

VOLUME XVII Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, HORN OF AFRICA DEC., 1999

HORN_{OF} AFRICA

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL • QUADRUPLE ISSUE

**CONSTRUCTED ON A SAND FOUNDATION: THE CRISIS OF
U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE HORN OF AFRICA
DURING THE POST COLD WAR ERA: A CRITICAL REVIEW.**

PART ONE

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Constructed on a Sand Foundation: The Crisis of U.S. Foreign Policy Toward the Horn of Africa During the Post Cold War Era: A Critical Review. Part One.

Hamdesa Tuso

This is a two-part essay. The first section consists of the personal experiences of the author, a professional Oromo who lives and teaches in the United States. The introductory section is a theoretical approach to the problem and sets the stage for the second part. Part two of the essay is a description of the problem and provides empirical evidence for the reasons of the crisis in Ethiopia and the Sudan. [Editors' Note]

I. Introduction: On December 31, 1999, like many other people, I stayed home in Dayton, Ohio, and watched the media extravaganza on the celebration of the arrival of the new century and the millennium. I switched from channel to channel to satisfy my curiosity about the images the media would select from different locations and continents around the globe. ABC presented two dramatically variant pictures from the continent of Africa for that glittering media event. One scene was from South Africa, previously the land of Apartheid. The main feature was the picture of President Nelson Mandela with an uncharacteristically sober look on his face, lighting a solitary candle from the infamous prison cell on Robben Island, where he spent some two decades condemned by the Apartheid regime as a terrorist. In a magnificently symbolic act, he passed the candle light to his successor, President Thabo Mbeki, and the latter in turn passed it to children depicting the passage of leadership to a new generation as well as symbolizing the hopes and aspirations of the younger generations of South Africa. Also, the footage included live African music and dance accompanying that historic commemorative event. The other picture was from the Horn of Africa, showing a ghostly scene from a refugee camp in Djibouti. The ABC reporter, Jim Wooten, made two strikingly austere comments: that the African Horn was ravaged by conflict during the Cold War, and that the new century was not bringing any better future for those in that refugee camp. Indeed, it was a disheartening scene; there was no music nor dancing nor even human voice nor human face from the refugee camp. All that was captured by the camera were refugee shanty huts under the shadow of a clear sky night. Ironically, but understandably, what was absent was any comment by Mr. Wooten as to why there are refugees in Djibouti a decade after the Cold War was ended. Why so much spirit of hope and bright future for the current and future generations, as projected in those images from South Africa, but nothing comparably as heartening images from the Horn of Africa; after all, Southern Africa was also ravaged by conflict during the Cold War; however, is there hope?

This essay is designed to serve as a follow-up, as it were, to that very disheartening scene from the Horn of Africa. Thus it will attempt to revisit the conflict in that culturally rich and political complex region during the post-Cold War era. More specifically, it will closely examine the role of the surviving super-power, the United States, in the conflict which has become even more complex than it was during the post

Cold War. This examination will be done against the backdrop of the newly declared U.S. doctrine that it, as the surviving superpower, will have a special obligation to support democracy and respect for human rights around the world. [1] President Bill Clinton, in affirming this presumably new doctrine asserted at his Speech to the UN General Assembly on September 21, 1999, that:

When the Cold War ended, the United States could have chosen to run away from the opportunities and dangers of the world. Instead, we have tried to be engaged, involved, and active. We know this moment of unique prosperity and power for United States is a source of concern to many.

Instead of imposing our values on others, we have sought to promote a system of government, democracy, that empowers people to choose their own destinies according to their own values and aspirations. [2]

More significantly, our examination of the U.S. foreign policy toward the Horn of Africa during the post Cold War will help to discern whether the political attitudes and behavior have changed in dealing with the social conflict in the region where traditionally major world powers have collided as the result of perceived threats by the competing parties' external "enemy". Historically, the main interest of the major powers in the Horn of Africa has been over concerns relative to their access to the Red Sea, which is adjacent to the oil fields in the Middle East deemed by the West to be vital to its economic interests and national security. This study will reveal that in the final analysis, nothing has changed relative to the western approach in their quest to "ensure" the security of the Red Sea. Neither has been a change in the strategy nor the tactics which have been developed and employed to protect the rich oil fields and the Red Sea. Based on the evidence available, pitting one tyrant against another at the expense of populations such tyrants control in their respective states has been a well established strategy and is still alive and well and indeed, in some cases, even more aggressive and cavalier to the consequences at the grass root levels. What even makes the situation more extraordinary is the fact that there is not another power able to challenge the U.S. in this sphere - - the implication is that the party the U.S. anoints for its policy objectives becomes the unchallenged winner while the parties the U.S. disapproves of will perish in shame and despair. Thus, in the examination of the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Horn of Africa, it seems that all the laudatory pronouncements about U.S. foreign policy commitment to advancing the cause of democracy and respect for human rights during the post Cold War era is nothing more than a side show. [3]

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

This war gives human rights precedence over the rights of the states. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been attacked without a direct UN mandate for the Alliance action. But the Alliance has not acted out to license, aggressiveness or disrespect for international law. On the contrary: It has acted out of respect for the law- -for the law that ranks the evolution of human rights higher than the protection of the sovereignty of states. It has acted out of respect for the rights of humanity, as they are articulated by our conscience as well as by other instruments of international law.

I see this as an important precedent for the future. It has been now clearly stated that it is not permissible to slaughter people, to evict them from their homes, to maltreat them and to deprive them of their property. It has been demonstrated that human rights are indivisible and that if injustice is done to some, it is done to all. [4]

Thus, according to President Havel that war against Mr. Milosevic set a new standard--that ethnic mistreatment by the government of dominant ethnic group is no longer tolerable. Indeed, he spoke to the unresolved dysfunctional relationships between the modern state and ethnic groups. During this century, the U.S. has been involved four times in European wars caused by tyrants. Two of these wars took place during the 1990's. The main goal for its involvement was to stop ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and provide the necessary assistance for the purpose of stabilizing the social, economic, and political system so that all groups can enjoy economic and political security and peace. [5] The central theme of the new doctrine was reiterated by President Clinton in his speech to the UN General Assembly. In fact he made the linkage between the new U.S. doctrine and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, which is to protect the basic rights of all citizens of the world. He said:

What is the role of the U.N. in preventing mass slaughter and dislocations? Very large. Even in Kosovo, NATO's actions followed a clear consensus expressed in several Security Council resolutions that the atrocities committed by Serb forces were unacceptable, that the international community had a compelling interest in seeing them end. Had we chosen to do nothing in the face of this brutality, I do not believe we would have strengthened the United Nations. Instead, we would have risked discrediting everything it stands for. By acting as we did, we helped to vindicate the principles and purposes of the U.N. Charter and the opportunity it now has to play the central role in shaping Kosovo's future. In the real world principles often collide, and tough choices must be made. The outcome in Kosovo is hopeful. [6]

The obvious question then, is whether the U.S. government is going to apply the same standard when it comes to ethnic persecution by African tyrants. Thus far, it seems the U.S. State Department has been sending mixed signals on this subject. One signal came from Dr. Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State, during her speech at the NAACP Annual Conference in New York where she indicated that the U.S. may do more

in resolving conflict in Africa. [7] A totally opposite signal came from her subordinates with respect to the current crisis in the Horn of Africa. Dr. Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in her testimony before the Congressional Subcommittee, gave a standard Cold War period style dogmatic and unreasoned, uncritical speech with a catalogue of the "bad guys" and the "good guys". In the list of the bad guys, she once again castigated the Eritrean government and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). According to her the Eritrean government was bad because it allegedly gave weapons to the OLF. Furthermore, in her view, Isias Afeworkie is going closer to Muamar Gaddafi, the "bad guy." She also believed the OLF was bad because it was going to use those weapons for violence. [8] About three months later Mr. Tabor Nagy, the new Ambassador designee to Ethiopia, stated in his confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate Committee that Ethiopia is an important ally of the United States. Mr. Nagy said, "Ethiopia is one of the most important partners in Africa. Our bilateral relationship is founded on mutual strategic interests and the shared aspirations of our governments for the people of Ethiopia." [9] What is even more startling is the fact he justified the U.S. foreign policy toward the regime of Meles Zenawi by asserting that, "Since the fall of the repressive socialist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991, Ethiopia has made great strides toward building a democratic society." [10] Consistent with this policy position, Mr. David Shin, the outgoing U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, echoed the same assertion that Ethiopia has been more democratic than in the previous periods. He even ventured to blame the victims for the conflict and devastation his government has sponsored: he specifically singled out the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) for convenient disparagement. He accused the OLF on two main grounds: (1) for failing to renounce violence, and (2) for not accepting the Constitution of Meles Zenawi. [11] It is instructive to note that he conveniently refrained from making any references to the state sponsored violence against the other subordinate nationalities by the regime of Meles Zenawi. Neither was there any observation relative to the well-established fact that the OLF was systematically prevented from full, free and fair competition during the 1992 election and subsequently banned by Meles Zenawi from legally participating in the political process. Furthermore he failed to point out that the Constitution of 1994 to which he referred was drafted and ratified under political duress. (More will be said about it later).

These assertions about the democratic progress in post-Cold War Ethiopia could not be supported by the available evidence, for the political policies of the government of Meles Zenawi in the areas of democratic processes and human rights violations against various subordinate ethnic groups should clearly demonstrate otherwise. Therefore, there are two dramatically opposing sets of views - - one expounded by the U.S. government relative to the new doctrine to support democracy and human rights in the world during the post Cold War, and the other set of views expressed about Ethiopia by the government representatives and their incongruence when compared with the evidence from the scene on the ground.

U.S. foreign policy toward the Horn of Africa can be perceived as the function of core vs. periphery relations at various levels: global, regional and state. [12] It may be useful to commence with a personal narrative from the periphery. More specifically

since the experiences of the peoples in the periphery, particularly those in the Ethiopian empire - - their grievances, hopes, and aspirations have not been exposed to the outside world sufficiently. It is hoped that such a personal narrative, in some small way, will illustrate the depth of the crisis with respect to the dysfunctional relationships between the core and the periphery. Since the central theme of the work is to provide a critical review of the U.S. foreign policy in the Horn of Africa, special focus has been given to Ethiopia and the Sudan. With respect to post *Dergue* Ethiopia, the U.S. government pays special attention to three entities: (1) the regime of Meles Zenawi, (2) the Oromo people, and (3) the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). This essay will also review, though briefly, the U.S. policy toward the regime in Khartoum during the period under discussion. There are five areas for further exploration, where the U.S. foreign policy should be reconsidered in some fundamental ways: (1) understanding the nature of the social system in Ethiopia; (2) the theoretical issue with practical implications- -is it possible to democratize an empire?; (3) the futility of suppressing national movements; (4) the need to empower the weaker parties; and (5) dealing with the Sudan - - alternative approaches.

II. A Personal Narrative: The personal narrative which will be related here centers around three episodes: the tears of the first Oromo generation; the London Peace Conference; and the tears of the fourth Oromo generation.

The Tears of the First Generation: I am an Oromo who was born and raised in the Rift Valley (around *Arsie-Neggalle* and *Shashamene* area). I represent the third generation in my family whose lives have been dramatically affected by the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia. My grandfather, Ulla Tulle, was gunned down in the wee hour of the morning on a wedding occasion at the foot of Mt. Durro. With him five persons (family members and neighbors) also perished. My grandmother lost her first son, Beriso, in that onslaught; however, she managed to run away with four of her remaining children who were too young to comprehend that dramatic event. The entire cattle and property of the family and their relatives and neighbors caught in that scene were confiscated by the government. Thus, my first history teacher on the subject of the conquest and subjugation of the Oromo and many other ethnic groups in the periphery of the Ethiopian Empire was my grandmother. The wound which remained in her soul was imprinted in my memory through her tears over the untimely slaughter of her son, Beriso. This act of atrocity was undertaken by the agents of the government. It was done under the pretext that my grandfather had failed to pay taxes. This took place approximately during 1930's, about three decades after the Oromos were conquered by Emperor Menelik II. This was the period of pacification by the Ethiopian colonial administration by employing various drastic measures. One such method was eliminating the leadership among the Oromos, one of whom was my grandfather who was a leader in his community.

My father, one of the four children who escaped death due to the courageous act of my grandmother, grew up in fear and was further terrorized as a peasant under the regimes of Emperor Haile Sellassie and the *Dergue*. In the district of *Arsie-Neggalle*, the

entire land, with a few exceptions, belonged to *Her Imperial Majesty, Etege Menon*. In addition to numerous unfair and abusive obligatory duties the peasants of the colonized subjects had to endure in Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia, my father, as the government policy demanded of all subjects on the royal family owned lands, had to pay taxes to Haile Sellassie's government as well as to the office of Her Imperial Majesty. Yet the West embraced Emperor Haile Sellassie as *the wise and modernizing Emperor*. The *Dergue* emerged claiming itself to be a pro-peasant, socialist government. The then *socialist world* embraced it as a truly revolutionary regime which cared about equality and socialist justice; however, in due course, the *Dergue* emerged as one of the most brutal regimes in the world. Among its chief cruel policies toward the peoples in the periphery of the Ethiopian Empire, it introduced resettlement of the new *naftatenga* (colonial settlers) to the South, imposed price control on the agricultural goods of the peasants, and most of all, it introduced forced *villagization* on the Oromo peasants of the generations of my father and his children. Indeed, this scorched-earth policy was meant to undermine the Oromo people: *to complete the final dispossession of the Oromo people of their resources with the intent of effecting death to their national identity and cultural heritage!*

The educated Oromos who, for the most part, represent the first generation literate segment in the Oromo society, did not fare any better. The *Dergue* systematically and indiscriminately persecuted Oromo professionals and intellectuals through intimidation, imprisonment, torture, and physical liquidation. (More will be said about this subject later in this work).

The London Peace Conference: In 1991, between May and July, I witnessed the dawn of a new era, the rise of the Tigrean power. Also, I observed in disbelief the coronation of Meles Zenawi and his Tigrean cohorts, the successor of the *Dergue*, by the West as *the new agents for democracy and protectors of human rights* in the new political order of the post Cold War Ethiopia. On May 22, I learned from National Public Radio (U.S.) about the flight of Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam from Addis Ababa. Like many who were following the events relative to the conflict in the Horn of Africa, I was taken by surprise by that extra-ordinary development in Ethiopia. After a few days, the U.S. State Department announced that it was hosting a peace conference in London, on the political future of Ethiopia.

This announcement excited me for several reasons. First, on May 6 I had organized a colloquium on the same general topic at the Institute of Analysis & Resolution of George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia - - the idea came from the course I was teaching about the conflict in the Horn of Africa. The participants were: the representative of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the representative of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the representative of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the representative of the Embassy of Ethiopia in Washington, D.C., the representative of the U.S. State Department, and the representative of the USSR Embassy in Washington, D.C. A dialogue format was selected for the discourse during this occasion. Professor Christopher Mitchell, an internationally recognized scholar on deep-

rooted conflicts, served as the moderator. Three other colleagues from the faculty of George Mason University joined him in asking questions which were designed to facilitate the dialogue. It so happened that the same parties would be invited to attend the London Peace Conference about two weeks later. At the London Peace Conference, Mr. Hermon Cohen, Assistant Secretary for Africa, U. S. State Department, was the convenor of the peace talks. The representative of the Soviet Union attended the conference as an observer.

Second, the London Peace Conference was significant due to the fact that peoples of the periphery of the Ethiopian Empire were represented for the first time in a major international arena since the conquest which took place during late 19th and early 20th centuries. At least symbolically, the presence of the OLF at the conference was a historic event. It would be recalled that in 1941 when the British expelled Italy from Ethiopia, the Oromos wanted to be given a chance to rule themselves; however, it was the London government which surrendered them to Emperor Haile Sellassie against their will. Indeed, the event was a clear demonstration that the attempts by the successive Abyssinian regimes to obliterate the nation from the political landscape did not succeed. Also, the presence of the EPLF was significant for that event (the London Peace Conference) in that it repudiated the colonial conspiracy where the London government was a major player in the partition and subjugation of the peoples of the Horn of Africa.

Third, the U.S. played a pivotal role in the incorporation of Eritrea by Emperor Haile Sellassie. Fourth, the involvement of the U.S. government in the peace process gave new hope because there was an expectation that the U.S., freshly freed from its preoccupation with the Cold War, might ensure some measure of democratic process and might provide a new source of legitimacy for the peoples of the periphery. And finally, I was invited to attend the London Peace Conference as consultant to one party in the conflict. I flew out of the Dulles Airport in Virginia on May 27 overnight and arrived in London in the morning. By the time I reached my destination in London, the peace conference was already over. On that evening, I watched on CNN the dramatic announcement by Mr. Cohen of the fact that the U.S. had already endorsed the TPLF to enter Addis Ababa and take charge. All of a sudden the mood changed from that of hope to a new level of anxiety for peoples of the periphery. My hope that the London Peace Conference would usher in a new era of equity and mutual respect for the various ethnic groups in Ethiopia was dashed, and I flew back in a mental condition of alarm and anxiety. Having witnessed the beginning of a new drama unfolding, I gave a speech in Minneapolis entitled, "The *Uttuba* is Fallen: Will the Oromo Create their Own or Remain a *Galttu*?"

Now I wish to explain the two metaphors, *uttuba* and *galttu*, which were used as the central pieces relative to symbolic representation of the realities as I conceived them at the time in that speech. The term *Uttuba* in Oromo language is the central pillar that holds up the roof- -of course, we are thinking about a traditional wooden house in an African setting for which grass is used as a cover. In such a house, there are other *uttubaas* which play subsidiary roles in upholding the structure. The term *galttu* (also an Oromo term) is used to describe an individual who cannot make it on his own; instead he

becomes dependent on another person. For example, a *galitu* person can not build his own house, can not have his own farm; thus he becomes a dependent on someone else. He survives by providing some sort of services for the family on which he depends. More importantly, his very survival always depends on the family.

Now placing these metaphors in the context of the politics in the Ethiopian Empire, I conceived the term *uttuba* to represent the Amhara power which had played pivotal roles for some seven centuries in the Abyssinian political landscape. The Amhara rulers, although they promoted Amhara dominance in all manners, somehow deflected the image of Amhara control by insisting that all peoples in the empire were Ethiopians and identification with any ethnic group was a "tribalistic" tendency and as such a manifestation of political "backwardness"; even more seriously, such notions were considered anti-unity of Ethiopia and not to be tolerated. The Amhara were able to lure the educated class of the subordinate nationalities, for the most part, through varied forms of a reward system (e.g. intermarriage, high posts, feudal titles, acceptance to the social class, etc.) They also, as it will be discussed later in this work, employed brutal repression to crush anyone who manifested any semblance of challenge to their power. Thus this twin system of control- -reward and punishment- -created the aura of security of the Ethiopian state, and projected an illusion that the political system in Ethiopia would be a viable one. In particular, the minds of the educated elite of subordinated nationalities were pacified by this twin system of control. Therefore the question in 1991 was, now that Amhara power has collapsed, what will keep Ethiopia together?

The metaphor *galitu* has political significance to the Oromos in their history of century old colonial experience. Since a *galitu* ranks higher than slave and a servant, how would he represent the social position of a colonized population? However, I conceived this metaphor to represent the experience of the peoples of the periphery (i.e. their subordinate status) in some fundamental ways. First, I meant it to represent the psychological and social condition of the educated elite of the subordinate nationalities. Because of relatively higher status in the social order due to their formal education and socialization, they, for the most part, escaped the brutality perpetrated against the peasant class. However, they remained the classic *galitu*, perpetually dependent psychologically, culturally, and socially. They were the psychologically castrated class of the Oromo society. During the last century, the social phenomenon of *galitu* has been haunting the Oromos. Indeed, Oromo towering personalities such as General Gobana Dochi played a pivotal role in the conquest of the Oromos and surrendered them to Emperor Menelik II. -Gobana came to symbolize the ultimate Oromo quisling--Fitaurari Habte Giorgis who served as Minister of War during the reign of Empress Zawuditu, while Teferi Mekonen (who would become Emperor Haile Sellassie I) was still a political novice, and who (Habte Giorgis) according to some accounts, refused to take power when the opportunity presented itself to do so. Then there is the history of the Bale armed movement which rekindled Oromo nationalism and a quest for self-determination. There too, it was the Oromo generals such as Jagamma Kello and others who played pivotal roles in defeating the movement.

Second, the TPLF, toward the late 1980's began, in some vague manners, preaching about unity based on equality relative to the future of Ethiopia. Yet in 1990, they created (the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO) out of prisoners of war for the purpose of undermining the legitimacy of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). This move was universally condemned by Oromos in the diaspora. As the London Peace Conference was adjourned abruptly and unilaterally by the American host of the Peace Conference, dashing any hope of creating some kind of equitable system of government for the post *Dergue* Ethiopia, I flew back from London thinking, "who and which Oromo group will be the new *Gobanas*- *-the new galttu*!" Little did I imagine that Meles Zenawi would create a ceremonial presidency and recruit a Ph.D. holding Oromo Nagasso Giddada and of all things, a former supporter of the OLF, as his highest point of deception relative to the notion of participation by the peoples of the periphery in the post *Dergue* Ethiopia. [13]] Neither did I ever conceive that the Oromos would universally reject the OPDO, and labeled it a *metane*. *Metane* in Oromo language refers to an object which does not possess the necessary structural qualities to stand on its own strength; instead, it attaches itself and crawls, so to speak, around a stronger object to accomplish its major functions. Metaphorically speaking, in the Oromo worldview, this represents the ultimate form of dependency.

Thus my choice of the term *galttu* as metaphor was conceived to represent these complex realities. In the Oromo notion of social realities, both of these metaphors, *galttu* and *matene* signify in some clear ways dependence, lack of self-confidence, and lack of accountability. However, the designation of the term *metane* to represent the relationship between the TPLF and OPDO illustrate a much stronger social disapproval on the part of the Oromos toward the rulers and the PDO's (People's Democratic Organizations).

The Tears of the Fourth Generation: There was another episode, a symbolically powerful one, which I still vividly remember from that week- *-it was the tears of the fourth generation!* During that week, upon returning from London, I talked to many people about the political development in London as well as in Addis Ababa relative to the future of Ethiopia. During the same week, the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF), with the support of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), was marching in Addis Ababa routing the remnant of the *Dergue* soldiers. One evening, I was discussing these rapidly unfolding events with a young Oromo woman. I will call her Shagittu. She was a refugee who was waiting for a decision from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on her application for political asylum. All of a sudden, she started crying. I was lost as to what to say. She kept on crying, louder and louder. What confused me was the fact that she was an apolitical person. After sometime, I asked her why she was crying. After she calmed down, she softly began talking. "You don't understand, you don't understand!" she replied. Her voice started to rise again. "You will never understand what will be happening to the people in Ethiopia," she added. "You are lucky; you were outside during the Red Terror!" she continued. Then she carefully explained to me her thesis. She said, "You see, the *Dergue* was a minority political group. It was not accepted by the people. So, in order to be accepted it killed so many and

destroyed so much. Then she went on. "You see, this group is another minority- -they are Tigreans. Nobody will accept Tigreans as new rulers. I know the views of the people in Addis Ababa about Tigreans. So, they are going to kill so many and cause so much damage to impose themselves on the people." As a teenager, she lived in Addis Ababa and the *Dergue* killed her older brother during the Red Terror. She almost lost her own life when the agents of Mangistu Haile Mariam raided her apartment one morning to capture her brother who eventually was killed. Her father died of stroke as the result of the stress emanating from the tragic loss of his son and the mounting social turbulence during the Red Terror. He left behind ten children and a widow who did not have much education. Suddenly, Shagittu's world collapsed before her watchful eyes. Just like my grandmother, she sustained emotional scars as a result of the legacy of violence during the brutal years of the *Dergue*.

The Red Terror was a violent conflict between three political entities- -the *Dergue*, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary party (EPRP), and Meison (the All-Ethiopian Socialist Union). Essentially, the central issue in the conflict was who would have exclusive control over political power in the post Haile Sellassie Ethiopia. All three political organizations, for the most part, were controlled by the Amharas. [14] For the Oromos students, the Red Terror had a special significance in two major ways. First, since the leaders of these contending political organizations (the *Dergue*, EPRP, Meison) were very conscious of the fact that the Oromos were the majority, each perceived that any organization that would gain Oromo support would be in a more advantageous position to attain the goal of winning supremacy in the new political order in Ethiopia. Second, the ghost of the Oromo Liberation Front was increasingly looming over the political landscape of the empire. Consequently, the Oromo students became suspects by all three groups, leading to the targeting of Oromo students either for recruiting them for one's political organization or eliminating them through physical liquidation. [15]

The tears of Shagittu represent the tears of the fourth generation of Oromos whose lives have been dramatically affected as the result of conquest and colonization. Indeed, Shagittu's predictions came to be realities. The Tigreans, once they took over Addis Ababa, imposed themselves through sheer military might and violence. The rise of Tigrean power has had profound ramifications for the Oromo society. The TPLF, the successor of the *Dergue*, systematically aborted the internationally advertised elections of June of 1992, successfully purged the genuine Oromo organizations, then declared war on the Oromos. Now Meles Zenawi is conducting genocide against the Oromos in his wars from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. As if controlling the some thirty million Oromos in Ethiopia is not enough, he has recently occupied half of Somalia; his cohorts, as agents for democracy and protectors of human rights, in the new political order in post Cold War Ethiopia, have penetrated the heartland of Kenya to terrorize Oromos, even those who are Kenyan citizens. 16] In his war with Eritrea, he has been using the Oromos peasants as cannon fodder. [17]

What I have attempted to present here can be told by hundreds and thousands of other families in the periphery of the Ethiopian Empire. I relate this personal narrative in the hope of making a point: the population in the periphery in Ethiopia comprises about

70 percent of the inhabitants of Ethiopia; yet the analysis which predominates the social scene in Ethiopia has been almost exclusively about the Abyssinian core and it is usually exclusively about the machinations of the Abyssinian ruling class. The early studies about Ethiopia have been exclusively about the Abyssinian kings and the power based Orthodox Church; and there is the deadly rivalry among them, their conquest of the periphery, and their intrigues with the external powers. The conflict which dominated the scene during the 1960's and early 1970's was essentially between the young educated *Habesha* intellectuals and the upper class represented by the Emperor, the nobility, and the Orthodox Church. The major story which grabbed the attention of the international community during the 1980's, for the most part, was about the conflict between the *Amhara* dominated regime in Addis Ababa and the two Tigrean political organizations (TPLF, EPLF). Now in the 1990's, the major story of the conflict in the *post-Dergue* Ethiopia is about new conflict between two *Tigrean* groups--TPLF of Tigray and the Eritrean government in Asmara.

In my view, this historically skewed treatment of the political development in the Ethiopian Empire, invariably in support of the *narrative* of the Abyssinian core at the expense of the overwhelming majority populations in the periphery, has created a distorted view of the historical realities of the ever raging conflict in the collapsing empire of Ethiopia. As the African proverb goes, "*When elephants fight it is the grass beneath the feet which suffers.*" I believe the record will show that it has been mainly the people in the periphery, in the Ethiopian Empire who have been *the grass beneath the feet of the giant elephants in the struggle for exclusive power in the Ethiopian-state*. It seems clear, at least to me, that *Habeshas* have managed to dominate the international scene by effectively occupying the two opposing positions in the universe of the ongoing social conflict. In one category, the winner campaigns in the world arena for recognition and in another category, the loser runs around the world as the victim asking for sympathy.

To be sure, as a student of social conflict, I recognize readily the fact that to resolve deep-rooted social conflict such as the one in Ethiopia will be an arduous and complex undertaking if there will ever be some reasonable and just resolution. However, it is my strong view that any new attempt to make peace in that over-heated, complex social order has to be preceded by assembling reasonably representative and accurate information which could result in some sound diagnosis. Thus far it is very clear, at least from my point of view, that the analysis relative to social change in Ethiopia has missed the mark by a significant margin (this may be an understatement of the problem). Ethiopian studies not only ignored the story of the majority in the periphery--the bloody conquest, the subsequent subjugation, and the perpetual exploitative relationships between the core and the periphery - - they even failed to sufficiently recognize the deadly inter-group conflict within the Abyssinian core which has been driving the political discourse in that collapsing empire. [18] The level of ignorance and the extent of misdiagnoses on the part of external powers about the politics in Ethiopia has been just as stark, and I will add, to some extent, even worse than that of the *Ethiopianists*. It is hoped

that in some small way this work will reflect the social realities perspective from the periphery of the deeply-rooted and protracted social conflict in the Horn of Africa.

END NOTES: PART ONE

1. See Congressional Record, Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Acct, 1997, House of Representatives, Washington, D. C. 5 & 12, Jun 12, 1996.
2. Presidential Document, Administration of William J. Clinton, Vol. 35, No. 38 (September 27, 1999), pp. 1783, 1984.
3. See Ted Dagne, "Ethiopia: An Overview of the Transitional Period" Congressional Research Service Report For Congress (Washington, D. C, August 2, 1995), p. 5.
4. Vaclav Havel, Speech before the Canadian Parliament on the subject of human rights over the state rights, April 29, 1999, Ottawa, Canada.
5. For a detailed philosophical position of the U.S. foreign policy toward the conflict in the Balkans, see *Time Magazine*, May 17, 1999, pp. 27-35.
6. Presidential Document, op. cit., p. 1782.
7. A speech by Dr. Madeleine Albright, The U.S. Secretary of State at the NAACP Annual Conference, New York, New York. See Agence France Presse, July 13, 1999.
8. Dr. Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Testimony before the U.S. Congressional Committee on International Relations—Africa Subcommittee, May 25, 1999.
9. Mr. Tibor P. Nagy, a statement before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations-African Affairs Sub-committee, on the occasion of his confirmation hearing, August 5, 1999.
10. Ibid.
11. The views of Ambassador David Shin on this subject were summarized in *Ethiopian Register*, September 1999, pp. 8-10.

12. The concept of core-periphery is also used interchangeably with "center-periphery." This has evolved to constitute a model of analysis relative to the structural relationship between the advanced or metropolitan 'center' and a less developed 'periphery' within a state. It is also applied to describe the relationship between the industrialized capitalist states and the developing societies. The concept is used to describe the structural relationship between the imperial core society and the subordinate societies in classic imperial systems. This model assumes that power is the most critical factor- -the core has the military, economic, political, trade power to impose its will on the periphery. See Gordon Marshall *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 47-48.
13. The Oromo view relative to the ascendancy of Dr. Nagasso Giddada to the ceremonial presidency in the post Dergue Ethiopia was well captured by the Editorial Page. of *Urjie*. It wrote, "The Ascendancy of Dr. Nagasso Gidada to Presidency is a Disgrace to Oromo Nationhood."
14. The conflict during the Dergue, particularly the Red Terror, has been well covered by different authors. One source comes from the members of the participants themselves. The works by Babile Tola, *To Kill a Generation: The Red Terror in Ethiopia* (Washington, D. C.: Free Ethiopia Press, 11989); Kiflu Tadesse, *The Generation --Part I* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1993), Part II (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998) are representatives of analysis by the members of "civilian left." Also, the work by David Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine, and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1989) covers this conflict. See pp. 31-34. He held several high government positions during the Dergue.
15. I have collected valuable information over the years through interviews from Oromo students and professionals who lived in Ethiopia during the Dergue.
16. See "Atrocities and Abuses Against Oromo in Kenya" a detailed report inserted in a Press Release issued by Oromia Support Group, August - October 1999, No. 29; See also Said Wabera, "Town Tense as Trader Is Killed", August 15, 1999.
17. See David Hirst, "In Tsorona, On the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border," *The Guardian*, May 18, 1999. For a summary of a first hand account as related by conscripted Oromos in this war see "Fighting Talk: Students and Captured Soldiers Tell of Forced Conscription and Horrors of Battle", *Sagalee Haaraa*, Oromia Support Group Newsletter, No. 28 (May-July 1999), pp. 4, 5.
18. See H. Tusso "The Demise of the Mythical Ethiopia: Multi-Dimensional Conflict In A Collapsing Empire," A paper presented at the African Studies Association Annual Conference, November 11-14, 1999, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

END PART ONE

