

THE TIGRAYAN-LED ETHIOPIA, REPRESSION, STATE TERRORISM AND GENOCIDE IN OROMIA¹

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The Tigrayan-led minority Ethiopian government² is attempting to give a final solution for the political problem that has existed for several centuries—the relationship between the Oromos and their Amhara-Tigrayan colonizers. In the process, it is trying to establish a Tigrayan hegemonic minority state both in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Since 1992, the Meles government has been focusing on brutally attacking the Oromo national movement led by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and robbing the economic resources of Oromia in order to enrich the Tigrayan elites and to develop the Tigrayan region. To achieve its political and economic objectives, the regime primarily uses its puppet organization known as the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) that was created and dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF); the OPDO is led by Tigrayan cadres, elements of Oromo speaking colonial settlers, and opportunist Oromos who do anything in exchange for luxurious lifestyles. Using the OPDO, the Meles government has attempted to construct a political façade for supposed self-rule and to give an Oromo face to its terrorist and genocidal policy in Oromia

While terrorizing millions of Oromos in Oromia, the Meles regime has established a political marriage of convenience with the governments of Kenya, Djibouti, Sudan, and some Somali warlords for denying support and sanctuary for the Oromo national movement and for extending its terrorist activities in the Horn of Africa. Western powers, particularly the United States, and China have been supporting the political and economic policies of the Meles regime. First, the paper identifies and explores the political and economic policies of the Meles regime in Oromia. Second, it explains why the Meles regime uses the discourse of democracy and development while engaging in state terrorism, genocidal massacres, gross human rights violations, and robbing and impoverishing the Oromos and others while enriching the Tigrayan elites and their collaborators. Third, it discusses why this regime is against peace and development as the previous successive Amhara-led Ethiopian governments, and the possible outcomes of such policies. Finally, the paper suggests what the political forces that oppose this regime should do to overcome the danger that the minority Tigrayan state elites have created in an attempt to establish a minority hegemonic state in complex and multinational societies of the Horn of Africa.

Political and Economic Policies of the Meles Regime

The racialized/ethnicized Ethiopian state with the collaboration of Euro-American allies has effectively excluded the colonized peoples and the Ethiopian masses from decision-

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²This regime was emerged from the Tigrayan population, which is estimated between 5 and 7 million. The Oromo are the largest ethnonational group and estimated at 40 million of the 80 million people in Ethiopia, and seconded by the Amhara ethnonational group. The previous successive Ethiopian governments were mainly the domains of the successive Amhara ruling groups. Since 1991, the Tigrayan state elites have been dominating and controlling the Ethiopian political economy.

making positions.³ This state has been controlling the colonized peoples by establishing local intermediaries, like OPDO, that served between the colonialists and the local population.⁴ The current authoritarian-terrorist regime of Ethiopia⁵ is supported by the United States, China, and the imperial interstate system while practicing authoritarianism in Abyssinia proper (the Amhara-Tigray homelands) and terrorism on the colonized regions, such as Oromia, Ogadenia, Sidama, Gambella, and conducting recurrent wars on its neighbors, such as Eritrea and Somalia.

The Ethiopian colonial system has taken away the sovereignty of the Oromo people and others and exposed them to absolute poverty by denying them their fundamental human rights and needs that Ron Shiffman calls subsistence, protection or security, affection, and understanding.⁶ Most people in urban and rural areas have low levels of subsistence because they do not have adequate income, enough food, and livable homes.⁷ The Oromo and others have been ruled by successive authoritarian-terrorist regimes, which exploited and impoverished them by expropriating their resources.⁸ Successive Ethiopian regimes did not have any concern and affection for the colonized peoples since they have considered them inferior people who did not deserve basic human rights.⁹ The Oromos and others have been denied their inalienable rights to self-determination and democracy, and denied also opportunities to build their social, economic, political, cultural and organizational infrastructures.

The Meles regime implements its political and economic objectives through a variety of strategies and tactics; it is highly militarized and repressive, and it tightly controls information and resources in the form of foreign aid, domestic financial resources, and political appointments. It also directly owns and controls all aspects of state power including security and military institutions, judiciary and other public bodies, and financial institutions.¹⁰ The Meles government uses the Tigrayan-dominated army, the police, security networks, and the OPDO, as well as the media to attack the OLF and

³For further explanation, see Asafa Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict 1868-2004*, second edition, (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2005).

⁴See Asafa Jalata, *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

⁵The Ethiopian state has been authoritarian to Amhara and Tigrayan communities since it has been against democracy, and it has been a terrorist government against the colonized peoples like the Oromos because it has been ruling by practicing state terrorism and massive human rights violations. In this 21st century, the Oromo and other peoples are denied the freedom of self-expression and self-development, and are forced to provide their economic and labor resources to the Ethiopian colonizers and their supporters, and live under deplorable conditions.

⁶Ron Shiffman, "Urban Poverty - The Global Phenomenon of Poverty and Social Marginalization in Our Cities: Facts and Strategies, 1995, <http://www.picced.org/advocacy/poverty.htm>, 1995, pp. 6-8.

⁷They do not have protection from disease since they do not have adequate access to health and medical services. They do not have protection from political violence since the Ethiopian state engages in massive human rights violations and state terrorism.

⁸For further discussion, see Asafa Jalata, "Poverty, Powerlessness and the Imperial Interstate System in the Horn of Africa," *Disaster and Development in the Horn of Africa*, ed. John Sorenson, (New York: St. Martin Press, 1995), pp. 31-48.

⁹ See Asafa Jalata, *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization*, *ibid.*

¹⁰For further discussion, see Asafa Jalata, "U. S. -Sponsored Ethiopian 'Democracy' and State Terrorism," in *Crisis and Terror in the Horn of Africa*. Edited by Pat Lauderdale, A. Zegeye and A. Oliverio, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 64-89. See also Catherine Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999), pp. 2-25.

all self-aware Oromos in order to destroy an independent Oromo national leadership and to deny the Oromo nation political voice on many levels. It also impoverishes the Oromos, thus exposing them to hunger and disease, and limiting their choice between dying by malnutrition or supporting the regime and fighting against their own national interest just to obtain basic necessities.

Despite the fact that successive Amhara-dominated governments colonized, dominated, and exploited the Oromos and other peoples, they did not create their own special homeland in Abyssinia proper for transferring the resources of the colonized peoples there. Instead, they created an empire they later called Ethiopia in the images of Amhara and Orthodox Christianity. By way of contrast, the regime of Meles Zenawi has created an autonomous Tigrayan homeland and reduced Oromia to the status of periphery to this emerging would be prosperous homeland. As we shall see below, the main political ambition of the Tigrayan state elites is to gradually destroy the Oromo people and their country, Oromia, by developing a new Ethiopia in which the Oromo people will be reduced numerically through war, terrorism, disease, poverty, and hunger. The Oromos have been targeted by the Meles regime because of their economic resources, their acceptance of the OLF as their national leadership, and their refusal to accept marching orders from the Tigrayan authorities and their collaborators who try to hide their political and economic objectives under the rhetoric of democracy, self-determination, and federalism.

The policy of targeting and exterminating indigenous peoples has occurred in different parts of the world, and has been an integral practice of the racialized capitalist world system since the 16th century. The European colonialists exterminated indigenous peoples in the Americas, Australia, Asia, and Africa over a period of several centuries in order to transfer their resources to the European colonial settlers and their descendants while claiming to promote Christian civilization, modernity, and commerce. Specifically, the Meles government has a grand plan for the Oromos similar to what King Leopold of Belgium had for the Congo or Andrew Jackson of the United States had for the Cherokees or colonial Germany had for the Herero and Nama peoples in South West Africa (Nambia).¹¹ The Meles regime is completing the forced removal of the Oromos

¹¹In his book *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Adam Hochschild (1998) vividly explains how King Leopold II of Belgium terrorized the people of Congo by dispossessing their lands and reducing them to semi-slaves in order to force them to collect ivory and harvest wild rubber. While claiming developing the Congo Free States and promoting a humanitarian cause, King Leopold II established policies that resulted in the destruction of more than five million Africans by murder, diseases, and hunger. His Force Publique Officers led by a few Belgians and staffed by the natives committed horrendous crimes against humanity by burning villages, hanging, torturing, raping, flogging, and mutilating in order to terrorize the people and force them to work for the king. This organization is similar to the organization of Meles Zenawi called the OPDO that imposes a reign of terror on the Oromo people. Similarly, in his book, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, Ben Kiernan (2007) explains how it took four centuries to decimate the indigenous peoples of the Americas through war, genocide, terrorism, diseases, and removal. He particularly discusses how the president of the United States, Andrew Jackson, destroyed the Cherokee Nation by removing them from their homelands and sending them to reservations. Jackson and his supporters and white settlers created civil war among the leadership of the Cherokee and made them to fight each other. In *The Trail of Tears and Indian Removal*, Amy H. Sturgis (2007) explores how the United States practiced racial or ethnic cleansing on the Cherokee nation. When the Cherokee people were removed from Georgia between 1838 and 1839, about eight hundred Cherokee perished, and they arrived in Oklahoma without any children and only a few elders. When the Herero and Nama peoples of Nambia

from the areas surrounding Finfinnee (Addis Ababa). It has settled millions of armed Amhara and Tigrayan settlers in Oromia by removing the Oromos from their ancestral homelands. Furthermore, it has already leased several millions of hectares of Oromo lands to foreign investors, such as the Chinese government and Arab, Indian, Malaysian, and European business people and local capitalists by evicting Oromo farmers from their homelands without compensation.¹²

The political and military leaders of the Meles government are gangsters and robbers, and they have used state power to expropriate state corporations and lands in the name of privatization--all with the blessing of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They are engaged in enriching themselves and developing Tigray at the cost of Oromia and other regions; they have used various forms of political violence to transfer Oromian resources to Tigray and Tigrayans and their collaborators. Today when the Oromos are facing abject poverty and hunger, the Tigrayan elites who depended on international food aid in the 1980s for their survival, are rich and powerful. In achieving its political and economic objectives, the Meles regime is engaging in political repression, state terrorism, genocidal massacres, and gross human rights violations in Oromia and other regional states.

Political Repression, State Terrorism, and Genocidal Massacres

The overthrowing of the Amhara-led Ethiopian military government by the Eritrean, Oromo, and Tigrayan liberation fronts in 1991 brought hope to the decaying Ethiopian Empire. This hope was dashed within a year when the Meles government, supported by regional and global powers started to express its political ambition through political violence. While engaging in political violence in the form of state terrorism, state rape, and genocidal massacres to control the Oromo people and loot their economic resources, the Tigrayan state elites started to claim that they were promoting democracy, federalism, and national self-determination. Since the Tigrayan-dominated Ethiopian government is weak, illegitimate, and lacks accountability and professionalism, it engages in all forms of political violence to protect its power and loot Oromian economic resources.¹³

Political Repression. The Meles government mainly targets the Oromos for destruction because they challenge the regime and its policy under the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Since the Oromo are the largest ethnonational group that is estimated at the half of the 80 million people in Ethiopia, the Tigrayan state elites have political nightmares about the Oromos and their national struggle. Recognizing that

resisted Germany colonialism, the German soldiers and settlers developed a plan to carry out a shoot-to-kill policy. They conducted extrajudicial killings, established concentration camps, and employed forced labor and death camps. The German colonial governor expressed the plan of Germany: "15 years from now, there will not be much left of the natives" (quoted in Kiernan, 2007: 381). This plan was implemented between 1904 and 1905 when the majority of Herero and Nama were exterminated. For further discussion, see Edwin Herbert, *Small Wars and Skirmishes 1902—18*, (Nottingham, Great Britain: Foundry Books, 2003).

¹²This problem is not yet fully studied.

¹³Bridget Welsh suggests that since weak states "lack the capacity to meet the demands and rights of citizens and improve the standard of living for the majority of population," they involve in political violence and engage in genocidal massacres to suppress the population groups that struggle for political and economic rights. Bridget Welsh, "Globalization, Weak States, and Death Toll in East Asia," *Violence and Politics: Globalization's Paradox*, edited by Kenton Worcester, Sally Avery Bermanzohn, and Mark Ungar, (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 67-68.

Oromia is the richest and largest populous state, the Tigrayan state elites have been using all forms of violence to dominate and control Oromia, which is the key in controlling the Ethiopian political economy. Consequently, the Meles regime started to deny a political space for the Oromo people in 1992, when it “closed more than 200 OLF campaign offices and imprisoned and killed hundreds of OLF cadres and supporters ahead of the elections scheduled to take place on 21 June 1992.”¹⁴ As Lisa Sharlach attests, a politically “dominant group, frightened by what its members perceive as an onslaught of international and internal movements for democracy and socioeconomic change, harnesses the state apparatus to destroy the subordinate group together.”¹⁵

In 1992, the Meles regime claimed imprisoning 22,000 OLF members, supporters, and sympathizers in the concentration camps of Didheesa in Wallaga, Agarfa in Bale, Blate in Sidamo, and Hurso in Hararge.¹⁶ However, a credible source estimated that between 45,000 and 50,000 Oromos were imprisoned in these concentration camps from 1992 to 1994, and 3000 of them died from torture, malnutrition, diarrhea, malaria, and other diseases.¹⁷ Hassan Ali, an Oromo collaborator of the regime who was appointed as the first president of Oromia between 1992 and 1995 by Meles, exposed the contradiction between what the regime claims by its democratic discourse and what it practices by its army, the police, and security networks. After he fled and resettled in the U.S., he said:

The TPLF soldiers and its members are a law unto themselves. Only what they say and what they want is implemented in Oromia to the general exclusion of Oromo interests or wishes . . . Although Oromia is autonomous in name, the government soldiers and secret service agents have total power to do whatever they want in Oromia. They imprison, torture, or kill anyone, including OPDO members and our government employees without any due process of law. They have established several secret detention centers, where thousands of innocent people are kept for years without trial or charge. Federal government soldiers, more appropriately the TPLF soldiers, are in practice above the rule of law in Oromia.¹⁸

This regime has banned independent Oromo organizations, including the OLF, since 1992, and declared war on these organizations and the Oromo people. It even outlawed Oromo journalists and other writers and closed down Oromo newspapers. As Mohammed Hassen asserts, “The attack on the free press has literally killed the few publications in the Oromo language in the Latin alphabet. The death of Oromo publications ... has been a fatal blow to the flowering of Oromo literature and the standardization of the Oromo language itself. The Oromo magazines that have disappeared include *Gada*, *Biftu*, *Madda Walaabuu*, *Odaa*, and the *Urjii* magazine ... Since 2002, there has not been a single newspaper or magazine that has expressed the

¹⁴Mohammed Hassen, “Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo,” *Northeast African Studies*, Volume 9, Number 3. 2002, p. 28.

¹⁵Lisa Sharlach, “State Rape: Sexual Violence as genocide,” *Violence and Politics: Globalization’s Paradox*, *ibid*, p. 107.

¹⁶*Ibid*, p. 32.

¹⁷Susan Pollack, “Ethiopia: Human Tragedy in the making,” *The Oromo Commentary* 5, no. 1 (1996), p. 12.

¹⁸Quoted in Mohammed Hassen, *ibid*, p. 33.

legitimate political opinions of the Oromo in Ethiopia.”¹⁹ Consequently, almost all Oromo journalists and other writers are either in prisons or killed or in exile. The regime also later banned Oromo musical groups and all professional associations.²⁰

The regime has engaged in fake elections in 1992, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2005, and achieved recognition from the international community that has ignored the principles of democracy and human rights. It has targeted all sectors of Oromo society in order to destroy the foundation of Oromo nationalism and political struggle. After the May 2005 elections, the Meles regime killed more than 193 demonstrators and imprisoned thousands of them in Finfinnee and others cities because they peacefully opposed the vote rigging by the regime. Nobody knows how many people the regime killed or imprisoned in rural areas since the regime did not allow the reporting of such information. *Human Rights Watch* notes that in “Oromia, the largest and most populous state in Ethiopia, systematic political repression and pervasive human rights violations have denied citizens the freedom to associate and to freely form and express their political ideas.”²¹

When the Oromo students demonstrated across Oromia from March to May 2002, the government detained, interrogated, and tortured hundreds of Oromo business people, students, teachers, and members of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association by branding them as supporters of the OLF on its radio and TV.²² Several thousands of Oromo high school, college, and university students protested all over Oromia demanding self-determination for the Oromo people, opposing the brutalities of the Ethiopian army and police against civilians, demanding the abandonment of settling armed colonial settlers in Oromia, and rejecting the new educational policy that limited the education of Oromo children to 10th grade. They also protested exposing and opposing the policies and actions of undermining the development of Oromo language and culture in the pretext of lack of budget, books, and teachers, criticizing the imposition of high taxes and burdening farmers with high fertilizer costs, exposing the existence of the terrorist group called Galla Gadayi (killers of Oromos) that killed Oromo children and other Oromos, opposing the human rights abuses of Oromo nationalists, particularly artists and journalists, and demanding the restoration of private Oromo newspapers. Ignoring these peaceful and democratic demands, the regime responded by arresting, killing, and torturing these protesting students.²³

The more the regime has continued to repress the democratic rights of the Oromos and others, the more Oromo students have continued to resist. From January to May 2004, the Oromo students across Oromia from secondary schools to colleges protested against the dismissal of about 380 Oromo students from Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) University and the change of Oromia capital from Finfinnee to Adama (Nazareth). Government forces killed at least 11 students, arrested more than 7,000 students and

¹⁹Mohammed Hassen, *ibid*, p. 31.

²⁰The Meles government has left the Oromo nation without independent organizations and institutions. Only the organizations and the media that are owned or controlled by the Tigrayan government have remained intact, further serving to impose the Tigrayan colonial and racist authority in Oromia and other colonized regions.

²¹*Human Rights Watch*, “Suppressing Dissent Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in Ethiopia’s Oromia Region,” May 2005 Vol. 17, No. 7 (A), p. 1.

²²See Asafa Jalata, “The Impact of Ethiopian State Terrorism,” pp. 35-37.

²³*Ibid*.

teachers, and disrupted both secondary and higher education in Oromia.²⁴ Saman Zia-Zarif, Academic Freedom Director for Human Rights Watch says, “Shooting at unarmed students is a shameful misuse of government power.”²⁵ The government detained Oromo teachers using the accusation that they instigated these protests because of their support for the OLF. Government forces have raped some female students in prisons.²⁶ Detained “students were forced to run barefooted and crawl on their knees on coarse gravel spending the night on bare concrete floors.”²⁷ Several Oromo students perished in prisons due to torture and lack of medical treatment and adequate food.

The Meles regime also targeted officials and members of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association by making the accusation that they had links with the OLF and the protesting Oromo students. Subsequently, government security men closed the office of this association in Finfinnee, confiscated documents and properties, and imprisoned the chairman, Diribi Demissie, vice-chairman, Gamachu Fayera, and other officers on May 18, 2004.²⁸ Finally, the association was banned again. According to *Human Rights Watch*, “In July 2004, the Ethiopian government revoked the license of the venerable Oromo self-help association Mecha Tulema [sic] for allegedly carrying out ‘political activities’ in violations of its charter. The police subsequently arrested four of the organization’s leaders on charges of ‘terrorism’ and providing support to the OLF. The four were released on bail in August but were arbitrarily arrested a week later.”²⁹

Furthermore, regional authorities consolidated quasi-government institutions known as *gott* and *garee* from a pre-existing system of local government to maintain tight political control in Oromia; they “imposed these new structures on ... communities and that the *garee* regularly require them to perform forced labor on projects they have no hand in designing. More disturbing, regional authorities are using the *gott* and *garee* to monitor the speech and personal lives of the rural population, to restrict and control the movements of residents, and to enforce farmers’ attendance at ‘meetings’ that are thinly disguised OPDO political rallies.”³⁰ The Meles government has continued to eliminate or imprison politically conscious and self-respecting Oromos. Today thousands of Oromos are in official and secret prisons because of their nationality and their resistance to injustice. After jailed and released from prison after six years, Seye Abraha,³¹ the former Defense Minister of the regime who participated in massacring and imprisoning thousands of Oromos, testified on January 5, 2008 to his audience in Virginia, the U.S., that “esir betu Oromigna yinager” (“the prison speaks Oromiffa”) and noted that “about

²⁴ *The Oromia Support Group*, “Press Release,” July 2004, no. 40, p. 2

²⁵ Saman Zia-Zarif, “Ethiopia: Halt Crackdown on Oromo Students,” Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/05/ethiopia052202.html>, (2004), p. 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, “Ethiopia: Overview of Human Rights Issues,” <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/01/13/ethiop9833.htm>, (2005), pp. 1-2.

³⁰ *Human Rights Watch*, May 2005, Vol. 17, No. 7 (A), p. 2.

³¹ Seye Abraha was a founder and former political bureau member of the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front. He was a chauvinist Tigrayan who did not hide his negative attitudes about the Oromos and the OLF, when he was the Defense Minister of Ethiopia.

99% of the prisoners in Qaliti are Oromos.”³² The Meles regime also uses state terrorism to discourage the Oromos from participating in their national movement led by the OLF.

State Terrorism. The Meles regime terrorizes the Oromos to establish Tigrayan hegemony and dominate and exploit Oromian resources. The Tigrayan state elites believe that Oromo intellectuals, businessmen and women, conscious Oromo farmers, students, and community and religious leaders are the enemy of the Tigrayan interest, and they must be eliminated. State terrorism is associated with the issues of control of territory and resources and the construction of political and ideological domination.³³ It manifests in the Ethiopian Empire in different forms. Its obvious manifestation is violence in the form of war, assassination, murder, castration, burying alive, throwing off cliffs, hanging, torture, rape, poisoning, confiscation of properties by the police and the army, forcing people to submission by intimidation, beating, and disarming citizens.³⁴ The methods of killing also include burning, bombing, cutting throats or arteries in the neck, strangulation, shooting, and burying people up to their necks in the ground. The agents and militia of Meles have burned houses and villages, exterminating hundreds of Oromo men, women, and children by claiming that they are supporting the OLF.

The Meles regime practices different forms of torture on the imprisoned Oromos and others. Former prisoners testified that their arms and legs were tied tightly together on their backs and their naked bodies were whipped. Large containers or bottles filled with water were fixed to their testicles, or if they were women, bottles or poles were pushed into their vaginas. There were prisoners who were locked up in empty steel barrels and tormented with heat in the tropical sun during the day and with cold at night. There were also prisoners who were forced into pits so that fire could be made on top of them. The cadres, soldiers, and officials of the regime frequently rape Oromo girls and women to demoralize Oromo society and to show that the Tigrayan rulers and their collaborators wield limitless power. As Bruna Fossati, Lydia Namarra and Peter Niggli report, "in prison women are often humiliated and mistreated in the most brutal fashion. Torturers ram poles or bottles into their vaginas, connect electrodes to the lips of their vulva, or the victims are dragged into the forest and gang-raped by interrogation officers."³⁵ The soldiers have collected young Oromo girls and women into concentration

³²See "The Prison speaks Oromiffa," *Ethiopian Review*, January 17, 2008. Seye was jailed in Qaliti prison.

³³Annamarie Oliverio explains two essential features of state terrorism: "First, the state reinforces the use of violence as a viable, effective, mitigating factor for managing conflict; second, such a view is reinforced by culturally constructed and socially organized processes, expressed through symbolic forms, and related in complex ways to present social interests. Within increasing economic and environmental globalization, gender politics, and the resurgence of nationalities within territorial boundaries, the discourse of terrorism, as a practice of statecraft, is crucial to the construction of political boundaries. As such, terrorism is invoked in the art of statecraft when multiple, often conflicting versions of the past are produced and, at particular historical moments, become sites of intense struggles." Annamarie Oliverio, "The State of Injustice," *ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁴See Sue Pollock, "Ethiopia-Human Tragedy in the Making: Democracy or Dictatorship?" *The Oromia Support Group*, 1996; Sue Pollock, "Politics and Conflict: Participation and Self-determination in Ethiopia: Conquest and the Quest for Freedom and Democracy," edited by Seyoum Y. Hameso, T. Trueman, and T. E. Erena, (London: TSC Publications, 1997), pp. 81-110; Trevor Trueman, "Democracy or dictatorship," in *Ethiopia*, *ibid.*, pp. 141-150; See U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 1991-2007; *Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch/Africa*, 1991-2007; *The Oromia Support Group*, 1997).

³⁵ Bruna Fossati, L. Namarra, and Peter Niggli, *The New Rulers of Ethiopia and the Persecution of the Oromo: Reports from the Oromo Refugees in Djibouti*, (Dokumentation, Evangelischer Pressedienst

camps and gang raped them in front of their relatives, fathers, brothers, and husbands to humiliate them and the Oromo people.

Similar conditions occurred wherever terrorism and genocide were practiced. Lisa Sharlack explains that as a campaign to commit terrorism and genocide, the West Pakistan army raped thousands of the Bangladesh women, the Serbian army raped the women of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo, and the Hutu men raped the Tutsi girls and women.³⁶ In addition to the effects of mental and bodily tortures, through raping women and girls, the TPLF soldiers and officers have been spreading diseases, such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, and HIV/AIDS in Oromo society. One study on issues surrounding HIV/AIDS in Ethiopian military personnel demonstrates that their frequent movements, exposition to causal sex with prostitutes, war, and social disorganization put them at high risk for acquiring and spreading sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS.³⁷

State sanctioned rape is a form of terrorism. The use of sexual violence is a tactic of genocide that a dominant ethnonational group practices in destroying the subordinate ethnonational group. To demoralize, destroy, and to show that Tigrayans are a powerful group that can do any thing to the Oromos, Tigrayan cadres, soldiers, and officials have frequently raped Oromo girls and women. What Catherine MacKinnon says about ethnic cleansing in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina applies to the sexual abuse of Oromo women: “It is also rape unto death, rape as massacre, rape to kill and to make the victims wish they were dead. It is rape as an instrument of forced exile, rape to make you leave your home and never want to go back. It is rape to be seen and heard and watched and told to others: rape as spectacle. It is rape to drive a wedge through a community, to shatter a society, to destroy a people. It is rape as genocide.”³⁸

Thousands of Oromo women and men are imprisoned or killed. Most Oromos who were murdered by the agents of the Ethiopian government were eaten by hyenas and denied burial. The relatives of the murdered Oromos and others are not allowed to cry to express their sadness according to their cultural tradition. For example, the wife of Ahmed Mohamed Kuree, a seventy years old elderly farmer, expressed on February 21, 2007 on the Voice of America, Afaan Oromo Program:³⁹ “We found his prayer beads, his cloth and a single piece of his bone which the hyenas left behind after devouring the rest of his body and we took those items home. What is more, after we got home, they [government agents] condemned us for going to Gaara Suufii and for mourning. For fear of repercussions, we have not offered the customary prayer for the dead ... husband by reading from the Qur’an. Justice has not been served. That is where we are today.”

In 2007, the Meles militia killed twenty Oromos and left their corpses on the Mountain of Suufi in Eastern Oromia. Ahmed Mohamed Kuree was one of these Oromos. Another Oromo, Ayisha Ali, a fourteen years old teenager, was also killed and eaten by hyena. Her mother also said the same radio the following: “After we heard the

Frankfurt am, 1996, p. 10

Main, 1996),

³⁶Lisa Sharlack, “State Rape: Sexual Violence as Genocide,” *ibid*, p. 107.

³⁷For details, see Ludmila N. Bakhireva, Yegeremu Abebe, Stephanie K. Bordine, et la, “Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Knowledge and Risk in Ethiopian Military Personnel,” *Military Medicine*, 169, 3: 221-226, 2004.

³⁸Catharine MacKinnon, “Rape, Genocide, and Women’s Human Rights,” *Harvard Women’s Law*, Journal 17, 1994, pp. 11-12.

³⁹The translation into English was made by <http://Oromoaffairs.blogspot.com/>

rumor about the old man [Ahmed Mohamed Kuree] I followed his family to Gaara Suufii [in search of my daughter]. There we found her skirt, sweater, under wears and her hair, braided ... That was all we found of my daughter remains.” Ayisha was probably raped and killed. According to *Human Rights Watch* (2005, 1-2), “Since 1992, security forces have imprisoned thousands of Oromo on charges of plotting armed insurrection on behalf of the OLF. Such accusations have regularly been used as a transparent pretext to imprison individuals who publicly question government policies or actions. Security forces have tortured many detainees and subjected them to continuing harassment and abuse for years after their release. That harassment, in turn has often destroyed victims’ ability to earn a livelihood and isolated them from their communities.” The Meles regime has targeted all sectors of Oromo society and their environment and even their animals. According to Mohammed Hassen,

Oromo men, women, children, animals, and even the Oromo environment are all targets of the TPLF’s tyranny. In cases where Oromo pastoralists were suspected of harboring OLF guerrilla fighters, TPLF soldiers punished them by destroying or confiscating their cattle or by poisoning the wells from which the cattle drank. On many occasions Oromo farmers, suspected of feeding OLF fighters, saw their farms burned to the ground and the defenseless members of their households brutally murdered. In 2000, when the TPLF government suspected OLF guerrillas of hiding in the forests of Oromia, its agents set fires that caused catastrophic environmental destruction in Oromia and other states in southern Ethiopia.⁴⁰

Most of the time, political repression and state terrorism have resulted in genocidal massacres in Oromia.

Genocidal Massacres. The regime has engaged in genocidal massacres with little or no opposition from Western powers, particularly the United States. All these crimes against humanity are committed in the names of democracy and development. The systematic destruction of Oromo nationalists and leadership are characterized as genocide. Article II of the United Nations Convention defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.”⁴¹ Kurt Jonassohn explains genocide as the planned destruction of any economic, political or a social group.⁴² According to Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, “GENOCIDE is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator.”⁴³

Chalk and Jonassohn identify two major types of genocide:⁴⁴ the first type is used to colonize and maintain an empire by actually terrorizing people perceived to be real or potential enemies. In this case, the main purpose of practicing genocide is to acquire land and other valuable resources. The maintenance of colonial domination by state elites

⁴⁰Mohammed Hassen, “Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo,” pp.37-38.

⁴¹Quoted in Kurt Jonassohn, *Genocide and Gross Human Rights Violations: In Comparative Perspective*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), 1998, p. 9.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 23.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

requires the establishment of cultural and ideological hegemony that can be practiced through genocidal massacres. This is the second type of genocide known as ideological genocide. Jonassohn notes that ideological genocides develop “in nation-states where ethnic groups develop chauvinistic ideas about their superiority and exclusiveness.”⁴⁵ The Tigrayan-led government sees Oromia as part of its empire, controls all Oromian resources, and practices terrorism and genocide on the Oromo since it perceives them as its potential or real enemies. It engages in genocide as Chalk and Johnassohn explains above with the intention of destroying part of the Oromos nation who happened to be nationalists and leaders.

The Tigrayan state elites are imposing their political ideologies, such as “revolutionary democracy,” “federalism,” at the gunpoint with the intent of legitimizing Tigrayan ethnocracy and state power. They deny that they practice terrorism and genocide by claiming that they are democrats and revolutionaries; they also destroy the records of their political crimes. Johnassohn’s description of a conspiracy of “collective denial” of genocide is applicable to the conditions of genocide in the Ethiopian empire: “There are many reasons for this: (a) in many societies such materials are not written down, or are destroyed rather than preserved in archives; (b) many perpetrators have recourse to elaborate means of hiding the truth, controlling access to information, and spreading carefully contrived disinformation; and (c) historically, most genocides were not reported because . . . there appears to have existed a sort of conspiracy of ‘collective denial’ whereby the disappearance of a people did not seem to require comment or even mention.”⁴⁶

When the Tigrayan racist regime attempts to eliminate the Oromo elites through genocide in order to deny the Oromos their own political leadership, it prepares the Tigrayan children for positions of leadership by providing them a better education while denying appropriate educational opportunities for Oromo children. Although it is impossible to exactly know at this time how many Oromos have been murdered because the Meles government hides the information, Mohammed Hassen estimates that between 1992 and 2001 about 50,000 thousand killings and 16,000 disappearances (euphemism for secret killings) took place in Oromia; he also notes that 90 percent of the killings were not reported.⁴⁷ The Meles government hides its political crimes and “does not keep written records of its extrajudicial executions and prolonged detention of political prisoners.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, the massive killings and genocide committed on the Sheko, Mezhenger, Sidama, Annuak, and ogaden Somali peoples shocked some sections of the international community.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Kurt Johnassohn, *ibid*, p. 23.

⁴⁶*Ibid*, p. 11.

⁴⁷Mohammed Hassen “Is Genocide Against the Oromo in Ethiopia Possible,” *Paper Presented at the Fourth International Biennial Conference of the Association of Genocide Scholars*, Radisson Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 10, 2001.

⁴⁸*Ibid*, p.30.

⁴⁹In 2002, when the Sheko and Mezhenger peoples demanded their rights, the regime killed between 128 and 1,000 people. Nobody knows exactly how many people were killed sine the government and the victims give different numbers. Similarly, on June 21, 2002, between 39 and 100 Sidamas were killed when government soldiers fired at 7,000 peaceful demonstrators in Hawas (Awash). Again government forces and colonial settlers committed genocidal massacres on the Annuak people of Gambella in December 2003 and beginning 2004; they killed 424 people and displaced about 50, 000 people. Currently, the regime is

The political repression, state terrorism, and genocidal massacres practiced by the Meles regime have forced millions of Oromos to become political refugees. Suspecting that these refugees support the Oromo national movement, the regime has been trying to control their activities. Using the leverage of Western countries, the Meles regime has pressured neighboring governments to return or expel Oromo refugees from their countries. The alliance of the West with this regime has frightened neighboring countries, such as Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan and turned them against the Oromo struggle and the Oromo refugees. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has even failed to provide reasonable protection for thousands of Oromo refugees in Djibouti, Kenya, and Sudan. For example, on December 21 and 22, 2000, five thousand Oromo refugees were refouled to Ethiopia, although the UNHCR office in Djibouti denied any violation of its mandate.⁵⁰ Between 2000 and 2004, hundreds of Oromo refugees were forced to return to Ethiopia to face imprisonment or death.⁵¹ "The continuing refoulement of refugees from Djibouti," notes the Oromia Support Group, "especially the large scale refoulement of December 2000 and the 28 associated deaths by asphyxiation and shooting, should be publicly acknowledged by UNHCR and the Djibouti government."⁵²

Similarly, Oromo refugees in Kenya and Sudan have faced refoulement and security problems. Kenyan security forces and the Habasha terrorist organization called Hagera Fiqir (love of country) have been harassing Oromo refugees in Kenya; the harassment has taken place in Nairobi and Kakuma refugee campus. Sudan, which was sympathetic to the Oromo refugees and the Oromo struggle until 1991, changed its policy. The Ethiopian Political Prisoners Committee reported that, violating the UN Convention on Refugees, Sudan forced some refugees to return to Ethiopia in January 2003, and revealed that 110 minors were sold in the Middle East and some European countries.⁵³ The burdens of Oromo women refugees are heavy; many of them are raped while crossing the border on the way to Djibouti or are forced to work as slaves by Djibouti households or the Djibouti police. Sebida Musa asserts, "They take the women home and treat them as their personal property. If one of the women gets pregnant, she is mercilessly thrown out into the street, where she and her unwanted child have to try and survive by begging."⁵⁴

Oromo refugees have been abused by the Djibouti authorities and the Ethiopian government, and ignored by international organizations, such as UNHCR. In addition to lack of food, Oromo children are denied education in Djibouti. Zeinaba Ibrahim, an Oromo woman refugee says "Our difficulty is that as Oromo we are threatened and endangered both at home in Ethiopia and as refugees in Djibouti;"⁵⁵ Probably following the instructions of the Ethiopian and Djibouti governments or due to the fear of these governments, the UNHCR provides little material help to Oromo refugees in Djibouti. Fossati, Namarra and Niggli note that: "The Oromo council of elders told us they believed they were entitled to a small portion of the international aid available to

engaged in genocidal massacres, imprisonment, and massive human rights violations in Ogadenia and Oromia.

⁵⁰*The Oromia Support Group*, "Press Release," December 2002, no. 38, p. 17.

⁵¹*Ibid*, July 2003, no. 39, pp. 16-18.

⁵²*Ibid*, December 2002, no. 38, pp. 18-20; July 2003, no. 39, pp. 18-19.

⁵³Cited in *ibid*, July 2003, no. 39, p. 20.

⁵⁴*Ibid*, p. 28.

⁵⁵*Ibid*.

refugees, but did not even get a glass of water from the UNHCR and had been completely forgotten. All the Oromo that we spoke to complained again and again that they were so poor that it was even difficult to bury their dead properly. The community, they said, should at least be able to guarantee a burial, since it is the one thing a human being cannot do for himself."⁵⁶

The Kenyan government has also failed to protect its Oromo citizens, let alone Oromo refugees from Oromia. Hussein Sora, a young Kenyan Oromo lawyer, accused the Meles regime of international terrorism and compiled a report on the criminal activities of the Ethiopian security forces in Kenya since 1992. According to this report, the TPLF forces assassinated prominent Oromo refugees, bombed the houses of some Kenyan Oromos and abducted civil servants, and shot some citizens in Kenya.⁵⁷ This lawyer died the same year he compiled and distributed the report to the Kenyan authorities and international organizations. The agents of the Ethiopian government were suspected of killing him by poisoning. The TPLF forces have continued to enter into Kenya murdering and looting the economic resources of some Kenyan Oromos by accusing them of harboring the Oromo Liberation Army. The Tigrayan soldiers have been killing hundreds of Kenyan Oromos by entering into Kenya.

Entering into Somalia and Kenya, the agents of this regime have been assassinating prominent Oromo leaders, such as Jatani Ali, Mulis Abba Gada,⁵⁸ Sheik Mohammed Saïdo, between 1991 and 2007. Still the regime kills prominent Oromos in Kenya and Somalia. The Ethiopian security forces assassinated Oromos in Somalia and Kenya in 2007 and 2008. One human rights organization notes that on February 5, 2008, the combined security forces of Ethiopia and Puntland, Somalia, bombed two hotels owned by two Oromo refugees and murdered 65 Oromo refugees and seriously injured more than 100 people.⁵⁹ When it comes to the Oromos, international organizations do not pay attention even if international laws are broken. The Oromos are denied sanctuary in neighboring countries and are denied the right to be refugees. Since Oromo refugees are not welcomed by neighboring countries and international organizations, there are thousands of 'internal' Oromo refugees in Oromia and Ethiopia. Fleeing from Ethiopian state terrorism, these internal refugees hide in the bushes and remote villages. Suspecting that these internal refugees support the Oromo national struggle, the regime attempts to control their movements and the movement of other Oromos. Since the Oromo are the largest national group and have abundant economic resources, there cannot be peace and development in the Horn of Africa without the full participation of the Oromo people in bringing peace and democracy.

The Tigrayan-led Ethiopian State as the Enemy of Peace and Development

Successive Ethiopian regimes have depended on external powers, lacked internal political legitimacy, and brutalized individuals and groups through the policies and practices of authoritarianism and state terrorism for more than a century. Despite the fact that

⁵⁶*Ibid*, p. 44.

⁵⁷Cited in *The Oromia Support Group*, p. 79.

⁵⁸Mulis Abba Gada was one of the Oromo heroes who initiated the Oromo movement, and he was a member of the Oromo Liberation Front National Council. A Tigrayan assassin squad in Somalia shot him in 2000.

⁵⁹http://www.humanrightsleague.com/press_Releases.html, 2008.

successive Amhara-Tigrayan state elites have claimed that their state, history, culture, religion, and civilization are something to be proud of, Ethiopia is known for its recurrent famines, internal and external wars, backwardness, poverty, and underdevelopment. Ethiopia has remained an empire of darkness, poverty, and ignorance and the leadership of Amhara or Tigrayan society has failed to care about their country, society, and development. Their ideological claims of Solomonic myth or Christianity or socialism or democracy could not hide their political behavior. The Ethiopian state has been used as an instrument of gangsters to enrich some elites and punish those who oppose them through the practices of authoritarianism and state terrorism.

Successive Ethiopian regimes have imposed their political power on their subjects through the barrel of the gun by violating the rule of law and the principle of social contract. The survival of these regimes has mainly depended on political violence and assistance from global powers. Consequently, the Ethiopian state has remained the organ of political repression, oppression, exploitation, terrorism, and impoverishment, and, hence it has lacked internal legitimacy. The Ethiopian political and cultural traditions have preserved colonial arrangements, and tyrannical political practices and resisted changes in political norms, rules, and practices although regimes have been changed several times through violence. Since the behavior of the Abyssinian political elites has been shaped by the predatory Abyssinian political culture, the Ethiopian political system has remained tyrannical and parasitic and failed to advance peaceful and meaning of socioeconomic development.⁶⁰

The Ethiopian cultural and political systems represent the worst kinds of oppressive and exploitative systems in the world, and they “gave birth to some of the most degenerate leaders who obstructed very much needed social, economic and political changes.”⁶¹ The Ethiopian state is failed to secure internal legitimacy from the peoples it controls through providing security and improving their well-being. As Jennifer Milliken and Keith Krause note, “state failure is causally linked to increased and widespread humanitarian suffering, regional instability, and transnational threats of international organized crime and terrorism.”⁶² Although four successive governments emerged after that of Menelik, the Ethiopian state has remained personalized, ethnicized/racialized,⁶³ and dependent on big global powers, and never become the domain of public power.

These regimes have imposed their political authorities through political repression and state terrorism in order to have absolute control over the means of compulsion (the state) and the means of consumption (productive resources). Because of the lack of

⁶⁰Tecola W. Hagos, *Democratization? Ethiopia (1991-1994): A Personal View*, (Cambridge, MA: Kheper Publishers, 1995).

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²Jennifer Milliken and Keith Krause. “State Failure, State Collapse, and State Reconstruction: Concepts, Lessons and Strategies,” *Development and Change*, November 2002, Vol. 33(5), p. 764.

⁶³In the global capitalist world system, individuals or groups who have political power use the discourse of race or ethnicity to consolidate their political power and protect their privilege. They create non-existent race and promote the ideology of racism. As the meaning of *race* is complex, so is that of racism. Racism is a discourse and a practice in which a racial/ethnonational project is politically, culturally, and ‘scientifically’ constructed by global and regional elites in the capitalist world system to naturalize and justify racial/ethnonational inequality in which those at the top of the hierarchy oppress and exploit those below them by claiming biological and/or cultural superiority. For further discussion, see Asafa Jalata, *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization*, *ibid*, pp. 8-21.

accountability from successive Ethiopian governments, the produce of the people has not been properly channeled toward development. The state elites have used available resources for conspicuous consumption and the consolidation of the position of the state. Due to the backwardness of the economy, the economic surplus is very limited. Hence there is a life-and-death struggle on its appropriation. The accessibility to state power is the major channel through which the surplus is siphoned off from actual producers. That is why there is no peaceful transference of power, and the struggle for political power is violent.

Ethiopia is probably the first empire in the world where the ideologies of the West and the East have drastically failed and resulted in human tragedies. The successive state elites and their international counterparts have mainly interested in wealth and capital accumulation that can be achieved through having control on the means of compulsion, the state. The racialized/ethnicized Ethiopian state has practiced violence and terror to maintain the logic of exploitation and oppression. The state elites of Amhara and Tigray ethnonational groups have used their ethnonational power bases to dominate and exploit other peoples. T. M. Shaw asserts that “whilst officially denying and decrying ‘ethnicity’, ruling classes tend to use it in practice to maintain personal networks: The construction of power. The articulation of ‘factionalism’ has in fact been ubiquitous on the continent as ethnic connections have become the hard-core of any support nexus.”⁶⁴ The racialization/ethnicization of state power in Ethiopia has prevented the construction of a legitimate democratic state that can reflect a multinational society.

Due to the priorities that successive Ethiopian governments and the imperial interstate system have maintained, peaceful redefinition of social and ethnonational relations are impossible. Under such conditions, the state is an instrument of the ruling class and the politically dominant ethnonations because it denies the masses and the subordinated ethnonations political representation in the decision-making process. The subordinated classes, groups and ethnonations are denied democracy, self-determination, and freedom that include political and economic rights. The results of these situations are conflicts, wars, massive human rights violations, economic crises, and underdevelopment. Since these regimes have not represented the peoples whom they ruled, they have failed to establish popular accountability.⁶⁵ The Amhara-Tigray state elites that have dominated the means of compulsion (the state) and the means of consumption (the economy) have engaged in plunder and accumulation of wealth and capital with the help of the imperial interstate system. Mohammed Mamdani notes that “state connection is a necessary precondition for membership in the African bourgeoisie gives a life-and-death character

⁶⁴ Shaw, T.M. “Ethnicity as the Resilient Paradigm for Africa: From 1960s to 1980s,” *Development and Change*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1986), p. 589.

⁶⁵For instance, in the early 1970s, Haile Selassie's regime ignored the famine crisis in Wallo that resulted in the deaths of 440,000 persons (Wolde-Mariam, 1985: 12) and even did not officially acknowledge the existence of famine (Wolde-Mariam, 1984: 102-116). Colonel Mengistu's regime, in addition to spending more than 45% of its annual budgets on military and security activities (Korn, 1986:164), spent about U.S. \$200 million in 1984 for building the convention hall, updating television equipment, decorating Addis Ababa, and for food and drink during the celebration of the creation of the so-called Workers' Party of Ethiopia and the tenth anniversary of the military officers' taking political power (Lemma, 1985: 123-124), while about 7 million farmers were facing starvation or death (Clay, Steingraber, and Niggli, 1988: 1). The military regime not only avoided helping the famine-stricken farmers, but it also did not want to report the reemergence of famine until the celebration was over.⁶⁵ While people are suffering from famine, poverty, and war Meles and his agents are looting the resources of the empire.

to the political struggle within it. A political position does not simply reinforce a pre-existing economic position or open up new opportunities where old ones already existed; it is in fact the very foundation of wealth.”⁶⁶ The governments' failure to invest effectively the available surplus in development of productive forces has left the peoples culturally, technically, economically, and political backward.

Failure to invest in the development of productive forces, internal and external wars, farmers' discouragement due to expropriation of their grains and animals, and conspicuous consumption of the ruling classes have slowed the introduction of technical innovation in the agricultural production system. Since the Ethiopian state and the imperial interstate system, spearheaded by the U. S. government, have refused to recognize and provide an alternative solution to the complex processes of decolonization, self-determination and multinational democracy, today we witness conflicts, political repression, state terrorism, recurrent famines, wars, social dislocation and crises in Ethiopia.⁶⁷ While most of the people are facing abject poverty, diseases, famines, and illiteracy, the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian regime is engaging in low-level wars against the liberation fronts of Oromia, Ogadenia, Sidama, and others, and intensifying the war of aggression against Somalia. This regime might also go to war with Eritrea to destroy thousands of lives and spend millions of dollars as it did between 1998 and 2000. There is no any doubt that the Meles regime and its global supporters are preparing this empire of famine to the total collapse.

Discussion and Conclusion

If the Ethiopian Empire is to be transformed into a viable, self-sustained, and peaceful country, establishing a multinational democratic state that will have internal political legitimacy by implementing the principles of decolonization, national self-determination, and popular sovereignty must be the first political priority. This is only possible by totally dismantling the current racialized/ethnicized Ethiopian state that is engaged in political authoritarianism and state terrorism and by replacing it by a state that will be a public domain by establishing and practicing the rule of law. I am afraid that if the existing political problems are not fairly and democratically solved as soon as possible, they may lead to genocidal conflicts like in Rwanda or former Yugoslavia. Before it is too late progressive intellectuals, democrats, concerned political forces, and the international community must start finding ways of addressing and solving these complex and difficult political problems.

Alternatively, if the Amhara-Tigrayan elites continue to be interested in their racialized/ethnicized state, the national liberation movements of the colonized nations should pursue commonly the political agenda of building a multinational democratic state by implementing the processes of decolonization, self-determination, and popular sovereignty. The only way to bring just, durable peace, and development in Oromia and

⁶⁶M. Mamdani, “Peasants and Democracy in Africa,” *New Left Review*, March/April, 1986, p. 47.

⁶⁷The old policy of building a state on the basis of one ethnonational hegemony in a multinational society, the blind acceptance of the sovereignty of the racialized state without recognizing the rights of the subjugated peoples, the idea of promoting the politics of order at the cost of democracy and self-determination, the lack of vision to build a multinational democracy based on ethnocultures and universal values of humanism, democracy, self-determination equality, social justice, and progress are contributing to the intensification of political conflicts, state decay and failure, underdevelopment, and social problems in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia and its neighbors is to replace the Ethiopian authoritarian-terrorist regime by a legitimate multinational democratic state. Without a new democratic paradigm that will allow the dominated classes, social groups, and ethnonations to have a genuine representation within a state that they can form and change, the existing state, continental and international political structures are inadequate to address and provide a solution for the complex political and economic problems in Ethiopia.⁶⁸

The Ethiopian state is failed and it is on the verge of collapse. Although the Meles regime survives mainly by depending on big powers and by practicing authoritarianism, terrorism, and hidden genocide, the Oromo, Sidama, and Ogaden-Somali national liberation movements and other political forces are challenging it. Crawford Young (1993:27-30) argues, “The world enters a period of exceptional fluidity-of the sort which historically has usually come about through the dislocation of a major war. Nation and state, as we have known them, are interrogated by history and alternative visions of the future. In this process, the politics of cultural pluralism will influence the outcomes in many important ways. In turn, the prospective impact of cultural pluralism beckons us to continue our quest for a more complete understanding of its inner workings.”⁶⁹ The Meles regime has two options: The first option is to continue its racist policy that is supported by the West and to lead the Ethiopian state to its final collapse by increasing its level of authoritarianism, terrorism, and genocidal massacres and by further contributing to massive social and economic crises in the form of famine, poverty, disease, and internal and external wars.

The second option is to transfer power peacefully and democratically to the majority rule like in South Africa where the apartheid regime transferred state power to the Black majority through multinational democracy. Furthermore, the Tigray-Amhara state elites should recognize that their successive regimes have been failure, and they cannot continue to maintain the ethnicized/racialized Ethiopian state power for very long in a multinational society. If these state elites opt to continue their racist and colonial policies, their empire may violently disintegrate like that of Yugoslavia or may face genocidal destruction like in Rwanda. This option may have a devastating consequence for both “the true Ethiopians” and the colonized population groups. So, it is very essential that all liberation fronts and progressive political forces recognize the possible consequences of external political legitimacy, the impacts of the policies and actions of authoritarianism and state terrorism, and devastating effects of underdevelopment and war, and commonly seek an enduring political solution through the processes of de-

⁶⁸The majority of the peoples in Ethiopia are at a political crossroads: Their social and cultural systems that traditionally satisfied social and material needs had been broken up, and they could not yet establish state or states that can be responsive to their social and economic needs. The world community, nongovernmental and regional organizations, except intervening during a famine disaster and feed those populations who are starved, do not help the peoples. They do not take preventive actions. They only respond when the media start to report the existence of famine, genocide, and massive human rights violations. These acute problems did not yet get attention in Ethiopia. That is why peoples like the Oromo, Sidama, Ogaden-Somali, Annuak and others are suffering today under the authoritarian-terrorist regime of Meles Zenawi that practices hidden genocide.

⁶⁹Young, Crawford. *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?* (Madison: WI: The University of Wisconsin Press), pp. 27-30.

colonization, national self-determination, and multinational democracy. To move towards these political objectives, all progressive individuals, liberation fronts, and other political organizations should reject a culturally and ideologically blind old paradigm, and develop a new paradigm shift that helps in listening to contradictory and competing historical and cultural narratives of the past and present of the peoples who have been suffering under the yoke of the Ethiopian authoritarian-terrorist state and seek balanced understanding and a democratic and fair solution.