vis-à-vis European countries, especially France.

Regional Patterns of Alignment

Developments in the Horn of Africa have always been influenced by events in the littoral states of the eastern coast of the Red Sea, the Middle East and the Gulf region. Throughout the ages, these states have had close cultural, economic, and political connections with the countries of the Horn. Two regional powers – Israel and Iran – have become prominent actors in the affairs of the Horn, while Egypt and Saudi Arabia continue to play significant roles. Iran, Iraq, Libya and Yemen have also maintained political interest in the region. Iran has become a close ally of the Sudan, and is accused by the US and its regional allies of conspiring to destabilize the secular states through an international Islamic network. This has resulted in a realignment of forces in the region, with Iran and Sudan forming one group, and Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Israel and Uganda another.

Iran’s opportunity to penetrate the region came as a result of two events. The first was the overthrow of Sadiq-Al-Mahdi’s democratically elected government in the Sudan by General Omar El-Bashir in 1989. The second was Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990.
and Sudan's support of the invasion. The US reacted to these events by cutting off military assistance to the Sudan which had replaced Ethiopia as the largest recipient of US military assistance in sub-Saharan Africa, receiving during 1977-1990 more than $1.5bn worth of equipment and training. Iran promised military assistance almost immediately, as did Libya and Iraq. Iran became Sudan's most important ally, in spite of the latter's support of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Iranian-Sudanese relations were consecrated during a visit to Khartoum by Iran's President Hashemi Rafsanjani at the end of 1991. The agreement signed at this meeting is thought to have provided the Sudan with Iranian weapons, about one million tons of oil at concessionary rates, and financial assistance to buy weapons from China. Although denied by the Sudan, it was also reported that the two countries have signed a security pact. This was to become a source of serious worry for both Egypt and Saudi Arabia, since it puts Iran in a position to strike at Saudi Arabia from across the Red Sea and at Egypt from the Nile. Sudan's neighbours feared it was becoming Iran's springboard to their respective territories.

Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Israel are loosely aligned against what they perceive to be an alliance that poses a threat to all of them. Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda are facing threats by dissident forces allegedly based in the Sudan. Saudi Arabia too suspects the Sudan is training, arming and financing subversive elements against it. Although it is not similarly threatened, Israel is concerned by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region. Egypt's concerns, however, are more vital than those of Israel. For Egypt, the Horn of Africa constitutes both its southern flank and controls a large stretch of the Red Sea. Moreover, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda and, to a limited extent, Eritrea are the sources of the Nile upon which Egypt depends for its very existence.

Egypt's relations with the new government of Ethiopia are friendly, and the two countries recently signed a protocol concerning Egypt's access to the Nile Waters. Egypt's relations with Uganda are also good, but relations with Eritrea have had their ups and downs. Its relations with Eritrea notwithstanding, this allows Egypt to focus its attention on the isolation of Sudan and the elimination of Iran's influence in the region. Egypt's objective is to replace the regime in Khartoum with a friendly government.

The 1990s saw Israel's diplomatic re-entry into Africa. Israel now has diplomatic relations with Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, and has again started to supply arms to the rebels in southern Sudan. Eritrea has assumed prominence in Israeli foreign policy, partly because it is determined to remain secular, but mainly because it is in control of 15 per cent of the Red Sea coastline as well as the strategic Dahlak Archipelago and other island clusters. Israel's involvement in the politics of the Horn of Africa has always been guided by the need to prevent the Red Sea from becoming an 'Arab Lake', thereby safeguarding its access to the Indian Ocean. For this reason, an alliance with Ethiopia, which also traditionally felt threatened by the Arabs, is natural. From its independence in 1948 to the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie's government in 1974, these two countries maintained a strategic relationship, even though diplomatic relations between them were broken after the Yom Kippur war. This relationship survived the military dictatorship in Ethiopia, except during 1977-81, and Ethiopia continued to receive military supplies from Israel. In return, Israel was able to arrange the exodus of Ethiopia's Bet Israel (a.k.a. the Falashas or Ethiopian Jews) to Israel.
A cautionary note is in order regarding the alignment of Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Israel. True, they have established a concord aimed at isolating and overthrowing the incumbent Sudanese regime. However, they have few other interests in common, and suspicions of each other's agendas are very much alive and frequently expressed. Egypt and Israel are antagonistically entangled in the Middle East. The Africans are suspicious of Israel's motives and Egypt's alleged expansionist agenda. African readiness to consider self-determination as a possible solution to the conflict in Southern Sudan worries the Egyptians, who do not cherish the idea of the Nile entirely controlled by black Africans.

Inter-State Relations

In the 1990s, under a regime guided by the National Islamic Front, the Sudan has become something of a rogue state in the Horn of Africa. The avowed aspirations of Hassan El-Turabi, NIF leader and the regime's chief ideologue, worries all of Sudan's neighbours. Turabi (Africa Confidential, 1995) reportedly believes that:

Ethiopia will self-destruct in the near future, thus paving the way for the establishment of an Islamic Oromo state and resulting in a chain of Islamic polities extending from Sudan to the Indian Ocean.

To this end, the NIF has sponsored several meetings of the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC), in support of 'oppressed Islamic Communities' throughout the world and particularly in the Horn of Africa.

Egypt has repeatedly accused El-Beshir's government of aiding and abetting radical fundamentalist groups seeking to overthrow its government. Tension between these two countries reached a peak after an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Egyptian President in Addis Ababa in June 1995. The Sudanese regime was accused of involvement in this affair and was condemned by both the UN Security Council and the OAU. This was followed by Egyptian-Sudanese troop skirmishes in the contested Halaib border region, and a threat by the Sudan to withdraw from the 1959 Nile Waters Agreement. This threat elicited a strong response from Egypt, whose Minister of Public Works and Water Resources declared that 'anyone who contemplates this will meet with the severest punishment' (FBIS, 5 July 1994).

The seeds of the Eritrean-Sudanese quarrel were sown in 1989, when the NIF reportedly sponsored the creation of the Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EIJM), despite the fact that the Eritrean People's Liberation Front had long enjoyed Sudanese hospitality. In 1992, only seven months after Eritrea's liberation, the Provisional Eritrean Government reported its forces had engaged Jihad infiltrators from the Sudan. Following the incident, the Eritrean government sent several delegations to Khartoum and apparently secured Sudanese agreement to stop the activities of the EIJM; relations eased for a time. The Sudan facilitated the participation of Eritreans living there in the Eritrean independence referendum of April 1993, and the Sudanese President attended the independence celebrations in Asmara in May 1993. However, relations deteriorated again at the end of the year when more clashes were reported with Jihad groups, this time reportedly supported by Sudanese army units. Eritrea lodged its second complaint to the UN, while Sudan accused Eritrea of sponsoring Sudanese dissidents in Eastern Sudan.

In December 1994 Eritrea severed diplomatic relations with the Sudan and threatened all out war. It also hosted a meeting of Sudanese opposition groups in Asmara in
January 1995, where they sought to forge cooperation in their efforts to overthrow the regime in Khartoum, and formed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Declaring that ‘for Eritrea it was a matter of extreme national interest’ to topple the Sudanese government, President Isaias Afwerki publicly pledged to supply arms to the National Democratic Alliance, with which his government, he said, had established a ‘strategic alliance decided on the basis of a mutual long-term interest’ (*Sudan Democratic Gazette*, February 1996). In turn, Sudan accused Eritrea of violating the OAU Charter by interfering in the internal affairs of a member state, and complained that Isaias’ statement was ‘tantamount to an act of war for which Eritrea is to be held responsible’ (FBIS, 26 June 1995). A mediation offer by the OAU was rejected by Eritrea, whose Foreign Minister actually declared ‘the Eritrean government does not believe in the effectiveness of the OAU’s mechanism for conflict prevention and management’ (*Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 28 October 1995), and expressed his country’s preference for the Inter-Governmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD).

Ethiopian-Sudanese relations got off to a promising start, given the good relations that had existed between the government of Sudan and the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) before 1991. The Sudan Peoples Liberation Army, which had enjoyed Ethiopian hospitality and considerable material support under the military regime, was forced to leave Ethiopia in a hurry when the EPRDF took power. It was thus not surprising that Ethiopia and the Sudan signed a friendship and cooperation agreement on 24 October 1991, only six months after the coming of the EPRDF to power. A Joint Ministerial Consultative Commission met two months later in Khartoum to lay down the principles of cooperation in the economic, political, diplomatic, social and cultural fields. Subsequently, several agreements were concluded between Khartoum and Addis Ababa, and a protocol was signed pledging cooperation in the utilization of the Nile waters.

Relations soured when Ethiopian complained of Sudanese interference in its internal affairs in 1994. The Sudanese Islamic Aid Organization was implicated in a conflict within the Ethiopian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, while the Sudanese government itself was accused of supporting the dissident Beni Shangul Liberation Movement, several rebel Islamic Oromo movements and a Nuer dissident movement. In April 1995, Ethiopia officially charged the Sudan with interference in its internal affairs, and President Meles Zenawi declared Ethiopia ‘will not hesitate to fight to protect its interest’ (*Sudan Democratic Gazette*, April 1995; *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, Vol. 7). Soon thereafter, the Ethiopian government was said to have given permission to the Southern Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM), a splinter faction of the SPLA, to set up training centres and military bases in Gambela, a frontier town in the southwestern border with Sudan (*Sudan Focus*, 15 January 1996). On the other hand, the Sudanese government accused Ethiopia’s army of assaulting Sudanese forces and occupying Sudanese border villages.

In the aftermath of the investigation into the assassination attempt on Egypt’s President Mubarak, Ethiopia accused the Sudan of masterminding the plot and harbouring three of the conspirators. Having failed to have them extradited on the basis of a 1968 extradition agreement between them, Ethiopia brought the matter before the UN Security Council which, in turn, asked the Sudan to carry out the extradition or face sanctions. The Sudan took no action and, in September 1995, Ethiopia closed the Sudanese consulate in Gambela, requested the reduction of Sudanese embassy staff in Addis Ababa, ordered Sudanese NGOs operating in Ethiopia to leave, imposed travel restrictions on Sudanese nationals, cancelled Sudan...
Airways' permission to fly to and from Ethiopia and discontinued Ethiopian Airlines' service to the Sudan.

Sudan's relations with Uganda have not been any better. President Museveni's government has repeatedly accused the Sudan of supporting Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Islamic radicals in Uganda. Sudan, on the other hand, has accused Uganda of intervening militarily on behalf of the SPLA in southern Sudan. Early in 1994, Uganda requested Sudan to withdraw its military monitoring teams that had been allowed to operate in Uganda for many years to assure that Ugandans were not assisting the SPLA. In July 1994, Uganda called upon the UN and the international community to censure the Sudan for its bad neighbour activities. In April 1995, a Libyan attempt to mediate was aborted when, a few days after the signing of an agreement in Tripoli, hundreds of Ugandan civilians were massacred near the northern town of Gulu, and Ugandan security claimed to have discovered a Sudanese plot to murder Museveni. On 23 April 1995, Uganda broke diplomatic relations, claiming its national security was endangered by the activities of Sudanese diplomats in Kampala.

Kenya is the only country enjoying normal relations with the Sudan. Throughout the presidency of Daniel arap Moi, Kenya has managed to maintain good relations with all its neighbours – including Ethiopia under Mengistu Haile-Mariam, Uganda under Idi Amin, Somalia under Siad Barré – and to contain any spillover from the disorders that afflicted them. To this end, Kenya discontinued the little support it was said to have given to the SPLA. It has also managed to resolve any misunderstandings which may have arisen over the issue of support that the southern Sudanese rebel movement had allegedly given to the dissident February 18 Movement in Kenya.

Sudan's relations with Djibouti can be understood only within the context of the idiosyncrasy that has characterized this state's foreign policy recently. Djibouti's unique recognition of Somaliland (Northern Somalia), its vote to lift the UN embargo against Iraq, and the alienation of its neighbours over the Afar rebellion are a few examples. Sudanese influence is credited with the introduction of a mild version of Sharia law in Djibouti, including the closure of bars and banning of alcohol in public places; a decidedly unpopular decision with soldiers of the French Legion. Djibouti's assertiveness in this field cannot have pleased its French patrons.

The Sudan also made brief inroads in Somalia. During 1991-93, General Aideed's faction established good contacts with both Sudan and Iran and secured promises of military and financial assistance. Their common effort to thwart US efforts to set up a client regime in Somalia was aborted when relations cooled after Aideed's decision to cast his fortune with Egypt, Eritrea and Ethiopia and thus distance himself from the Sudan.

Relations among the other states of the Horn of Africa have largely been friendly. Eritrea has maintained exemplary relations with both Ethiopia and Uganda. Its relations with Ethiopia belied the doomsday predictions that separation will lead to perennial hostility and instability in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea has a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Kenya, maintains contact with the major embattled factions in Somalia, and has played a constructive role in IGADD.

During 1991-92, Djibouti's relations with both Eritrea and Ethiopia were flawed with mutual suspicion and some hostility, because the 'Afar question' had become alive in all three countries, and developments in any one of the three countries had grave implications for policies in the other two. Djibouti-Eritrea relations were particularly
tense since Eritrea suspected that both the Djibouti government and the Afar rebel Front pour la Restauration de l'Unite et la Democratie (FRUD) were fanning irredentist sentiments among Eritrean Afars and aiding and an Afar group composed of elements loyal to the overthrown Mengistu regime. Djibouti's relations with Ethiopia were likewise strained. By 1993, however, relations between Djibouti and its neighbours had been normalized, and Ethiopia renewed its Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Djibouti. Unfortunately, Eritrean-Djibouti relations once again took a turn for the worse in 1996, when Djibouti claimed Eritrea had occupied some 420 sq. km of its territory along the sea coast.

Soon after coming to power in 1991, the EPRDF undertook to foster good relations with its neighbours and to promote regional cooperation and integration. It renewed its treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Kenya and signed one with Eritrea. Relations with the latter country were described by an Ethiopian Foreign Ministry publication (Ethioscope) as follows:

\textit{No two countries that have concluded a divorce recently have ever managed to maintain, even build on remaining links, so soon and so successfully after separation, as Eritrea and Ethiopia have. Both the process of separation and subsequent relations have demonstrated the maturity of both and the civility and dignity of the cultural traditions of the people of the region.}

Concerning Ethiopia's relations with Kenya, the same publication declared that

\textit{initial contacts between them were rather cool, but the two countries presently maintain close relations which have ... the potential of providing foundations for effective regional cooperation in all areas, including the maintenance of peace and stability (Ethioscope).}

Ethiopia has also played a prominent role in regional attempts to bring peace in Somalia, particularly after its President was mandated by the OAU in June 1994.

\section*{Regional Organizations and Intra-State Conflicts}

While the Organization of African Unity has always proved eager to play a role in resolving inter-state disputes, it has been unwilling to involve itself in civil conflicts within states, even when it was clearly within the purview of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. For example, it has been content to allow IGADD to play the primary role in attempts to resolve the conflict in the Sudan. IGADD itself was restructured in early 1996 to broaden its scope, and was given a new mandate for conflict prevention and resolution. However, even before the recent restructure, IGADD members had become actively involved in conflict resolution. During 1994-95, they held several meetings during which they, \textit{inter alia}, decided to restructure IGADD, whose previous mandate was limited essentially to issues of cooperation in the fight against drought. The major objective of restructuring was to broaden the organizations mandate in order to provide a mechanism for conflict resolution. By the end of 1995, the charter had been revised and a new Secretary General was appointed from Eritrea in spite of some resistance from the Sudan. The charter also incorporates new provisions which regulate future relations between the organization – now renamed the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) – and foreign parties, particularly western donor countries.

Earlier, an IGADD Committee of Four, comprising Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, was formed to seek an end to the conflict in southern Sudan. The Committee upheld the two basic principles of democratic governance and self-determination. On
the one hand, it recognized the Sudan's rich cultural diversity, and maintained that a truly democratic, secular order can ensure peace and stability in this vast country. On the other, it recognized the unique situation of the people in southern Sudan, and believed their right to self-determination must be upheld. On this basis, it formulated a Declaration of Principles containing four options for resolving the problem of Southern Sudan: (1) full unity on the basis of a democratic constitution; (2) the establishment of a federal state; (3) the establishment of a confederal state; (4) secession. The framers of the Declaration made it clear that the options were listed in a descending order of preference, and that any of the first three options would be applicable only if they were acceptable to all the people of the Sudan, while the fourth was offered only as an option of last resort.

The National Democratic Alliance, the Sudanese opposition abroad, readily endorsed the Declaration. On the other hand, the Sudanese government at first prevaricated, and then went on to argue that the committee's recommendations could not be taken seriously since two of its members - Eritrea and Uganda - had no diplomatic relations with the Sudan, and could not possibly be neutral. It then approached Nigeria to mediate, but after the failure of talks held in Abuja between March 1992 and June 1993, Nigeria lost interest. Subsequently, former US President Carter had a try, and Kenya's President Moi was approached, again without result. In the meantime, the southern Sudanese made it clear they would only negotiate within the framework of the IGADD initiative.

Amare Tekle, Asmara, Eritrea.

Endnote

1. Markakis argues that the struggle for material and social resources 'is the real bone of contention and the root cause of conflict in the Horn, whether it is fought in the name of nation, region, ethos, class or religion'. Lefebvre argues that 'lying at the root of increasing international tensions in the Horn is the Secularist-Islamist conflicts ... which have blown in from the Middle East and North Africa ... Thus the East-West Cold War ... has been replaced by a new Cold War in the Horn of Africa between Secularists and Islamists'. See also Lippman.

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Djibouti: Between War and Peace

Mohamed Kadamy

Tardivement accédée à l'indépendance, en 1977 la République de Djibouti, à l'instar des autres régions de la Corne d'Afrique, vit à son tour une guerre civile depuis octobre 1991. La lutte armée menée par le FRUD (Front pour la Restauration de l'Unité et pour la Démocratie) qui recrute principalement chez les Afars a révélé la fragilité de l'Etat djiboutien ainsi que sa dimension stratégique. La lutte pour la démocratisation et l'équilibre ethnique s'est heurtée à l'intransigeance du régime et à la méfiance de certains États: La France, l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée.

Cet article essaie de retracer l'évolution du régime et la genèse de l'opposition particulièrement de sa composante armée. Après avoir dérivé vers un système de parti unique, le pouvoir de Hassan Gouled a suivi sa propre trajectoire par l'appropriation clanique de tous les secteurs de la vie économique et politique. La radicalisation du régime est-elle inscrite dans sa nature clanique? A l'instar du régime de Siad Barré, le pouvoir djiboutien ne risque-t-il pas de remettre en cause les fondements de l'Etat? L'inquiétude semble gagner certains secteurs du pouvoir, ainsi que certains États comme la France, l'Ethiopie, l'Erythrée. La volonté des forces de l'opposition sera t'elle suffisante pour empêcher l'implosion de ce micro État?

The concurrence of several troublesome events plunged Djibouti into a profound crisis in the first half of the 1990s. The most serious was a revolt against an emerging ethnic dictatorship. It was exacerbated by grave economic problems, and compounded with a ferocious struggle for the succession of President Hassan Gouled who is seriously ill. This article traces the course of events that brought Djibouti to the most dangerous point in its short history.

Colonised by France in 1862, Djibouti became independent in 1977. This tiny state is inhabited by two ethnic groups, the Afars and the Somalis, who are about equal in numbers, and a small Yemenite minority making a total population of less than half a million. Totally bereft of economic resources, Djibouti is host to a large French military base with 4,000 soldiers, and to an equally large expatriate community. The colonial power was interested in the territory from a strategic point of view, and did not develop its infrastructure to any great extent except for the town of Djibouti, its port and airport, and the railway line to Addis Ababa. Nor did France seek to integrate the various ethnic groups. On the contrary, the succession of names given to the territory reflect a colonial policy of manipulation of those groups.
The initial name ‘Colony of Obock’ was supposed to reflect the conditions of the 1862
treaty signed with the Afar Sultan of Raheita, which established the French presence.
France claimed it had bought the territory of Obock, but this claim was contested by
Sultan Dini Mohamed Bourhan, who objected that ‘the property rights to the territory
had not been ceded, because this is strictly impossible under Afar common law. Only
use can be the subject of a transaction; property rights can never change owner. Even
the Sultan cannot change this’ (Lewis, 1955). From that point on, the French policy was
to negate the existence of the Afars – also called Danakils at the time – who were
viewed as an obstacle to further colonial penetration. The second name chosen,
‘French Somali Coast’, reflected this negation. In 1967, the need to combat Somali
irredentism led to the adoption of a third appellation, namely the ‘Afar and Issa
Territory’.

Independence for Djibouti was the result of popular struggles and a compromise
between France and Somalia. However, it did not change the fundamental
relationship between the colonial power and its former colony. In their book, Histoire
de Djibouti (1985), Oberle and Hugot make it clear that France lost little in the deal
with its interests well protected. The choice for leader fell on a leading personality of
the Issa, the dominant Somali clan in Djibouti. Hassan Gouled Aptidon was born in
northern Somalia and had served in the French parliament. Upon becoming
president, his first concern was to clear the political stage of all political organizations
and independent political figures that did not fit into the post-colonial scheme of
things.

Independence without Freedom

The structure of the future state of Djibouti was established at a round table
conference held in Paris in March 1976, chaired by the Secretary of State for the
Overseas Dominions and Overseas Territories. Several political parties from Djibouti
participated in this meeting, but several others boycotted it.

Everything points to the fact that the purpose of this Round Table Conference was to
hurriedly form a government conforming to French wishes, to set up institutions which
would consolidate the absolute power of a single party, and thus to stop any public and
democratic debate on the contents of independence before independence was achieved.

This was the opinion of Mohamed Adoyta, vice-president of the Mouvement
Populaire de Libération (MPL), a predominantly Afar opposition organization (Le
Monde, 4 March 1977). As set out in the plan drawn up at this conference, the ligue
Populaire Africaine pour l'Indépendance (LPAI) took power at independence. This
party was presided over by Hassan Gouled, and the Issa played a dominant role in it.
Nevertheless, it was also supported by some influential Afars, like Ahmed Dini who
became secretary general of the party, and Mohammed Ahmed Isse (Sheiko). With
French support, Hassan Gouled quickly transformed this party’s monopoly of power
into a clan seizure of power.

One month after independence, the new government set about restricting liberties:
meetings in public places were prohibited, electoral meetings on a national scale were
banned, democratic rights gained on the eve of independence were curtailed, and the
independent press was harassed. The MPL was dissolved in December 1977, and
more than 60 junior officers suspected of favouring it were dismissed from the army.
The Somali irredentist Front de Liberation de la Côte Somaliele (FLCS) was neutralised
by assassinating some of its leaders. Other radical groups, including the left wing of the ruling LPAI, were imprisoned. The seal on the tribalisation of the LPAI was set by the resignation at the end of 1977 of Ahmed Dini, an Afar founder of the party and Djibouti’s first prime minister. He has been in office only a few months, and protested against what he called a tribal coup d’etat. These measures eliminated serious opposition and transformed the L.P.A.I., now reduced to its Issa component, into a de facto single party which changed its name to Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progress (RPP). Its monopoly status was legalized by a 1981 law that made Djibouti a one-party state. The ethnic takeover of state institutions was accompanied by increasing repression, attested to by reports from Amnesty International.

By 1979, Antoine Compte, a lawyer who defended victims of repression in Djibouti, concluded an article entitled ‘Djibouti: Independence without Freedom’, in Le Monde Diplomatique (December, 1979) with the words:

The republic is two years old, but in Djibouti history is repeating itself and independence with democratic respect for the rights of different ethnic groups is still, more than ever before, a pressing issue.

The hardening of the regime was significantly aided by political and economic support from France and some Arab states – Saudi Arabia and Iraq among them. France helped consolidate the regime’s authoritarian and repressive tendencies by taking financial responsibility for the army and police between 1977 and 1985. The effectiveness of foreign aid was undermined by corruption and fund diversion at the highest levels of the state apparatus for the benefit of the president’s clan, while the rest of the country was neglected. External aid and alliances were also used against those the regime labelled the internal enemy. Referring mainly to Afars, this label could, when circumstances required, be stretched to cover other Somali clans, like the Gadabursi and Ishaq, as well.

Resistance and the Struggle for Democracy

Resistance to repression and the struggle for democracy took several forms. Contrary to common opinion, the battle for democracy in Africa did not start after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Long before then, African patriots were imprisoned, tortured and killed because they claimed the right to participate in the political life of their country. What changed after the collapse of communist regimes in the East were Western perceptions and public opinion. African struggles could thereafter be called ‘democratic’ as opposed to tribal or clan conflicts. People in Djibouti were engaged in political and military resistance from the very beginning of Hassan Gouled’s dictatorship.

Whereas the anti-colonial struggle was mainly waged by the Somali section of the population, the struggle for democracy in Djibouti is mainly the work of Afars. Writing in Jeune Afrique (27 November to 3 December 1992, No. 1613), Marc Yared explained the emergence of the armed resistance movement thus:

Even though the feudal behaviour of those in power has alienated certain groups from the dominant Issa community itself, if you want to find the spearhead of the armed resistance which has just been revealed in broad daylight you must look to the Afar community.

The Afar hard core, which provided the resistance with its most experienced militants, took form in December 1975, under the name of the Mouvement Populaire
de Libération (MPL), which later became Front Démocratique de Libération de Djibouti (FDLD). Another writer, Roland Marchal, whose views are often close to those of the French Foreign Ministry, has traced the line of descent from the MPL to the FDLD and finally to the Front pour la Restauration de l’Unité et de la Démocratie (FRUD). Again, in *Politique Internationale* (Autumn, 1993), under the name of Gabriel Lamarche, Marchal wrote: 'The influence of militants close to the former Popular Liberation Movement, created during the struggle for independence in 1975, was noticeable in the three groups' which together formed FRUD in 1991.

The appearance of the MPL marked an important point in the political history of Djibouti. It became the forum in which young Afars who opposed the colonial administration could express themselves. Its audience was limited to Afar circles, and this was a major handicap. This was the result of a historical process which gave rise to ethnic polarisation. The Somalis and Afars of Djibouti became involved in modern politics quite late, starting to organise themselves into clubs from 1950 onwards. At the outset, attempts were made to form multi-ethnic organisations. Some of the people who were to make their mark in the political life of Djibouti formed the Dankalie/Somali Youth Club, only for it to split into the Afar Club and the Somali Club in 1952. When the Loi Cadre came into force in 1952 giving the French African colonies restricted autonomy, two multi-ethnic coalitions were formed, but hardly lasted beyond the first elections in 1957. Henceforth, Somalis and Afars organised themselves separately, and the organisational forms they chosen differed. The Somalis were influenced by the Somali Youth League based in Mogadisho, which called for Somali independence and unity. After Somalia became independent in 1960, its government undertook to mobilise the Somalis in Djibouti in the struggle for Greater Somalia, and exercised control over all Somali movements in the French colony which the nationalists called the Somali Coast.

Mogadisho kept the Front de Libération de la Côte Somaliele the Somali irredentist organization in Djibouti - in a tight grip, harassing its leaders and preventing it from developing its own dynamism. The Popular Movement Party (PMP), a Somali group which instigated the anti-colonial events of 1966-67, was never able to get past the stage of being a populist rallying point, and did not survive after its dissolution in July 1967 by a French government decree. And the LPAI, which took up the role of the PMP, never got past the stage of patronage politics. After Mogadisho had done its best to emasculate the Somali political forces in Djibouti, the Hassan Gouled regime in Djibouti itself took over the task of controlling political activity among the Somalis, using both persuasion and repression, as well as clan manipulation.

The Afars, who were largely nomadic, began to organize later. In 1963, a number of low ranking employees created the Union Afar Démocratique (UDA), which was followed by a burgeoning of cultural and educational associations - the modern equivalents of the age-group sets which are still found in rural Araf areas. The MPL, which was organized clandestinely in 1974, became official in 1975. While it tried to publicize its programme in the different sectors of society in Djibouti, its audience was limited to the Araf community because of the hostility of Somali elites under the influence of the regime in Somalia, or the LPAI, or the colonial administration.

The MPL emerged from a millieu formed by secondary school students, people who studied in France and Egypt, and groups formed to organize evening classes, literacy campaigns, musical and theatrical events. It became established in the capital where it organised the dockers, and in the interior among the nomadic Araf who are famous for their aggressiveness. In a political climate dominated by personalities, two of the
MPL’s innovations were to introduce the idea of a party with a programme, and to create structures based on the principles of democratic centralism. The movement’s leaders and cadres were imbued with anti-colonial ideologies, and much influenced by the Vietnamese struggle and the African liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. The presence in Djibouti of Afar refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea helped the MPL’s cadres to become aware of social and political realities in the region. Marc Yared (1991) wrote:

> the creation of a dynamic women’s section in a social environment with an extremely conservative reputation was one of the most spectacular successes of the movement in the seventies.

The revolutionary upheavals in Ethiopia and the Eritrean liberation struggle also influenced the MPL. After calling for a public debate on the contents of independence and the French military presence, the MPL also proposed a regional project. In a bulletin (Avant Garde 3, 24 February 1976), the MPL posed the national question and the meaning of the struggle for independence within the context of the Federation of the Horn of Africa.

Supported by a France anxious for its military installation, the regime in Djibouti accused the MPL of organizing the bombing at the Palmier en Zinc café on 15 December 1977, and dissolved the party. The MPL did not disappear. Although weakened in the capital where its office holders and militants were hard hit by repression, it was able to enlarge its social base and profited from the massive repression launched against the Afars. In May 1979, it joined another faction named Union Nationale pour l’Indépendance to form the Front Democratique de la Libération de Djibouti (FDLD), whose purpose was to fight for ‘a real improvement in the lot of the popular masses and against any form of discrimination, favouritism or nepotism’. The FDLD carried out several attacks against government troops, and the regime responded by mounting operations against the civilian population thus digging a deeper divide between the Issa dominated government and the Afar community.

At its congress in 1982, profiting from a period of calm, the FDLD changed its strategy deciding that a large number of its members could go back to the capital and other towns. However, the government took a hard line and some of the FDLD leaders were arrested, some cadres were tortured, and all members of the FDLD were ostracised: they were not integrated into the police or the army and were not employed in the state sector. All these militants who had been trained in guerilla warfare and who were now marginalised in society, were to become the spearhead of a new wave of opposition to the established order.

The Rebirth of Opposition and the Emergence of the FRUD

One part of the FDLD and some of its leaders, including its president, Mohamed Adoyta, continued their political activities underground. A fresh impulse in the struggle against the government came from hardened militants, certain local personalities in Djibouti, and intellectuals in France, all of whom strove to establish a new opposition on a wide social base. They effected a reconciliation between prominent figures in the opposition, and tried to approach Issa and Gadabursi opposition groups. Coordination between these groups was implemented within the framework of the Union des Mouvements Démocratiques (UMD), which announced its formation in March 1990.
The regime raised the political tension in January 1991, by accusing the Afars of plotting against the state, and imprisoned prominent personalities, cadres and members of the FDLD. Repression furnished hundreds of people with added reasons for joining the guerrilla groups forming in the north and southwest of the country. From June 1991 onwards, more and more young people from Arhiba, Tadjourah, Dikhil, Yoboki and Obock joined the guerrilla army. The unity of the movement was forged in the bush, and FRUD was created in August 1991 at Bahlo in northern Djibouti near the Ethiopian frontier. It was the product of the fusion of three political movements: the Front Populaire pour le Restauration du Loi et de l'Equalite (FRDE), the Front de la Resistance Patriotique de Djibouti (FRPD), and the Action pour la Revision de l'Ordre a Djibouti (AROD). In fact, all three had been created by the FDLD to mobilize people in various social sectors. The FDLD continued to lead a shadowy existence in Djibouti and abroad. Its president, Mohamed Adoyta, was named president of FRUD and was to play a major role in maintaining cohesion and unity. With only two exception, the leaders of FRUD were former members of FDLD.

FRUD established a military force in the north and southwest regions where Afars live, and initially intended to exert political pressure whilst avoiding bloodshed. Nevertheless, hostilities soon commenced. On 10 October 1991, government forces launched an offensive at Ab'a in the southwest. Two days later, FRUD counter-attacked in the north of Djibouti and in several months of fighting it succeeded in gaining control of most of the Afar countryside ensuring the enlargement of the organization. As FRUD advanced and the regime repressed the civilians, volunteers flocked by thousands to FRUD. Its political cadres, who were themselves engaged in military operations, found it difficult to organise the recruits. The vastness of the territory under its control, and the large numbers of civilians subject to an economic and medical blockade, also created administrative problems for FRUD.

FRUD is the historical continuation of the MPL and FDLD movements, and inherited the ideas and activists who have figured in the political history of Djibouti since independence. Veteran political personalities brought their experience with them. The case of Ahmed Dini, a former Prime Minister (1977-78), is typical. He acted as spokesperson of FRUD before becoming its president in August 1992. He helped FRUD to achieve diplomatic success, and to create a synthesis between the fighting force and its civilian supporters. FRUD strategy aimed to create a balance of force sufficient to make the regime accept democracy and ethnic balance. In July 1993, the FRUD information bulletin, *Aysseno* explained:

> Political ostracism, the increase in inequality, and the slide towards a military and police state which have characterised the fifteen years of Gouled's 'reign of calm', bear witness to the fact that rebellion was in the end the only means of conquering the redoubt of democracy.

In August 1991, FRUD set out the three main planks of its political platform: 'Democracy, Equality and Justice'. *Aysseno* (no. 1) elaborated these concepts a little more:

> Democracy is not the ersatz presented by the Gouled dictatorship, but real participation by citizens in the life of the nation via competitive expression of points of view which will necessarily be plural (above all when there are several co-existing communities). Equality consists in not considering the different sectors of the administration as a series of profit centres reserved for different clans. Justice must allow the great majority of the national territory to profit from development.
In a document of 6 April 1992 entitled ‘The FRUD proposals for a peaceful solution to the political crisis in the Republic of Djibouti’ and submitted to heads of state in the region meeting in Addis Ababa, the FRUD set out the following proposals: A ceasefire followed by negotiations; creation of a transitional government for a two-year term charged with the tasks of restoring ethnic balance in the administration, the army and the police, drawing up new electoral registers, and drafting a national constitution which guarantees civil liberties. These proposals were adopted by all the opposition movements during the conference of the Front Uni de l’Opposition Djiboutienne (FUOD) held in Paris on 20 June 1992.

It is legitimate to ask if FRUD is simply an expression of Afar identity or an important factor in the struggle for democracy. Ethnic type demands are more clearly articulated in the FRUD programme than they were in those of the MPL and the FDLD. Nevertheless, this can be explained by the increasing exclusion of the Afars from the political and economic life of the country. FRUD reflects the state of consciousness and the organisation of the Afar community in Djibouti; low status employees, workers, dockers, educated young people, members of associations, nomads and women. Ethnic balance within the state can only be restored in a democratic context. The fact that this programme has been adopted by the whole of the opposition tends to moderate its ethnic character.

The Radicalisation of the Regime

The Gouled regime, which thought it had ensured itself a permanent monopoly of power, was greatly surprised by the turn of events. It did not realise the extent of popular discontent or the determination of its opponents. It contemptuously rejected a proposal to create a multi-party state which Mohamed Ahmed Isse (Cheiko) presented to the party’s central committee on 17 March 1991 instead affirming that ‘given the specific nature of the country, for the foreseeable future the RPP will remain the only political organisation which can guarantee national unity, stability and development’. When therebels offered a dialogue, the regime replied by hardening its position. It declared a general mobilisation, called up all the Issa men, sent out a call to Somalis outside Djibouti, and internationalised the conflict. Neither the general mobilisation nor the solidarity of the Issas beyond the frontiers could contain FRUD operations. When he became aware of the mass support FRUD enjoyed among the Afars – 13 deputies in his regime defected to the opposition – Hassan Gouled and his circle called on all Somalis to confront the danger of the Afar menace. The non-Issa Somalis did not fall over themselves to save the regime. After fifteen years of a repressive government they welcomed a more open form of politics.

At this point, the government started to recruit in Somalia and Ethiopia under the pretext of Somali solidarity, but also by offering material advantages and the acquisition of Djibouti nationality. Article 13 of law 200 voted by the national assembly on 24 October 1991 provides for automatic acquisition of Djibouti nationality by any foreigner recruited into the army or the security force. In Le Monde Diplomatique (24 October 1994), Gerard Prunier wrote:

numerous mercenaries have been recruited: Issas from Somaliland, survivors from the United Somali Front adventure in 1991, Ethiopian Issas from the Dire Dawa, Hawiye Agbal (clansmen from the south) ‘provided’ by ‘president’ Ali Mahdi who appreciates the support given by the Djibouti government to his cause, and even Digil or Wa Gosha adventurers who had at some point been made prisoners in the war of Somaliland.
The government of Djibouti was willing to use any means. It called on France to apply the defence treaty on the pretext of an invasion by foreigners. At a regional level it trumpeted the menace of a 'greater Afar land'.

Largely due to the position taken by Pierre Joxe, French minister of defence at the Time, France refused to intervene directly. Nevertheless it contributed in weakening the guerrillas in several ways. It used all its influence to stop any humanitarian aid reaching civilians under the protection of the FRUD who were already suffering from an economic and medical blockade mounted by the government of Djibouti and reinforced by Eritrea and Ethiopia. The suffering of civilians was a crucial factor in persuading the opposition to accept the separation of the warring parties by French troops in February 1992. The army of Djibouti profited from this respite to acquire new arms and increase its strength fivefold.

The deputy commander of the French military contingent at Djibouti, Colonel Gandoli, helped the army of Djibouti with information about FRUD's positions and assisted in planning operations. Strengthened by this support, in July 1993 government troops went on the offensive and took Randa and Assagueila. FRUD was not equipped for conventional warfare and could not resist this coalition of forces. It was forced to retreat to the mountains of Mabla, Dalha and Dakka.

The French government was surprised by the magnitude of the conflict, despite the fact that specialists on the region had warned French officials ever since 1985. In a study published in 1986, the Foundation for National Defence Studies commented on the risks of an uprising in Djibouti:

> The hostility between Afars and Issas is one of the most serious factors leading to instability in the Republic of Djibouti. This factor is reinforced by the overwhelming domination wielded by the Issas since independence and their virtual monopoly in the higher levels of the administration and the government even though the Afars inhabit most of the country and were more numerous for a long time.

It should be noted at this point that many of the Issas in Djibouti come originally from former British Somaliland and, even more, from Ethiopia.

> The fact that a rebellion of this size has happened in a country described as an 'oasis of peace' is a complete repudiation of France's unqualified support for the regime in Djibouti since independence. Alain Vivien, secretary of state for foreign affairs, who tried to promote negotiations in February 1992, failed because of the interference by Jean Christophe Mitterand, who favoured total support for Hassan Gouled.

This inconsistency has damaged French credibility in Djibouti and the region. After applying very moderate pressure for change, France has been content with patching up a facade to make the dictatorship presentable. A constitution improvised by the regime and adopted in December 1992 introduced a multi-party state limited to four parties. Three parties were already registered: the government party, and two opposition parties. The latter were created by politicians who had detached themselves from the regime: Aden Robleh Awaleh, president of the Parti Nationale Démocratique (PND), and Mohamed DjamaElabé, president of the Parti de Renouveau Démocratique (PRD). The legislative elections held in December 1992 resulted in the ruling RPP taking all the seats, and Hassan Gouled was elected president of the republic for the third time in May 1993. The elections took place in the one-third of the territory not under FRUD control and, according to observers, were
marked by widespread fraud. A report issued by the Afro-American Institute on 29 March 1993 stated that

in the light of the effective boycott organised by the Afars and the fact that one of the three political parties did not take part, these elections cannot be seen as a representative reflection of the will of the people of Djibouti.

Following the elections and the successful military offensive, the government encouraged the emergence of a dissident faction within the armed rebellion, and concluded a peace treaty with it on 24 December 1994.

Though this agreement received unprecedented media support, it secures few concessions from the regime and provides little hope for meaningful political change. The government refused to alter the basic law which endorsed its dictatorial practices, and the dissident faction accepted the constitution, the laws, and the current arrangements in the Republic of Djibouti. Under these conditions, the entry into the government of two leaders from the dissident FRUD faction has not really changed the way the regime operates, and these men are destined to fulfil the same role as their predecessors. This faction was a minority in FRUD. Its emergence was favoured by a lack of coordination between the different guerilla groups in the north and south. Ougouru Kiflé, one of the military commanders, led the faction and was joined by some middle ranking cadres. Having joined the government, Ougouru Kiflé's supporters got a few administrative posts and some four hundred joined the government army. However, the situation in the country had not changed and while large battles are not reported, the army presence in Afar areas is intimidating and repression continues unabated. FRUD tried to clarify the situation during its second congress (16-21 September 1994). It condemned the historical and political error of the supporters of Ougouru Kiflé, and confirmed the historic leaders of the FRUD in their positions: Ahmed Dini as president and Mohamed Adoyta as vice-president. Nevertheless, the split created confusion, weakened the democratic forces, and granted the regime relief from diplomatic pressure from abroad.

The Regional Consequences of the Crisis in Djibouti

Ethiopia and Eritrea became involved in the civil war in Djibouti. At first they were hostile to FRUD, but later they made attempts to find political solutions to the crisis. These two states, both of which have large Afar populations within their borders, were surprised by initial success of FRUD and panicked at the prospect of a reversal in the balance of power in Djibouti so much so, that their clumsy initial reactions appeared very hostile to the Afars. Ethiopia called for French intervention against the FRUD, and went so far as to arrest leading figures of FRUD in October 1991.

Eritrea and Ethiopia reinforced the economic and medical blockade the government of Djibouti imposed on Afar civilians. They deployed forces along the border with Djibouti (1,500 Eritrean soldiers and 1500 Ethiopian soldiers), thus exerting considerable pressure to the rear of the rebels. Eritrean radio broadcast commentaries against FRUD's struggle, stigmatising it as a project to establish a 'Greater Afar' state. In its Arabic language programme (24 November 1991) reported in La Lettre de l'Océan Indien (3 December 1991), it accused 'certain powers' of promoting 'the setting up of a greater Afar State'. This affair caused difficulties within the Eritrean government itself, because some of its members were irritated by the anti-Afar direction bias of its policy. Eritrean Afars in general were very critical of their government's attitude, and
some Eritrean intellectuals thought it their duty to convey this feeling to president Isaias Afwerki.

Such a hue and cry by regimes which had themselves gained power through armed struggle can only be explained by their internal problems. Neither has properly settled its own Afar problem, and neither understood the nature of FRUD. Even though the Afar problems in Eritrea and Ethiopia are closely related, Djibouti has always been a separate case. The Afars in Djibouti have never called for the establishment of an Afar state, either in their writings or in practice.

The two neighbouring states could not maintain a position that had become uncomfortable both in regional and internal terms. Other states in the region had taken a neutral stand, and were pushing the warring parties in Djibouti towards negotiations. Yemen distinguished itself by refusing to apply the blockade on food supplies to civilians in Djibouti, and received a delegation from FRUD. Sudan and Egypt offered to use their influence to resolve the problem. Even the leaders of the emerging state of Somaliland advised Hassan Gouled to look for a political solution. In Ethiopia, the Afar and Oromo regions did not share the government's views on FRUD, and according to some sources there were differences of opinion also within the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF).

Eritrea and Ethiopia changed their positions from April 1992 onwards, and actively promoted a peaceful solution to the crisis. They asked FRUD and the government to find grounds for compromise, as the crisis could have repercussions for the stability of Ethiopia and Eritrea. During an official visit to Djibouti on 18 December 1993, Isaias Afwerki demanded the government stop its repression of Afar civilians, and advised to seek negotiations. Eritrea did not grant refugee status to the 5000 people who fled from Djibouti, whereas Ethiopia accorded refugee status to 20,000 refugees.

Conclusion

Djibouti's survival depends on the ability of this mini-state to satisfy the dual requirements of democracy and ethnic unity. The regime installed in 1977 proved itself to be incapable of safeguarding democracy and uniting the population. The emergence of FRUD and the civil war demonstrated the government's failure. The regime's final bid in handling the crisis was to try to set the Somalis against the Afars. However, intra-clan divisions prevented it from playing the Somali solidarity card successfully.

For its part, FRUD tried to leave room for compromise by handling the crisis in a moderate way. It spared the lives of Somali civilians, treated prisoners of war humanely, and created the Front Uni de l'Opposition Djiboutienne (FUOD.), a grouping of organisations from all the ethnic groups. Thanks to the responsibility shown by both the military and civilian opposition, a descent into chaos on the Somali model was avoided. Peaceful cohabitation of Afars and Somalis in Djibouti can have beneficial effects on the whole of the Horn of Africa, whereas the collapse of this mini-state may well destabilise Ethiopia, Somaliland and Eritrea. The struggle led by FRUD, for which the Afars of Ethiopia and Eritrea feel a great deal of sympathy, will ultimately have consequences for those countries; not, as their leaders fear, in terms of territorial split, but in terms of a greater desire of the part of the Afars to participate in government.
Though Afar-Somali rivalries could well be contained by responsible and moderate policies the same cannot be said of the struggle for the succession to Hassan Gouled who is old and seriously ill. Prominent figures in his regime are already engaged in ruthless competition which risk provoking clashes among Issa sub-clans. The social base of the regime has been further eroded by the defection of two important figures. In a statement issued on 25 May 1966, Ismael Gueddi, director of the Presidential Cabinet, and Moumin Bahdon Farah, secretary general of the RPP, called for unity of all the people of Djibouti to oppose oppression by a dictatorship.

Mohamed Kadamy, Montmirail, France. Translated by Phil Grantham, Sheffield, UK.

Bibliography


Tribe and Religion in the Sudan

Mahmud El Zain

The purpose of this article is to depict a process of 'tribal' reproduction and to describe the manifestation of this phenomenon in the current political system of Sudan. It focuses on 'tribal' structures, rather than other 'traditional' structures in Sudanese society. A 'tribal' logic pervades political practice in Sudan since the Turkish invasion in 1821, and politics in this country seems unworkable without the 'tribal' factor. Colonial rule with its peculiar politics, independence rule with its nation-building ideology, and now Islamic fundamentalism with a universalist ideology, they all have preserved in one way or another the 'tribal' element as an essential component of the political system. A critical discourse of this system has to deconstruct this component.

This article examines the shifts in the nature of the 'tribal' in the colonial and post-colonial contexts, and shows how it has become involved in the present regime's strategy of mobilization. It also describes how this factor mediates relations of domination/subordination, both at the national level – north versus south – and the local level. Finally, a case study of the Dar Hamid tribe is used to illustrate the manner in which the 'tribal' has dominated the ethnic politics of the present Sudanese regime. In contrast to the primordial approach to ethnicity, the role of elites in reviving and exploiting 'tribalism' is emphasized. The thesis of the article is that 'tribalism' in many instances hides behind a secular facade, and in others it appears in a religious guise. Scrutinizing its history therefore is necessary for understanding the current situation.

Tribe in the History of Sudan

The Funj Sultanate emerged around the year 1504 through an alliance of the Funj and the Arabs. The nature of this alliance and the way it has been portrayed historically illuminates the capacity of 'tribalism' to negotiate and contest with other structures in the current politics in Sudan. Written history emphasizes the moment of the alliance and essentializes the Arab party to the extent that many other factors are ignored. It is predominantly the history of the Arab alliance with the Funj, and the subsequent history of the Funj Islamic Sultanate in which 'Islamic' coincides with 'Arab' that has been written. Historical continuity in terms of social formation and politics is traced to this Arab-Islamic foundation, particularly the Arab tribe. Tribalism in Sudan derives its existence from that essentialization and the process of reproduction related to it. The tribe and its ideology are perceived as permanent and unchanging. The tribe is not seen as a structure affected by other structures in the same way as it affects them. The ideological reading of this history attributes an eternal nature to the 'tribe', which coincides with the eternity of religion and God.
The alliance between the Funj and the Arabs established a political and administrative system based on the division of power between the Funj kings in Sinnar and the tribal leaders in their territories. This is important as it represents a system in which Africans were rulers and Arabs were subalterns. Under this system, the ‘tribes’ functioned as units of local self-government. The Funj kingdom can be considered a confederal, rather than a centralized, state. In this ‘confederalism’ another ideology emerged to establish new relationships transcending the ideological and geographical boundaries of tribes. This ideology is Sufism.

With the appearance of Sufism as a religious and social movement transcending tribal boundaries, we can see an attempt to forge unity at the ideological level. A Sudanese historian notes that under the umbrella of Sufism, stability and a sense of unity and integration was realized by the peoples who lived in the territory of the Funj kingdom, and it was sustained for a considerable part of the reign of the Funj kingdom that lasted for three centuries. Almost all the subjects of the Funj kingdom were involved in Sufi sects, and it was rare to find any who were not influenced by Sufism in their life (Hassan, 1985:11). We can cite as evidence that Sufism was starting to replace tribal ideologies the fact that Sufi shaykhs began to replace tribal leaders in dealing local issues. Moreover, Sufism succeeded in settling its own differences with the parallel juristic culture and finally assimilated it. Sufism continued to develop within its own internal logic and in its relation to the tribal ideology. This development was abruptly halted by the Turkish invasion of 1821.

Early on, trade was controlled by the king in both the Funj and Fur kingdoms. In a later stage, trade generated a commercial class which strove to free itself from the Sultan’s grasp (Al-Gaddal, 1986:25). At this time, Sufi ideology reflected a concern with the principles and procedures involved in the commercial transactions (Hassan, 1985:6). It was the tribal ideology which gave the Sultan the right to monopolize trade, and also gave the tribes the right to impose taxes on caravans, even to rob them. It is in this moment of transformation, which has a particular meaning for our discussion, that the Turks invaded and occupied Sudan. Had the invasion not succeeded, the political process would have evolved differently, and competing political discourses would have a different logic. Thus, the possibility of development in a certain direction in Sudan was distorted by the requirements of development in Egypt and Britain. The Turkish invasion was the launching moment for a new political system in Sudan, which was characteristically centralized. The centralization process did not abolish the ‘tribal’ structures and the shaykhs (tribal leaders) as principals; in fact it deformed them. O’Brien (1979:139) writes:

Under the greater central authority of the late Funj Kingdom (eighteenth century) and the Turko-Egyptian regime (1822-1884), the position of the shaykhs changed in ways that fundamentally altered the structure of the relations between the power centres. Shaykhs took on the added role of representative of an outside power – the central government authority in the ‘tribe’. Their tribal authority and power thereby gained a limited degree of freedom from the consent of the governed. In other words, the structure and the nature of the groupings (tribes) were modified, distorted and transformed. Instead of an ‘original’ flexible organization of a core group that represented a ‘power centre’ to which followers were attracted, there started to emerge more stable power centres to which attachment became involuntary.

The centrism of Turkish rule reflected negatively on the development of Sufi sects. It terminated their autonomy and compelled them to adopt to the needs of efficient
administration. Political centrism affected the nature of the Sufi establishment, placing it within the state apparatus, and using it for the realization of its interests.

Tribal institutions were also linked to the new system of rule. The logic of this system was incompatible with the nature of the tribe, an institution that expressed the autonomy of pastoral societies. The process of centralization excluded non-cooperative tribal leaders (Al-Gaddal, 1985:9-10), and subjected some tribes to enslavement. Since then, the centralized state has repressively bound together culturally different entities and subjected them to discriminatory policies. The state backed one group against another, empowering one and depriving another. Thus, Turkish rule terminated the 'confederalism' of the Funj.

The British colonization of Sudan can be considered an extension to the Turkish colonization. In fact, it was referred to by the British and the Egyptians as the 're-conquest of the Sudan' (Abdel Rahim, 1986:25). One difference between Turkish and British rule is that the latter accelerated trends that were set in motion by the former. It is in the second colonial period that the tribe became 'tribalist', the sect became 'sectarianist', and culture became a source of domination and racism.

The designation of 'closed districts', the Southern Policy of isolating that region, and similar restrictive laws of the colonial administration in the North are the roots of today's political calamities. It is in this context that present-day dualities of Muslim-Christian, Arab-African, North-South, attain their contemporary meaning (Hurreiz and Abdel Salam, 1989:89-90). To counteract an emerging nationalist movement, the colonial administration issued numerous ordinances in 1919, 1921 and 1926 to strengthen the position of tribal leaders (El Zain, 1987:17-23), on the grounds that they were the only important sector of society posing no threat to the colonial system. Tribal leaders were promoted as a rival force to the sectarian leaders and the nationalist intelligentsia. They were expected to insulate rural dwellers from the political aspirations of the townsmen. It was also hoped to turn some of the tribal leaders into national personalities capable of negotiating for the people of Sudan. These are the dynamics which promoted tribalism and institutionalized it within the power relations of the colonial system.

The policy of 'divide and rule' created geographical and psychological boundaries separating and isolating the different Sudanese entities. The logic of dividing was not confined to the 'tribal' entities, but extended to their constituent clans and lineages. Thus, the relationship British/natives at the national level is manifested at the local level in the relationship between tribal leader/clan leader and clan leader/clansman. Another hierarchy consisted of collaborator tribes, non-collaborators, and rebels. This new pattern of power relations radically transformed the traditional tribal systems, and a new era of tribal wars had started by the time these ordinances were carried out. Ultimately, this led to the appearance of native collaborators who ruled on behalf of the British and who became part of the elite group (Bakheit, 1965:24-5).

Tribalism and sectarianism separated the 'enlightened' sector of society, which perceived independence in a way that threatened the vested interests of sectarian and tribal leaders. The colonial administration sought to legitimize and essentialize the position of traditional leaders. In 1919, a delegation of these leaders was sent to London to express their loyalty to the King of Britain. That moment was capitalized by the colonial administration to declare that only traditional leaders had the right to represent the Sudanese people. Capitalizing on their 'noble origins' and their alliance with the colonial power, the traditional leadership agitated their followers against the
nationalist movement. They referred to the leaders of the movement as people-of-no-origin and no-account, who had no right to speak for their social superiors. Encouraged by the colonialists, this discourse confused people, and created a sense of deprivation and hatred that were internalized in the nationalist consciousness. It not only delayed independence and accelerated exploitation and distortion, but also became the paradigm which governs power relations in Sudanese politics today.

Tribalism and sectarianism are the two pillars of the Sudanese political system. Attempts to eliminate tribalism in 1965 and 1971, serious though they were, failed because they did not consider the political economy of the tribe. They were also handicapped by a perception of the tribe as an isolated entity, and the assumption that the liquidation of tribal rule (native administration) would be enough to disengage tribalism from the network of power. However, tribalism had penetrated all sites of power. It continued to influence politics even after the native administration system was dissolved, and in recent years it rivals sectarianism for predominance.

The Dar Hamid Tribe and the Policy of Amalgamation

The Dar Hamid tribe lives in northern Sudan, in Bara province, North Kurdufan. It was one of the first tribes in which the British applied their policy of 'Tribal Amalgamation'. Dar Hamid is composed of more than thirteen clans: Hababeen, Nawaahya, Farahaana, Maramra, Awaad Egoi, Beni Jarraar, Majaaneen, Jiledaat, Areefiya, Baza'aa, Zayadiyya, Ma'aalya, and others. All are sedentary agropastoralists, except for the Ma'aalya, a nomad clan which lives in South Kurdufan, far away from the Dar Hamid homeland. The composition of this tribe shows a variety of ethnic entities which were amalgamated and labelled as Dar Hamid. It is not astonishing, therefore, to find that some clans within this tribe also exist as distinct tribes elsewhere in the Sudan. The Baza'aa and the Zayadiyya, for example, are well known tribes living elsewhere in Western Sudan. It is interesting that the name Dar Hamid refers to the territory rather than to a tribe. Dar literally means homeland. There is considerable evidence to show that some of the Dar Hamid clans were once de-tribalized groups, subjects of the Keira and Musaba'aat kingdoms.

Administrative labelling in the 1920s and 1930s combined the geographical with the cultural and the ideological. The process was not only administratively efficient, but also beneficial for the tribal elites to whom the power of the tribe was an essential resource for bargaining with the colonial administration. Experience shows that the bigger the tribe was, the more powerful its leaders were, and the better they managed local affairs.

The logic of amalgamation extended to the intra-clan level. The Hababeen clan, for example, is amazingly heterogeneous. It is composed of Hababeen, Zaghaawa, Fellaata, and Abu Ammaar. The last three can in no sense be classified as Dar Hamid. The Zaghaawa are from the tribe of the Zaghaawa in Western Sudan bordering Chad. The Fellaata are immigrants from West Africa, mostly Nigeria. The Abu Ammaar are from the White Nile area in central Sudan. Nevertheless, all these fractions call themselves Hababeen. At the level of internal differentiation, they classify themselves as Hababeen naas Al-nazir, Hababeen Awaad Zaghaawa, Hababeen Fellaata, Hababeen Abu Ammar. The tribal title, with all the symbolic power it carries, became a homogenizing agent. It was the policy of the British administration to strengthen the position of collaborating Nazis by encouraging people from other areas and cultures to become his subjects. Strange compositions were thus created. The founding of the Gezira scheme, and migrant worker influx from Central and West Africa also had an
effect on the composition of the Dar Hamid tribe. People displaced from their lands by the vast Gezira scheme and similar schemes, were recruited to enlarge the followers of the Dar Hamid Nazir. An example are the Abu Ammaar, who came from the White Nile and still maintain family relationships in that area.

The Nimeiry regime (1969-1985) abolished the native administration, and tribal rulers were replaced by local government officials. Nevertheless, local affairs were still managed by members and retainers of the Nazir’s family. Local government was starved of funds, and was never able to displace traditional structures at that level, nor to eliminate tribalism.

**Intra-Clan Conflict in the Dar Hamid Tribe**

The Nawaahya, another constituent clan of the Dar Hamid, is composed of several factions: Balaalee’a, Mafaateeh, Awlaad Sa’ad, Awlaad Kreim, Awlaad Ageiil, Jamu’eyya, etc. This clan recently experienced internal strife between factions. A grouping of several clans, excluding the Jamu’eyya and Mafateeh, formed a block known as Abd Addayem. This is a group with a grievance, because it was earlier deprived of its own Omdodiyya (administrative district) and was administered by an Omda (clan chief) who was not of their own. In the 1980s, the Abd Addaayem claimed the right to have their own Omdodiyya. This was a time of general unrest in the tribe, and another clan, the Areefiyya, was making a similar claim. The Abd Addaayem Nawaahya claim to their own Omdodiyya meant they consider themselves different from the other sections of the Nawaahya. They were not only defending a distinct identity, but also correcting a historical injustice that put them under an alien Omda. In this ‘tribal’ strategy, some groups seek to re-define a historical context, which is vague not only due to lack of documentation, but also due to the state’s efforts to erase that history. This is done with an eye to current political conditions and on the basis of new political alliances.

**The Passing of the ‘Development Discourse’ and its Successors**

Nimeiry’s turn to Islamic fundamentalism in 1983 was proof of the failure of developmentalism.

*The 1980s were truly a decade of political turmoil and deepening political conflicts. Increasing foreign dependence, food crisis, and social disintegration during the first half of the decade sharpened conflicts and led to collapse of the ruling alliance and a reorganization of the power bloc after 1985* (El-Mekki, 1990:8).

The resumption of armed rebellion in the South, in which ethnic groups from different parts of the country participated, the escalation of banditry in the West, and student demonstrations in the cities compelled the regime to borrow another ideology. The situation permitted only one type of discourse: the ethnic discourse, and such discourse in the North requires a religious cloak.

Violent conflict in the rural areas of Western Sudan is the true reflection of the crisis in developmentalism. Banditry generated a sense of insecurity among the people who sensed the inability of the state to provide protection. Due to historical sensitivities, armed robbery in the West was attributed to particular tribes. After the people of Dar Fur, who are not Arabs, rejected an Arab governor imposed on them by the central government, the Arab/non-Arab dichotomy became a dimension of the conflict. This was essential for the reproduction of the ‘tribal’.
In the border zone between Kurdufan and Bahr El Ghazal provinces, the Arab militia (Maraheel) was backed by the state since the early 1980s. Realizing its incapacity to deal with threatening issues, this group had no other choice than to ally with the state. In 1990, the military governor of Kurdufan convened a large tribal meeting and gave all tribal leaders and religious shaykhs weapons and the title of emir. Apart from the symbolic representation of the past, this was an important moment in the militarization of the tribes, and the justification for a later demand to tribal chiefs to produce men for the Popular Defence Forces. In giving special consideration to tribal structures, the state was obliged to intervene in the selection of tribal leaders in order to secure collaboration. As in the colonial past, leaders who are not cooperative are dismissed.

In timing their demand, Abd Addayem sub-clan elites calculated that tribal leaders who were supporters of the traditional religious parties would be unpopular with the Islamist government. Moreover, the homogenizing logic of the Islamic discourse has to accept fracturing the already ‘homogeneous’, in order to re-create and integrate the pieces. A newly-recognized clan becomes a state client and ally against clans that are not yet fully mobilized. It is important to mention here that the elites of the Abd Addayem were related to the ‘Islamists’ in one way or another. The new Omda was supported by a group of young ‘Islamists’ keen to distinguish themselves from the traditional religious parties.

It should be noted that the state plays no role at the local level, other than administration, and it is making its presence felt mainly by intervening in tribal affairs. In contrast to the developmentalist state of the past, the state is shifting from its former role of providing services and benefits, to re-ordering and embellishing the ‘tribal’ as a representation of a glorious past. In this, it is assisted by tribal elites anxious to retrieve power and prestige, and is encouraged by the prevailing tendency for people to mobilize for collective defence on a tribal basis, given the state’s incapacity to protect them.

Severely condemned earlier, the ‘tribal’ is now politically acceptable. A transformation in the nature of the state necessitated the retrieval of the ‘tribal’, not only as a political tool, but as a cognitive appropriation necessary for the ongoing process of ‘authenticization’. The fundamentalist coup d’etat of June 1989 did not make economic promises. In fact, what made it possible to rule up to now, despite severe economic difficulties, is its ability to shift the public focus from secular development goals to religious and ethnic concerns. The ‘tribal’ has a place of honour in this re-orientation. In the summer of 1995, the government organized a conference lasting over a month in which tribes and tribal leaders were celebrated as the best Sudanese society has to offer. The conference was part of the ‘authenticization’ process.

The ‘authenticization’ process itself demands a literal reading of Islam. In its appeal to the texts, the regime has characterized Islam as an ethnic religion, in so far as it relates to the Arab language and culture. This is in addition to Arabic being the official language of the state. In this sense, fundamentalist Islam is not only an ethnic religion, but one which is to be imposed on the non-believers. This has negative implications for ethnic minorities which earlier were mobilized by the ‘universality’ of Islam. It is clear that in Sudan: a) the ethnic is the last resort to which people appeal when other structures are failing, b) in this context, religion is a mere ethnic discourse, c) religion is not the dominant discourse.
Religious fundamentalism allows the ‘tribal’ to appear in the guise of religion, albeit a complementary rather than autonomous religion. The most important aspect of this fusion is the capacity to mobilize on the basis of an imagined uniqueness. The construction of the Abd Addayem sub-clan rests on such imagined homogeneity. So is the projected duality of Muslim/Christian, Arab/African, North/South at the national level. The co-optation of tribalism by religious fundamentalism stems from the state’s need to maintain itself and, in the final analysis, the ruling groups which depend on it. It is a consequence and a reaction to the rising ethnic tensions that threaten the state with disintegration. It is an attempt, as someone puts it, of ‘using ethnicity to contain ethnicity’ (Mudoola, 1993:101).

Mahmud El Zain is at the Institute of Social Studies, the Hague.

Bibliography


Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia

John Young

Ethiopia is implementing a radical programme of decentralising state power to ethnic-based regional units, which could be of interest to other countries in Africa faced with demands of ethnic communities for a greater role in the state. This apparent empowerment of ethnicity represents a complete reversal of this country’s past practices, and is the joint product of the ethnocratic character of the state until recently and the policies adopted by the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) in its long struggle against the military regime that ruled Ethiopia during 1974-1991. This article examines the processes that brought forth this novel, and for Africa unprecedented, constitutional arrangement.

Ethiopia's New Constitution

The overthrow of the military regime, or Derg, in May 1991, brought the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to power. The EPRDF is a coalition of ethnic political movements, dominated by the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) which fought a sixteen year war against the Derg in the northern province of Tigray. After assuming power, the EPRDF set about implementing new and controversial policies, the most contentious of which was the acceptance of Eritrea's independence, and the reversal of the age-old quest of Ethiopian rulers to centralise state and integrate a population belonging to more than eighty ethnic groups, or nationalities as they are called here. The EPRDF chose instead to accord political recognition to all ethnic groups, and to devolve power to regional and district administrative units representing ethnic communities. In fact the 1995 Constitution (Art. 39) proclaims 'every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession' (Endnote1) The constitution then goes on specify the conditions under which this right can be exercised, and these include a two-thirds vote of the regional legislature, the organisation by the federal government of a referendum on the issue, a majority support of voters in the referendum, and a mutually agreed division of assets.

While decentralisation has been on the political agenda in Africa since the 1970s, no government on the continent has devolved powers on an ethnic basis; nor has any government explicitly granted its constituent parts the legal right to secede. This radical break with the past is the key objective of the new government, and one that has great significance potentially for other countries in Africa which share Ethiopia's problems of ethnic conflict. The following paragraphs will outline the historical and political context in which this policy emerged and will examine its implementation and implications.

It is argued that the EPRDF's unique approach is not – in spite of appearances to the contrary – the result of bargaining in the post-Derg period. It is first a forthright, if
controversial, response to the legacy of ethnic domination and marginalisation in the Ethiopian state, and secondly a product of the course the TPLF followed in the conduct of its revolutionary struggle. It is not a 'leap in the dark' (Brietzke, 1994), as some have described it, but perhaps the only approach that could ensure the unity and survival of the Ethiopian into the twenty-first century. Certainly, it is a high risk strategy, and its success is far from certain.

**Ethnicity and the State**

The Ethiopian state traces its roots to the Axumite civilisation in the first millennium BC, whose centre was in what is now the province of Tigray. Although it declined after the seventh century AD, Axum’s legacy was sustained in the core of what was to become Ethiopia in the form of Coptic Christianity, Geez the liturgical language of the Church which is the basis of the modern languages of Tigrigna and Amharigna spoken by the two branches of the Abyssinian family, and a feudal system that survived up the 1974 revolution. This legacy is an enduring source of pride for all Tigrayans, although their province was increasingly marginalised in an empire-state dominated by the far more numerous Amharas, particularly by the Amhara nobility from the central province of Shoa in recent times. According to Markakis (1994:73), the social structure of traditional Amhara-Tigray society represents the ‘classic trinity of noble, priest and peasant’, and what fundamentally distinguishes the three classes is their ‘relationship to the only means of production, that is land’. From time immemorial until the introduction of the Derg’s land reform in 1975, the vast majority of the northern peasantry held land under the *rist* tenure system which ensured that every Christian Abyssinian was entitled to a piece of land.

In the last years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of this century the Shoan Emperor Menelik II incorporated the lands and peoples of the south, east, and west into an empire which became the modern state of Ethiopia. Much of the conquered land was given to court and church officials, soldiers, and settlers from the north who were encouraged to migrate to the region. Unlike the north, southern lands were fertile, suitable for valuable export crops like coffee, and the indigenous population could be dispossessed. The Abyssinian nobility, especially the Shoan branch which dominated the imperial state, were the main beneficiaries of the expansion. The increasingly destitute peasants of Tigray and the other northern provinces derived few advantages from it, though unlike the southern peoples, they could not be easily deprived of their lands.

The objective of Ethiopia’s rulers, even before Menelik, was the centralisation of the feudal state, and this involved a measure of modernization and the import of military, bureaucratic, and educational technologies that could only be paid for with agricultural exports. Although receiving few benefits from modernisation, the Tigrayans did feel the impact of centralisation. They felt it in the deteriorating authority of their traditional regional rulers, the imposition of Amharigna as the official state language, and progressive general decline of their province. The Tigrayan nobility, and later the emerging petty bourgeoisie had to compete with their Amhara counterparts for positions and status within a state in which they were junior partners.

One expression of Tigrayan resentment was the *Woyene* rebellion that broke out in the province in the aftermath of the Italian collapse in 1941, and was provoked by attempt of the Haile Selassie regime to reimpose taxation and Amhara hegemony. Although quickly overcome with the timely assistance of British aerial bombing, the TPLF
regards the rebellion as representing a revolt of an oppressed nation against Shoan Amhara oppression. However, a historian of the Woyene, Gebru Tareke (1977:215), contends that, ‘the peasants rebelled against the state not particularly because it was controlled and dominated by the Shewan Amhara but primarily because it was oppressive’. Tigrayans resentment may have been more intense than in other parts of Ethiopia, but it was by no means unique, and rebellions broke out in other parts of the country, including Amhara Gojjam. At any rate, the Woyene revolt entered the mythology of the TPLF, demonstrated the combativeness of the peasants, and the need for effective leadership if the Amhara regime was to be successfully challenged.

With the restoration of Haile Selassie in 1941, following the liberation of Ethiopia from the Italian rule, a reinvigorated government pursued a policy of centralization by weakening the provincial nobility, the bureaucratization of the state apparatus, the formation of a professional army, and the launching of modern education. There was little scope in this process for the integration of the various ethnic groups, beyond the selective incorporation of individuals who accepted assimilation into the Amhara culture and society. To the extent they were successful, these policies greatly increased the power of the imperial autocrat, and solidified the Amhara dominance in the state and economy. On the other hand, they produced the educated counter-elite and petty bourgeoisie which eventually proved the autocrats undoing.

This event was presaged in the 1960 coup attempt by Haile Selassie’s bodyguard army unit. This represented the first significant stirrings of political discontent in the modernizing sector of Ethiopian society. It was the expression of a broader conflict between a multi-ethnic petty bourgeoisie increasingly aware of its capacity and lack of power, and an old regime based on privilege and status and unwilling to share power. There was, as well, the contradiction between the dominant position of a Shoan Amhara elite and the political marginalisation of the majority of the population. The revolt in Eritrea that Haile Selassie precipitated by arbitrarily ending the federal system under which the self-governing territory was linked to Ethiopia, was another powerful challenge to the legitimacy of the imperial regime. There were similar rebellious incidents among the Somali in the southeast and some Oromo groups in the south. And last, there was the fundamental class-cum-ethnic contradiction in southern Ethiopia – between an minority who held most of the land and a native majority forced to work on what had been their land for the benefit of interlopers.

The most explosive conflict, however, proved to be between a regime claiming a monopoly of state power and a politically ambitious petty bourgeoisie; such conflicts have been the cause of conflict throughout Africa. However, in Ethiopia the clash was compounded by the fact that power was held not by a transplanted colonial class which could be pushed to relinquish power and return to Europe, but by an indigenous nobility whose survival depended upon retention of state power. The inability of the imperial regime to respond to demands for political reform, land reform, to end the hegemony of the Amhara, and to come to terms with the Eritreans, eroded its popular support in the 1960s and 1970s. As the opposition grew in size and strength, an ageing Haile Selassie proved unable to contain it, and it was the military who stepped into the power void in 1974.

Apart from Eritrean, Somali and other rebels on the periphery, it was the students who led the opposition against the Haile Selassie regime at the centre, as it did later against the Derg. From its inception in the mid-1960s, the student movement had a pan-Ethiopian character, and focused on class rather than ethnic contradictions.
However, the insurgency in Eritrea and elsewhere, the glaring fact of ethnic dominance in the state, and the policy of cultural suppression practised by this state, brought the issue of national self-determination to the fore. Being militant marxists, the students accepted the principle of national self-determination, up to and including secession. At the same time, they believed the overthrow of the imperial and the end of class exploitation and ethnic oppression would remove the grounds for secession (Pateman, 1990).

Under pressure from popular expectations for radical change aroused by the students, the Derg adopted a radical ideology and undertook a fundamental transformation of Ethiopian society. Soviet style marxism-leninism provided the ideological framework the Derg utilised to destroy the old social structure, to force the pace of development, to further centralize state power and the militarize its apparatus. The most crucial element in this process was the 1975 nationalisation of land which destroyed the material basis of the old regime. The Derg also proclaimed an end to ethnic oppression, it decreed the equality of all cultures, promoted the use of other languages and cultures, and entertained the idea of some type of federal structure for Ethiopia. With this in mind, it established the Institute of Nationalities in the mid-1980s, to study the ethnic composition of Ethiopia and to draft a constitutional design for local self-government. It was the first time this prospect was contemplated in Ethiopia, though it was not taken seriously by the Derg.

The Ethiopian military had no intention to weaken the power of the centre, nor to allow meaningful mass participation in the government. In fact, it intensified the policy of centralization and arbitrary rule typical of its predecessor. The Derg thus fought to maintain not only the integrity of the Ethiopian state against strong challenges by Eritrean, Somali, Oromo, Afar and other dissident ethnic groups. It also strove to forge a totally centralized state and, therefore, it refused to share power with either the politically conscious middle classes or the emerging regional and ethnic elites, and ensured that the state retained its predominately Amhara character. As a result, the new regime was almost immediately challenged from many quarters.

Convinced the Derg would not resolve the ethnic problems of the country, or democratise the state, militant Tigrayan students embraced the view that the correct basis for struggle against the regime was not class but national (i.e., ethnic), and it had to be based on the peasantry. It was this conviction they took to their home province where they formed the TPLF in 1975. (Some years later the TPLF acknowledged that emphasising the national question was 'the best tactic to rally the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia in general and that of Tigray in particular; TPLF, 1980:12). Based on the assumption that the primary contradiction that had to be resolved was ethnic oppression, the TPLF concluded that the opposition to the Derg should organize on that basis. The TPLF militants rejected the class based approach of the student movement, and opted to struggle for national self-determination. This approach was to prove very effective — while class approach failed tragically — which was also reflected in the policies the EPRDF government some sixteen years later.

**Ethnic Based Rebellion**

While the course of the TPLF's struggle cannot be recounted here (Young, 1997), it is important to emphasise how the Front’s struggles, political positions and relationships to other parties during the course of the struggle carried over into the post-Derg period. Soon after launching its struggle in rural Tigray in early 1975, the TPLF fought two rivals in the province. In the west, the Front defeated a much larger force
dominated by members of the former nobility who were fighting to restore the ancien regime. In the east the TPLF defeated the superior forces of the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP), an organisation of the student movement. While calling for a social revolution, the EPRP looked to the working class for inspiration and was unable to rally support among peasantry whose concerns were framed within a provincial perspective.

By 1979, the TPLF was the only significant opposition movement in Tigray. The lesson it drew from these successes was that nationalism had to be at the forefront of the campaign, along with a programme which for social transformation in the countryside. In the wake of the collapse of the imperial regime, and before the Derg alienated most of the peasantry through its brutality and incompetence, Tigrayan peasants were mobilized in opposition to the military regime. They feared a new form of Amhara domination being imposed upon them, and were convinced, as one peasant put it that, ‘only Tigrayans could solve Tigrayan problems’.

Controversy over the Front’s direction first broke out in 1976 with the publication of the Manifesto of the TPLF and its call for ‘the establishment of an independent Republic of Tigray’ (1976:24). While this pronouncement was subsequently rejected, the Manifesto’s commitment to the principle that all Ethiopia’s nationalities have the right to self-determination up to and including the right to independence, was repeatedly affirmed. Moreover, the Manifesto’s claim that the national question was the ‘best tactic to rally the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia in general and that of Tigray in particular’ (Ibid. p. 28) has not only been confirmed by the TPLF’s success, but applies to the contradictions at the core of the Ethiopian state.

Crucial to the early development of the TPLF was its relations with the Eritrean nationalists who had launched their struggle against the imperial regime a decade and a half earlier. Based on a shared culture, language and contingent territories, the TPLF gained the support of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) after affirming that Eritrea constituted a colony and thus had the right to independence. While it has never questioned this principle, as the TPLF later challenged the EPLF on a number of issues (Young, 1996:105-120), but the most contentious was the national question. While the EPLF denied the nine nationalities living in Eritrea the right to independence and denied that right to other nationalities in Ethiopia, the TPLF repeatedly asserted the right of all nationalities, in both Eritrea and Ethiopia, to independence. The TPLF position was bitterly resented by the EPLF and was to be a major cause of the EPLF’s decision to break relations with the Tigrayans in 1985. Pragmatism and the prospect of victory over the Derg brought the Fronts together again in 1988, but the TPLF did not back down from its views on the rights of nations in either Ethiopia or Eritrea. The founding of the ethnic coalition, the EPRDF, the following year served to again give expression to the TPLF’s emphasis on the principle of national mobilization.

With the war against the Derg approaching an end, a conference organized by the United States in London, in May 1991, was attended by leaders of the TPLF, EPLF, OLF (Oromo Liberation Front), and representatives of the Derg, although by the time the conference was actually held, Mengistu had flown to Zimbabwe and the regime was disintegrating. At that meeting, US Under-Secretary of State Herman Cohen proposed the EPRDF, whose troops were at that time on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, enter the city, and set up a transitional government with the participation of the OLF and other groups. This decision caused great anger among TPLF/EPRDF opponents who considered it an act of US betrayal. However, it was almost certainly not the
result of any US-EPRDF collusion, but based on the recognition that the Derg's army had collapsed and the EPRDF was the only force that could ensure stability, an important consideration given the destruction and anarchy that was taking place at that time in Monrovia and Mogadishu where the Dole and Barre regimes disintegrated.) A further agreement was reached between the EPLF, TPLF, and the OLF to meet in Addis Ababa and prepare a draft document (Charter) according to which Ethiopia would be administered for a transitional period of two years. The success of the EPRDF in defeating the Derg affirmed the correctness of its policy of putting nationality at the forefront of the struggle. With victory in hand, the EPRDF was in a position to implement this policy on an Ethiopia-wide basis.

Shortly after EPRDF's forces entered Addis Ababa, a draft agreement was prepared and accepted by the parties who attended the London meeting, and the EPRDF began talks with a number of groups interested in attending a planned conference in the Ethiopian capital. Significantly, those who were encouraged to participate were predominately ethnic based groups, which either existed earlier or organised immediately prior to the conference (Vaughan, 1994:45-6). The remnants of the student movement, EPRP and Meison, were not invited to attend the conference, and have not been allowed to participate in the political life of the country to this day. Tightly controlled by the EPRDF, which held a majority of the seats, the conference essentially approved the Charter prepared earlier in negotiations with the OLF; claiming to represent the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, this organization was potentially a major force. The most contentious issue taken up by the conference was the status of Eritrea. In the end it the majority agreed to recognise the right of Eritreans to determine their own future through an internationally supervised referendum to take place after two years. In return, the Eritreans agreed to make Asab a free port for Ethiopia (Ibid. p. 42). There was almost no mention of the EPRDF's plans to restructure the Ethiopian state along ethnic lines. Instead, after approving the right of the country's nationalities to self-determination, up to and including secession. In effect, it was left to the transitional government to empower ethnicity by proclamation (Ibid. p. 52).

The EPRDF Government and Opposition

After the conference, Meles Zenawi, leader of both the TPLF and EPRDF, became president of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), whose cabinet was dominated by the EPRDF but included representative of the OLF and other ethnic groups. A Council of Representatives was appointed with more or less the same membership as the conference, and comprised thirty-two representatives from the EPRDF, twelve from the OLF, and the rest from a number of other, mainly ethnic-based groups. On 22 July 1991 the Council adopted the Addis Ababa conference Charter as an interim constitution for the Transitional Government of Ethiopia.

Contrary to widespread expectations, the EPRDF did not integrate the Derg's forces into the into the guerilla army led and dominated by fighters of the TPLF. Critics suggested this indicated a less than firm commitment to national unity. TPLF sources maintain this decision was made months earlier, after it was concluded that the new government could not rely on the Derg's army, because it was Soviet trained, was not disciplined and did not respect the people (Mamo, 1995). The intellectual community of Addis Ababa, with its large Amhara contingent, was likewise excluded from positions of responsibility and influence in the new government. Instead, the EPRDF
relied almost entirely upon its own members and apolitical technocrats, something that has not changed in the ensuing five years.

Relations with the OLF, the most important group outside the EPRDF fold, broke down quickly. The main reason was the sponsoring by the EPRDF of a rival Oromo political organization, the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization which proceeded to compete with the OLF in the first elections for regional administrations held in June 1992. Alleging intimidation and other irregularities, the OLF decided to boycott the elections and withdraw from the government.

Afterwards, the OLF drifted into an armed insurrection and was banned from Ethiopia. Relations between these two movements are bedevilled by mutual suspicion. The OLF openly flirted with secession – a mortal threat to the existence of Ethiopia which the EPRDF is unwilling to countenance, its attachment to the principle of self determination notwithstanding. On the other hand, the OLF suspects the new regime represents the continuation of Abyssinian hegemony, this time by Tigrayans, regards the devolution scheme as a ploy.

Opposition also came from the other end of the political spectrum from those who regarded the ethnic policy was designed to dismember the Ethiopian state. This was the view of the All-Amhara Peoples Organization (AAPO), an opposition party which sought to rally the former dominant ethnic group. A number of other ethnic opposition parties were organized to compete with those sponsored by the EPRDF. Several minuscule factions abroad, especially in the United States raised a barrage of propaganda against the regime in Ethiopia. At home, there were struggles within the state which pit Amhara and, to a lesser extent, Oromo functionaries, against their Tigrayan political masters and appointees. Gradually, the EPRDF became more restrained about pursuing the kind of reforms to the central state which raised the ire of bureaucrats, and Tigrayans could be heard complaining that the government had not done enough to end Amhara domination of state structures. Generally the public bureaucracy remains, as it was under the Derg, deeply conservative, resistant to change, preoccupied with national security, and seriously in need of reform.

Recently released figures from the Federal Civil Service Commission show some 57 per cent of federal government employees are Amhara, 14 per cent Oromo, and 12 per cent Tigrayan (Ethiopian Herald, 8 April 1996). Apart from indicating the continuing importance of the Amhara as state functionaries, these figures point to the continuing subordinate position of the Oromo who constitute more than a third of Ethiopia’s population, a situation that cannot continue indefinitely if the EPRDF’s objective of creating a state that broadly represents all Ethiopians, is to be realised.

While Ethiopian peasants may remain sceptical of the new regime, their concerns have diminished with the return of peace, the end of forced conscription, liberalization of trade agricultural produce and, until recently, very low taxes. Indeed, the low levels of peasant taxation seemed designed to win peasant support for the government and to deny the urban opposition a rural base. On the other hand, this meant the government had few resources with which to administer in the countryside. It is remembered that the Derg initially also reduced the taxes of peasants, but then drove peasants to the brink of starvation with its demands. Recently, the EPRDF introduced price increases on fertilisers, government housing and stores, and petrol, and also restricted businessmen access to hard currency. In response, tradesmen staged mass demonstrations in the cities in October 1996.
The first step in the process of power devolution was the 1992 regional elections. The first of the kind, they were not without blemish, but were generally regarded as the best that could be expected under the circumstances (Amnesty International, 1995). They were followed in 1994 with elections to the Constituent Assembly which was to ratify the new constitution. This paved the way for the national elections on 7 May 1995. As in the earlier, given the absence of most major opposition groups, it produced a sweeping victory for the EPRDF. As a result of this election in the 547 seat Council of People’s Representatives the EPRDF holds 493. At the time of the 1995 elections the EPRDF components included the TPLF, the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) which was previously the EPDM, OPDO, and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Front (SEPDF). There was no shortage of complaints against the conduct of the elections, yet foreign observers declared them valid.

Meles Zenawi became Prime Minister, Dr. Negaso Gidada, an Oromo, assumed the largely ceremonial role of State President, and Tamrat Layne, an Amhara, became Deputy Prime Minister and also Minister of Defence. Meles and Seyoum Mesfin, who retained his position as Minister of Foreign Affairs, were the only Tigrayans among the seventeen ministers, although there is little doubt that the TPLF remains the most dominant force in the government. To reflect the new constitutional arrangements, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) was officially proclaimed on 24 August 1995 by the federal legislature, the Council of People’s Representatives.

Ethnic federalism is the EPRDF’s answer to the problem of state centralism and Amhara domination, while Tigray is the prototype for local administration. Throughout the revolution, the TPLF consistently linked the struggle against the Amhara-dominated state and for Tigrayan national self-determination, with the liberation of all Ethiopia’s nationalities. The Front’s opposition to multinational parties, its promotion of ethnic-based movements, and formation of the EPRDF, are all designed to reinforce this perspective, to achieve these ends, and create an Ethiopian state radically different than that which existed for the past one hundred years under the feudal regimes and the Derg.

While the TPLF’s view of Ethiopian history is open to dispute, it is this interpretation and the Front’s experience gained in Tigray during sixteen years of revolutionary war that forms the basis of the EPRDF’s constitutional agenda. Two other factors are important. The first is the conviction that success in the battlefield confirmed the superiority of the Front’s political precepts. Second, it is clear that the best means for the TPLF to retain a leading position in a Ethiopia, where Tigrayans constitute a small proportion of the country’s population, is to maintain an ethnic-based coalition with elements of the numerically superior Oromo and the historically dominant Amhara. This is best achieved in a state where power is diffused to ethnic based administrations in the regions.

The fact that the Front assumed power in a period when the centralised administrative states of the socialist bloc were collapsing, undoubtedly enhanced this process and gave it a measure of legitimacy. As Clapham noted (1988:229),

> throughout the former socialist world there is a recognition that, 'the state hierarchy cannot achieve its basic goals of national unity and food self-sufficiency because success requires a devolution of decision making ... which challenges the leninist model of the all-powerful party-state.
The EPRDF model of devolution is not without its leninist elements, since it involves a strong vanguard party which reaches from the executive in the national capital down to the smallest of villages. Thus, elected representatives at the regional level *often appear more as functionaries of the national government and the EPRDF, rather than genuine representatives of local peoples*. Crucially, however, these local officials are predominately natives to the area, and no longer do Ethiopia's non-Amhara peoples have aliens administering their local affairs, and no longer have to speak Amharigna to make themselves heard by their governors.

It remains to be seen whether devolution of powers to the regions will represent real decentralisation of power, or simply deconcentration, with the national government still retaining dominant power, irrespective of constitutional provisions. The problem is further compounded by the fact that the EPRDF in its party guise has assumed control of assets and functions formerly held by the state, notably in the economic sphere. While the EPRDF in the state is busily shedding enterprises acquired or created by the Derg, its agents and associates are in turn purchasing and managing these same assets.

This policy, which to some extent mirrors current developments in Eritrea, preserves a measure of state control over resources, in a fashion that is indirect and, formally at least, outside the state structure; thus far, it has escaped international criticism. It provides a major source of income for the Front, and utilises its corps of talented individuals, particularly TPLF cadres forced to leave positions of leadership in government as a result of efforts to increase non-Tigrayan representation. Last, it creates a source of employment for the Front's supporters. Taking advantage of the absence of effective opposition, and a lack of tradition of voluntary organisation autonomous of the state, EPRDF power has been further reinforced through the growth of a media controlled by the state and the party. On the other hand, the budding free press, almost unanimously hostile to the regime, has drawn harsh penalties for its inexperience and excessive zeal.

While the EPRDF remains committed to the devolution of state power, the success of regional administration, apart from Tigray, is uncertain. Unlike the TPLF, which has a base of dedicated and talented party personnel to draw upon at both the centre and regional and local levels of government, the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), its main partner in the EPRDF, is struggling to establish itself against the opposition in urban areas and among intellectuals in particular. It does appear to be gaining some ground among the peasants in the Amhara territory. The shortage of skilled personnel in the regions is being addressed with the establishment of a Civil Service College in Addis Ababa devoted entirely to upgrading the qualifications of regional officialdom.

Raising administrative skill levels may prove easier than gaining legitimacy for the non-ethnic affiliates of the EPRDF which, with the exception of ANDM, were established very late in the day and lack strong bases of support in their communities. The Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO) is of particular concern. Many Oromo regard it as a puppet of the EPRDF regime, and corrupt in the bargain. A new Oromo party, the Oromo National Congress, was formed recently to oppose both the OPDO's subservience to the central government and the OLF advocacy of an independent Oromia. The troubles of the OPDO are not unique. Other regions, the Somali, Afar, and Beni Shangul among them, are paralysed by political infighting and administrative chaos.
The EPRDF government has also moved to reduce the role of the state in the economy; although as noted, this may in some cases be a slight of hand, as the party moves into areas the state abandons. In any case, these efforts meshed closely with the proscriptions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. As a result, the new government won the support in quarters that might have been suspicious of revolutionaries who had only recently proclaimed their admiration for Albanian socialism. The conversion of economic orthodoxy by a party with marxist-leninist traditions is not as paradoxical as it might appear. The EPRDF took over a state whose existence was always based on the exploitation of the peasants. In the latter period of the Derg's rule this assumed extreme forms, with a network of state corporations preying on the peasantry. Ethiopian peasants have long looked upon the state as a major cause of their poverty, and had no regrets when the new government dismantled this oppressive apparatus.

While structural adjustment of Ethiopia's heavily statist economy has thus far imposed few costs on the majority of the country's peoples who are peasants, it has – as elsewhere in Africa – caused dislocation, unemployment, a higher cost of living, and growing discontent in the cities and towns where the EPRDF has in any case limited support. The regime's opponents failed to exploit this discontent and remained fixed on non-economic issues such as the loss of Eritrea, the alleged break up of Ethiopia, and the question of democracy.

The strength of the EPRDF's commitment to democracy is by no means clear. From the earliest days in Tigray, the TPLF established a wide range of elected councils and mass associations. In Tigray, these proved highly effective in mobilising peasants and giving them a voice in local affairs. Nevertheless, while free and open discussion is encouraged, opposition against the TPLF is actively discouraged. The effectiveness of local governments outside Tigray is much less clear and deserves study.

Perhaps the most noteworthy TPLF populist creation has been *gim gima*, which literally means evaluation. It is an institution of marxist-leninist origins designed to evaluate the performance of collective entities, individuals, and programmes through debate in open forums. Developed in the army, and later introduced into the mass associations, *gim gima* proved highly successful at not only increasing the effectiveness of these organisations, but also in making the leaders accountable to their followers, and closely binding the TPLF to the people. *Gim gima* was subsequently introduced into the component elements of the EPRDF, and since 1991 has spread to institutions throughout the country. As with other TPLF initiatives, the effectiveness of *gim gima* outside Tigray, and the extent it might be manipulated to further the interests of various elite groups, is not known. *Gim gima* is also not free of human rights abuses. In Tigray, it is being revised to adapt it to the changed conditions of peace, and also to make it effective in the urban areas where its history and acceptance by the population is much shorter.

For fourteen years (1975-1989), the TPLF was restricted to the countryside, and had little experience of working in urban areas. Subsequently, it did not develop an institutional base for urban administration. Local government in the towns and cities of Ethiopia is carried out through the system of district councils created by the Derg and reformed by the EPRDF. While some opposition and independent candidates won seats in these councils in recent elections in Addis Ababa and other towns, EPRDF control remains overwhelming, and quite at variance with limited support in the urban sector. The governing party in turn acknowledges its lack of urban support,
and defines itself as a peasant party, making it clear that its energies are directed at the countryside. This rural focus is undoubtedly correct in a country where the overwhelming population lives and works in the countryside. Nonetheless, it is questionable how long the EPRDF can disregard the townspeople.

Despite harassment, the opposition newspapers provide critical comment on government policies and the issues of the day. However, to a large degree they operate in a vacuum, because so little is known about the inner workings of the government. Whether it is the product of Ethiopia’s feudal traditions, or the result of a government which, after five years in power, still does not feel secure in its capital city, the EPRDF leadership appears remote, and has little interaction beyond a select group of political allies, most of whom are Tigrayan. The EPRDF presides over what is still an authoritarian state, which it shows less interest in reforming than was the case during its first years in power. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that, with some exceptions, Ethiopians do not live in fear; their objections and opposition to the government are freely expressed verbally and in street demonstrations, and few would deny that political conditions have improved enormously since the Derg years. Respect for human rights was never a priority in Ethiopia, and it is perhaps unrealistic to expect a dramatic change in such a short time. For that very same reason, there is need for constant vigilance to ensure that the arrogant dismissal of human rights characteristic of the EPRDF’s predecessors does not revisit the country.

**Conclusion**

The EPRDF challenge to the supremacy of the centralized state and its role in the economy, must be seen in the context of the Horn of Africa, where for more than thirty years ethnic based opposition to the state has been the cause of enormous disruption and loss of life and property. Policies designed to increase the authority of centralized states by weakening ethnic identities and encouraging economic development have a long history in the Horn. Continuing problems of ethnic conflict and economic stagnation made clear the failure of these approaches and the theories on which they are based.

This failure derives from the mistaken notions that state centralisation can overcome the divisiveness of ethnicity, and economic development can take place without confronting the political and structural problems of the state and its relationship with ethnic minorities. Contrary to these notions, state centralisation fosters ethnic conflict, as the example of Ethiopia demonstrates, because as Brass has argued, ethnicity is a product of competition between ethnic elites for state power, and state centralisation encourages alienated elites to raise ethnic demands (Brass, 1991:217).

It is clear that patterns of development that have favoured some groups and regions at the expense of others have made the state, as the arbitrator over the distribution of scarce resources, the focus of endemic political conflict between competing ethnic groups in the Horn (Markakis, 1994:217). Indeed, liberation movements which have come to power in recent years in Uganda, Eritrea, and Ethiopia were all led by marginalised ethnic elites who mobilised peasantry in opposition to hegemonic states. Having captured state power, these liberation movements confront the relationship between the state and its ethnic communities in very different ways. The Ugandans and Eritreans are trying to overcome ethnic-based struggles for power and resources by disallowing political expression of ethnicity and attempting to channel ethnic sentiments along cultural lines.
Unique in the Horn and Africa, the EPRDF holds ethno-nationalism cannot be restricted to the cultural sphere, and the only means to ensure that conflicts over state power do not produce secessionist movements is to grant ethnic communities full political rights. Consistent with this conviction, it has facilitated the separation of Eritrea, renounced long-held Ethiopian policies based on state centralization, has proceeded with the devolution of powers to the regions, and through its new constitution has granted the regions the right to peacefully and leave the federation. It is a highly innovative and even daring approach, and the object of much criticism by nationalist who argue it will bring about the destruction of Ethiopia. However, in the absence of a strong opposition with convincing alternative policies, the government’s approach must be considered the only viable one at present, although whether it will indeed prove effective remains to be seen.

John Young is in the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Addis Ababa University.

Endnotes
1. ‘The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia’ (unofficial English translation from the Amharic original), Addis Ababa, 8 December 1994, p. 18-19. Nation, nationality or people are defined in the constitution as ‘a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture, or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief (sic.) in a common or related identities, and who predominantly inhabit an identifiable, contiguous territory.’

Bibliography
The Plight of the Agro-pastoral Society of Somalia

Mohamed Haji Mukhtar

Despite advances in modern communication and the proliferation of information, there remain areas of the world about which little is known. One such place is Somalia. The informed public is aware of a political 'meltdown' and consequent chaos there, but few comprehend the causes of this tragic crisis. Unless and until there is greater understanding of the basic issues involved, Somalia will continue to suffer mayhem and chronic disorder. This article assesses some of the factors involved in the current civil war in Somalia, especially as they pertain to the inter riverine region of the south. Particular emphasis is placed on the Dighil/Mirifle clan in that region.

In contrast to the single cause analysis that attributes all to Siad Barré's dictatorship, which is adopted by nearly every Somali scholar and politician, the article investigates the social causes of the worst civil war in the modern history of this country. The single cause analysis is inadequate because it is not so much scientific as ideological, and represents the desire of nomadic groups to impose cultural and political hegemony on the settled agro-pastoralist groups in and around the inter-riverine region in the south. The basic tenet of this hegemonic ambition is an invented homogeneity, which presents Somalia as one of the few culturally homogeneous countries in Africa, if not the world. The Somali people are said to have a single language and to share a mono-culture. In fact, Somalia has always been divided into southern agro-pastoral clans and northern nomadic clans which have distinctively different cultural, linguistic, and social structures. The mono-culture about which most students of Somalia speak is extrapolated mainly from the study of the northern part of the country, where most of the research into Somali culture was undertaken. The assumptions and extrapolations of these northern-based studies were later applied to other parts of the country without any scientific basis. The myth of Somali homogeneity played a major role in the rise of nomadic clans to political predominance, and the appropriation of resources from the less warlike and intensely religious agro-pastoral groups in and around the inter-riverine region. A major factor in the Somali conflict is the struggle among clans for control of limited and increasingly scarce resources, especially land and water. More specifically, it is a violent competition between the Darood and Hawiye clan families for political and economic dominance of the inter-riverine region.
The Land and the People
The contested region is the fertile valley that lies between the Shabelle river in the north, the Juba river in the south, the Ethiopian border in the west, and the Indian Ocean in the east. The area has over fourteen ecological regions providing four modes of livelihood; agriculture, pastoralism, agro-pastoralism and trade. The region is the bread-basket of the whole country, satisfying local food consumption as well as producing the main export goods; fruit, livestock, hides and skins. Before 1969 it comprised four regions: namely, Banadir, Upper Jubba, Lower Jubba, Hiran. After the 1969 coup d'etat, these regions, with the exception of Hiran, were divided into many more. The Upper Jubba was divided into Bay, Bakool, and Gedo; the Lower Jubba into Lower Jubba and Middle Jubba; and Banadir into Mogadishu, Banadir, Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle regions. The reason for this regional division is not clear; nevertheless, one suspects the government's intention to create regions for favoured clans.

The inter-riverine region is mainly populated by the Dighil and Mirifle clans, the descendants of the two sons of Mad (Mahamad) Reewin; Dighil being the older and Mirifle the younger son. Today, the descendants of the Dighil inhabit the Banadir, Jubba and Shabelle regions, while the descendants of the Mirifle live in the central and western parts of the region. The Mirifle are divided into two main groups; the Sagaal ('nine') and the Siyeed ('eight'). The Sagaal, in turn, are subdivided into nine clans, such as the Hadame, Luway, and Gasaragude to mention a few. The Siyeed are divided into sixteen clans, including the Harin, Haraw, Eemid, Leysan and Elay. The Dighil are divided into seven clans known as the Toddobadi Aw Dighil, including Geledi, Tunni, Jiido, Garre, DaBarre. In addition, groups of Bantu origin live among the Dighil/Mirifle clans. These are the Banadiris, Jareer and Bajunis, who are mostly merchants, fishermen, hunters and cultivators, and inhabit the coastal strip bordering the Jubba and Shabelle valleys and the southern islands of the Indian Ocean. They speak languages of their own, but use Mai as the lingua franca. Historically they are associated with the Dighil and Mirifle clan structure. There is also a significant number of Hawiye groups, mainly in the Hiran region and in a few pockets in Banadir and Lower Shabelle.

These people of this region are socio-culturally and linguistically different from the nomadic groups who live in central and northern Somalia. They speak the Reewin language locally known as Mai, as opposed to Maha which is spoken north of the Shabelle river. Mai is to Maha as Spanish is to Portuguese; that is, they are not mutually intelligible. They are distinguished from the nomads by their agro-pastoral mode of production and their settled mode of life which produced a distinct culture and social organization. Unlike the nomads, the settled communities of the inter-riverine regions have well organized social and political structures based on hierarchical authority.

Colonial Experience
The Anglo-Italian agreements of 1891 gave Italy the triangle of land known as the Horn of Africa as her 'sphere of influence'. Afterwards, Italy proceeded to construct shaky colonial edifice of her own in this part of Africa. Until the outbreak of the First World War, Italy was unable to consolidate her control over these territories. All attempts, both military and political, were in vain due to active resistance from the inter-riverine people of southern Somalia. It is out of the scope of this article to discuss the details of this resistance; however, a brief sketch will be helpful. In the late 19th
century, the inter-riverine region was the centre of religious ferment and economic resistance against European colonization. The so-called Gosha Revolt (1890-1907), led by Nassib Buunto, emerged from the struggle against slavery. Nassib Buunto recruited the bulk of his fighters from the freed slaves who deserted their Italian landlords and Somali 'Abans' (overseers). He established a centre named after him in the Gosha region. The centre offered the escaped slaves not only refuge and freedom, but also a better way of life by developing communal ways of farming and cattle herding, training in new handicraft skills, new techniques for building houses and for manufacturing tools and weapons. It was the free men of this centre who fought against the Italians, delaying their penetration into the fertile hinterlands of the inter-riverine region for decades. Another focal point of resistance was the Banadir. The Banadirians of the interior were concerned that the occupation of the port by foreigners would mean the diversion of the external trade from their control. The Banadir ports played a significant role in the region's external and internal trade. They supplied the hinterland with imported commodities as well as providing markets for livestock and major local products. Moreover, it was in these coastal towns that cottage industries like weaving and knitting the Banadiri cloth, the manufacture of utensils and tools flourished, and trader communities were established. It was essential to defend such economic resources, and the Banadir revolt (1888-1910), though religious in origin, was motivated by economic factors. The Banadirians blockaded the Italians on the coast for more than two decades, from 1888-1910.

In October 1923, De Vecchi di Val Cismon became the first fascist Governor of Somalia marking a change in Italian strategy in the Horn of Africa. De Vecchi set out to exterminate all who opposed his government's desire for total control over what fascist propaganda called 'La Grande Somalia'. However, the Somalis were heavily armed and led by men who had been given advanced training during the preparation for the First World War. An estimated 16,000 rifles were in Somali hands. The Governor’s first task, therefore, was to order the confiscation of arms and ammunition from the Somalis, particularly from the clans in the inter-riverine region. In March 1924, Sheikh Hassan Barsane, a leader of the Shabelle valley movement known as the Barsane Revolt, convoked a Shir (meeting of elders) where the participants, inflamed with millenarian zeal, denounced the Governor's order. On behalf of the Shir, Barsane wrote the following to the Governor:

In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful ... I have received your letter and understood its contents, but must advise that we cannot obey your orders and join with you in a covenant ... Your government has its laws, and we have ours. We accept no law other than ours. Our law is the law of Allah and his Prophet ... We are not like other people, none of us has ever enrolled in the Zaptie (colonial forces), never! ... and if you come to our land to fight against us, we will fight you with all possible means ... The world is very close to its end, only 58 years remain. We don't want to stay in this world. It is better to die while defending our laws.

After some initial success, the Somali resistance crumbled when Barsane was captured by the Italians on 4 April.

De Vecchi's problems were not over. Further resistance emerged from the Jama'oyin religious settlements which had sprung up in the 19th century in the same region. In 1923, Sufi Baraki united several Jama'a settlements: Buulo Mareerto, Golwing, Muki Dumis and others scattered in the Lower Shabelle region, and set up his headquarters in Barawa, the birthplace of Sheikh Aways Qadir, the founder of the movement. The
major goal of this movement was to propagate the teaching of its founder. The tours of Sufi Baraki to the villages, where he often made provocative speeches, aroused Italian suspicion, and the fascist authorities warned him several times to give up what they called 'these unhealthy activities'. Sufi Baraki was forced to leave Barawa for the extreme north of the Upper Juba region, where a strong religious movement had emerged led by Sharif Alyow al-Sarmani. Sufi Baraki learned many things there, which he later taught to the Lower Shabelle militants. These included plans to fight against tribalism; to bring harmony among the Ikhwan (Muslim) brotherhood; to fight salaried tribal chiefs who were considered agents of the colonial administration; to establish settlements for the protection of the Ikhwan from Italian raids, and to promote learning and training.

Sufi Baraki returned to the Lower Shabelle and established a village called 'Dai Dai', later known as 'Jama'a Dai Dai', located in the heart of the Jidu territory. Eventually, the movement gained the support of Sharif Alyow al-Sarmani, who established his own village at Qorile, later known as Buulo Ashraf, not far from Dai Dai. A partial merging of the two groups occurred, making the Lower Shabelle movement more powerful. Delegations were despatched across the inter-riverine region to obtain support. They contacted Sheikh Murjan, a prominent Qadiri holy man in the Lower Juba. The Italian authorities felt endangered, and as a preemptive measure, the Governor ordered the Barawa District Commissioner to negotiate with the leaders of the movement in a peaceful way. This was not fruitful, and a Zaptie commando was sent against Sufi Baraki and his allies. On 20 October 1924, Zaptie forces besieged Dai Dai Camp; the Ikhwan defended their village and forced the Zaptie to retreat to Barawa leaving behind some of their dead and injured. Sufi Baraki considered the event a miracle, and proclaimed a *Jihad* against the fascist administration. Early in November 1924, the Italians sent well-armed detachments to attack the strongholds of the movement; many centres were attacked, and the Ikhwan fought bravely with arrows and swords.

**Characteristics of the Inter-riverine Resistance**

In dealing with Somali resistance to colonialism, much scholarly attention has been given to the northern Somalia, particularly the rebellion led by Ina 'Abdulle Hassan, known as 'the Dervish Movement'. Southern Somali resistance is not often discussed in Somali scholarship. There were a number of reasons for this. Perhaps the most important is the fact that Somalia's history has been seen mainly through the eyes of what some scholars call the 'orientalist scholarship' which classified southern Somalis as Bantu, culturally inferior to the northern Arab influenced nomads. In addition, Somalia's historiography became obsessed with a mythic monolithic culture, diverting scholars from examining other important themes of Somalia's past. Current scholarship is pointing out the significance of anti-colonial resistance in the inter-riverine region. The list of scholars includes Lee Cassanelli, Virginia Luling, Bernhard Helander, Herbert Lewis and those who contributed to Ali Jimale's recently edited volume, *The Invention of Somalia*.

Inter-riverine society was more diversified than its northern counterpart. At the advent of colonialism, it was divided not only along clan lines, but also on the basis of Sufi order affiliation. Moreover, the region had absorbed people from neighbouring regions; Arabs, Oromos and Bantu among them. One wonders how such a complex society could raise serious resistance against colonialism. Nevertheless, the region produced movements that transcended particular clan interests and fought for the
protection of broader regional political and economic interests. Because the regional economy was integrated, threats to any one sector affected the others. The early Italian blockade of the Banadir ports was a threat not only to particular clans or traders, but threatened to damage the sophisticated network linking the hinterland with the coast. The caravan routes started to fade, and the value of goods dropped sharply. The oral tradition of the time records the inflation caused by the blockade. Indeed, inflation triggered the resistance that involved numerous clans of the coast, such as the Biyamals, the Tunnis, the Cheledis, the Wa’dans, the Abgals, the Shikhals and others. A coalition of these clans prevented the Italian penetration to the hinterland of the inter-riverine region for over two decades (1886-1908).

From 1893 to 1905, when the Italian government assumed direct administration of the southern portion of the inter-riverine region, two companies – the Filonardi Company 1893-1896, and the Benadir Company 1896-1905 – introduced customs and tariff regulations which were anathema to the people of the region. Most early protests were provoked by these measures. Italian colonial records indicate a great deal of Somali discontent. With the introduction of forced labour in the interior, and the toleration of slavery in the newly-established plantations, popular resistance acquired a new dimension. The Nassib Buunto movement is a good example of resistance against slavery and forced labour. Bitter memories of the period are found in the oral tradition of the inter-riverine people. Terms like 'Cologno' (corvee labour) and 'Teen' (shift labour) are reminders of a tragic period in the history of the region, when its people were forced to work on plantations, roads, canals and other construction projects. Workers in the plantations were treated harshly, and many died of over-exertion and disease.

The faith of Islam includes a metaphysics, a cosmology, a moral and political theory. It is not surprising that colonial oppression and the moral disruption of inter-riverine society should lead to the emergence of movements to defend that faith. The Jama’a movement played a leading role in raising the political consciousness of its followers. The sheikhs who led them were the educated elite in a mass of illiterate people. Most of the Jama’a centres were located in the agricultural part of the region where the colonial plantations also developed, and they posed a threat to colonial activities. These centres became safe havens for runaway slaves and outcasts, giving them a fresh start and helping them to integrate into the religious and economic life of the region. The centres also enabled destitute people to acquire land and earn a living while also practicing their faith. Jama’a centres were actually a means by which the Somalis could evade the colonial forced-labour regime. In brief, these communities played a tremendous social and economic role and led most the southern resistance at the time.

As we have seen, the Jama’a were scattered throughout the inter-riverine region, and the colonial authority failed to suppress their activities decisively. Italian frustration is clearly manifested in the reports sent to Rome. Governor Riveri (1920-1923) noted in 1921 that the multiplication and extension of Jama’a communities might be a cause for concern since they were acquiring more land and more adherents along the Shabelle valley. 'By substituting the universal ties of religion for strictly ethnic ones', Riveri added, the Jama’a 'could constitute, sometime in the future, a real danger to the political tranquillity of the colony'. As the examples cited above of Sufi Baraki and Sharif Alyow reveal, Riveri’s warning was prophetic. Although by 1926 the most powerful Jama’a resistance had been defeated and the leadership either killed or detained, the fascist administration still confronted sporadic disturbances and
sabotage from the Ikhwan followers of martyred Sheikhs. It is also evident that millenarianism strongly motivated these movements both in opposition to the colonialists and to rally their own followers. Barsane's letter to the fascist Governor cited above, and his foretelling the end of the world within 58 years, is a clear illustration. The statement that 'we are living in a time of unparalleled woes' is a familiar one in nineteenth and twentieth century African anti-colonial movements. The followers of Sheikh Aways al-Qadiri believe he would be murdered by the Dervishes of the north, and that would be the end of the world. Sheikh Abdulle Issaq from Bardhere, another millenarian, predicted that 'when we are close to the end of the world, Captains and Commissioners will conquer our country'. Similar movements inspired by messianic and millenarian doctrines appeared all over Africa during the colonial era; such as Kimbangui in the Congo, who believed the world would end on 21 October 1921 and Adamawa in Northern Cameroonian, who believed the Mahdi (Messiah) era had already passed, and it was now the epoch of the Dajjal (anti-Christ). The believers, Muslim and Christian alike, had nothing to lose in this just struggle: if they die for the cause, they become martyrs; and if they win, they are heroes. Nassib Buunto, the leader of the Somali anti-slavery movement was hanged in 1907. Sheikh Aways al-Qadiri was murdered in 1909. Sheikh Hassan Barsane was sentenced to death in 1924, but had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment and died in prison in 1929. Sufi Baraki was killed in 1925.

The Struggle for Independence: 1920-1960

Modern political organization in the inter-riverine area has it origins in a philanthropic movement that appeared in the 1920s under the name of al-Jam'iyah al-Khayriyyah al-Wataniyyah (The National Benevolent Organization). In 1947, the Jam'iyah was transformed into a political party, Hizbia Dighil-Mirifle (HDM) (Dighil and Mirifle Party.) By 1957, it had changed its name to Hizbia Dastur Mustaqil al-Sumal (HDMS) (Somali Independent Constitutional Party). For more than 20 years (1947-1968), especially before independence in 1960, HDMS was the true opposition party in the country, given the fact that the dominant nationalist movement, the Somali Youth League, worked closely with the British Military Administration in the 1940s and later with the Italian Trusteeship authorities in the 1950s. During this period, it raised several important issues for Somali political development, including the necessity of undertaking a census of the Somali population as a basic step toward the political development of the country, insisted on 'al-Dastur' (constitution) as vital to democratic governance, and demanded the adoption of a federal system of government as the only way of creating a harmonious Somali state. The HDMS call for decentralization and a federal system of government was motivated by fear, later justified, that the powerful nomadic clans would dominate the Somali state. The Somali Youth League rejected a proposed census in 1956, because of fear it might show the Dighil and Mirifle population outnumbered the Darood who claim to be the largest clan in the country. Indeed, Somalia has never carried out a proper census of its population.

The HDMS was clearly disenchanted in 1956, when the victorious Somali Youth League formed the first Somali cabinet consisting of three Hawiye (including the prime minister), two Darood and one Dir. Though twenty of the sixty elected members of the legislative assembly were Reewin they received not one ministerial portfolio. The HDMS therefore had no choice but to call for decentralization. In fact, the party boycotted the general elections of 1959.
The Independent Era: 1960-69

The former Italian colony of Somalia became independent in 1960, and some months later united with the former British Somaliland Protectorate to form the Somali Republic. Before unification, seats in the southern assembly were proportionately divided among the three major clan families: 30 Reewin, 30 Hawiye, 30 Darood, irrespective of party affiliation. Unification with the north diminished the political importance of the Reewin because it reinforced both the Hawiye and the Darood who have kindred clans living in the north, Issaq and Dir, Dhuulbahante and Warsangeli respectively. The Reewin and the HDMS party could not expect support from the North. Subsequently regional and clan cleavages became sharper. One issue was language. The Reewin speak a distinct language, Mai, which is different from the Maha spoken by most of the Hawiye, Darood and Issaq clans. Until 1960, both languages were used as means of communication in the south, and Radio Mogadishu used to broadcast in both. However, the first government after independence cancelled the Mai programmes for the sake of language uniformity.

Due to the new clan alignments in the aftermath of independence and unification, the SYL was dominated by the Darood. President Osman’s nomination of two successive Darood prime ministers – Abdirashid A. Shermarke in 1960 and Abdirizak H. Hussein in 1964 – indicated this development. In the 1964 elections, the SYL won only 69 out of 123 seats in the national assembly, but managed to co-opt many members of other parties. Among those who crossed the aisle was Mohamed H. Ibrahim Egal, an Issaq former leader of the nationalist movement in the British colony, the Somali National League. This marked a shift in Somali clan alliances, from Hawiye-Issaq to Darood-Issaq, and brought about the victory of Shermarke, a Darood, in the 1967 presidential election. Egal was called to form a new government. For the first time a northerner, was premier and a Darood president of the republic. These developments greatly reduced the significance of other political parties. Between 1967 and 1969, Somali political life was in turmoil, caused partly by the disintegration of alliances and the fragmentation of clans, which passed the political initiative to smaller lineage groups. The Reewin in the HDMS were also divided. The 1969 elections confirmed this trend. More than 60 lineage parties, most of them contesting a single seat, competed for the 123 seats of the national assembly. Weaving a net of lineage groups and clans, the SYL commanded 73 seats, and when the remaining 50 opposition members (three from HDMS) crossed the floor to join it, Somalia had become in effect an one-party state.

During 1960-1969, when the Somali Youth League dominated the political life of independent Somalia, the Reewin found themselves increasingly marginalized and discriminated against in education and state employment, and the inter-riverine region suffered from the actions of the state. The Somali government collaborated with former Italian concessionaires to take over the majority of shares in the banana, sugar and livestock estates in the south. This was followed by a policy of forcing small farmers of the region to sell their land to state officials and army officers. What Ahmed Qassim calls ‘the land rush’ stripped thousands of small farmers of their lands and pushed them into the bush. Because of their nomadic background, the new landlords not only lacked knowledge of farming but, like their Italian predecessors, were also harsh and exploitative. Like the Italians as well, they spoke a language, Maha, that was alien to the region. Land hunting was not confined to the countryside. It went on in the towns of the region, where new landlords built houses and shops in the most preferred sections. The bulk of these ‘land hunters’ belonged the Hawiye, Darood and Issaq clans.
The Siad Barre Era: 1969-1990

It was evident from the start that the disfranchisement of the Reewin would continue under the Barre regime (1969-1990). For example, eleven of the twenty-five members of the military junta, the Somali Revolutionary Council, were Darood, and the rest Hawiye, Issaq, and Dir. The same was true of the makeup of the first Central Committee of the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party, formed in 1976. Clans like the Reewin were excluded from participation in the government of their own country. Furthermore, their land tenure systems were ignored and their property rights violated when many Darood groups were transplanted to the inter-riverine region. The resettlement scheme of 1973-74 is a good example: Over 100,000 drought-stricken pastoralists were resettled in the Lower Shabelle and Middle Juba valleys. The three sites chosen—Kurtunwarey, Sablale, Dujuma—are in the most fertile part of the inter-riverine region.

The Co-operative Law No. 70 of 1973 and the Land Law No. 73 of 1975 were further attempts to deprive the inter-riverine peoples of their land. These laws failed to limit the size of state farms, co-operatives and private owned companies, so that by the mid-1980s, there was not a single piece of arable land along the two rivers that remained unclaimed by state-sponsored projects. The laws failed to protect the small farmers from losing titles to their land. The late I. M. Abyan, in his study on the social impact of agricultural development in Somalia, showed how little benefit these projects brought compared to the harm they did. He reported that most of the small farmlands were taken without compensation. Farmers who resisted trying to protect their land were threatened or imprisoned. The Department of Land Use and Irrigation was very hostile to the inter-riverine farmers and, from the mid-1980s onwards, was the main instrument for the expropriation of their land.


The overthrow of Siad Barre was the prelude to total disintegration. The opposition groups were all clan-based organizations each fighting for a particular clan interest. This is made very clear from an examination of their areas of operation. Some of the groups focused their activities on areas historically controlled by their respective clans. The Somali National Movement (SNM) operated in the Issaq inhabited area of Northern Somalia; the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) in the Mudug region primarily inhabited by Majerteen; the United Somali Congress (USC) in the Hawiye territory of the central regions; and the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) in the inter-riverine regions predominantly populated by Reewin. Other groups were fighting to defend the territorial gains they had made since independence in the inter-riverine and coastal regions of the south. The Somali Patriotic Movement, representing the Ogaden clan, operated in the Middle and Lower Juba valley; the Somali National Front, representing the Marehan, was based in the Gedo region; and the Somali National Alliance, a Habargedir faction, occupied the regions of Banadir, Lower Shabelle, Bakool and Bay. None of these three clans have roots in the regions they currently claim. These regions belong to the Reewin and some Hawiye clan sections, but not the Habargedir.

In January 1991, Mogadishu was captured by USC, and Barre’s regime collapsed. However, this was not quite the end of this story. Barre’s forces maintained strongholds in the inter-riverine regions of the country for almost a year, during which they pursued a scorched earth policy, destroying the infrastructure and bringing agricultural production to a standstill. Because the Reewin were excluded,
from high ranks in the Somali army, the SDM, had no access to arms and lacked sufficient means to protect their people. The inter-riverine people were trapped between Aideed’s forces in the north, Barre’s in southwest, and Morgan’s – Barre’s son-in-law – in the south, in what became known as the ‘triangle of death’. Baidoa, the capital of the region became also known as the ‘city of the walking dead’. It is estimated that nearly 500,000 people died in the man-made famine that followed. After Barre’s army was forced out of the country in mid-1992, Aideed militia looted Baidoa once again, taking everything the dictator’s soldier’s had left behind. One relief official in Baidoa in 1992 said of the starving Somalis: ‘These people look like they are from Auschwitz’. The monthly death rate in August in Baidoa was 3,224; that is 104 a day. In September, the figure rose to 5,979 people a month, or nearly 200 a day. The looting and rampage increased when the US Marines landed in Mogadishu, and the fleeing bandits went on a last minute rampage in Baidoa.

Famine in Baidoa was neither the result of natural or environmental causes, nor the result of the civil war. Baidoa is the richest city in the country and the capital of the most productive agricultural region, and did not experience the level of conflict that was the fate of Mogadishu, Belet Weyn and Kismayu. How then could Reewin suffering be explained, when they had no part in the power struggle? Some have argued that Baidoa was hit by famine due to its inland location which made relief deliveries difficult. If that were the case, then Belet Weyn and Galkayo would have had the same experience as Baidoa, for they are located in the interior, too. One of the poets of Buur Hakaba, whom I interviewed, assessed the causes of the Reewin suffering as follows:

The main cause of the Somali conflict was not a direct conflict between Darood and Hawiye per se, but a competition among them to occupy the land of the Reewin. Their aim was to eliminate the Reewin and then occupy their land.

During my interviews in 1992-94, several elders in Baidoa have quoted Omar Jees, the leader of the SPM, which represents the Ogaden clan of the Darood, addressing his followers, after a brief occupation of Baidoa by the SPM: ‘Dhul baan idiin qabaney hadii aad dhacsan waydaan waa idinka iyo nacasnimadina’, he said, which means: ‘We have conquered a fertile land for you; it is you and your folly that could not keep it’. Sheikh Eedin Alyow, an elder in Buur Hakaba, portrayed the situation dramatically and convincingly.

The Hawiye and Darood had a master plan of extinguishing our people. For example, they started to take all our stored grain first, then they took all the animals that we kept. After several weeks, the murderers came back to check whether the people of the villages were dead or still alive. When they realized that we were eating garas (an edible wild fruit) they started systematically to burn all the garas trees in the area. What could this mean?

This genocidal policy was exemplified by General Aideed and his militia when they blocked food shipments from inter-riverine area. Throughout 1992, and before the US Marines landed on the shores of Mogadishu, Aideed militia prevented food from reaching Baidoa and other parts of southern Somalia. They used various tactics, including forcing relief agencies to use the militia’s trucks and drivers for transportation. Whenever vehicles of the United Nations headed for the inter-riverine region, Aideed militia methodically looted them en route. Finally, when the UN/US command in desperation decided to airlift supplies to Baidoa, Aideed militia captured Baidoa Airport, and imposed a fee of $5,000 per flight, taking a percentage of the food load as well.
After UNOSOM

After the withdrawal of the United States followed by the United Nations, Somalia reverted to its pre-colonial past, consisting of a mosaic of independent clans with different laws and rulers, each with its own ‘militia’. In the north, the Issaq clan proclaimed the independence of former British Somaliland; in the northeast and parts of Mudug inhabited by Majerteen there is talk of establishing a Majerteen state to be called Puntland, whereas in the central region, the Hawiye factions are engaged in mortal conflict for control of the Hawiye homeland. The inter-riverine region is the only one controlled by clans that are not indigenous to it. The Shabelle valley is occupied by the Habargedir, and the Juba valley by Marehan, Ogaden and Majertee militias. This includes the ports of Marka, Barawa and Kismayu. In September 1995, five months after the withdrawal of UNOSOM, the hinterlands of the region – Bay and Bakool – with the country’s most valuable livestock and agriculture resources, were invaded by General Aideed and remain under the control of the Habargedir clan until now.

During the period of UNOSOM, the people of the inter-riverine region established their own regional and district administration and a police force. Organized by the SDM, the Bonka Conference of 7 to 11 March 1993 defined an approach for reconciliation. One of the resolutions of the Conference stated:

"In the light of the current political realities of Somalia, where parts of the country have declared secession, and others are talking about the possibility of federation or regional autonomy, the future reconciliation process should accommodate all these views and put them into perspective ... Somalia should focus on efforts to reconstitute itself by working on its grim reality, forgetting about the past myths which led to the current humiliating political conditions...The international community should support Somalis in putting their nation back together in whatever form of government they choose: a unified state, a confederation or federated states, or even several independent states.

In 1994, Baidoa was no longer ‘the city of death’. The region’s markets offered a range of food and clothing, even quality appliances and sophisticated electronic goods. Huddur, the capital city of Bakool region, became a centre of trade with Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. Here the roads people and goods were safe, and there were even some landing strips serving international flights.

In February 1995, Baidoa hosted the pan-Dighil and Mirifle Congress, which lasted until 19 March 1995. It was the first of its kind in the recent history of the region. Participants included traditional rulers (Sultans, Malaqs) of all Dighil and Mirifle clans, religious leaders, business men and women, intellectuals, and representatives of various clan ‘militias’ of the region. The major purpose of the conference was to unite the inter-riverine communities and to voice their demand for regional autonomy. The conference recommended the formation of four federated states in Somalia: a Riverine State in the south for the Reewin people; a Somaliland State in the north for the Issaq; a Central State for the Hawiye; and a Cape State in the northeast for the Darood. Territorially, the Reewin State comprised the pre-independent regions of Upper Juba, Lower Juba and Banadir. The conference also elected two councils for the Riverine State. The Supreme Administrative Council of 175 members, with Dr. Hassan Sheikh Ibrahim ‘Hassey’ as chairman, and a Supreme Traditional Council of 51 members, with Haji Mukhtar Malaaq Hassan as chairman. The resolutions of the conference were a direct challenge to the contending warlords of the region, particularly General Aideed in the Shabelle valley, and General Morgan in the Juba..."
valley. Six months later, Aideed forces invaded Baidoa, and the short lived experiment in self-rule was aborted.

The Emergence Of Reewin Resistance
Following the capture of Baidoa by Aideed’s forces in September 1995, the newly-established regional political infrastructure was dismantled. Some of the senior members of the elected councils were killed, and many were taken to Mogadishu where they are still detained and reportedly maltreated. A few survivors fled to neighbouring countries. In the aftermath, a group of young officers and intellectuals formed the Reewin Resistance Army (RRA), and from October 1995 began attacking Aideed's forces. The RRA has not produced a political programme, but simply declared its intention to liberate the region from the invaders. It is led by a committee of four: Colonel Hassan Mohamed Nuur ‘Shargaduud’, Ali Mohamed Marguus, Mohamud Mohamed Ahmed ‘Boonow’ and Sayyid Ahmed.

Today, with the Habargedir occupying the farmlands of the Shabelle valley and the grazing areas of Bay and Bakool, while the Darood maintaining their occupation of Juba, the region is experiencing infamous exploitation. The region’s ports are controlled by Darood and Hawiye warlords who are waging what the media dubbed ‘the banana war’. Before the state collapsed, Somalia was earning some $20 million annually from banana exports. That represented around 25 per cent of the country’s total export earnings. Most of it went to Siad Barré and his clique. Today, the banana earnings and other resources of the inter-riverine region go to whoever controls the region and its ports.

Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, Savannah State University, Savannah, Georgia.

Bibliography


Sudan: Between Radical Restructuring and Deconstruction of State Systems

Peter Kok

Commonly perceived as the Sudan’s ‘southern problem’, what is now the oldest conflict in Africa has developed dimensions that are concealed in that narrow formulation. Among these are a) a generalized confrontation between centre and periphery in a state marked by gross iniquities in access to power and resources, b) a conflict over the legitimacy of the current fundamentalist regime in Khartoum, c) a parallel conflict over the legitimacy of the leadership of the southern liberation movement, and d) an intensifying struggle over diminishing resources among ethnic groups in various parts of the country. In the South itself, the conflict has split the liberation movement and has brought the issue of separation to the forefront of the political debate.

In the mid-1930s, Harold Macmichael (1934:274), then Civil Secretary of the Sudan, thought it

doubtful whether the Sudan, a country with no deep traditions and no long historical inheritance, the artificial product of military bargains and whims of geographers, is likely to become fully self-governing.

He was wrong. The Sudan became self-governing in 1954 and formally independent on 1 January 1956. He was, however, right in one basic sense. Independence itself was obtained by fraud perpetrated on the Southern Sudanese – an original sin that still haunts the Sudan today, for the country has been at war with itself for thirty out of forty years of its formal independence. To persuade Southern Sudanese members of Parliament to vote for the Independence Motion, the Northern Sudanese suggested that the request by the Southern Sudanese members for a federal status for the Southern provinces be given full consideration by the next constituent assembly. Federation was subsequently rejected by that Assembly.

The controlling feature of post-colonial Sudan has been a crisis of governance. It expresses itself in various forms, but primarily in the recrudescence of violent political conflict, economic and social stagnation, corruption, alternating between liberal democracy and authoritarian regimes, and the proliferation of obscure ideologies. If governance can be defined as the art of conflict management, and good governance as ‘the proper functioning of a system of conflict management,’ the crisis of governance in the post-colonial Sudan is the art of conflict-generation. The crisis of governance itself is an expression of a basic clash between power politics on one hand and social reality on the other; a contradiction between raison d’état and raison de société. In conventional terms, it is the contradiction of trying to rule what the rulers believe is a nation-state, in pointed disregard of the realities of a pluralist society which is the Sudan.
The dominant social forces in the Sudan have failed to produce a national consensus on the fundamentals of governance such as the nature of the state, the functions of government, the role of culture in nation-building, the criteria for resource and power sharing, and the centrality of fundamental human rights. It is a contention of this work that a national consensus on these fundamentals is a condition *sine qua non* of good governance, a lack of which can have an implosive effect on the state system, and an imposition of a sectional ‘consensus’ as the basis of government is a recipe for political conflict. Such conflict is likely to take violent forms in areas where the harshness of state oppression, poverty, and other factors leave the people with no other choice but to rebel.

**Formation of the Sudanese State**

Four principal agents were involved in the formation of the Sudanese state and are responsible for the resultant defects: 1) Egyptian colonialism, misleadingly called Turco-Egyptian rule, 2) the Mahdiyya, which in reality was the Abdullahi Khalifate, 3) the so-called Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, which was British colonial rule, and 4) the rule of the *jellaba*. The *jellaba* are a group of Arab Sudanese, mainly resident in north-central Sudan, but active all over the country, who have benefited from such activities as trade (including slave trade) and acting as auxiliaries to successive colonial bureaucracies. British colonialism strengthened the *jellaba*’s hold over internal trade and commerce and expanded their bureaucratic stratum. After 1924, the British prepared the *jellaba* to dominate the officer corps of the Sudanese armed forces.

At independence, the *jellaba* inherited state power from the British through the northernisation of the public service at the expense of the African Sudanese. Parts of the economy then were still in the hands of Europeans and Middle Easterners. The *jellaba* replaced these expatriates following the nationalisation and confiscation measures taken by the Nimeiri regime in 1970. Nimeiri is rightly credited for having thus unified the commercial and bureaucratic strata of the *jellaba*. Whereas the scope of this article does not permit a comprehensive consideration of the role of each agent in the formation of the present Sudan, the following general observations may be made: neither Egyptian colonialism nor the Mahdiyya created a Sudanese nation; quite the opposite. Both left the legacy of slavery and memories of the violence and suffering that went with slave raiding and trading. They left a negative image of state authority – violent, authoritarian, corrupt and, in the case of the Khalifate, nepotistic. They did not contribute to nation-building. The Egyptians had no interest in this because they were colonialists; the Khalifa because he was an Islamic internationalist – ironically with a tribal power base. The cleavage between Arab and African Sudanese, which is the most important factor in the crisis of the Sudan today, emerged during that period.

British colonialism defined and consolidated the state in the Sudan. Among its legacies are the consolidation of an Arab-Islamic hegemonic bloc in North-Central Sudan, and the conservation of underdevelopment and tribal peculiarities in the South. This evolved into the structural disequilibrium which manifests itself in the conflictual centre-periphery dichotomy. To most Southern Sudanese and indeed to some British colonial officials, the most untenable part of the British legacy was the handing over of the state to the northern Sudanese nationalists, without any safeguards for the South and other marginalized regions in the African belt. The era of *jellaba* rule commenced with the granting of self-government in 1954. The era of crisis and conflict also began then.
The \textit{jellaba} vision of state and nation was self-centred and self-serving, therefore, it did not enjoy a national consensus. They sought to build a state run from Khartoum and ruled largely by them, and a nation united through Islam and the Arab language. Socio-economic development, as reflected in various development plans and actual practice, was based on the growth-pole model. The relatively developed central Sudan was to be the centre of investment and development, while other regions were to benefit from the trickle-down effect of this region.

The lack of a national consensus on the model of nation-state building pursued by the \textit{jellaba} is illustrated by the elusive search for a 'permanent constitution'. A constitution is a covenanted consensus on the fundamentals of government. The \textit{jellaba} blocked all genuine efforts to reach such a consensus because it would have required the dismantlement of their hegemony over the Sudanese state. Instead, they sought to impose their own model designed to reinforce the structural injustices on which that hegemony rests. Significantly, the \textit{jellaba} sought and still seek to legitimise that hegemony by invoking all sorts of ideologies, including what one observer called Islamo-fascism (von Arnim, 1986). \textit{Jellaba} rule has not been unopposed. In areas, such as southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains opposition has taken violent forms.

\section*{Anatomy of Conflict}

\subsection*{Legitimacy of the National Islamic Front (NIF)}

The NIF took over state power on 30 June 1989 by using its own cadres in the armed forces overthrowing a democratically elected government. It was the second time that a political party in the Sudan staged a \textit{coup d'état} (the Sudan Communist Party is widely believed to have staged the coup of 19 July 1971) but the first time it was done by a party with representation in parliament. Indeed, one of the leaders of the coup was the none other than the head of the opposition who, as a member of the National Assembly, had sworn on the Koran to uphold and defend the Constitution.

The NIF's reasons for staging the coup are beyond the scope of this essay (Kok, 1996). They relate to the need to preserve the political, financial, and social gains the party had made under the Nimeiri and Saddiq regimes, as well as to safeguard the \textit{jellaba} hegemony that was threatened by militant forces in the marginal regions of Sudan. The usurpation of power by the NIF provoked serious opposition from various political forces in the North. However, this is primarily a conflict within the hegemonic bloc over power and the rules of the game.

\subsection*{The Centre-Periphery Conflict}

The conflict over the legitimacy of the NIF regime is a microcosm of the wider conflict over the legitimacy of the state itself. The latter is usually portrayed as a conflict between North and South, Arab versus African, or Muslim versus Christian. However, it is now generally understood that it is a clash over state power and access to resources. It arises from the fact that state formation in the Sudan created structural inequality, vesting political and economic power in the hands of the \textit{jellaba} community who are, in fact, a minority even in the North.

The centre-periphery conflict has a prominent Centre-South dimension which should not be overlooked in any conflict resolution scheme. However, what is called the 'Southern problem' is in fact a manifestation of the general crisis in governance and the
Southern response thereto. The Southern reaction to that crisis has taken violent forms whenever the central authority sought to appropriate what Southerners regard as their strategic assets. These include leadership cadres, exclusively Southern military units in the armed forces, minerals and water resources. Whenever the central government has tried to expropriate or neutralise any of those assets, which in itself is arguably an act of violence, the South has reacted with force. Conceiving it as a 'Southern problem' led peace-makers in the past to concentrate on making arrangements for the South, disregarding the symmetrical necessity of effecting far-reaching changes in the structures of power in the centre.

Conflict over Basic Resources

The competition for resources in conditions of increasing scarcity is the process that shapes the confrontation in the Horn of Africa. The mediating role of the state plays in it renders this process intrinsically political and this means that only groups can compete (Markakis, 1984:235).

Most of the natural resources in the Sudan (including known mineral resources) are located south of the 13th parallel. This area covers southern Darfur, southern Kordofan, southern Blue Nile, and the whole of Southern Sudan. These areas are predominantly inhabited by African Sudanese. North of the 13th parallel and away from the riverine belt, northern Sudan is desert and semi-desert land; creeping desertification is consuming the savannah belt of the North at an alarming rate. Much of the land in northern Sudan, outside the riverine areas, cannot support animal and human life as before. As a result, a conflict-generating southward expansion by northern nomads, farmers, investors, slave-raiders, traders, poachers, and adventurers into the African belt has been under way for some time. This process acquired added momentum with the discovery of oil in the mid-1970s in western and northern Upper Nile region. The conflict is particularly acute in the area between latitude 13, 9 degrees North, an area sometimes known as 'the beefy waist' or the 'sore waist of Sudan', depending on whether one is emphasizing the riches or the conflict in this interface zone.

The state supports the Arab element in this zone to acquire agricultural and grazing land from the autochthonous population, using all means including violence. The local African tribes rallied behind the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) when it first entered this area in 1985, and the government responded by arming the Baggara Arabs and set them loose against the SPLA and the African peoples in this area (de Waal, 1993:142-156; Africa Watch, 1992). The massacre of more than 1,500 Dinka by the Rezayqat Arabs in April 1987 at Daen (Mahmut & Baldo, 1987); the massacres of more than 1,000 Shilluk by the Sabha Arabs in December 1989 at Jebelein, the enslavement of Nuba and Dinka tribesmen by various Arab murahalin (tribal militias armed by the government) since 1985, and the ethnic cleansing carried out in the Nuba Mountains by the NIF regime, are examples of the aggravated nature of the conflict in this zone over the last ten years. Since the arrival of the SPLA in 1985, the conflicts in this zone have dovetailed with the general conflict over governance and justice in the Sudan.

The Intra-SPLA Conflict

The intra-SPLA conflict was heralded by the Nasir Declaration of 28 August 1991, announcing the deposition of Dr John Garang from the leadership of the movement. This internecine conflict has led to enormous loss of life and property among the
Sudan: Between Radical Restructuring and Deconstruction of State Systems

Southerners. It has divided and weakened the SPLA, tarnished its reputation, lowered its national, regional, and international prestige. Moreover, it has retarded the prospects for a just and lasting resolution of the conflict by giving the NIF-controlled government the chance to exploit the split to win a series of otherwise undeserved military victories. These victories have in turn prolonged the life of the regime.

The conflict started as a power struggle within the SPLA leadership, particularly within the former Politico-Military High Command (PMHC). In fact, the Declaration was a call by three members of the PMHC to the SPLA to depose John Garang. The result was a split of the movement, initially into two factions: the Nasir faction and the Mainstream (Torit) faction. Subsequently, Nasir subdivided into several more factions, whereas Mainstream with John Garang retained control of the main body of the SPLA.

The Nasir Declaration cited a number of grievances such as Garang’s alleged one-man rule; the lack of institutions for democratic participation, a lack of clear strategic objectives for the movement, nepotism, corruption, and violation of human rights. Such grievances had been voiced, publicly and widely, earlier by members of the SPLA and outsiders. They had been brought to the attention of Colonel Garang, who promised to initiate a process of correction. It was anticipated that these matters would be taken up at a meeting of the Political and Military High Command of the SPLA scheduled for late summer of 1991. The circular of the Nasir faction entitled ‘Why Garang Must Go Now’ was in circulation before then. Subsequently, the case made by the Nasir commanders was weakened by attacks made by their forces on the Dinka population bordering Nuerland and their increasing collaboration with the regime in Khartoum. Attempts at reconciliation later foundered on the issue of leadership.

The Split in Perspective

The SPLA started as rassemblement of a number of groups united in a common cause against the government of the Sudan. Power struggles within the movement erupted almost from the start and claimed a lot of lives (Johnson & Prunier, 1993:117-141). They were finally resolved by force and, thereafter, emphasis was placed on military discipline, security, centralization of decision-making, control of information, and intelligence surveillance. Fear that the movement could be hijacked by politicians or opportunists delayed internal democratisation and election of leaders. The result was an authoritarian structure in which open discussion, dialogue between the leadership and the people, and participation by the population were missing. A basic contradiction arose between the SPLA’s authoritarian structure on one hand, and its commitment to liberate the people from oppression and injustice on the other. This contradiction was responsible for the crisis.

The split occurred at a time when the crisis of authoritarian governance was reaching a climax in the region with the collapse of the military dictatorships in Somalia and Ethiopia. The SPLA leadership had ample time to read the signs of the times and to respond appropriately. However, intense military activity during 1985-1991, and the preparation to capture Juba had priority. The SPLA arose out of social milieu still characterised by tribal consciousness. In the context of struggles for power, some people succumb to the temptation of appealing to tribal chauvinism for the purposes of attaining or maintaining power. This tendency plays into the hands of the oppressor, who has consistently employed the age-old tactics of ‘divide, conquer and rule’. According to Freire (1993:122),
It is in the interest of the oppressor to weaken the oppressed ... to isolate them, to create and deepen rifts among them.

Ample evidence exists of how the government of the Sudan uses disinformation, material rewards, blackmail, and empty promises to deepen the split within the SPLA (Kok, 1997). It scored a major propaganda success lately by signing a Political Charter with factions that have defected from the SPLA. The Charter is an unequivocal endorsement of NIF policies on maintaining the unity of Sudan and the supremacy of Shari'a law. It also recognizes the present structure of government and the regional borders that have been redrawn to deprive the South of its agricultural and oil-bearing lands. One faction, the Southern Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM), is deployed near the oil wells to protect oil extraction by the government and the Canadian-based Arakis Energy Corporation.

The grievances voiced in the Nasir Declaration became the basis for a gradual reform in the SPLA. The National Convention (April/May 1994) was the first serious step towards democratic rule. A National Liberation Council (NLC) and a National Executive Council (NEC) were formed. A number of conferences followed, which promoted the practice of open debate and the airing of grievances. These were also brainstorming sessions which generated ideas for policy-making.

Separation Versus Unity

A major point raised by the Nasir faction and by many Southerners was the sort of state the movement is fighting for. They questioned the SPLA's commitment 'to establish a united socialist Sudan, not a separate Southern Sudan', and proposed to fight for a separate and independent state. The regime would concede separation of the South if this were clearly demanded; so went the argument.

In its 1983 Manifesto, the SPLA was vehemently anti-separatist (Manifesto, 1983); however, a close look at its objectives revealed that the unity it wanted was a highly qualified one and subject to such conditions as,

> the radical restructuring of the power of the central government in a manner that will end, once and for all, the monopoly of power by any group of self-seeking individuals whatever their background, whether they come in the uniform of political parties, family dynasties, religious sects or army officers (Khalid, 1987:26-7).

Northern Sudanese Attitudes

The agenda of the SPLA attracted some groups in northern Sudan and repelled others. The marginalised Africans generally welcomed the SPLA, and some, like the Nuba joined the movement in substantial numbers. Social strata wedded to religious sectarianism were suspicious and even hostile, despite the SPLA's commitment to the unity of the Sudan. In their eyes, the SPLA's hostility to what it called the ruling minority clique, and its commitment to redistribute state power was more alarming than assurances on the unity of the Sudan (Sikaingais, 1993:78-96).

Traditional political parties such as the Democratic Unity Party and the Umma were also disturbed by the SPLA agenda. However, they saw political gains to be made in winning the SPLA as a partner in peace-making. Accordingly, a self-serving rivalry developed between these two parties over-reaching a peace agreement with the SPLA. (The DUP which was hostile to the SPLA from its inception, concluded the Sudan
Peace Initiative in Addis Ababa on 16 November 1988 in which the ‘freezing’ of shari'a laws and the convening of a National Constitution Conference were agreed upon (Khalid, 1990:455-6). The Umma Party leader Saddiq al Mahdi, who was also the Prime Minister from 1986 to mid-1989, also met the SPLA leadership for ten hours in Addis Ababa in July 1986 in an effort to reach a formula for peace. After some hesitation, he finally agreed to seriously seek peace, but was overthrown by the coup of Brigadier al-Bashir.

The so-called Modern Forces, a term which included middle and lower middle class professionals, trade unions, and various secular-oriented groups were sympathetic, if not supportive of, the SPLA’s vocation. Some of them rightly saw the SPLA as an ally against the forces of sectarian and radical Islam. However, some of them lost their sympathy for the SPLA when the latter took the war to the North. Others, particularly the pan-Arabists amongst them, saw the southern movement as a threat to the Arab identity of the Sudan, despite the SPLA assurances to the contrary. It soon became clear that despite the non-racial and democratic message of the SPLA, Arab Sudanese stood aloof. To them, the SPLA’s commitment to the unity of the Sudan was not reassuring. It was the balance of forces within the Sudan and the privileged position of the jellaba that mattered. In this light, the SPLA was seen as more threatening than any separatist movement in the South.

Southern View

Among the Southern Sudanese, the unionist aspect of the SPLA’s agenda evoked mixed reactions. Some saw it as a dilution of Southern Sudanese nationalism and a deviation from the real political desideratum of independence for the South. A former leading member of SPLA confessed that it was a choice imposed by the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia as a condition for supporting the SPLA (Arok, 1993). Others felt the commitment to liberate the whole Sudan and to establish a just state was politically a sound strategy. It appeals to all the oppressed Sudanese, and the African Sudanese in particularly. It made it possible to attract support from the Nuba Mountains and the Ingessina Hills, and to generate a feeling of solidarity with the SPLA among the people of marginalized regions outside the South. The ‘united Sudan’ approach of the SPLA deprives the jellaba of the winning card of anti-secessionism, which they used so effectively against the southern movement in the sixties and early seventies. They are now using religious slogans such as jihad and ‘defence of Arab civilisation’, which are designed to fan secessionist reactions among Southerners.

Admittedly, the regional and international environment is not as hostile to secession as it used to be. Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to raise the banner of secession without adequate military means to secure it. Indeed, except for the case of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where separation was peacefully agreed upon, and of the states that emerged out of the collapse of the former USSR, all other cases of successful secession had to be accomplished militarily before they were ratified politically and recognised internationally (see the cases of Bangladesh (1971), Slovenia (1992), Croatia (1993, Somalia Republic (1992), and Eritrea (1993)).

The ‘united Sudan’ approach keeps a number of options open for the SPLA: the option of its coming to power in the Sudan with its allies, and restructuring the state unconformity with its vision. In a restructured state, the southern constituency of the SPLA will not be disadvantaged. Under such an arrangement, there would be no jellaba hegemony, the oppressed people would have self-rule in their respective...
regions, and would participate effectively in the institutions of the central government. Alternatively, the option of independence together with the Nuba Mountains and southern Blue Nile remains open.

The debate over ultimate goals has been overtaken by the general acceptance of the right to self-determination for the people the Southern Sudan and other marginalised area, stipulated in the Washington Declaration (October 1993), the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Asmara Agreement (June 1995), and NDA’s London Declaration (November 1995) (The NDA was formed by the Northern Party and the SPLA). The final choice has thus been left for the people to make in ‘an internationally supervised referendum after a four-year interim period’. The choice would be between independence, federation, and confederation.

Peter Kok, Hamburg, Germany.

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Obituary: Claude Ake

J 'Bayo Adekanye

The tragic news has been received of the untimely death of Professor Claude Ake, a top-rate Nigerian political economist, who was killed along with 131 other passengers and nine crew members in the Boeing 727 airplane crash disaster near Lagos last Thursday, 7 November 1996. Ake had just presided over a national workshop on conflict resolution in Africa held at the Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS) in the oil city of Port Harcourt, and was on his way to keep a working dinner appointment with the Swedish Ambassador in Lagos that fateful Thursday when he met his tragic death.

He was born 18 February 1939. A graduate of the University of Ibadan, where he took his B.Sc. Hons. degree in 1962; Ake obtained his Ph.D. from Columbia University, New York in 1967. He had been recipient of numerous international fellowships and awards at various times, including the Rockefeller, Ford, MacArthur, and Brookings. In 1992, he was awarded his country's highest academic prize the Nigerian National Merit Award.

Professor Ake had had a distinguished academic career, having taught in many universities at home and abroad, including Carlton, Columbia, Dar es Salaam, and Nairobi. He was appointed Professor of Political Economy, University of Port Harcourt in 1977. He had held many top research positions. He was former Head, Department of Political Science, and Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt; Foundation Member and one of the Past Presidents of the Nigerian Political Science Association; Research Director, African Association for Political Science (AAPS); Consultant, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); former President of the Executive Committee of the Council for Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) based in Dakar; and Founder and Executive Director, Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS), Port Harcourt, which he held until his death.

An internationally renowned scholar, Ake was the author of numerous scholarly works, among which are the following books: *A Theory of Political Integration* (Dorsey, 1967); *Revolutionary Pressures in Africa* (Zed, 1978); *The Theory of Political Development: Social Science as Imperialism* (Ibadan Univ. Press, 1979); *A Political Economy of Africa* (Longman, 1981); *The Political Economy of Nigeria*, (Longman, 1985); and most recently, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Brookings, 1996).

Ake was an engaged scholar who combined the best in scholarship with a commitment to help the poor, the downtrodden, and the oppressed. A very profound scholar, Ake’s most distinguishing trait lay in the simplicity of the man and his ideas and the way in which he tended to express them. He was a supremely confident person, and yet very much noted for his very shy, unassuming, and unobtrusive nature. A firm believer in the ennobling role of politics both as an activity and discipline, Claude Ake was also always at pains to show why and how politics, like colonialism, continued to contribute to the underdevelopment of the African continent. He was both a social critic and an optimist. With such an orientation, it was only to
be expected that Professor Ake would be an implacable opponent of military rule, particularly in his own country. He considered military rule and intellectual function to be differently structured and oriented: the former because actuated by respect for hierarchy, order, and discipline; and the latter, by almost antithetical ideas, including those of egalitarianism, inquisitiveness, and sceptical outlook. Ake was a born democrat at heart, but not necessarily in the exclusivist western-liberal definition of the term.

Ake was one of Nigeria’s leading critics of Shell and the oil industry and, therefore, a supporter of the late Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Movement for the Survival of Ogoniland (MOSOP) in their cause and crusade against the economic and environmental damage and destruction wrought by Shell and the oil industry to the riverine areas. By some curious irony of fate, Ake’s tragic death took place close to the anniversary of the brutal killing of the environmental activist and leader of the Ogoni minority rights group Ken Saro-Wiwa. By Claude’s tragic and untimely death, one has lost a very good friend, senior professional colleague, and compatriot; the Nigerian political science profession, easily the best and the brightest member; and the African intellectual community, one of its most stimulating and engaged scholars. He will surely be missed for a long time to come by all those who knew him. May his soul rest in perfect peace.

Babu Remembered

In the last issue of ROAPE we carried a tribute to Babu who died in August. As a way of remembering him we are including in this issue (and hopefully continuing with your contributions!), a bit of levity. Babu loved story-telling, as a way of either getting a point across or as a way of de-bunking those in power. We hope you appreciate the following as much as Babu did in the telling.

... it comes from Egypt, when Nasser was President. In fact many political jokes were circulating in Cairo at that time, all poking fun at Nasser. This drove him wild so he got the secret police to track down the source. They went incognito into cafes and bazasars and whenever they heard a joke asked where the raconteur heard it, making elaborate genealogical trees tracing back the story telling. These networks seemed to point to one small shoemaker in the bazaar. His place was raided and this little fellow was hauled at dead of night to the palace where he was confronted by Nasser, who, without identifying himself, immediately launched into him:

'I hear you like telling stories?'
'Who doesn’t?'
'Stories that ridicule Nasser?'
'Well, I don’t know about that, but I am interested in politics.'
'Do you know that ridiculous one about Nasser and Cleopatra?'
'Well ... maybe I did tell one like that.'
'What about that shocking one about Nasser and the Sphinx? Do you know that?'
'Well, maybe I have told one along those lines.'
'And do you know the one about Nasser and fat King Farouk?'
'Well, now you mention it ...'

Then Nasser, blowing his top, yelled:

'Do you know Nasser is the uncontested leader of 70 million Egyptians, the national saviour, the symbol of unity for the whole Arab people?'
'That’s not one of mine - but it’s really funny.'

A Nigerian ‘Joke’

A glimpse of the incredible self-esteem of the military personnel who rule Nigeria – in contrast to the common perception of these people as thugs – was offered by a
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Under the Old Mim Tree

*‘Letekidan’*

Ray of warming sun
shining on
desiccated peach trees
bereft of memory.
The afternoon breeze
calms the aching heart
longing for dusk

In the shadow
of the old mim tree
we sit remembering
the days of childhood
our broken dreams
our scattered lives
We ponder our hesitant return
to normalcy.

How we longed for this moment
crowded now with the spirit
of those who did not live
to see this hard-won peace.

No-one should be surprised
by our impatience.
We have waited so long ...
the days pass by so swiftly ...

It is time to talk and live
in the present tense
setting aside the seductive
sweet or bitter call
of the past
and the fragile promise
of tomorrow.

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Stars and moon find us
still there
under the old mim tree
weaving a healing
wholeness.

This poem met with great
enthusiasm on the Eritrean ‘net’

_Selam, kubrat ahu‘n ahatn_
zelalemawi zekri neswatna!!!

Time has come to worry me,
I am at that age, barely begun 20
Introduced to womanhood
did not know, wasn’t prepared for it.

_I heard talk of joy, and laughter_
in the living room, there are men
handsome men, I have never seen before
the beauty of their age, reflected at me
as I stood behind the curtain.

suddenly, the silence took over
they interrupted the laughter and the
talk
a moment of truth had controlled the
room
the priest cleared his voice,
_for seconds, I waited to hear him preach_
Then he started saying in deep voice.

*‘she is indeed a beautiful woman*_
a daughter of respected family,
from pure blood, and decent kin
our son glimpsed, and liked her
we are here to ask your permission
to share you daughter with us
become one of us and let us become
yours.’

From behind the curtain, I sat numb
urged from inside, wanted to interrupt
desired to stop their negation about me
quit talking, I wanted to tell them
about my future and my life
I intended to tell them,
I am my own person
and have control over my life.
But, I don’t. Never have.
huge reception in Lagos to mark the publication of the autobiography of the recently retired Head of the Air Force. He and other sycophantic speakers suggested his life story as a model for young Nigerians. He had modestly entitled the book, *Garlanded with Honours*. Unfortunately, this is not a joke.

**Under the Old Mim Tree**

*'Letekidan'*

Ray of warming sun shining on desiccated peach trees bereft of memory. The afternoon breeze calms the aching heart longing for dusk

In the shadow of the old mim tree we sit remembering the days of childhood our broken dreams our scattered lives We ponder our hesitant return to normalcy.

How we longed for this moment crowded now with the spirit of those who did not live to see this hard-won peace.

No-one should be surprised by our impatience. We have waited so long ... the days pass by so swiftly ...

It is time to talk and live in the present tense setting aside the seductive sweet or bitter call of the past and the fragile promise of tomorrow.

Stars and moon find us still there under the old mim tree weaving a healing wholeness.

**This poem met with great enthusiasm on the Eritrean 'net'**

*Selam, kubrat ahwa’t aha'n zelalemawi zekri neswatna!!!*

Time has come to worry me, I am at that age, barely begun 20 Introduced to womanhood did not know, wasn’t prepared for it.

*I heard talk of joy, and laughter* in the living room, there are men handsome men, I have never seen before the beauty of their age, reflected at me as I stood behind the curtain.

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*'she is indeed a beautiful woman a daughter of respected family, from pure blood, and decent kin our son glimpsed, and liked her we are here to ask your permission to share you daughter with us become one of us and let us become yours.'*

From behind the curtain, I sat numb urged from inside, wanted to interrupt desired to stop their negation about me quit talking, I wanted to tell them about my future and my life I intended to tell them, I am my own person and have control over my life. But, I don’t. Never have.
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I couldn't command my legs to cross the curtain
my tongue tied, remained speechless
my tears started rolling, to calm me
my anger struggled, to check me.

I had no say on my own life
I don't have the choice of my future
suddenly, I realize I am an object
up for sale, no purpose of profit
I am a woman, I have been for centuries.

I had so much to say, a lot to choose from
I have dreams, hopes, and plans for the future
Yet, no one bothered to ask, and share my view
they have no room or time for me or my ideas.

You see, I was taught to be good
polite, and to respect others
to be a woman, not to raise my voice
that is why, I did not oppose
when my womanhood was for sale.

Mother always told me
'you are a woman, you should act a certain way'
to be accepted, she advised and taught me to follow her lessons.
she never used her words to teach me things
she didn't have to, I understood her silence.
I listened to her closely, she is my role model
she is my mother.

Like all mothers, she expected a lot of me, to be married to a perfect man
a man from a nearby village, just like my father
she wished and prayed for me to be like her.

so many times, I wished we could talk
to learn about life, about marriage, about womanhood,
ask her about happiness and sadness
about divorce, about sex, and pregnancy and bearing children
and about life and its obstacles.
But we never did.

We never really talked about things
never had female bonding or family time
you see, it was taboo
to talk about the unspeakable, to think about the unthinkable
to imagine of worst possibilities in life
the barriers were too heavy,
my mother never questioned her mother so, I never enquire her.
how could I?

So, here comes that day,
for me to be trapped in marriage
that I never approved or had a say
It will be settled soon, it is already arranged.

How could I say no!
my mother never said no.
nor did her mother or any woman
If I do, say no, break the hegemony
how could I live with the rejection?
rejection of my own family
fear of being disowned
how could I break the cycle,
the deepest and strongest traditional cycle,

I was raised believing.
My mind tells me something
yet, my heart advice me another
what is important to me?
the value of tradition that I adore or the values I have come to enjoy
that respect my womanhood.
I am confused and torn apart!

I hear he is a good man, hard working and kind
the elders in my living room have decided what is best for me.
When do I get to decide what is best for me?
when do I choose my future?
when do I get the respect of my womanhood?

Is any one listening?
yared
The Somali in Ethiopia

John Markakis

Persuading the Somali living in Ethiopia to shed their irredentist aspirations and the dream of Greater Somalia was a conspicuous initial success for the regime that came to power in that country in 1991 (see ROAPE 59, 1994). Undoubtedly, the disintegration of the Somali state itself had something to do with it. Be that as it may, the Somali apparently accepted the offer of self-government within a decentralized Ethiopian state and plunged enthusiastically into political competition for control of their regional government. They did this in characteristic Somali fashion: each clan produced its own political party, and soon there were more than a dozen. The Ogaden, the dominant clan in the region that traditionally bore its name, was initially represented by two organizations. The veteran Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF), founded in the mid-1970s, was now overshadowed by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), formed a decade later by defectors from the WSLF who had exchanged Somali irredentism for Ogaden nationalism and aspired to set up their own state. Two Islamic organizations also made their appearance— one representing militant fundamentalism, the other the traditional religious leadership. While both aspired to transcend clan boundaries, their support, as their names indicate, came mainly from the Ogaden clan. The formal name of the first is Ogaden Islamic Union, and of the second Islamic Solidarity Party — Western Somalia — Ogaden.

In the first elections for the regional government, held in 1992, the ONLF won around 70 seats and the WSLF 10, out of a total 110 seats in the regional assembly. With an additional 7 seats won by Tadamun (Solidarity), the traditionalist Islamic party, the Ogaden commanded an absolute majority in the regional assembly and took control of the regional government. Both the president and vice-president of the region were ONLF members, and the Front also dominated the regional executive. The ONLF’s commitment to the new order in Ethiopia was not solid. Its chairman, Sheikh Ibrahim Abdalla, a graduate of Islamic jurisprudence from the university of Riyadh, was reluctant to accept Ethiopian sovereignty, and stayed in Saudi Arabia. In his absence, Abdulahi Mohammed Sadi, a former WSLF member and one of the founders of the ONLF, became president of what was designated at the time as Region 5. He avowed to test Ethiopian intentions and, if necessary, to exercise to right to self-determination. Relations between the two leaders were far from smooth, and the ONLF was riven with factionalism. By contrast, the fundamentalist Islamic group, made no secret of its opposition to any collaboration with Ethiopia’s rulers, and refused to take part in the elections.

The Somali claimed Dire Dawa, the most important town in southeast Ethiopia, for their regional capital, but this claim was strongly contested by the Oromo. The central government settled the issue by making Dire Dawa a separate self-governing entity. The ONLF then chose Gode, at the western end of the Somali region, as the capital. A remote and inaccessible township, of some 12,000 inhabitants, bereft of road connections and facilities, including telephones, it lies deep into Ogaden clan territory.

Hussein Mohammed Adam observed (ROAPE 54, 1992) that Somali society is obsessively preoccupied with ‘the issue of equality and recognition on the part of individuals, families, sub-clans, clans and clan families’, and the commonest cause belli of clan conflict is the rise of one clan to a position of dominance. Not surprisingly, Ogaden control of the regional government united all the other clans in opposition, and they set about to derail the newly-established regional adminis-
tration. They took advantage of the fact that the regional leadership spent several months early 1993 in Addis Ababa, arranging for the transfer of government personnel, assets and records to region 5, a time when sizeable hotel bills and other expenses were incurred. When they returned to Gode in July, they were accused of fund misappropriation by the Ministry of Justice in Addis Ababa. The entire regional executive council was replaced, and the regional president, Abdulahi Mohammed Sadi, was thrown in prison. When he was released on bail, he fled abroad.

He was replaced by Hassan Jire Qalinle, a former pilot of the Police Air Wing in Somalia. He had been elected as a member of the WSLF and switched to the ONLF afterwards. In February 1994, the assembly of region 5 met in Jijiga, and in a outburst against the alleged interference of the central government in Somali regional affairs, it voted to exercise the right of self-determination, i.e., secession. Less than two months later, Hassan Jire and his deputy were removed for ‘preventing the people of the region from enjoying the benefits of the transitional period’ (Ethiopian Herald, 9 April 1994). He was replaced by Abdurahman Ugaz Mahmud, who had been director of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission branch in Gode. An Ogaden clansman, he was supported by the other clans because he was not a member of the ONLF. In August of that year, nearly all the bureau heads and their deputies in the regional administration were dismissed for corruption. Abdurahman himself was dismissed in December 1994 for ‘obstructing development projects’ (Ethiopian Herald, 6 December 1994). The vice-president, Ahmed Makahil Hussein, also an Ogaden clansman, became acting president.

Needless to say, there was preciously little sign of development in the region during these years. On the other hand, the political struggle intensified and the stakes were raised recklessly. The opposition clans strove to forge a united front against the Ogaden, encouraged by the central government’s growing disenchantment with the ONLF. Initially, the government wisely had stayed out of Somali regional affairs, and had not sponsored an affiliate political organization in region 5, as it did nearly everywhere in Ethiopia. However, it soon began to have second thoughts. Lacking firm leadership and direction, the ONLF spoke with many voices, some calling for secession and others for acceptance of the reformed Ethiopian state. The central government was involved in the removal of three successive Somali regional presidents, none of who stayed in office more than seven months. A number of regional officials and ONLF members were also imprisoned. All were charged with embezzlement of funds, abuse of authority and sundry other crimes. This effectively crippled the regional administration, alienated the Ogaden clansmen, and provoked sporadic clashes between government forces and members of the ONLF. Itihad, which was threatening insurrection, eagerly joined the hostilities.

The effort to unite the opposition bore fruit early in February 1994, with the formation of the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL), at a meeting held at Hurso military training camp near Dire Dawa, which lasted three days and was addressed by then Prime Minister Tamrat Layne. He was accompanied by the two Somali members of his cabinet, who became president and secretary general respectively of the new party. The president, Abdul Majid Hussein, was educated in Ethiopia and Europe and had been an international civil servant before becoming Minister of External Economic Cooperation in Ethiopia. He is an Ishaq, a clan which has been feuding violently for decades with the Ogaden over possession of the Haud pasturelands along the eastern border. Samsudin Ahmed, the secretary general of ESDL, is a Gadabursi, and was a civil servant in Addis Ababa before becoming vice-minister in the Ministry of
Mineral Resources and Energy. Neither of them had previous connection with Somali nationalist and clan politics. The ESDL claimed twelve clans, including the Ogaden, were represented in its Executive Committee.

The day before the Hurso meeting began, then President Meles Zenawi addressed a gathering of Somali elders and politicians in Harar urging them to cooperate. He pointedly warned that the right of secession was to be exercised 'by the people and the nation, not a political party or a clan' (Ethiopia Herald, 11 February 1994). Meles returned to the region in January 1995, to address a conference on peace and development at Kebri Dehar. The leadership of most groups attended, including a delegation of the ONLF led by Abdirazak Tibba, a member of its executive committee. There they signed an agreement to keep the peace and participate in the elections. Itihad stayed away.

The Ogaden now made an effort to close ranks in the face of the massed clan opposition. The WSLF, which had come out unequivocally against secession, joined with Tadamun to form the Western Somali Democratic Party (WSDP) in 1994. The ONLF was invited to join, and a delegation led by Omar Nur, a legendary WSLF commander in the 1970s, engaged in discussions. They proved fruitless allegedly because Hassan Jire, who had earlier returned to the WSLF, was made leader of the WSDP.

National and regional elections were held again in mid-1995. The ESDL contested all the districts in the region with candidates chosen for their local clan ties, and had the advantage of ample funds and the backing of the ruling Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Prior to the elections, some Ogaden constituencies were merged, giving rise to charges of gerrymandering. The task of the ESDL was made easier by an ONLF split on the issue of participation. Having visited the region in 1993-94, Sheikh Ibrahim Abdalla returned to Saudi Arabia and remained opposed participation. Shortly before the elections, a splinter group led by Bashir Abdi Hassan registered as the 'legal' ONLF in proceeded to contest the elections. That it was doing so under adverse conditions was made clear when the National Elections Board twice warned its officials in the Somali region not to obstruct the registration of ONLF candidates, and balloting had to be postponed for nearly a month is some district due to ONLF protests. Familiar incidents were reported in the course of the elections; ballot boxes in some polling stations disappeared, elsewhere they were found full before voting began, the results in three districts became the subject of investigation, and there was a storm of complaints from the losers. Of the 139 seats in the regional assembly, the ESDL won 75, the 'legal' ONLF 18, the WSDP 15, and 24 seats went to independents. ESDL also won 23 seats in the Federal Assembly out of the 25 assigned to the Somali region, the WSDP 1, and 1 was won by an independent.

Now came the turn of the Ogaden to have a try at derailing a regional government controlled by other clans. The 'legal' ONLF and the WSDP members refused to take their seats in the regional assembly until the investigation of the results in the three contested districts was concluded. They claimed the assembly lacked a quorum because it mustered only 54 out of its full membership of 139. Ahmed Makahil Hussein, the former acting president who was re-elected in 1995, refused to vacate his office. He was arrested and is now in prison awaiting trial. Id Tahir, the new regional president, who is from the Ishaq clan, claimed that 76 members were in attendance in the first brief session of the regional assembly. The first act of the new regional government was to shift the capital from Gode to Jijiga in the east. A larger (about 30,000 pop.) and lively trade centre, Jijiga lies outside Ogaden clan territory and near Ishaq grounds. Region five was officially named...
the Somali National Administrative Region.

The new political order in Ethiopia does not seem to have affected the categorical imperative of Somali political practice, which is clannishness. Opposition to the threat of Ogaden dominance is what brought the other clans together in the ESDL. It was to be expected that having gained the upper hand, the ESDL itself would become the arena of clan rivalry. In order to delay the inevitable, the League has not called a meeting either of its congress or its central committee since its founding. Although it is supposed to meet every six months, the regional assembly did not meet for the second time until September 1996. Nor has the region held elections for local administration, as have the other regions in Ethiopia. Nonetheless, there were several announced defections from the ESDL during this time. Marginalised in the new political order, the Ogaden clan turned defiant once again. With its leadership in prison or abroad, the 'illegal' ONLF drifted on a collision course with the central government. In June 1996, an agreement was announced in London between this group and the Oromo Liberation Front, an organization that has flirted with secession and has declared war on the regime in Ethiopia. The two agreed to coordinate their activities in the 'diplomatic, political and military fields'. Similar agreements are said to have been concluded with Itihad and the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia.

It was also inevitable that Ishaq prominence would make it the target of other clans. On 8 July 1996, there was an attempt to assassinate the ESDL chairman, Abdul Majid Hussein. He survived multiple wounds, while two of his bodyguards were killed. A spokesman for Itihad in Mogadisho claimed the fundamentalist group was responsible. Afterwards, the Ethiopian authorities arrested numerous Ogaden political activists, including members of the regional assem-

bly. Among the latter were Sheikh Abdi Nassir Sheikh, the long-time secretary general of the WSLF, and Colonel Ibrahim Aden Dolal, former political commissioner of the Somali armed forces. All told, six regional assembly members are in prison in Jijiga.

Itihad appears to be the main problem for the Ethiopian government, which blames this fundamentalist group for attacks against its soldiers in the Ogaden and several hotel bombings in Addis Ababa and other towns. Itihad is closely linked to its sister movement in Somalia, whose stronghold is the Gedo region in southern Somalia across the border from Ethiopia. Itihad established bases there to carry out crossborder raids into the Ogaden. Ethiopians know from long experience that it is futile to chase guerrilla bands in this vast, arid region, if they find sanctuary on the other side of the border. Consequently, the Ethiopians recently carried the fight into the Gedo region with ground and air attacks. They seemed to have found an ally in the Somali National Front, a Marehan clan organization which competes with the fundamentalists for control of Gedo. Tragically, the dark shadow of war is falling once more over the Ogaden, a region that has known little peace for more than three decades.

Eritrea: Constitutional Forum

Zemehret Yohannes

The Eritrean people have been discussing the draft constitution since its approval by the National Assembly. We started with the big towns and went all the way to small villages. Discussions were also conducted in various places across the Middle East, Europe, America and Aus-
the Somali National Administrative Region.

The new political order in Ethiopia does not seem to have affected the categorical imperative of Somali political practice, which is clannishness. Opposition to the threat of Ogaden dominance is what brought the other clans together in the ESDL. It was to be expected that having gained the upper hand, the ESDL itself would become the arena of clan rivalry. In order to delay the inevitable, the League has not called a meeting either of its congress or its central committee since its founding. Although it is supposed to meet every six months, the regional assembly did not meet for the second time until September 1996. Nor has the region held elections for local administration, as have the other regions in Ethiopia. Nonetheless, there were several announced defections from the ESDL during this time. Marginalised in the new political order, the Ogaden clan turned defiant once again. With its leadership in prison or abroad, the ‘illegal’ ONLF drifted on a collision course with the central government. In June 1996, an agreement was announced in London between this group and the Oromo Liberation Front, an organization that has flirted with secession and has declared war on the regime in Ethiopia. The two agreed to coordinate their activities in the ‘diplomatic, political and military fields’. Similar agreements are said to have been concluded with Itihad and the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia.

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Briefing: Eritrea: Constitutional Forum

Australia. The main suggestions and recommendations will be taken into consideration in preparing the final draft which will be presented to the National Assembly.

The Diaspora

Constitutional discussions are not new to Eritreans living abroad. They have already been actively participating by conducting group discussions and coming up with questions and suggestions addressed to the Constitutional Commission. Various views and recommendations have been presented collectively and individually by many Eritreans. Thus, viewed in general, we can say that the participation of the Eritreans abroad has been quite satisfactory.

Constitutional Proposals

The proposals can be taken as the basis for the draft constitution. The aim of the proposals was to lay the basis for our principles. We wanted to have a clear background against which we can frame a constitution that is viable in the Eritrean context. The present draft constitution is therefore a direct outcome of wide public discussions and expert consultations undertaken over the past two years.

Contents of the Constitution

We should not take any constitution as being capable of solving all kinds of problems. As a matter of fact, constitutions are not expected to contain detailed laws and regulations. Constitutions, and especially constitutional experiences, vary from one country to another. The significance of any constitution lies in the strength and viability of institutions of government and the society which it helps to create. We want to have a dynamic constitution, one that can really work and that can be translated into action.

On its being too concise

The basic principles of human rights are enshrined in our constitution. One of the main pillars of the constitution is our fundamental concept of social justice. Any question that can be raised related to constitutional rights is included in this basic principle. It would not be wise to write down all the social rights and duties of the citizen in detail since this could prove difficult to implement in the immediate future. Our constitution should be taken as a guideline. It is an instrument to work with. As long as the general principles are clearly outlined, detailed legal questions can be regarded as secondary.

Social Justice

The idea of social justice signifies that every citizen must have equal opportunity in improving his/her means of existence while enjoying the inalienable rights to health, education and other basic needs. The wide gap in infrastructural facilities and various social and economic services between the urban and rural and between different regions of Eritrea has to be narrowed down if social justice is to reign in the country. Social justice is equality of opportunity and creating the conditions for equitable human development. Eritrea must not be a place where a few people live in opulence while the majority suffer from dire want.

Guarantees for Human Rights

It is a question of struggle and development. If we look into human history, we find out that there never was a time when rights were given to a people on a silver plate. Rights are obtained through struggle. We have won our rights through a long struggle. And if we now want to preserve, strengthen and expand those rights, we have to continue our struggle. We have to create a new breed of Eritreans who are capable of defending those rights.
The Family

If we look at the global society in general, the Occident seems to put more emphasis on the individual while the Orient stresses the family and the society in which the individual thrives. Our society is inclined towards the Oriental view. Hence, our constitution, which adopts this outlook, presumes that the individual is of no significance apart from the family. Conversely, the family or society means nothing without the individual. One aspect is incomplete without the other. They are complementary. It is for this reason that parents are expected to raise and nurture their children until they become adults, while the children are expected to support their parents in old age.

Culture and Traditional Values

This question is central to our identity. Unless we strengthen our identity and our culture, we cannot embark on the road to development nor can we ensure our place in the competitive world market. The relationship between culture and development is a point that must be taken very seriously. Our armed struggle has taught us endurance, self-reliance, truthfulness, love for work, teamwork – all of which have basically been part of our cultural heritage. What the Revolution did was to give fresh impetus to our cultural values. Therefore, it is our right and duty to strengthen and develop them.

Enriching the Constitution through Discussion

It was the people that crowned the Revolution with success. No nation-building and reconstruction program succeed without grassroots participation. And since constitution-making is part and parcel of nation building, to try and establish a constitution without popular participation is unthinkable, especially in our Eritrean context. Again, it is through participation that the level of popular awareness can be developed. This is one of the reasons that the constitution has also been presented for discussion to students. Our constitution is going to be incorporated into educational programs and curricula with a view to acquainting the public with its provisions. It is only when the people know their constitution in depth that defending it becomes a matter of course.

On Having an Official Language

This is a question that has repeatedly been raised during the presentation of proposals. The answer is very simple: the constitution takes as its basic principle the equality of all Eritrean languages.

To start with, any language must be seen as a means of communication, and it is as such that it should be dealt with. It seems to me that the problem is politicising the issue. Thus, there is a simplistic and naïve tendency to equate Tigrigna with Christian Highlanders and Arabic with Moslem Lowlanders. This oblique manner of looking at these two Eritrean languages could have only evolved with the instigation of the past colonial regimes. But, we are not going to condemn ourselves by subscribing to such a malignant colonial approach. The question should not be confined to that of Tigrigna and Arabic only. The issue must be addressed in its entirety. It is a question of national unity. Whatever steps we take should reflect the national unity and integrity that we have fought for for so many years to realize. Our national policies have been formulated to speed up development. To this end, we have opted to use English as a medium of instruction in all secondary schools. In addition, since Arabic is spoken by a large number of Eritreans as well as by peoples of several neighbouring countries, and since Tigrigna is widely spoken in Eritrea, it has been decided that both languages be taught in all Eritrean schools.
But this does not mean that only these two languages will be allowed to develop at the expense of the rest of the Eritrean languages. All Eritrean languages shall have equal opportunity to grow as they are all part and parcel of the nation's cultural heritage.

**Election of President & Ministers**

Before we try to answer this question, we must go back to our national experience. What we have written in this draft constitution is what best suits the needs of our country. We have never tried to copy blindly from other countries. We will have a National Assembly which is elected by and represents the people. The National Assembly will represent the sovereignty of the people. The president will be a member of the National Assembly, will be elected by the members of the National Assembly and appoints ministers to help him/her in governing the country. These ministers may or may not come from the National Assembly. But what really matters is the strength and the efficacy of the legislative and executive institutions. In the final analysis, the issues are important, and creating systems that can really work.

**Remaining Task of the CCE**

The discussions will go on both inside and outside of Eritrea until the end of December. When all suggestions have been considered and the necessary changes and improvements have been made, the draft constitution will be presented to the National Assembly for final approval. Thereafter the task of the CCE will come to an end.

**Zemehret Yohannes** is head of Research and Documentation at the PFDJ and Secretary of the Constitutional Commission of Eritrea (CCE). Reprinted with permission from *Eritrea Profile*, 9 November 1996.

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**Convergent Catastrophes in Central Africa**

**David Newbury**

The peoples of Central Africa face yet another human catastrophe. The press response has taken two forms. One has been to detail the plethora of events and peoples involved: Hutu, Tutsi, Hunde, Havu, Tembo, Bashi, Banyamulenge, Banyabwisha, Mayi Mayi – the list is long. A second approach has been to rely on broad characterizations all too reminiscent of the ‘tribal’ mentality which western observers often adopt when dealing with African histories: ‘the people of this region are killing each other’. As an alternate interpretive framework, it might be useful to identify four distinct but inter-related issues in this rapidly changing situation.

The first relates to the politics of Mobutu’s Zaire. For twenty years, but especially over the last decade, it has been the policy of the Zairean government to respond to increasingly intense popular protest by setting off regions or ethnic groups against one another. The effect has been to heighten the role of ethnic awareness, to turn ethnicity into a major political tool in Zaire. One result of this has been a long-standing discrimination against Rwanda-speaking people in Zaire – whether Tutsi or Hutu. In fact, by the early 1980s Rwandan-speakers were denied citizenship rights in Zaire in most cases, a policy which effectively disenfranchised up to 85% of the population in some locales. This policy lies at the root of the current crisis. When the Zairean government officials threatened to expel certain Rwanda-speaking peoples living west of Lake Tanganyika (referred to as ‘Banyamulenge’), the victims responded with force. It is important, therefore, to note two features to the current crisis. First, though the presence of one million Rwandan refugees greatly intensifies political tensions, the current crisis...
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originated in issues firmly based in Zairean politics; it is not a simple extension of the Rwandan conflict.

The second feature to note is that the Zaire policy applied to all Rwandans living in Zaire before 1994; it was not specific to either Tutsi or Hutu. The common characteristics by which westerners see ‘ethnicity’ in this region – ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ – were not the operative characteristics. There were actually four different categories of Rwanda-speakers in eastern Zaire. One had arrived before colonial rule which included the ‘Banyamulenge’ who settled west of Lake Tanganyika. Another was established in the area north of Lake Kivu during colonial rule – formed mostly of Hutu, and resettled from Rwanda to serve as a labour pool to attract European plantations owners. A third category (mostly Tutsi) sought asylum following the Rwandan revolution of 1959-62. A fourth category (mostly formed of Hutu) included those who arrived in the wake of the genocide of 1994. It is important to note that although historically the Banyamulenge were largely composed of people of Tutsi origin (who had fled to this area to escape expanding Rwandan state structures in the eighteenth century), the same Zairean policy had earlier affected hundreds of thousands of Rwandan-speaking Zaireans of Hutu descent. But in the recent ‘ethnicized’ context of Central Africa, the term ‘Banyamulenge’ has taken on new connotations to apply to all Rwanda-speakers of Tutsi identity in Zaire, a new, more expansive meaning. We are watching, therefore, the redefinition of an ethnic label. Such a process is not uncommon – but it is often denied by outside observers, who tend to see ethnicity in essentialist terms. The irony here is that these observers, who often paint in such bold strokes of ethnic rigidities, are the same people who are, in this instance, directly involved in furthering the process of expanding ethnic classifications.

The second issue to account for in the current crisis is the incursion of armed personnel, including regular army units, from Rwanda and Burundi into Zaire. These are claimed to be supporting their ‘cultural brethren,’ though there may well be other objectives behind this policy as well. But whatever the intentions, the effects have been momentous, for these actions have transformed the situation from essentially a Zairean political struggle into an international crisis, and it allowed Zaire to portray this not as an internal issue but as an invasion of the country by outsiders. Such actions also carried several long-term implications. To justify their occupation of parts of eastern Zaire, the government of Rwanda has advanced claims that large parts of eastern Zaire were formerly part of the Rwandan kingdom. Such irredentist claims are not supported in the historical record; nonetheless they highlight the complexity of current state boundaries and the tensions of the concept of the nation-state in Africa (as well as in Europe and North America). Furthermore, the invasion also places at greater risk all Rwanda-speaking people in Zaire; several thousand Rwanda-speaking people have had to flee Kinshasa, the Zairean capital, 1,200 miles to the west of Kivu. And finally, and not least, it enormously complicates the task of repatriating to Rwanda the refugees of 1994, who now feel under attack by the very state they are told to return to. If the argument is that security is assured in Rwanda, this is a strange manner in which to make the case.

The third major issue embedded in the current crisis relates to a new stage in the long-term disintegration of Zaire, the largest state in sub-Saharan Africa. For twenty years there has been sporadic popular resistance to the oppressive and exploitative rule of President Mobutu, who has often turned to western support to maintain his position in the face of popular opposition. But this stage in the process now presents the distinct possi-
bility of a militarization of opposition to Mobutu – with arms readily available in both eastern Zaire and in southwestern Zaire (from Angola). Counteracting this tendency, however, this crisis may also have the effect of rallying Zaireans to oppose an ‘invasion’ and ‘occupation’ from outside – for despite strong regional, class, and ethnic differences, Zaireans see themselves as a political culture distinct from their neighbour in many ways. Since September, President Mobutu has been out of the country, in Switzerland and France, undergoing treatment for cancer. In his absence, and with the collapse of formal internal discussions on the mechanisms of political transition, we may well be seeing the beginning of a new stage in the long and tortuous succession struggle in Zaire. The effects would be portentous – possibly leading to the break-up of the state, or some other redefinition of the Zaire political community (though it remains to be seen how outside powers would receive that).

The fourth issue involved in the current events of eastern Zaire is a humanitarian crisis of massive proportions. Several hundred thousand people in refugee camps in eastern Zaire have been under attack and have fled for their lives. What is curious is that what made them flee was often attacks from Rwanda, yet Rwanda claimed the need to force them out of the camps in order that they return Rwanda. Currently, the numbers of Rwandans who have returned to Rwanda is miniscule. On the other hand a large number of Zaireans have also fled the fighting; and ironically – given the tiny numbers of Rwandans who have returned – many Zaireans have sought refuge in Rwanda. But the humanitarian crisis is deeper still, in three respects. First there are many Zaireans who are also fleeing attacks, thus multiplying the numbers of people on the move. Second there will surely be serious confrontations over food, as desperate refugees seek crops – as yet unripe – from Zairean fields, and as Zairean farmers seek to protect their maturing yields (while bananas, cassava, and sweet potatoes can be harvested at any season, the staples – beans, maize, sorghum – will not be ready to harvest until mid-December at the earliest). And third, now all Rwanda-speaking peoples in Zaire are at risk as a result of this invasion/occupation; already several thousand have fled Kinshasa (1,200 miles from Kivu) for Brazzaville across the Zaire River. Faced with a million lives threatened by hunger and disease, the outside world is not prepared to act. This situation – if not the exact trajectory of events – was predictable, but western powers have engaged in three aspects that have contributed to the emergent crisis. They have reinstated Mobutu from political oblivion, and allowed him both to protect the former Rwandan army leaders in the camps, and to continue to rape and pillage his own population – thus leading to the confrontation of the state with the Banyamulenge that triggered the larger war.

Second, the international community has sought to close its eyes to the problems in Central Africa and thus allowed arms to continue to flow to the former members of the armed forces of Rwanda now found in the refugee camps. Their presence in the camps – and the attacks on Rwanda from militarized units – have been the focus for Rwandan attacks. And finally, the international community has refused to bring effective pressure to bear on Rwanda to create conditions of security – both personal and material security – within Rwanda that would encourage refugees to return to Rwanda in numbers. Instead they have acquiesced in Rwandan demands for the departure of external human rights observers; they have failed to follow up on credible reports on atrocities within Rwanda; and they have failed to lend meaningful support to a credible and transparent process of judicial proceedings within the country to assure returnees that they can live under the protection of the government, not under threat of government personnel.
To reiterate, we are faced with four overlapping crises. One is the systematic and long-term discrimination of the Zaire state against Rwandan-speaking Zaireans — and especially the threats directed against the Banyamulenge, in southern Kivu, whose homes were west of Uvira, on Lake Tanganyika. The second is the intrusion of armed units from Rwanda and Burundi — including attacks directed against refugee camps north of Lake Kivu, in areas far removed from the Banyamulenge areas.

The third is the potential political disintegration — or transformation — of Zaire by a process of both outside attacks and internal opposition. And the fourth is the massive humanitarian crisis — affecting both Rwandans and Zaireans — at a time when there is little local food, and little chance of outside supplies of food or medical care reaching the area. It is a very serious situation. But to take it seriously, we must first see it for what it is, and not for what it is not: it is not simple 'tribal warfare,' though ethnicity has an important role in complicating the political battles. It is not simple 'indiscriminate killing,' though many people are killed. And it is not simple 'political incompetence' (though there is that in abundance), but competing agendas formed without reference to the effect on local populations. And of course none of this addresses the long-term well-being of the people of this region. They have seldom had a meaningful say in their futures, neither in regard to local state structures, nor in regard to the global economic structures. It doesn't look like that will change in the near future.

David Newbury, Department of History University of North Carolina

Central Africa Intervention Must Not Reinforce Hutu Extremists or Mobutu Regime

Washington Office on Africa

ISSUE: Despite the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Zaire to Rwanda over the weekend, conflict in eastern Zaire still poses an immediate threat to the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees and Zaireans. International military intervention to establish safe corridors for relief and for refugees to return home is still urgent. Equally important is an adequate international civilian presence to support not only feeding but reintegration and protection of human rights for returned refugees. It is extremely important, however, that this intervention be carried out in such a way as to address long-term issues, as stressed by the recent Nairobi summit of East African leaders, by human rights organizations, and by non-governmental groups.

The situation is changing rapidly. There is a risk that the dramatic return of half a million refugees to Rwanda will distract attention from the plight of refugees and displaced Zaireans still not reachable (the affected area in eastern Zaire is roughly equivalent in size to the US east coast from Pennsylvania through North Carolina inclusive) and from the massive needs to provide adequate support for resettlement of the refugees. Plans for intervention must be adapted to changes on the ground, but there is still a pressing need for speedy and large-scale action by the international community.

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groups still in eastern Zaire from genuine refugees. African states, as well as humanitarian organizations and human rights observers familiar with the situation, say that unless this is done the intervention may well promote more conflict even while saving some innocent people from starvation.

The international intervention in 1994 came too late to prevent genocide in Rwanda. It served in practice to reinforce the power of the military forces who orchestrated the killings, who fled with the refugees to Zaire and who still dominate the Rwandan refugee camps there. Unless carefully designed to avoid such an outcome, the current intervention could further reinforce the power of those responsible for genocide, and of the Mobutu regime in Zaire.

The chances of avoiding these pitfalls can be increased if the international community provides financial and logistical support for significant participation in the operation by troops from neutral African countries. In any case, short-term military expediency and humanitarian imperatives must not again be allowed to shelve aside longer-term issues.

Action: If you are an US citizen, contact the President and your Members of Congress. Tell them you support US participation in a neutral international military intervention to protect humanitarian relief for refugees and displaced Zaireans in eastern Zaire, but only under certain conditions. Make the following points:

- The intervention force should not be used, directly or indirectly, to protect the military forces of Hutu extremists who carried out the 1994 genocide, or the Mobutu regime in Zaire.

- The United States should provide adequate financial and logistical support to neutral African countries willing to participate.

- The United States must give urgent attention to long-term issues, in particular: 1) creating conditions in Rwanda to facilitate the refugees' return, including expanded human rights monitoring as well as distribution of relief supplies, and 2) stopping the flow of arms to extremist forces in the region, including both the Hutu extremists now in Zaire and the Burundi government led by Tutsi extremists.

Write, Phone or Fax: President Bill Clinton, The White House, Washington, DC 20500, White House comment line: (202) 456-1111, White House fax: (202) 456-2883 E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov.

US Senate Washington, DC 20510; US House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515; Capitol switchboard for reaching congressional offices: (202) 224-3121

Background: The current crisis stems most directly from the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Those killings were organized by the former Rwandan government which was led by Hutu extremists with a Nazi-like ideology, explicitly committed to the extermination of all Tutsis and moderate Hutus. They killed more than 500,000 people in the three months of April through June 1994.

There are many different forces involved in the current conflict, and shifting battle lines. The major combatants on one side are the former Rwandan government army and militia – Hutu extremists responsible for genocide – who control the Hutu refugee camps in eastern Zaire. They have generally been supported by the Zairean government army, much of which, however, has disintegrated and fled west deeper into Zaire. On the other side are the Zairean rebels (mainly Zairean-born Tutsis) who resisted efforts to expel them from Zaire, and won control of the border area in eastern Zaire. They are reportedly trained and armed by the current Rwandan government, which has retaliated against raids
from the Hutu extremists in eastern Zaire, and may have troops supporting the Zairean rebels inside Zaire. After their defeat by the current Rwandan government (predominantly Tutsi), most of the killers fled into neighboring Zaire. They were accompanied by approximately one million refugees.

The 1994 humanitarian relief operation focused on feeding these refugees. Since then, most of the refugees have stayed in Zaire rather than returning to Rwanda, many fearing reprisals or discrimination if they return. Others have been intimidated by the Rwandan extremists who control the refugee camps and threaten to kill those who do try to return. Other Hutu refugees have fled in recent years from Burundi, where the military is led by Tutsi extremists. That regime is being boycotted by neighboring states (including Rwanda) to force it to allow political participation by the Hutu majority. The social gaps between Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda and Burundi and between Tutsi and other Zaireans in eastern Zaire have deep historical roots, but have grown wider in the colonial and independence periods. Often wrongly labelled a 'tribal' division, the distinction between Tutsi and Hutu (who within each country share a common language and culture) is better compared to a caste distinction, roughly translated as 'aristocrats' and 'commoners.' For extremists on both sides, however, it has come to be perceived as a racial division.

The influx of refugees has further destabilized already chaotic Zaire. Unscrupulous Zairean politicians and soldiers have targeted local Zaireans of Tutsi origin, including many whose families had been living in the area for over two centuries. Last year in North Kivu province Hutu extremist refugees together with local Zairean officials expelled Tutsis from North Kivu. In September local Zairean officials threatened also to expel the Tutsis of South Kivu (known as Banyamulenge). Reportedly armed and trained by the Rwandan government, however, the Banyamulenge fought back. The Zairean army and Hutu refugees were driven out of major East Zairean towns such as Uvira, Bukavu and Goma.

The undisciplined Zairean army has for the most part fled the area, causing disruption to the west, including the next major city, Kisangani. While relief supplies have begun to flow again to some portions of eastern Zaire held by rebels, most refugees or local Zaireans are dispersed in the countryside without food, many still in areas still controlled by the genocide organizers or in combat zones.

Over the weekend, as many as 400,000 refugees returned from Zaire to Rwanda, overwhelming relief agencies on the border, after the Mugunga refugee camp near Goma was abandoned by the Hutu extremist forces who had held the refugees there. The fate of as many more deeper in Zaire, both refugees and Zaireans, both in North Kivu province and in South Kivu province, is unknown.

The situation on the ground is changing daily. But it is clear that urgent assistance is still needed, both in eastern Zaire and in Rwanda as the refugees return to their home areas. Military-supported logistics operations are required in order that UN and non-governmental relief operations can function inside eastern Zaire. In Rwanda the urgent need is not only for relief supplies, but for an adequate international human rights and non-governmental presence throughout the country to facilitate the refugees' return.

Note: Updated information from a variety of sources can be found most conveniently and quickly at (1) http://www.info.usaid.gov/ofda/reliefweb/ (outside North America at http://www.reliefweb.int/) and (2) http://www.africanews.org/greatlakes.html.
Editor's Note: Obviously events have been moving too quickly to include in this issue. However, I have a note from Basil Davidson which I'm sure he won't mind my sharing with you: *We have to be armoured against this despair, about which I think I am feeling just as you do ... the roots of the mess don’t in the least lie in ‘Belgium’s divided past’ [in reference to a Guardian headline] – they lie in the European imperialism of 90 or so years ago. My own is in resenting the bloody sheer-and-don’t-care ignorance of those who ought to know better. Can’t they read? They don’t anyway ...*


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**Land Tenure in Zimbabwe**

*Phil O'Keefe and Sam Moyo*

The Government of Zimbabwe has again, started a debate. The 'Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Appropriate Agricultural Land Tenure Systems' (3 volumes: Government Printer, 1994) has stimulated much of the recent debate. In summary, the Commission is strong on analysis but the recommendations are timid.

In the Large Scale Commercial Farming (LSCF) sector, the Commission accepted that there was a measure of inefficiency. It was prepared to accept subdivision of the LSCF and to levy a land tax on land that was under-utilised. In Communal Areas (CA), the Commission proposed that individuals or families could register their home plot and vegetable garden but, in the long run, there would be no individual title deeds which would protect the land rights of women and would be administered by local chiefs. In Resettlement Areas (RA), the Commission argued for the granting of secure leases and the selection of settlers on the basis of proven capacity as farmers; women were to be encouraged to become leaseholders. Finally, the Commission addressed the Small Scale Commercial Farm (SSCF) sector which was in decline. It argued that there was a need to revise rules of inheritance and to provide government support to SSCF by, for example, strengthening extension.

What does all this mean? The conclusions are good for the Government but not necessarily Zimbabwe. More particularly, for politicians as ministers the conclusions relating to each of the four sub-sectors are logical policy outcomes although the politicians, simultaneously, manage to keep land as a political issue. Consider the sub-sectors in detail.

In the LSCF, the recommendations are good for Government because it maintains LSCF as a major foreign exchange earner and as a major source of tax revenue. There is no threat of land appropriation so the donor community look favourably upon the recommendations. Politicians can still play the race card by objecting verbally to inequalities of distribution and inefficiency but collective responsibility of government maintain the status quo. The status quo continues to provide white income from black rents and encourage further speculation in land.

In the CA, what is offered is a sense of ownership and place but little freehold rights – a move from permanent impermeance to impermanent permeance, to tackle the overgrazing issues – where herding strategies are accepted as complicated coping mechanisms to respond to a variable environment – there is a clear recognition that overstocking can
For additional information: Washington Office on Africa, 110 Maryland Ave. NE, #509, Washington, DC 20002. Phone: 202-546-7961. Fax: 202-546-1545. E-mail: woa@igc.apc.org.

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lead to land and water conflicts. As government does not wish to address such local conflict which can be politically very destabilising, it has passed the buck. Suggestions for new local authorities combined with traditional authority are offered to address what is essentially an insoluble problem if there is no land redistribution. Women receive greater individual access to land, under the recommendations, but it is a marginal improvement. It is marginal because women are not seen as a political force. Urban migrants are recognised as legitimate claimants for CA land because there are few formal employment opportunities in town but urban dwellers have a high political influence.

In RA, the Commission acknowledges past mistakes and emphasises the need to allocate land to productive settlers. Quite simply, the focus should be successful farming not political allocation. The role of women as successful farmers and land inheritors is openly pursued. Again, however, it is largely words because there is little land available for resettlement in mid-1990s – unlike the early 1980s – and there is no space for a land grab.

Finally, the SSCF needs support, particularly extension support. With government budgets declining in real terms – not least because of continuing structural adjustment – agricultural services will continue to decline or be provided by the private sector charging individual small farmers for services.

The conclusion is clearly that the politicians have gained space by doing nothing. Whether the people of Zimbabwe feel this is the correct course is another matter.
Review Article

John Markakis


Explaining why the Somali state, the only one in black Africa blessed with a national identity, self-destructed, is no mean task. It takes someone with the knowledge and self-confidence of I M Lewis to make it look easy. His latest contribution is a collection of previously published papers, spanning a period of over three decades, supplemented with a fresh final chapter covering recent developments. The material in this collection is by no means outdated, because it deals with a feature of Somali society which has greater salience today than it ever had; namely clanship. Early on in a professional lifetime devoted to the study of Somali social organization, Lewis concluded that kinship is the bedrock of Somali nomad society, and clanship the determining factor in all social activity, politics included. He sees no reason to change his mind now. On the contrary, he feels vindicated by recent developments which represent clan rivalry gone berserk. ‘Everything that has happened in recent Somali political history is an eloquent testimony to the accuracy of anthropological analysis’, he claims (p.222).

There are some people who regard Lewis’ exclusive focus on the clan as both narrow and static, and wish to expand it to encompass other features of Somali society, as well as take into account changes that have affected clanship this century. They point out that Somali society today is not exclusively nomad, if it ever was, and other social strata have emerged in an expanding, modernizing urban sector. Furthermore, they argue the clanship cannot possibly have remained untouched by socioeconomic changes, such as the intrusion of the market in the livestock sector, the development of an urban economy, the loss of autonomy and subordination in the colonial and later the national state, labour migration to the Gulf, catastrophic war and massive displacement. Lewis has no patience with such views. He insists that clanship in the 1990s ‘is basically the same phenomenon that it was in the 1890s’, because, as the Somali claim, it is ‘bred in the bone and running in the blood’ (p.233). Unfortunately, Lewis does not engage his critics in debate, but brusquely dismisses them as ‘ideologues’ (p.233).

The most prolific of Lewis’ critics are the Samatar brothers, and they are at it again in ‘The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal?’ edited by Ahmed with a contribution from brother Abdi. This volume originated in a conference and covers diverse aspects of the Somali experience. Ahmed introduces the work with a blast against the tyranny of the clanship concept, which he terms ‘a
source of analytical stagnation, tedious superficiality, and, above all, repetitive and dangerous stereotyping' (p.6). Lidwien Kapteijns' contribution summarizes the counter-argument to Lewis' thesis. According to her, clanship and its political role today is not traditional, but a modern phenomenon forged by people caught in the rush of unregulated socio-economic change. According to Ahmed Samatar, modern clanship is decoupled from the moral order of traditional Somali society sustained by the sheer (customary code of conduct) and Islamic law; a point reinforced in this volume by Maxamed Afrax in a survey of oral expression. The decoupling is demonstrated by the evaporation of authority of elders and veneration for shaikhs. Modern clanship is particularly susceptible to manipulation by the ambitious and unscrupulous and, according to Ahmed, conducive to 'pernicious asociality' (p.111); a prize euphemism for inter-clan mayhem.

Abdi Samatar posits a direct link between the progressive decline of the Somali economy and the gradual disintegration of the sociopolitical order, and draws a lesson for the future. These two themes are also treated by Ben Wisner in his contribution. David Rawson and Terence Lyons separately examine different aspects of Somalia's foreign relations under the Siad Barré regime. In a brief statement, Hassan A. Mireh, a former Somali government minister, pronounces a familiar indictment: 'the single most immediate factor responsible for the Somali catastrophe is the nature of political leadership' (p.23). Ahmed Samatar also repeatedly refers to a 'failure of governance' as the principal cause of the Somali predicament. It is but a short step from here to pin the blame for the disaster on Siad Barre's regime; which is what most people, Somali and others, are prone to do.

One of them is Jama Mohamed Ghalib, a professional policeman who rose to become Police Commissioner of Mogadisho and held various ministerial posts in that regime. His work, 'The Cost of Dictatorship: The Somali Experience', is broadly biographical, beginning with a nostalgic account of his training in British Somaliland. The rest is a readable account of 'the misdeeds and misrule of Siad Barre', enriched with anecdotes and description of the dictator's byzantine intrigues. As Minister of Interior at one point, Jama had responsibility for the refugees who flooded into Somalia from the Ogaden in 1978. His account corroborates the stories circulating then of systematic looting of foreign aid by the Siad cohort. As an Ishaq, Jama dwells on the suffering of that clan under Siad, and traces the rise of the Somali National Movement and Somaliland's path to secession. On his part, Lewis acknowledges that demagogues can 'pluck the strings of kinship to their own advantage' (p.233), but it is not politicians he holds responsible for today's tragedy. After all, he points out, there were always political entrepreneurs and adventurers in the Somali past.

It is hardly surprising that the destruction of the Somali state would inspire the deconstruction of its historiography. Such is the purpose of The Invention of Somalia, whose authors set out to shift through the layers of Somali scholarship - traditional and modern - in order to separate myth from reality. According to Ali Jimale Ahmed, historians, anthropologists, politicians and poets are the mythmakers who invented the fable of a Somali national homogeneity embedded in its nomadic culture. There is a racial underpinning to this myth which claims the Somali are Arabs with a tan, not black Africans, and a theological one which claims they are descended from the family of the Prophet. A related myth is the blood and bone relationship that allegedly binds clansmen eternally with indissoluble ties. 'Dervishization' is the reigning paradigm of Somali myth making. By this, Ali Jimale refers to 'a
conscious effort on the part of successive Somali regimes and their intellectual acolytes to monumentalize, to the exclusion of other groups, the dervish experience in Somali history' (138).

'Dervishization' broadly refers to the cultural, social and political hegemony of the nomadic tribes of the north in modern Somalia, and most of the contributors to The Invention of Somalia are intent on picking this particular myth to shreds. Mohamed Haji Mukhtar’s analysis of 'Islam in Somali History: Fact and Fiction' derides the claim of Somali descent from Arab ancestors as 'a cultural invention developed recently to gain political ascendancy' (20). Furthermore, he refutes the conventional view of Islam's advent in Somalia through the north, insisting that this occurred in the south, the Benadir coast and its hinterland. Mohamed M. Kassim in 'Aspects of Benadir Cultural History' agrees that the southern coast was the main entry point of Muslim migration to Somalia and the seat of Swahili culture.

Abdi M. Kusow in 'The Somali Origin: Myth or Reality' goes a step farther by challenging the accepted view of the Somali origin in the tip of the Horn and gradual expansion south-westwards. He posits the opposite view of an origin in the south and expansion north-eastwards, which portrays the sedentary Reewin clans in the Juba-Shebeli valley as the proto-Somali. Catherine Besteman's 'The Invention of Gosha' focuses on a small Bantu group in the lower Juba river, whose ethnic identity and self perception were forged in the anvil of slavery and stigmatization. The Gosha are also the subject of Francesca Declich's contribution 'Identity, Dance and Islam among People with Bantu Origins in Riverine Areas of Somalia'. Obviously, deconstruction has taken a definite southern direction in this volume, prompting Edward A. Alpers in his 'Critiques of the Invention of Somalia' to warn against replacing the discredited dervish paradigm with a Benadir myth (226).

In 'Finely Etched Chattel: The Invention of a Somali Woman', Catherine Choi Ahmed takes aim at the scholars who have portrayed the Somali woman as a chattel, commodity and a creature of little power and no importance. Once more, Lewis is denounced, this time for his 'orientalist and androcentric approach' (162), and so are some of his followers. Catherine Ahmed goes on to cite evidence indicating gender relations in traditional Somali society were rather different than commonly depicted; moreover she argues, whatever these relations might be, they must be understood in the Somali context. Ahmed Qassim Ali in 'The Predicament of the Somali Studies' cites Lewis' praise for a colonial official 'who tried to bring order to the Somalis when they were rebellious ... and all he got for his pains was a bullet in the head,' as evidence of racism. After this barrage of criticism, Lewis also must feel poorly rewarded for his pains. Finally, Christopher Ehret in 'The Eastern Horn of Africa, 1000 B.C. to 1400 A.D.' delves into the region's past to sketch some of its ethnographic and cultural features. Mercifully, he finds no bone to pick with Lewis.