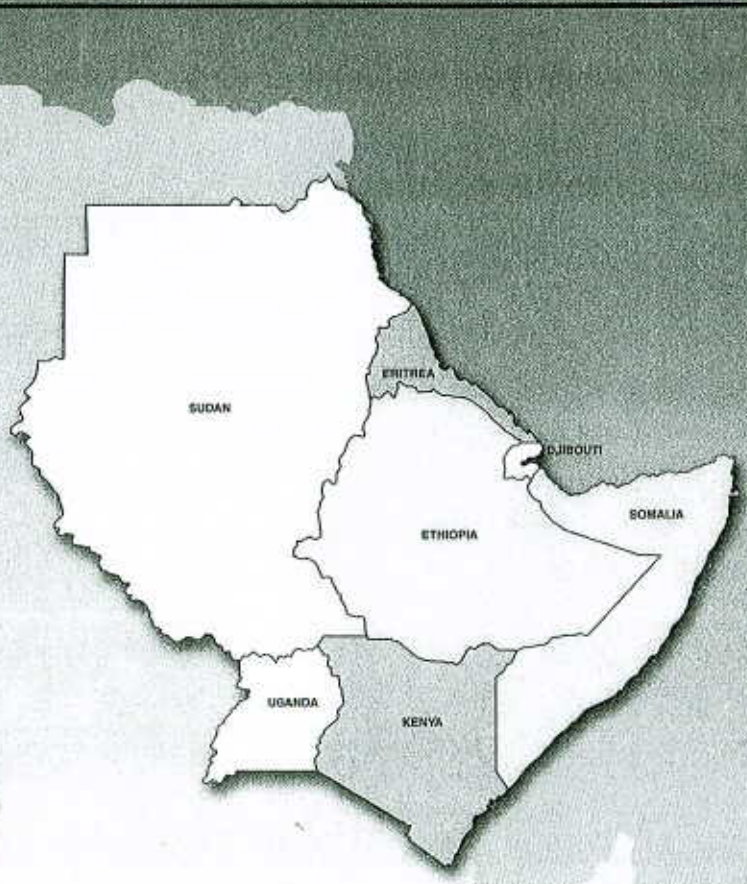
Early Warning and Conflict Management in the Horn of Africa



Edited by

Cirû Mwaûra and Susanne Schmeidl

Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat (team leader) and Josephine Odera (moderator) from the Africa Peace Forum, Nairobi, Kenya; Professor Howard Adelman (lead, institutions team) and Dr. Abbas Gnamo (institutions team) from the Centre for Refugee Studies and Centre for International and Security Studies, York University, Canada; Cynthia Gaigals (conflict team) from Saferworld, UK; Dr. Günther Baechler (lead conflict team) and Dr. Susanne Schmeidl (lead information team) from the Swiss Peace Foundation. Sharon Rusu (information team), Tom Hockley (conflict team), Sandra Ayoo, John Oloya (both economic aspects of conflict team), and Dr. Makumi Mwagiru (legal expert) were commissioned as independent consultants. The project was coordinated by Cirû Mwaûra from the FEWER secretariat.

x In the second year, only the following individuals actively contributed to the consultancy: Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat (team leader) and Josephine Odera (moderator) from the Africa Peace Forum; Professor Howard Adelman from the Centre for Refugee Studies and Centre for International and Security Studies, York University, Canada; Dr. Susanne Schmeidl from the Swiss Peace Foundation; Dr. Makumi Mwagiru, Centre for Conflict Research, Kenya (legal expert); and Cirû Mwaûra, FEWER secretariat (project coordinator).

xi This document may be found at www.igadregion.org.

xii Osman Abrah (Djibouti), Iyob Tesfu (Eritrea), Dr. Yacob Arsano (Ethiopia), Vincent Lelei (Kenya), Zadock Nyakuni (Uganda), Mohamed Ziad Doualeh (Somalia), Atta El-Battahani and Telar Deng (Sudan).

xiii Makumi Mwagiru, *IGAD Conflict Early Warning Mechanism: Legal and Institutional Aspects*. Working paper within IGAD CEWARN Consultancy (London, FEWER, September 2000).

xiv This is reflected in the draft protocol in Appendix F.

xv A delegation from Somalia was present for the first time, as the country had a newly formed government in late 2000.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO CONFLICTS IN THE IGAD REGION

CIRÛ MWAÛRA, GÜNTHER BAECHLER, AND BETHUEL KIPLAGAT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief overview of conflicts in the IGAD region as a background to the development of a conflict early warning and response mechanism (CEWARN) for the region. There is an extensive and rich body of literature on the nature of conflicts in the Horn of Africa that provides in-depth analysis of the causes and consequences of conflicts in the region. The aim of this chapter is simply to present some key background factors that present a challenge to the implementation of CEWARN and also to set out briefly the key issues relating to conflicts in pastoral areas along borders, the entry point chosen for CEWARN.

BACKGROUND

Conflict constitutes perhaps the single greatest barrier to economic and social development in the IGAD region. The region has been embroiled in endless wars for more than forty years and represents one of the most complex conflict systems in the world. It has been the site of several armed conflicts (both intra- and inter-state), severe environmental degradation, and

general livelihood insecurity. The sub-region has come to be defined by the number and intensity of destabilizing population movements it has experienced.[i] Indeed it has become commonplace to assert that "violent conflict disruptive of the state is endemic in the Horn of Africa."[ii]

As Lionel Cliffe observed, the Horn has been faced with "the same arbitrariness of borders inherited from European colonial rule and with the inevitably resulting problems of state making and nation building among disparate peoples and in contested territory where there were cultural links with people across those borders. These features, found throughout Africa and other ex-colonial territories, were intensified by factors specific to the Horn, each of which further enhanced the likelihood of internal and inter-state conflict: an ethnically homogenous state, Somalia, whose nationalism embraced neighboring Somali minorities; Ethiopia with a territory that resulted from resistance to European colonialism but also from becoming an empire; Sudan straddling the cultural divide between Africa south of the Sahara and the north."[iii] The revision of boundaries (as evidenced by the appearance of Eritrea and the still unrecognized Somaliland and Puntland), the collapsed state (Somalia), and secessionist groups (continued agitations for a separate Oromo State outside Ethiopia's ethnic federalism) are thus a key part of the Horn's reality.

Socio-economic Underdevelopment

The vast majority of the work force in IGAD countries is engaged in agro-pastoral activities. Average rural production in the Horn amounts to 33.8 percent of the GDP of all countries (except Somalia and Djibouti – in industrialized countries it is about 1- 2 percent). In Kenya, the poorest 20 percent of the population earns 5.0 percent of GDP, in Uganda 6.6 percent, and in Ethiopia 7.1 percent.[iv] At the same time, large parts of the (rural) population still depend on international food aid; for Ethiopia alone 589,000 metric tons in 1998.[v]

With persistent poverty, high population growth rates, and most of the small subsistence farmers and nomadic pastoralists marginalized, new socio-ecological dimensions put

added pressure on lowland/highland eco-zones sensitive to degradation and catastrophes (recurrent floods and droughts). The socio-ecological dimension of underdevelopment is more than a contributing factor to the political economy of wars in the area. Those small subsistence producers who depend more on degrading renewable resources (fertile land, water, and wood) have been further marginalized by those among the rural and urban elite who can mobilize economic substitutes through access to the necessary resources most often provided by access to the world market.

The divide between highland and lowland population as well as climatically and environmentally determined modes of rural production is a significant pattern throughout the Horn. Adverse impacts on an increasingly fragile environment may in turn aggravate structural heterogeneity within the Horn's countries, for instance, through a further decrease of historically already low productivity in the traditional rural sector due to degradation of land, forest, and water resources. Deterioration of the environment in the marginalized sector may also have negative impacts on the modern sector if and when the latter depends on use of scarce renewables, such as fresh water, wood, and fertile land for large-scale irrigation schemes and/or cash-crop plantations (for example, the Awash and Woiyto valleys in Ethiopia).

The traditional rural sector is most affected by heterogeneous development. In the rural (subsistence) sector, dependence on natural capital per definition is extremely high. Degradation of badly managed resources means the natural capital itself is shrinking in total and per capita terms – and not accumulating. Only state-sponsored development areas with agro-industry and mechanized farming get access to financial and human resources in order to enhance productivity. As a result of the green revolution and limited programs established by international and/or state agencies in some countries, a new service sector is emerging between the two poles: traditional smallholders on one hand and agro-industry on the other. However, in most of the Horn areas, this sector remains a rather small niche and does not absorb the landless, migrants,

livestock breeders, smallholders, or the internally displaced.

Furthermore, societies in the Horn are fragmented through regionally bound economies dominated by eco-geographical boundaries (highland–lowland interaction) due to lack of means of communication, of legal regulations, and of viable political institutions. The consequences of such a combination of geographical constraints and poor state performance are numerous: For example, competing land-use and land-tenure systems leading to confusing property rights, subdivision of already small plots leading to overuse of scarce land resources, over-centralization combined with poorly developed sub-regional urban centers, lack of off-farm opportunities, and high taxes combined with low capital investments leading to a lack of financial input in rural areas. A main predicament of the past in most if not all Horn countries is certainly the extremely high dependence of the economy on intervention by the central government leading to failures in rural development if not of the state itself.

Political Context: Lack of Integration and Cooperation

Given the socio-economic disparities, societal heterogeneities, and geographical boundaries, it has always been difficult to create a stable regional security identity in the IGAD region. Culturally and historically speaking, various fault lines, which have successfully been politicized in the course of the last century, crisscross the arena. One is the line between Arabic and Black Africa linked with lines between Muslim and Christian culture; the lines between highland and lowland cultures are often linked with ethno-political boundaries; the line between peasant cultures and nomadic pastoralism often relates to the other lines mentioned too.

There are political factors such as the absence of a leading power (like South Africa in SADC or Nigeria in ECOWAS), heavily differing forms of national governments and types of state constitutions, diverging domestic policies, and self-centered nationalist leaders who may set limits to regional effectiveness as well as minimizing efforts for integration and cooperation (see, for example, the collapse of the East African Community in the 1970s).

The informal but strong linkages of most of the Horn states with centers and powers external to the region has always been much stronger than the links among the IGAD countries themselves. Given the Horn's strategic geopolitical importance, as it provides a prime spot from which to project power and provide rear-base support for military intervention in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, some states in the region featured boldly in the superpower ideological rivalry and political engineering for strategic spheres of influence during the Cold War era. In more recent times, these links have included Sudan with Egypt and Libya; Somalia, Djibouti, and to a lesser extent Eritrea with the Arab Peninsula; and Kenya and Uganda with Southern and Central Africa.

Regional Stability and Instability

Most writers on the Horn highlight the predominance of a culture of external interference in the affairs of neighboring states. Cliffe describes the pattern of conflict in the Horn as one of "mutual interference" (see chapter 2), a characteristic that has existed for more than thirty years.[vi] He argues that the origins of this "mutual interference" culture are rooted in the authoritarian and dictatorial nature of the regimes. These regimes consequently drove most opposition groups to organize abroad – setting up governments in exile and bases from which they could launch cross-border attacks and campaigns against sitting governments. These destabilizing liaisons form an impressive network encompassing all areas of the Horn. Regimes tend to actively intervene, to provide arms, or to support movements opposed to governments in neighboring countries.

Somalia provides the most vivid example of this "mutual interference" culture. During the ten years of fragmentation and civil war in Somalia, neighboring states and

regional brokers backed different faction leaders, supplying them with money, guns, and, in some cases, direct military support. Somalia became a fertile arena for proxy wars and regional interference. The flare-up of the Ethiopia-Eritrea border conflict in 1998 exacerbated this trend, and tensions are likely to remain high among these three countries, even with cessation of hostilities. A snapshot of regional involvement in Somalia before the election of the new government is provided below:

- Egypt, Libya, and Eritrea supplying support to Mogadishu faction leader Hussein Aideed
- Ethiopia, Libya, and, to a lesser extent, Egypt supplying support to north-eastern leader Abdullahi Yusuf
- Ethiopia and, to a lesser extent, Egypt backing Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, leader of the self-declared state of Somaliland, northwest Somalia
- Ethiopia providing direct military support for the Rahanwien Resistance Army based in Bay and Bakool, southern Somalia
- Some Ethiopian support to Mogadishu faction leader Musa Sude Yalaho
- Kenya's weakening foreign policy in the region through the 1990s, rendering connections with various faction leaders insignificant

Given the situation outlined above, what are the implications for regional conflict management? The optimism with which the IGAD mandate was received was rapidly eroded by the outbreak of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. This severely limited the organization's capacity to address regional security. In a grouping as small as IGAD, disagreements between member states have tended to undermine the organization's ability to execute its mandate effectively.

Commenting on this reality, Kenyan Foreign Minister Bonaya Godana noted that: "Djibouti and Kenya are the only two countries that have had no diplomatic row with one or other of the IGAD member states in recent times. And Ethiopia, which has been given the responsibility of leading the IGAD peace talks in Somalia, is now concentrating on the war with Eritrea and correspondingly with actions along its border with Somalia. We have to acknowledge the weakening of IGAD is there – we wish these problems between IGAD members did not exist."[vii]

Against this complex historical, socio-economic, and political background, the demand for innovative regional peace and security structures is urgent. It is clear from the preceding discussions that patterns of conflict in the Horn of Africa in Makumi Mwagiru's words "pose serious questions about the practices of its management and centralize the need to engage in debate about creative conflict management."[viii]

Some might argue that the combination of all these factors renders any attempts to create a conflict early warning and response mechanism (CEWARN) for IGAD member states quite futile. Yet none would deny the need to put in place mechanisms that facilitate effective regional dialogue and decision-making on matters related to peace and security. The options are thus either to remain cynical and do nothing while appreciating the need for action or to address the daunting and complex task actively. IGAD has chosen the latter path, one that, as we have shown above, has been riddled with obstacles and numerous stumbling blocks.

As discussed in the Introduction and chapter 7, the CEWARN design has involved the pragmatic acknowledgement that CEWARN is unlikely to have region-wide coverage at this point. Regional politics, particularly the "mutual interference" factor, outlined above and in chapter 2, illustrate the reasons for this. Cooperation in the field of early warning and early response is only likely to be achieved gradually, as confidence in the system grows. Confidence building is thus a key component of the CEWARN project. It is for this reason that the mechanism's initial focus is conflict in pastoral areas along borders. The next section provides a background to the nature of conflicts in pastoral areas along borders.

Conflicts in Pastoral Areas Along Borders

If we focus on the character of many international borders in the Horn, we find interesting economic and ecological features.[ix] Teka, Azeze, and Gebremaraim note that the border areas are generally "arid and semi-arid environments, inhabited by pastoralists and agro-pastoralists and governed by livestock-based economies."[x] The very nature of pastoral livelihoods demands a high degree of mobility guided by the need for access to water and grazing land rather than any deference to state borders. This ecology, as Hizkias Assefa points out, has created "symbiotic relationships between pastoralists and agro-pastoralists transcending modern state boundaries. In addition, to these common livelihood systems, similar ethnic groups are found along the regional state boundaries."[xi]

Prolonged food shortages resulting in increased cross-border movements as people move with their livestock in search of food, water, and better grazing land have also contributed to the region's refugee problem. Throughout the region, three consecutive years of poor rains and the onset of drought affected an estimated 16 million people,[xii] resulting in an increased number of what are now referred to as ecological refugees.[xiii]

Pastoral communities play a major societal role in all seven IGAD member states. Throughout the region, nomadic pastoralism is one of the most important ways of life for rural society. Livestock holdings contribute heavily to the wealth of the IGAD countries. Nomadic pastoralism, as a traditional system, is currently under pressure, induced primarily by modern development and related social changes. As a consequence, pastoralists in all IGAD countries are becoming increasingly involved in violent clashes and armed struggles against each other as well as in fights with other societal groups and government.

Pastoral conflict and violence in the sub-region is historically linked to the violence that accompanied the state formation in the colonial era.[xiv] The genesis of these conflicts was triggered by colonial state policy. The gazetting and appropriation of large parts of the pastoralists' communal lands, as was the case in Uganda, triggered contradictions and conflict between pastoralists and the state. The violence meted out by

the authorities pushed these communities to the fringes of the state and led to their being marginalized. This contributed to the strong impulse among pastoralists to acquire firearms to match or counter state violence. The British authorities administered emergency law to rule the sub-region's people (northeastern Uganda, northern Kenya, and southeastern Sudan). The colonial authority's quest to pacify the people led them to neglect any meaningful investment in fields of social and economic development. Lord Harcourt's observation provides a clear illustration of this: "It appears to me both dangerous and unremunerative for the Governor of Uganda to undertake the administration of a country which is not easy to access from headquarters and which has no great resources."

Imposing fixed internal divisions (for example, northern Kenya was a closed district in colonial times) and international borders without regard for livelihood systems of pastoral communities had devastating results. Thus it is quite clear that colonial borders – and the way they have been administered since then – are a crucial factor behind conflicts in border areas: Awuondo warns that "the pastoralist understanding and response to ecological pressures was systematically eroded by colonialism. This was affected by drawing ethnic and national boundaries as well as restricting cattle movements."[xv] This situation of acute socio-economic underdevelopment and deliberate neglect in the sub-region is also linked to a colonial political economy that favored private to communal ownership of the principal means of production (land).[xvi]

In more recent times, the decline of pastoral livelihood systems as a result of unfavorable ecological patterns; inadequate development policies and interventions, poor infrastructure, resource allocations, and social services has increasingly marginalized pastoral communities. Thus, raiding has become an alternative means of livelihood. And, as one commentator notes, "Restricting movements, which was a fatal decision, meant when the animals of one group died, the only way to replenish stocks the most natural and socially available – was cattle raiding."

Civil wars over the years in Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and Uganda have led to proliferation of small arms and light

weapons. The wide availability of arms, apart from being devastating in terms of human loss, has altered the cultural foundations of many communities – erosion of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms in the face of arms-bearing youth being one of the most significant examples. Given the livelihood insecurity of communities in border areas, availability of arms has provided the means for communities to seek alternative livelihoods (inevitably violent ones) such as livestock rustling and banditry.

The phenomenon of livestock warlord rivalry has now emerged, most notably in the Kenya, Sudan, Uganda border area (particularly in the Pokot and Turkana communities). In Kenya, the Pokot have raided the Tugen, Marakwet, and Keiyo; internationally they have raided the Turkana and Karamajong of Uganda and the Toposa of Ethiopia. The warlords command small and well-equipped armies and, as Osamba reports, "have acquired more sophisticated weapons [as bandits] than those of government security forces; bandits have become *de facto* administrators in northern Kenya."[xvii]

Rebel activities along the Kenya-Ethiopia border further complicate the nature of conflict. The frequent tensions along the Kenya-Ethiopia border are largely rooted in the belief that the Oromo Liberation Front often uses Kenya as a base for retreat from Ethiopian forces following armed engagements. In response, Ethiopian militias often cross over into Kenya in hot pursuit of OLF rebels and end up in violent clashes with communities in Kenya. There are several reported incidents of these sorts of incursions and one reported incident in which several Kenyan policemen were killed and one captured and taken across the border. These incidents put a great deal of strain on relations between Kenya and Ethiopia.

The Ethiopia-Somalia border, and particularly the Ogaden region, has been the arena for what John Markakis calls an "old and bitter conflict" between two pastoral Somali clans – the Ishaq and Ogaden.[xviii] This conflict, related to access to watering points and pasture, was "greatly exacerbated by the intervention of political forces from outside the pastoralist realm."[xix] These political forces have claimed to a Greater

Somalia that resulted in inter-state wars between Ethiopia and Somalia (1960s and 1977-1978) and more recently (October 2000) in tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia in border districts near Doolow.

The case study border regions (for more detail see chapter 6) are characterized by weak state structures in the pastoral areas. As in the colonial days, security considerations predominate in official thinking. Traditional governance systems, while under pressure, are still dominant. The exception is Kenya where chiefs and community leaders are state appointed. The areas have few roads, rendering it extremely difficult if not hazardous to communicate between these authorities and the rest of the country on either side of the common borders. This situation has serious implications for security in general and maintenance of law and order in particular. Social services like education, health, and veterinary services are meager, and communities along these borders suffer from the effects of severe social neglect and economic underdevelopment.

The overarching issue is that of governance, and the key challenge is in addressing the manner in which states have responded (or in most cases not) to underlying causes of violent conflicts. Government responses have usually been reactive, characterized by use of force (indiscriminate in many cases) in the face of insecurity. This has gone hand in hand with systematic neglect of pastoral communities. How can states manage population movements, mediate community relationships, and ease trade across borders? One needs a border regime of utmost flexibility that facilitates cross-border movement and trade while reducing the immense ecological, economic, and social pressure in border areas.

Notes

i At the start of 2000, the region hosted over 1.2 million refugees and 3.2 million internally displaced persons. These figures rose to 1.3 million and 4.2 million respectively following resumption of fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea, continuing violence in southern Somalia and Sudan, and severe drought in parts of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia.

ii Lionel Cliffe, "Regional Dimensions of Conflict in the Horn of Africa." *Third World Quarterly*, 20, 1 (1999).
iii Cliffe, 1999.
iv For these and more data about social disparities – also concerning gender – see: United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2000*, Oxford and New York, 2000): 158.
v UNDP, 2000, 240.
vi Cliffe, 1999.
vii IRIN interview of Kenyan foreign minister, Bonaya Godana, April 23, 1999.
viii Makumi Mwagiru, "The Greater Horn of Africa Conflict System: Conflict Patterns, Strategies and Management Practices." (*USAID Conflict and Conflict Management in the Greater Horn of Africa Project Reports*, 1997).
ix This section draws substantially on Cirû Mwaûra's paper "Borders, Frontiers, and Conflict in the Horn of Africa." (Centre for Conflict Research and Friedrich Ebert Foundation Conference on Borders, Frontiers, and Conflict in Africa Conference Papers, 2001).
x Tegegne Teka, Alemayehu Azeze, and Ayele Gebremaraim, *Cross-border Livestock Trade and Food Security in the Southern and Southeastern Ethiopia Borderlands*. (Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) Development Research Report Series 1, 1999).
xi Hizkias Assefa, *Towards a Culture of Peace: A Regional Approach for the Transformation and Prevention of Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (UNESCO PEER Culture of Peace Project Document, 1997).
xii UNHCR, *State of the World's Refugees, A Humanitarian Agenda* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997).
xiii Anders Hjort af Ornas and M.A Mohamed Salih, eds. *Ecology and Politics Environmental Stress and Security in Africa*. (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1989).
xiv See Peter Adwok Nyaba and Peter Otim, *Conflicts in Pastoral Areas along Borders: The Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan*. CEWARN Consultancy Report (London: FEWER, 2001).
xv Odegi C. Awuondo, *Life in the Balance: Ecological Sociology of Turkana Nomads*, (Nairobi: ACTS Press, 1992).
xvi See Nyaba and Otim, 2001.
xvii Joshia O. Osamba, "The Sociology of Insecurity," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 1:2 (2000).
xviii John Markakis, "The Ishaq-Ogaden Dispute." *Ecology and Politics* (1989).
xix Markakis, 1989.

CHAPTER 2

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

LIONEL CLIFFE AND PHILIP WHITE

INTRODUCTION

As outlined in the preface by IGAD Executive Secretary Atallah Hamad Bashir, IGAD's conflict prevention, management, and resolution (CPMR) program consisted of five different components; CEWARN was only one. This chapter is based on investigations that were part of another component tasked with an assessment of CPMR capacities in the IGAD region. Given that CEWARN emphasizes linkages to existing mechanisms, those dimensions that have significance for setting up a CEWARN mechanism are emphasized here. Picking up from chapter 1, this chapter provides a more in-depth overview of conflicts in the Horn of Africa, linking it in with existing CPMR initiatives.[i] The purpose is illustrative and does not aim to offer an exhaustive list. Nor does this chapter take the reader on a long and often familiar review of the nature, causes, and dynamics of all the conflicts. We concentrate on bringing out those aspects that are germane in handling current conflicts, trying to answer two questions: (1) What does a conflict of a particular type require as a "solution"? (2) What mechanisms for CPMR might be appropriate? In addressing these issues, the chapter develops a classification of types of conflict that can act as a yardstick in assessing the adequacy and

appropriateness of mechanisms that have been or ought to be employed.

The CPMR mechanisms (the capacities of which are considered in this chapter) fall into two different categories:

- Agencies: a wide range of institutions – governmental and non-governmental, formal and informal, modern and traditional – at the regional, national, local, communal, and community levels have been, are at present, or could in the future be involved in CPMR. Their actual or potential roles are part of what needs to be examined.
- Tools: a variety of techniques and methods, rules and procedures, political and other processes are among the activities and initiatives that have been employed. Their varying degrees of success need to be evaluated.

Capacity refers to the existence and effectiveness of such mechanisms. The distinction between "existence" and "effectiveness" is crucial throughout this study of capacity assessment. They need not specialize in CPMR but may have the potential to contribute. They may be *ad hoc*, ephemeral bodies that emerge in response to particular instances of conflict. The effectiveness of institutional intervention in CPMR depends significantly on the presence and strength of a social consensus regarding (1) generally the appropriate and desirable ways and means of managing social conflict, and (2) specifically the nature and issues of a given conflict. Consequently, cultural traditions, belief systems, and conventions that shape attitudes to conflict are factors in determining capacity for CPMR.

Definitional Clarification for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution

Before entering into deeper discussion on regional capacities, it is necessary to clarify some definitions so as to demarcate the areas covered. Given that chapter 3 provides a clear assessment of conflict early warning and prevention, the

conceptual focus is on conflict resolution and management.

Conflict is understood as a confrontation between social groups with clashing interests and incompatible goals. Societal conflict is a universal phenomenon, intrinsic to the process of social change. It is inevitable so long as material and social resources are unequally distributed within society, and inequity is reflected in cultural, social, and political relationships between groups. Security (physical, material), identity (cultural, religious, ethnic), recognition (social, political), and development (adaptation to change) are basic human needs expressed collectively through membership in social groups.

Conflict between groups inevitably tends to have political dimensions and implications by virtue of the fact that the groups are organized and/or because the state is involved either in trying to handle conflict or in becoming the arena for such conflict. But conflict can also be political in origin; its aim may simply be a struggle for power for its own sake rather than to further broader group interests and goals.

Eliminating social conflict is impossible and may be undesirable. But not all disputes and conflicts between groups are expressed in collective, organized violence. Preventing social conflict from escalating to that level is often possible and desirable, although not necessarily desirable if violence is the only redress for major inequities and grievances (like *Apartheid*). When violence does erupt, it can be contained and kept from spreading to other groups and areas. And it may eventually be resolved if the grounds for the original conflict are mediated and removed or means to prevent a future descent into violence are put in place.

Resort to violence could indicate either the absence or ineffectiveness of institutionalized processes and rules for resolving social conflict, the state's inability to enforce them, the government's illegitimacy and/or involvement as a party to the conflict, or the absence of social consensus on the issue of the conflict. Alternatively, resort to violence can indicate the presence of individuals or factions with an interest in instigating and perpetuating conflict that can shape and manipulate group opinion.

There are several conflict types and levels that also define the main parties involved. Few conflicts in the IGAD region are without cross-border linkages, a fact that greatly complicates the task of conflict management. The following distinctions can be made:

- Inter-state conflict is obviously the highest level and also the most rare; there have been only three instances in the IGAD region during the post-colonial period.
- Civil war is far more frequent, pitting states and regimes against groups that challenge their legitimacy; all IGAD member states have had this experience in the past, and several of them are experiencing it at present.
- Inter-community conflict between groups, usually over territory and resources, is another familiar phenomenon in the IGAD region.
- Intra-community conflict between sections of one group over resources, leadership, and its perquisites is likewise familiar.

Prevention, management, and resolution of the last two levels of conflict, inter- and intra-community, are assumed to be among the state's essential tasks. In relation to civil war or rebellions, it is again seen as one of the state's responsibilities to handle such conflicts, but in such contexts the state is also both the target of violent opposition and a participant in the conflict. By definition, the first level involves two or more states.

In contrast to conflict management and resolution, conflict prevention refers more to processes or interventions that inhibit social conflict from taking on a violent form, rather than eliminating all disputes and conflicts of interest in a society (more detail is provided in chapter 3).

Conflict management refers to actions taken to mitigate or contain ongoing violent conflict, trying to limit the scale of destruction and suffering in order to avoid spillover potential into other regions or neighboring countries. The type of action

can range from force to humanitarian assistance to mediation. Depending on the level or type of conflict (see above), the parties involved in conflict management will have a different composition, capacity, and status.

Conflict resolution has two widely different meanings. One refers to immediate action taken to bring a halt to violence and involves mediation, negotiation, facilitation, conciliation, leading hopefully to disarmament and demobilization of fighters. A cease-fire or other way of ending open violent conflict is an essential but not the only element. The second refers to long-term action designed to remove structural causes of conflict, to transform relationships, change attitudes, and bring about lasting peace. Outcomes of the resolution process often do and always should include mechanisms to avoid or manage future outbreaks of violent conflict. They may in turn provide for some solution to whatever underlying disputes and grievances have led to conflict. Such outcomes can emerge through a variety of processes – formal or informal agreements, *ad hoc* arrangements, an eventual war-weariness, or outright defeat/victory. Again, depending on the goal and type of action, the parties involved in resolution will differ in composition, capacity, resources, and status.

The government's role in dealing with any of these levels of conflict may be impaired by any one of a number of circumstances, many of which are common in the IGAD region. The state itself may either have lost effectiveness in handling community conflicts or is caught up in particular conflicts in a way that makes it partisan rather than a neutral mediator. Or the non-state mechanisms that have customarily handled them may have become less effective. Governments typically deal with internal challenges by some combination of suppression of armed rebellion and political concessions or negotiations and will normally seek to prevent such conflicts from becoming open and violent. Such preventive and containment action is usually easier if the state is not seen to be part of the conflict.

Types of Conflict

The following discussion uses a particular kind of categorization of conflict that brings out the crucial features that have implications for the way they might best be handled. Put simply, the typology poses these practical questions:

Who is fighting whom? What organizations, groups, or movements are opposed to each other?

In particular, how is the state involved: (1) as the target for violent opposition? (2) as a main contender in a power struggle (with internal or external forces)? (3) as the ultimate, disinterested mediator; or (4) as a partisan third party?

Distinguishing Conflicts on Basis of Level and State Involvement

Normally, the state is expected to be the main agency for CPMR but may on occasions fuel conflict, deliberately or through some unintended effect of other actions or circumstances. It may also lose the capacity to prevent and manage conflicts and thus allow those prepared to use violent means to gain the ascendancy. Ideally it should play a role in community level conflict by being an even-handed mediator, even when it seeks to impose a solution administratively on both parties. However, the state may often play a partisan role, which may not prevent violence and which makes sustainable resolution more difficult.

Taking into account the centrality of the state's role, in theory (if not always in practice) the prospects for preventing, managing, or resolving conflicts will depend as much as any other factor on the extent and manner of state involvement. In seeking to assess the existence and effectiveness of CPMR's institutional capacity, the state is the crucial agency to be considered. Table 1 depicts the typology used in this chapter.

Table 1. Types of Conflict Differentiated by State Involvement

Type	Level
Interstate	1. War 2. Border clashes 3. (Mutual) aid to rebels
National (government involved)	1. Rebel challenge to state power 2. Region in conflict with center 3. Warlordism
Community level	1. Government partisan 2. Government neutral, mediating 3. Government uninvolved

Cross-border Dimensions of Conflict

The cross-border dimension helps shape the nature of conflict in this region. It renders a definitive military solution difficult; thus it helps to prolong some conflicts indefinitely. Moreover, these cross-border conflicts bedevil inter-state relations in the region, as each state seeks to retaliate against its neighbors by hosting dissident movements from across the border.

State borders divide communities nearly everywhere in the IGAD region, making it likely that even localized conflicts can have border dimensions and complications. This is most likely to happen in the pastoralist zone through which nearly all state border lines are drawn in this region, dividing communities and obstructing natural movement of peoples, livestock, and trade. Conflict involving pastoralist communities is likely to spill over frontier lines when help is sought from kinsmen across the border. Raiding for animals, a widespread practice in the pastoralist zone, often takes place across borders. Commercialization and access to automatic weapons have greatly raised the stakes of this practice, occasionally resulting in what might be termed international incidents.

Conflicts that challenge the state or the existing regime usually transcend state borders, because opposition move-

ments seek and nearly always find support or at least safe haven in neighboring countries. In fact, it is axiomatic in the region that a dissident movement without a base across the border has no chance to succeed.

It has been common practice in this region for states to offer hospitality to dissident movements operating in a neighboring country. When relations between neighbors become hostile, then dissidents might find not only hospitality but also significant material support. The principle that claims, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," is a categorical imperative of regional diplomacy adhered to by all states, having survived numerous bilateral agreements to the contrary. Indeed, the most fundamental challenge to reducing conflict in the IGAD region is that of evolving an alternative pattern and practice, of a regional security regime that limits rather than amplifies internal and inter-state conflicts simultaneously.

The cross-border dimension also includes the role of the diasporas, whether found across the border or across the ocean. Significant material, moral, and propaganda support for embattled groups comes from this source.

The Ability of Existing Mechanisms to Deal with Conflicts

Cross-border Mechanisms

Comparison of findings from the several countries, especially when reviewing relations between pairs of neighboring countries, shows a wide range of differing experiences in terms of ability to contain disputes and disruptions and in establishing institutional mechanisms for handling them. Four different sets of circumstances wherein conflicts across state boundaries can emerge were identified in the previous section: disputed borders, clashes between communities across a border, mutual intervention by outside governments in internal conflicts, any one of which, alone or in combination, might spark off or in turn be sparked off by a fourth: inter-state warfare.

Disputed Borders

The recent war between Eritrea and Ethiopia underlines the terrible human cost when such disputes escalate into major violent confrontations. It serves as a reminder that the best action in other such cases would be conflict prevention. In such a context a conflict prevention formula is likely to be one in which each pair of neighbors agrees to set up a joint commission (with or without a third party mediator such as the UN or IGAD itself) to settle any outstanding ambiguities or counter claims about border delineation or demarcation. Recent history provides only a few examples of such pre-emptive resolution of disputes so as to prevent conflict. One such instance that resulted in some degree of acceptance transferred territory claimed as Ugandan to Kenya – but this was accomplished while there was still a single colonial authority ruling both countries. Other instances of unilateral "settling" of frontiers by the later colonial powers, such as the Haud, are still remembered as a source of grievance. It should also be recognized that the existence of disputed enclaves in some cases only threatens to generate open conflict when relations between two governments deteriorate because of other factors. This was one findings in our Sudan study of the Sudanese-Egyptian and other disputes.[ii] The lesson may be to initiate exploration of disputes and options for their resolution, but only when timing is appropriate, i.e., when the countries are on good terms or are resolving other matters.

Nevertheless, there is much to be said for systematic review of all cases from which potential border disputes could emerge and joint bodies are set up seek lasting solutions. Eritrea's disputed border in the Red Sea with Yemen is one of the only cases where a definitive ruling was made by an international legal body and accepted. But there again the lesson is that such steps could have been taken preemptively before a violent clash had caused loss of life and soured relations.

There have been instances of conflict management in such border disputes, meaning in this context that action is taken to prevent a descent into open conflict. In one or two instances, it would be more appropriate to talk about inaction:

Kenya and Sudan seemed to have reached an agreement at the top political level not to do anything to disturb (or clarify) the ambiguous status of the Elemi triangle. Similar disputes between Somalia and Kenya were defused many years ago. Yet these and others are instances in which tacit agreement often exists – one entered at summit or other high diplomatic level as part of a political arrangement. The agreements are not codified nor made public and transparent. Nor are monitoring and regulatory mechanisms set up and institutionalized.

The recent Eritrea-Ethiopia case is a cautionary tale in many ways, but specifically in this context, because a joint commission was in place to seek clarification of the border and to ease tensions that were recognized as building up (thus hardly a case of lack of early warning). The Eritrean case study thus makes a point of providing detailed review of the experience of that commission and the failure of it and other mechanisms to achieve what they had been set up to do.[iii] It is worth reading closely, for the report concluded that the failure was not in any inherent defectiveness of the commission but at higher political levels. Specifically, in a context where issues between the two countries were routinely settled by personal dialogue at the summit level, there was no awareness of the problem or sufficient political will to manage it by means other than violence. This analysis supports a general conclusion that border issues of prevention and management have usually been handled on an *ad hoc* basis, being taken seriously only after tensions have been built up, and by political dialogue at leadership levels. Even though the latter process has chalked up some successes as well as spectacular failures, the lesson would seem to be that processes that are more transparent and institutionalized might be more sustainable, especially if undertaken *before* tensions mount and while relations are not mutually suspicious.

Thus resolution of border disputes, which preferably should occur at an early stage to stave off conflict, is not the same as resolution of wars that, to a degree, are generated by border conflicts. Fortunately, either by ignoring such issues or by the casual diplomacy discussed above, the region has been

spared cases of such inter-state conflict, and thus *conflict resolution* of such border issues has seldom arisen. The exception, of course, is the Ethiopian-Eritrean war. But that case has a further lesson of relevance to this section: in the event the proposal to handle the border dispute through an international third party review was the easiest aspect of the long and complex negotiations on which to reach agreement to end the war. Moreover, it was a formula that had been available to the two parties before they went to war – and it is available to all other pairs of states with border ambiguity. By that time, of course, there seemed to be many other dimensions of the war that had to be settled. The experience of international and regional actors, including IGAD, in those broader problems will be reviewed below in discussion of inter-state wars.

Cross-border Intercommunity Clashes

Conflicts and disturbances between communities living on opposite sides of the border are common in the region. These may involve rustling of livestock or other forms of theft, terrorizing of communities, destruction of crops, smuggling and imposition of illegal levies on trade, and trade in arms. Such violent events may be essentially local ones between communities. But because they involve international frontiers, they have the potential to escalate, as a result of some combination of the conflict becoming "ethnicized" or through involvement of government personnel. The other implication is that conflicts that might otherwise be managed or resolved by customary, inter-community mechanisms tend to involve local administrators and even foreign ministries and state security services. As a consequence, the processes of CPMR need to become more complex.

These conflicts also tend to be dealt with in an *ad hoc* way, and in response to escalation of open conflict rather than on a pre-emptive and institutionalized basis. Two examples of a more formalized mechanism being put in place may offer more generally applicable lessons. Sudan and Chad have had a joint border commission operating and meeting regularly for many years. This body deals with the range of problems men-

tioned at the start of the paragraph above. But it also deals with encroachment by rebels from across the border and even border demarcation issues. It seems to have defused many conflicts. Recently a committee was set up to deal with conflicts across the Somalia-Kenya border, originally reaching out from the Kenya district of Wajir but now extended to other districts of the Northeast Province.[iv] This innovative committee involves administrations from the two areas as well as army and police on either side of the border, but also traditional authorities and civilian representatives. Women's groups are involved and were responsible for many of the first initiatives. The body is also remarkable in that there are no formal "authorities" or "security service" on the Somalia side of the border – but that has not prevented whatever informal authorities exist on the ground from being involved in a system that works.

Mutual Intervention

There is a persisting systematic pattern whereby internal rebel groups operate from neighboring countries, often with the support of governments. Intervention escalates on a tit-for-tat basis. These tendencies aggravate and amplify the internal conflicts and make them harder to resolve. They also exacerbate tensions between countries and make contested issues between them harder to settle peaceably. Indeed, this pattern is often at the root of the chronically unstable and volatile regional security regime that characterizes the Horn.

Although some individual internal conflicts have been resolved, and occasional (but usually short-term) improvements do occur in bilateral relations, little has been done systematically so far to tackle this combined problem of internal conflicts feeding off external support from countries whose relations are antagonistic. One of the few exceptions was that the new governments that took power in 1991 in Ethiopia and Eritrea concluded bilateral agreements with each other and with the Sudan government to stay out of each other's affairs and even to curb activities of exiled rebel groups in their territories. The political agreement operated for about three years, and activities of opposition groups in neighboring capitals

were inhibited in various ways. But this broke down in 1994, and the three countries reverted to earlier patterns of mutual interference.

Any attempt to reverse this systematic pattern would be a daunting task: it would be a matter of great complexity; and it would involve seeking agreement between governments whose attitude toward each other is far from one of good will. However, unless some thought is given to this level of problem and possible options are explored to resolve it, the likelihood is great that conflict resolutions (either internal and inter-state) will not last and there would be indefinite continuation of regional conflict. Given this complexity, IGAD could not be expected to come up with an immediate formula for such a fundamental transformation. But it constitutes the only forum whereon such discussion and imaginative rethinking can take place. The temporary abnegation of interference, like that between the three countries mentioned, suggests that the present pattern is not immutable. There are also instances, like the agreement between the Ethiopian and Somalia governments in 1988 that emphasize the mutual advantage in non-intervention. This should be stressed as opposed to the seeming short-run political gains from intervention.

Peacemaking in Inter-state Wars

Fortunately there had only been the one case of inter-state war in the region, the Somalia-Ethiopia war of the 1970s, until the 1998-2000 war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. However, one can also say that, despite Africa's conflict-ridden image, this region is the only one on the continent where inter-state wars have occurred. So, even if very rare, the wars' enormous human and political cost and the fact that they have occurred at all mean that it is vital to explore what mechanisms are in place to resolve and prevent them. What has been attempted in those cases of open warfare? And what might be done to ensure that mechanisms can prevent or manage potential future cases?

The Eritrea-Ethiopia war is of great significance for future conflict resolution in the region, and specifically for

IGAD. A look back to events following the outbreak of war in 1998 shows that there was a delay before initiatives got under way. The world was shocked and did not anticipate the escalation and scale of fighting or its long duration. But neither were there any clearly available mechanisms for stepping in. Eventually there were a host of peace initiatives, mostly by particular governments at first – Burkina Faso, Rwanda, the U.S., and regional bodies like EU, which appointed a special representative, and the Arab League. The UN Security Council passed resolutions but took no active part in mediation, until it came in to play the crucial role (and one that only it can play) of monitoring peacekeeping and settling the border, as well as setting up commissions to deal with compensation and identifying "causes." In fact the OAU played a critical role, especially through its Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution (COMCPMR). Like IGAD's equivalent, it is still developing its own capacities. The Algerian president also took an active mediation role.

IGAD itself was unable to play a significant role in any of these initiatives. This inertia was perhaps predictable, as the war involved two member governments with whom other members had intimate relations. Both had been among the leading proponents of reinvigorating IGAD during the mid-1990s. These circumstances raised the issue of whether IGAD could ever have been an appropriate and sufficiently disinterested third party. Even if it had been seen as appropriate, the antagonism between the two countries also imposed strains on the organization itself and generated a paralysis. Nor was the paralysis in any way a result of shortcomings of the IGAD secretariat or of other member governments. However, the crucial lessons to be learned are that IGAD must be prepared to play more of a role, developing the robustness and diplomatic skills to take some hand, no doubt with the OAU and UN, in any such future slide into war. Unless such capabilities are built up over time to prevent and manage the most serious threats to security, any regional system of CPMR will be impaired – not least because of the regional interrelationship between all levels of conflict.

Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution in National Conflicts

As has been documented, the IGAD countries have faced armed insurgencies challenging authority of the state itself, at least over certain parts of its territory. Distinctions have been made between three kinds of such national conflict situations differing in levels of seriousness of their challenge to government:

- Rebellion, constituting a movement that seeks to overthrow and replace an existing regime; an uprising with such aims may generate a scale of conflict that could be called civil war, but this will not always happen.
- Regional opposition to central government.
- Warlordism, presence in some part of the national territory of organized armed groups not subject to government control; these challenge the state's monopoly of the means of violence.

Findings about how each of these conflict types has been dealt with are summarized in the sub-sections below.

Rebellion and Civil War: Military Solutions to Internal Conflict

Evidence indicates that there may be many self-proclaimed movements seeking to overthrow governments by armed means. But it also shows that many of these can be of short duration, their escalation into serious violent conflict pre-empted by political deals and/or by forceful suppression, while some have just fizzled out. Uganda is an extreme example of this trend: only a handful of some thirty would-be rebellions have posed a serious threat to the government at the time or to a conflict-free existence for citizens.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there have been several occasions when those putative rebellions that do escalate into real civil war have ended with the defeat of government

forces and replacement of the ruling regime. In the case of southern Somalia, the first of these was achieved without a replacement regime taking its place for a decade. In Somaliland and Puntland a single *de facto* authority emerged. Three others of the present IGAD governments came to power after civil war; one has remained in power after gaining a superior position in a civil war, while another came to power through a military coup, and the remaining one put down a coup in the past.

This history of governments coming to power or maintaining it by outright defeat of opponents underlines the fact that violent conflicts can end by being fought out to a conclusion – not by peaceful mediation or other political means. Thus military means must be included in the lexicon of mechanisms for conflict resolution. One limitation of this form of resolution by enforcement is that it may leave those disputes and social and political conflicts that underlay open conflict unresolved. Or it may generate a new round of grievances.

Political Resolution of Civil War: Direct Negotiations

This history further suggests that once an internal armed opposition cannot be pre-empted or contained, there is a tendency for civil war to occur, dragging on with massive harm to civilian populations until fought to a conclusion. But where outright victory is not possible, prolonged stalemate and a permanent war society and economy occur. Thus both sets of circumstances – defeat for one side in a civil war or permanent internal war – and their relative frequency point to the dearth of effective political mechanisms that can come into play to resolve serious internal war, once initial containment fails.

There have been only a very few recent instances where both two parties in a civil war have acted successfully on their own to conclude an agreement that ends fighting and reshapes the political system so that they can act out their differences through conventional political dialogue and opposition. One such example was the Peace and National Reconciliation Agreement that ended the civil war in Djibouti in 1994. The

series of agreements brokered in Somaliland to end inter-clan and militia fighting could be seen as a case that had parallels. In both these cases the agreements provided not merely for a cease-fire to end the violence and for some demilitarization and demobilization of fighters. They also created a new political dispensation, including revised or even new constitutions. In one of the region's most important conflicts, the civil war in Sudan, there has been a long and so far unconsummated series of negotiations. These are dealt with in detail in the next sub-section, as they have mainly involved third parties. But what should be noted here is that it has become accepted that a new political dispensation of some kind must be part of this civil war's resolution, although debate and disagreement about what this new political system would look like has been a major stumbling block to resolution.

These few cases where peace in major internal war has been negotiated or is seriously being negotiated, tend to support lessons from elsewhere in Africa that a reshaped political system must be considered as one of the most effective mechanisms for sustainable resolution of internal warfare. A "'democratic" structure is often the political formula prescribed for African conflicts: witness the recommendation of an earlier African research program "democratization of the society through constitutional arrangements that give every group a say in governance...."[V] But the value of that formula is that it gives weight to a process of incorporation and participation of groups. Decentralization may be as important as, say, competitive, multi-party elections. The record in Africa does indicate that provision for elections can be part of a formula for resolving conflict, but the Djibouti case and others in Africa, like Angola, also suggest that a "first-past-the-post" electoral system can exclude groups from power and may not resolve conflicts.

Inter-Community Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution: Customary Mechanisms

Among the most clear-cut and widespread of findings from the various country case studies are those relating to operation of indigenous modes of conflict resolution and peace maintenance. To simply label these "traditional" often obscures some of their key characteristics and the reasons for their past effectiveness. But in any event they are usually well established. They are also usually couched in ritual procedures meaningful to the people involved, whether from one ethnic or cultural group or two. This in turn underlines the seriousness of these undertakings and their continued observance.

The single country case studies that contributed to this chapter (and larger study) show the wide extent of these practices and their past effectiveness. Some of them are extensions of the laws and values of particular societies, for example,. the *xeer* principles governing Somali communities. But it is also clear that they have characterized potential conflicts between ethnic or linguistic groups and not just those between clans, communities, or extended families of the same cultural group. Thus such practices and associated rituals are not part of the "culture" of only one group but have emerged in an innovative way to deal with new conflicts as they developed with trends such as population expansion, new demands on territory, etc.

The record also includes a few attempts by governmental bodies to use and even institutionalize such indigenous practices, although with mixed success. The lessons to be derived from the many such experiments over several decades seems to be that, where governments seek to take over, subordinate, or transform such mechanisms, they are usually unlikely to remain effective and may not even survive.

Indeed, the most clear-cut and disturbing finding relates to the widespread *decline* in the ability of such indigenous mechanisms to play a role, to guarantee sustainability of any agreements reached, or even to survive. Certainly the degree to which such a decline has already occurred varies from locality

to locality, even within the same country. Yet the underlying trend seems undeniable. Incorporation by governmental bodies in an inappropriate form is only one possible factor behind such deterioration in effectiveness. Population movement and displacement as well as changes in social and economic circumstances are also involved.

This finding is corroborated by one recent study that offers an explanation related to the nature of contemporary conflict in Africa. [vi] Traditional African conflict management practices, which generally reflect principles of reconciliation and reintegration (rather than retribution and exclusion) based on long-standing relationships and values/norms, tend to be effective in addressing intra-community conflict and even inter-community conflict where relationships and shared values must be established as part of the reconciliation process. However, contemporary conflict is often associated with processes of modernization and deep sociopolitical change, which challenge the very authority on which such relations and values depend (for example, as leaders seek to mobilize ethnic communities to vie for control of the state). Such authority-destroying conflict thus tends to elude the integrative capacities of traditional CPMR as much as it eludes efforts of modern diplomacy.

The policy implications of such a trend are extremely serious, not least those for any CEWARN system that assumes the existence of such mechanisms for handling certain kinds of impending, local conflict situations. Therefore, it is important to document these trends and to explain them if possible, so as to offer suggestions as to how this decline might be halted.

In Sudan, for instance, traditional institutions among the Beja in the east, *maglis*, emphasize truce-making and compliance mechanisms. These are still in operation and continue to curtail violent conflict but are losing some of their status. Meanwhile in Darfur in the west, traditional mediation mechanisms (*agaweed*) have been undermined by fundamental social changes and by being subordinated or even by-passed by "tribal conferences" set up by central authorities. In the South of the country, past ability to keep violent conflict within

bounds has also eroded.

Out of nine local cases of conflict that were examined in our Ethiopian study, six reported that indigenous mechanisms had formerly played a part in conflict resolution between communities from different ethnic groups.[vii] These were often institutionalized and given local names: *shimiglana* (Nuer-Anuak) or *arrara* (Karayu-Afar). In only one instance were such mechanisms successful in resolving conflict and sustaining peace. In two others, such agencies had been absorbed into local joint peace committees, now or in the past, with some success. But traditional mechanisms or authorities in the others had begun "to lose their ritual powers and cultural significance" over a generation or more. Among the reasons for this decline were the spread of populations (and thus greater intensity of conflict) or the failure to evolve joint mechanisms. The sidelining of such mechanisms by top-down efforts by administrations or even the army often emphasized punitive measures rather than reconciliation, sometimes acting with a partisan rather than neutral stance.

Similar findings come from a published study focusing specifically on the erosion of such mechanisms in a multiethnic area of southwest Ethiopia, which "until recently had customary and ritually sanctioned ways of resolving conflict."[viii] The study sees the problem as a result more of increasing state hegemony than of involvement of this peripheral area in the global political economy. It recognizes "the efforts of state agents to mediate emerging conflicts in conditions of increasing resource scarcity and identity struggle, (by involving) customary mediation mechanisms and their cultural symbolism," but suggests that involvement is mainly "rhetorical" and is in practice undermined structurally by other initiatives of administrative agencies. It also recognizes the "inability of the (representatives of the) ethnic groups to redefine their relationships in a constructive and culturally acceptable manner." Generally it points to a prevailing need "to reconstitute a new political arena of conflict resolution," involving customary mechanisms (if need be in resuscitated form) working with governmental institutions, but reports a failure to fulfill this goal. This might

well be seen as a motto for this part of the chapter.

In Uganda, the conflicts given attention in our study have been the many rebellions against central power.[ix] It is not surprising that such major conflicts concerned with modern political power should not be amenable to resolution by local, customary agencies alone. But the findings of our country study point to contributions by such procedures and rituals as well as by local elders and other traditional authorities in some instances. These have noticeably occurred when central authorities have not been partisan and have sought to involve them in new and *ad hoc* negotiations. In short, Uganda also illustrates the general conclusion that indigenous, traditional mechanisms can play a CPMR role. However, this is more likely to be effective if they themselves are accorded renewed authority and perhaps a revamped role alongside state and civil society institutions.

The report on Somalia spells out in the greatest detail the customary agencies and their typical procedures that were used among Somali communities throughout the Horn, both within clans and sub-clans and between them as well as in smaller communities.[x] Events in all parts of the former Somalia Republic since the late 1980s clearly show that major cleavages developed, which were beyond the capabilities of the complex indigenous mechanisms to contain. Another lesson, however, is in how the use of traditional elders and other institutions and an adherence to their procedures and style played a major role (especially in Somaliland but also in Puntland) in not merely resolving such major, political conflicts but providing the basis for a new, modified political arena within which CPMR tasks can be handled. But in an interview, a key actor in the long process, now a senior figure in the House of Elders *(Guurti)*, commented on this process of using traditional mechanisms and breathing new life into them. This had only been possible in the part of Somalia subjugated to a British system of '"indirect rule" more accommodating to traditional structures. It may no longer be replicable in areas subject to the more intrusive system of Italian colonial administration. In other words, some Somali experiences sig-

nal the enduring possibility of a contribution of indigenous mechanisms, but they also underscore the general conclusion that such agencies and procedures have lost considerable potency, especially in addressing types of conflicts that now abound.

The Eritrea report affords two cases in which traditional mechanisms came into play.[xi] The long-running land dispute between Tor'a and Tzenadeghle was not amenable to official, top-down modes of resolution. Indigenous methods came into play eventually, but only when they were used alongside new initiatives from "civil society" actors from within the two communities. The second set of cases, involving Afar communities, have shown a continuing role for indigenous mechanisms, but only when those local institutions (and especially the method of holding kin responsible for violent acts) were defended successfully against a range of threats to undermine them from outside over many decades.

Our report from Djibouti documents how the two peoples, the Afar and Issa, both had elaborate structures and procedures for resolving the inevitable conflicts in pastoralist societies, although each was based on a different logic.[xii] Some mechanisms also existed for settling Issa-Afar community disputes. It is the latter that have suffered the most significant undermining: they were probably at best only measures for obtaining a cease-fire rather than settling underlying causes, so they lack enough robustness to survive partial replacement of most traditional mechanisms by French colonialism or the pro-Issa partisanship of most state structures since independence.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of existing conflicts and conflict management and resolution mechanisms in the Horn of Africa. The discussion concludes that there have been sophisticated and effective customary mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution at several inter-state, national, and sub-national levels, even between different ethnic communities in the IGAD regions – more than

many official channels often realize. These mechanisms should not be ignored in contemporary efforts, and CEWARN should aim to use as many of these in an integrated way as it can (both as informants and receivers of early warning information and analysis as well as potential "responders"). However, such possibilities are cast in doubt by one strong finding: that given decades of political change and the escalating scale and changed nature of conflicts, customary mechanisms for handling intra- or inter-community conflicts are eroding or collapsing and must be restructured, strengthened, and perhaps associated with other mechanisms. Perhaps the best expedient for putting new, effective mechanisms into place is to involve such customary mechanisms and processes within new frameworks and with other actors.

This assessment, however, has applications beyond those of CEWARN, which tends by definition to be concerned with upcoming or worsening conflicts and with prevention and management – implications for resolution of the several long-standing conflicts in the region. When it comes to rebellions and civil war, military "solutions" do have a role to play in resolving internal conflicts, but sustainable resolution is likely to demand some reshaping of the political system. In relation to border disputes and cross-border inter-community clashes, the existing prevalence of *ad hoc* approaches to prevention and management should give way to more transparent and institutionalized processes that are accordingly more sustainable. Finally, while IGAD must be prepared to play more of a role in preventing inter-state wars, it also provides the only forum for resolving the systematic pattern of mutual intervention between states that continues to underpin much of the conflict afflicting the Horn.

Notes

i The project was identified as Output 1 of the IGAD Program on CPMR (the development of CEWARN was Output 4) and was funded by the European Union. The assessment was carried out by a team of consultants from the Peace, Conflict, and

Dallaire received were to inform the embassies of the U.S., France, and Belgium in Kigali, but his request to search for weapon arsenals was denied. Subsequently, Dallaire tried three more times in February with a request to search and destroy weapon depots, but DPKO denied all three requests.

"Noise or static" (from other conflicts). This problem will always exist, as there will always be multiple situations requiring attention, be it other conflicts or other issues with which decision makers must deal. In the cases of Rwanda, Haiti and Yugoslavia, and also Burundi, in the region, served as major distractions. We must also consider the "signal-to-noise" problem, meaning that background noises (other conflicts) can cover up a specific signal. It is also important that the potential recipients know that the signal is meant for them; otherwise they may miss it or even intentionally find an excuse to ignore it.[xviii]

"Unfavorable political environment." This is linked to political interests of local, regional, and international actors. Sometimes actors do not favor peace but are interested in armed conflict for political or economic reasons—the spoiler problem. At other times, actors may have had no interests either way. Finally, action is sometimes disregarded in order not to avoid meddling in the business of strong states (Chechnya in Russia, East Timor in Indonesia). Action often accompanies political interests, for example, prevention of spillover potential of a conflict (Macedonia) or threats, for example, the fear of major refugees influx, Kosovo).

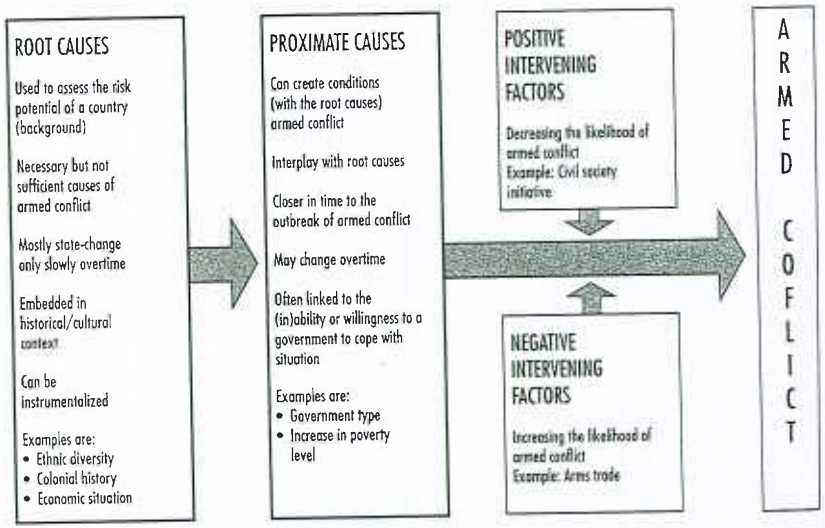
"Incoherent, inconsistent, inadequate, contradictory, incomplete, or even harmful response strategies." Preventive action was too slow and/or too late (especially clear in Kosovo and East Timor). Actions taken were inadequate, and/or the long-term consequences were not taken into account (see the early recognition of Croatia's independence without considering the impact on Yugoslavia as a whole, exclusion of Kosovo in the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords in order to bring about closure in Bosnia). Actions taken were inconsistent and contradictory (see Yugoslavia, military intervention in Kosovo without considering ground troops). Actions in a complex situation were not followed, seen through to the end (for example, Somalia).

"Lacking collaboration (especially at a local level) among major intervening actors." This is frequently the case, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, but also in Rwanda.

The Technical Side of Conflict Early Warning and Prevention: Collection and Analysis of Information

Extensive work within and outside academia, coupled with the information revolution, has enabled better access to information. Nevertheless, availability of information does not necessarily lead to sensible indicators, as they need to be based upon thorough analysis that identifies the complex interrelation of factors that may lead to escalation of armed conflict. While the search for a set of key indicators upon which all conflict escalation processes could be monitored has largely been abandoned, there is growing consensus that structuring information around groups of "family" indicators is beneficial. For the purpose of this chapter, I draw on traditional categories of early warning models that were strongly influenced in the 1980s by Lance Clark and the Refugee Policy Group that pioneered the early warning of population displacement.[xix] Table 3 shows a graphic display of such an analytical and monitoring framework.

Table 3. Analytical Framework for Predicting Armed Conflict



The two push factors considered in early warning models are root causes and proximate causes. Root or systemic causes refer to general structural and deep-rooted background conditions. According to Clark, they are underlying events and conditions that have existed for many years but are mostly static or only change slowly over time.[xx] They tend to be embedded in historical/cultural contexts such as religious conflicts, long-standing border disputes, difficulty in state building, or ecological degradation. Root causes are thus necessary but not sufficient causes of armed conflict that can be orchestrated by political actors and are generally used to assess a country's risk potential.

Proximate causes are much closer to the actual conflict and can create sufficient conditions (with root causes) for armed conflict. They are specific situational circumstances – widening income disparity, competition between ethnic groups, popular discontent – that tend to interplay with root causes (or root causes work though them). Thus, they may change over time and are often linked to the ability/inability or willingness/unwillingness of a government to cope with given situations (for example a failure to introduce legislation that allows equal access to political and economic resources in an ethnically heterogeneous environment).

Intervening factors, sometimes also called accelerators can either increase *or* decrease the likelihood of armed conflict and increase *or* decrease the likelihood for peacebuilding (thus either prolonging conflict or contributing to conflict resolution) if an armed conflict is already in progress.[xxii] Thus, it is important to consider any organizations working to diminish violence, including those at the often overlooked grass-roots level. Experts tend to agree that facilitating and inhibiting factors with respect to conflict escalation are very important for prevention of triggering events as well as formulating policy options and mobilizing effective responses.

Indicators are generally grouped roughly under political/institutional, military, economic, environmental/ecological, socio-demographic, and societal/cultural factors.[xxii] In addition, information on key actors and stakeholders is also very important. It is equally important to know their attitude(s) to the conflict/peace process as well as their resources to accomplish their goals. For the purpose of early warning, one needs to be familiar with spoilers that oppose peaceful conflict resolution as well as potential actors who are willing to work for conflict prevention.[xxiii]

There are several kinds of information, and in the ideal case one should rely on multiple types of input such as quantitative data (structural, event data, statistics) and qualitative data (narrative/descriptive data/information). In general, one can distinguish between raw data (unprocessed indicators) and analytical data (information that has already been set into context). Ideally the focus should be on raw data for analysis, but one can use analytical data to inform the analytical process or cross-check one's own findings and assumptions. It is best to use a mix of both qualitative and quantitative information to strive for a comprehensive approach.

Information must also meet certain standards; it must be timely, accurate, valid, reliable, and verifiable. Real-time early warning cannot rely on dated information. The other

attributes are inter-connected and have to do with reliable sources that can be trusted and traced back to the actual source. "Standarization is highly desirable, but by no means easy to obtain."[xxiv] Yet using a set of family indicators aids this a great deal. Networks of interested organizations in an open system can be used to collect and verify information. These practices permit users to judge source credibility and, to some degree, the authority of the analysis. It should be noted that information alone (however sophisticated) is not early warning. "Information without analysis is, as the popular advertisement goes, 'like an orange without sunshine.'"[xxv] It is analysis that sets information into context, that moves from knowledge of a situation to the ability to anticipate violent conflict. Last but not least it can formulate case scenarios and response options that make early warning complete.

Discourse on the best analytical method began inside and outside academia during the 1970s and culminated in an understanding that both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are needed for adequate early warning analysis. Quantitative scholars agree that more macro-level structural models are primarily useful in yielding risk assessments though models using quantitative methods present the problems of data availability in general and time-series data in particular. Large models using many explanatory variables have demonstrated the difficult if not impossible task of activating variables in a way that can use existing data sources. These macro-level models, however, can guide analysis, while the more micro-level approaches are indispensable for the actual monitoring process or to anticipate conflict.[xxvi] Thus, while structural models guide analysis to the degree that they are based on certain theories, in many cases it might not even be possible to obtain the necessary data (across space and time) to test theoretical arguments. This data availability problem has limited existing early warning research based on structural quantitative models to largely retrospective analysis as opposed to predictive analysis. In light of the above, it is best to use a comprehensive approach combining indicator models with case evidence. "Indicator models provide general information about factors that should

be monitored, while case studies provide in-depth information about key personalities, issues, and events that are needed to gauge the prospects for conflict resolution."[xxvii] The necessary detailed information often aids in fine-tuning data accurately to anticipate conflicts that can often be gained only through a context-sensitive qualitative approach.

Furthermore, analysis moved from the explanation of specific types of conflict, such as genocide/politicide,[xxviii] ethnic discrimination and ethnic conflict, inter- and intra-state war, or environmental conflict, to more general anticipation of conflict escalation at earlier stages.[xxix] Discussion on information collection has already highlighted the fact that violent conflict is caused by a set of diverse and interconnected factors. While linked to general key categories, it is necessary to establish on a case-by-case basis the particular mix of factors, the weight of each one including an identification of the most crucial ones, and the historical genesis. For this purpose, it is important to develop a country-specific analytical grid (from a base-line analysis) with targeted indicators that can guide the on-going monitoring process. At a minimum, it should include the group of family indicators discussed above that, in complex interplay, lead to armed conflict.

This shows that information is not collected randomly but clearly based upon important indicators identified in analysis. Yet the grid needs to be flexible, so that new insights from the monitoring process can be incorporated (grounded theory approach). This is crucial, since conditions can change, and analytical explanations need to be adapted to realities on the ground. For example, conflicts might start as socio-economic struggles or competition over scarce resources, and they may end up as ethno-political violence, nationalist campaigns, or genocide. Therefore, early warning and the monitoring of countries needs to be a constant and on-going process ("rolling process").[xxx] Crises can emerge seemingly out of nowhere, which means *ad-hoc* analyses may miss early developments. Thus, especially in the monitoring exercise, it is important to focus on latent and simmering conflicts as precursors of more violence. As Dipak Gupta fittingly said, "It is extremely difficult

The Red Sea Press, Inc.
Publishers and Distributors of Third World Books

First Printing 2002

Book Design: Jonathan Gullery
Cover Design: Ashraful Haque

Library of Congress Catalog-in-Publication Data

Authority on development: early earning and conflict management in the Horn of Africa / editors: Cirû Mwaûra and Susanne Schmeidl.
p. cm.
Includes index.
ISBN 1-56902-156-2 (hardcover) -- ISBN 1-56902-157-0 (paperback)
1. International relations--Risk assessment--Case studies. 2. Conflict management--Case studies. 3. Conflict management--Africa, Northeast. I. Mwaûra, Cirû. II. Schmeidl, Susanne.
JZ6368.I58 2001
327.1'7'0963--dc21
2001004369

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

This publication was produced within the context of developing a conflict early warning and response mechanism (CEWARN) for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member states. Preparation of the mechanism's conceptual and operational framework took place over a two-year period. This publication is intended to share with other policy-makers and practitioners the details of what has been an innovative and exciting process for the IGAD secretariat and member states.

Let me start by providing some background to IGAD's decision to develop CEWARN. The Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), as it was then known, was originally created to coordinate member states' efforts in preventing drought and desertification.[i] However, it became increasingly apparent that IGADD was a forum through which broader political and socio-economic issues could be addressed. As a result, the heads of state and governments of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda met at an extraordinary summit on April 18, 1995 and resolved to expand the IGADD mandate.

A declaration to revitalize IGADD and expand cooperation among member states was passed, and IGADD was renamed the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). This decision reflected the belief that only through joint efforts could the sub-region's development challenges – economic and social-environmental degradation, increasing food insecurity, massive dislocation, and movement of people across borders – be addressed.

Central to this revitalization process was the recognition that the sub-region's economic development depends ulti-

mately on the prevalence of peace and security. Indeed the absence of these conditions severely constrains and often nullifies the practical efforts made to tackle basic economic, social, humanitarian, and environmental problems in the sub-region. Ultimately, the sustainability of development initiatives will always be directly related to and affected by the incidence of violent conflict.

With this recognition, IGAD member states committed themselves to maintaining peace and security.[ii] This is reflected in one of the specific aims of IGAD - "to promote peace and security in the sub-region and create mechanisms within the sub-region for the prevention, management, and resolution of inter- and intra-state conflicts through dialogue."[iii]

Perhaps the biggest challenge for any intergovernmental organization (particularly one such as IGAD, which has come to be characterized by the volume and intensity of conflicts in the region it represents) is adapting to the demands of institutionalized processes for regional consultation, decision-making, advanced planning, and preparedness. Such structures have traditionally been bilateral state mechanisms in the IGAD region. Yet we are all aware that effective early warning, conflict prevention, management, and resolution requires the involvement of civil society. Indeed most successes in conflict management, and peacebuilding have been characterized by state and civil society cooperation. Despite this reality, few formal structures for state and community cooperation exist in the region.

Given our context, where the culture of conflict management and resolution has been characterized by *ad hoc* mediation and reactive peace-making initiatives, a new mandate in conflict prevention, management, and resolution demands the creation of dynamic and proactive regional decision-making structures and processes for consultation. The challenge for IGAD in executing its new conflict prevention, management and resolution (CPMR) mandate is the development of integrated institutions that are regional in scope. Transforming the current decision-making culture away from a centralized process to one that captures the key ingredient of community

participation in conflict management and peacebuilding is the ultimate aim.

After adopting this new mandate, a second process involving the translation of IGAD's formal responsibility for conflict prevention, management and resolution initiated concrete activities that would bring such responsibility to practical effect. Here the IGAD secretariat was mandated to produce a framework and provisions for a more cohesive approach to addressing conflicts in the sub-region. Translation of the mandate into a coherent framework was facilitated through a CPMR formulation exercise.[iv]

Developing an effective role for IGAD in CPMR requires an understanding of its comparative advantages and its overall added value to the region. Such a process requires an assessment-based approach. For this reason, the components that emerged from the program formulation exercise are essentially stock-taking activities. This approach acknowledges the existence of several ongoing and planned activities for early warning, conflict prevention, management, and resolution.[v] Thus the principle of the program mentioned above is to build on and complement existing capacities. IGAD's understanding of what regional resources and capacities exist positions it to better articulate its role as a regional institution for conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

While this may appear an obvious point, it has not been translated into practice, as most sub-regional and regional CPMR projects have been developed without regard for existing and planned initiatives. This results in duplication of efforts, incoherence, and resource waste. With this in mind, IGAD highlighted the following components as essential for any CPMR program:

- Assessment of the conflict prevention, management, and resolution capacities in the IGAD region
- Documentation of demobilization and post-conflict peace-building experience in the region
- A proposed program component to promote a culture of peace and tolerance in the region
- A conflict early warning mechanism for the IGAD

region to implement
- Proposals for an IGAD Emergency Relief Fund[vi]

The CEWARN project emerged within the framework of Project Number 4: *'A conflict early warning and prevention mechanism for IGAD member states for implementation.'*

This book discusses in more detail the truism that early warning without response lacks purpose. Yet it is this crucial element – generating effective responses – that continues to elude various organizations. As mentioned earlier, the key challenge for IGAD in this area is to transform highly centralized decision-making cultures into more inclusive processes.

Early warning is essentially a decision-support tool. The emphasis is not simply on producing early warning analyses but in developing a regional response architecture. Such architecture is most likely to be effective when decision-making is integrated. A key IGAD concern in developing this project was that the focus – following a general assessment of sub-regional capacities – should be the design of a regional response structure.

For this reason we chose to develop an early warning system rooted in the realities of our region and avoided opting to buy an existing early warning model or to contract an institution to provide IGAD with early warning analyses. We recognize that providing early warning analyses, no matter how sophisticated, renders the whole exercise meaningless in the absence of clear decision-making structures and channels of communication and responsibility.

IGAD's preferred methodology in developing CEWARN was thus a process-oriented one that brought together stakeholders from civil society and governments in the region. The vision is that CEWARN will provide a regional platform to undertake collaborative conflict management and peace-building that rests on solid analytic foundations.

We are grateful to the two donor agencies — the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ), especially Niels von Keyserlingk and Dr. Wolfram Fischer, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), especially John Munuve and Ned Greely. They provided financial support for this project and contributed immensely to the planning process. We also appreciate the technical assistance provided by the research team, some of whom were drawn from member organizations of the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER).

Special thanks also go to the two editors of this volume and all contributors involved in documenting this memorable process. I hope this book will serve as a useful resource for regional organizations and to those working with them to develop their early warning and conflict management mandates.

Atallah Hamad Bashir
Executive Secretary, IGAD
Djibouti, 2001

Editor: Heather Dawson, British Library of Political and Economic Science, 10 Portugal Street, London WC2A 2HD. Email: h.dawson@lse.ac.uk

Printed by Reliance Meridian Print Ltd. Tel. 01623 623416 (Merid200@aol.com)

Volume 4, no. 2
January 2009

ISSN 17479258

ALISS Quarterly

Association of Librarians and Information professionals in the Social Sciences

Special issue: New ways of supporting learners and researchers in the Social Sciences II

Social Software

Facebook at the University of Warwick; Delicious at the Institute of Education; Facebook at the University of Wolverhampton

Podcasting

Oxford Brookes University Library projects

Repositories

Welsh Repository Network project; POCKET project

Resource description

Cataloguers and MARC 21

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest edition of ALISS Quarterly. It has been published by ALISS (Association of Librarians and Information Professionals in the Social Sciences) .

In our October 2008 edition we focused upon new ways of supporting our users using web 2.0 and other new technologies.

This proved such a fruitful area that we are again using this issue to highlight a number of new innovations.

The first section contains articles from staff at the University of Warwick and the University of Wolverhampton which describe their experiences in using Facebook to communicate with their users. This is followed by an article which describes how delicious social bookmarking can be used effectively to promote information literacy.

The issue then highlights two new open access repositories, The Welsh repositories network which is an exiting new project involving collaboration between colleges in Wales and the POCKET project which is seeking to create open access HE educational materials for independent learners.

Finally the issue concludes with some interesting new research relating to resource access in the digital age. It focuses specifically upon opinions about cataloguing standards and their relevancy .

Remember that you can keep up to date with ALISS news by subscribing to our free electronic mailing list LIS_SOCIAL SCIENCE at http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/LIS-SOCIALSCIENCE.html . Have you seen our new website at: http://www.alissnet.org.uk

We hope you enjoy the issue!

Heather Dawson.
ALISS Secretary

DISLOCATIONS

The immense dislocations and suffering caused by neoliberal globalization, the retreat of the welfare state in the last decades of the twentieth century, and the heightened military imperialism at the turn of the twenty-first century have raised urgent questions about the temporal and spatial dimensions of power. Through stimulating critical perspectives and new and cross-disciplinary frameworks that reflect recent innovations in the social and human sciences, this series provides a forum for politically engaged and theoretically imaginative responses to these important issues of late modernity.

Volume 1
Where Have All the Homeless Gone?: The Making and Unmaking of a Crisis
Anthony Marcus

Volume 2
Blood and Oranges: Immigrant Labor and European Markets in Rural Greece
Christopher M. Lawrence

Volume 3
Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope and the Movement of People
Edited by Stef Jansen and Staffan Löfving

Volume 4
Slipping Away: Banana Politics and Fair Trade in the Eastern Caribbean
Mark Moberg

Volume 5
Made in Sheffield: An Ethnography of Industrial Work and Politics
Massimiliano Mollona

Volume 6
Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century
Edited by David O'Kane and Tricia Redeker Hepner

Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development

Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century

Edited by
David O'Kane &
Tricia Redeker Hepner

Berghahn Books
NEW YORK • OXFORD

— *Chapter Three* —

The Youth Has Gone from Our Soil

Place and Politics in Refugee Resettlement and Agrarian Development

Amanda Poole

In October 2006, the UN cited Eritrea for breaking the ceasefire accords with Ethiopia and moving armed troops and tanks into the temporary security zone—a tense strip of land that has divided the two countries since the end of open conflict in 2000.[1] The Eritrean Information Minister provided the rejoinder that the military was there "to pick crops." "If the harvest is not taken," he claimed, "it will be lost with severe consequences for our food security" (*BBC News* 2006). Whatever other motivations it may be masking in the convoluted politics sustaining the border dispute, this claim is consistent with a powerful discourse in Eritrea that explicitly couples national sovereignty and food security. In fact, soldiers *are* frequently deployed in agricultural labor on both state-owned and smallholder farms. According to UN figures, Eritrea has only produced an average of 30 percent of its cereal needs over the past decade" (Harris 2006), and the attainment of food security is one means to legitimize the nation's right to sovereignty. Leaving aside the unsubtle calculus of harvesting crops and claiming sovereignty within disputed border lands, food security and national sovereignty have been at the center of rural development projects of the Eritrean state since independence in 1991, legitimizing state interventions into agrarian production. Consequently, national news articles on rural development cast community-level activities like soil and water conservation into an explicitly political project of nation-building: it is through such community-building activities, claimed the state-led press, that "the people are playing a vital role ready to safeguard the sovereignty and national integrity of their Nation" (*Eritrea Profile* 2005b).

This intersection of community work, food production, and militarization also reverberates throughout local landscapes in Eritrea, if in strikingly different ways. I begin with a brief vignette from my fieldwork in a community where I researched refugee resettlement and rural development in 2004–2005.

It was a windy afternoon when I met with Idris and Abdella, farmers from a village at the edge of Hagaz, a town in the western lowlands of Eritrea that had been one of the pilot sites for the resettlement of refugees returning from Sudan after independence in 1991.[2] The dry wind pulsed through the surrounding hills, kicking up dust that settled in a fine film on the surface of our tea. It was *menchelos*, the strong wind at the end of summer that could destroy crops if it came too early, or too late, but was required to dry the sorghum and millet in preparation for harvest. Although the wind was timely in following the rain this year, some of the plots around us yielded only sparse stalks. These men were in their sixties and had been raised here, farming and rearing livestock on land that had been lost to the refugee resettlement program. They began, like many of my interviewees did, with nostalgia for a lost landscape of plenty: "The past was better than the present because there were a lot of animals. Even the farming was well and good," explained Abdella. They described the land as having been "fat" and "wet." "But gradually in the course of time the land gets more and more barren, just like a human being, who gets older and older." Idris agreed, but linked the loss of soil youth and fertility to a lack of capacity to care for the land and practice desired cultivation:

> It is impossible to practice successful communal work on our farms, because all the youngsters with energy are at the front. ... The elders here are weak, they cannot work on something that needs a lot of force. Their sons went to the front. If you check all of the houses, you can only find women and aged men in each house. This is the reason why some of the farmland is not properly cultivated. If we are not able to provide the land with fertilizers or cow dung, and make terraces, the crops will not grow as desired. We need help from the government to provide us with fertilizers. This land needs help. If we don't get any help from the Ministry of Agriculture, our fingers alone will not have the power.

The power to build community, secure livelihoods, and continue subsistence practices across generations in a landscape facing the erosion of fertility and youth on both material and symbolic levels—these are immediate concerns among people in Hagaz. However, these processes unfold in the local context of resettlement and broader state-led development in different ways for local farmers and returned refugees. When the first few thousand returnees came to Hagaz under the official repatriation program in 1994, they were allocated plots for housing at the northern edge of a small but growing town. They were returning from Sudan, where as

many as 300,000 Eritreans lived as refugees during the struggle for independence. Some of the refugees were returning to their hometown, but many arrived to a place and region they had never lived in before, and to a nation they had imagined from afar for as many as thirty years. By the time I began my research in 2004, Hagaz had grown to incorporate three villages, including that of Idris and Abdella. Elsewhere, I have explored the frailty of the "returnee" and "stayee" categories; in this chapter, I examine the ways local farmers and return refugees engage differently with concepts and practices of agrarian labor, both mandatory state-led labor known as *ma'atot*, and self-initiated, traditional community work known as *wofara*. Shifting practices of community work in the context of postconflict resettlement expose the need to interrogate how agrarian politics become central to ways that people reestablish ties to landscape and community after periods of violence and displacement—a process that is tightly enmeshed with questions of power and agency of rural producers in the context of postcolonial state-making. I draw from my ethnographic research in Hagaz to explore how local idioms of youth, fertility, and development, connected to practices of community work, become a medium through which different members of the Hagaz community negotiate claims to belonging, and call into question the meanings and practices of sovereignty over national lands.

Sovereignty and Biopolitics in Eritrean Agricultural Development

In this chapter, I use the concepts of biopolitics and sovereignty to understand people's negotiations with the state and shifting practices of community labor. Foucault's (1978) model of biopolitics—the techniques of governance concerned with fostering the life of the population—maps neatly onto the appropriation of labor for food production in Eritrea. However, coupling biopolitics with sovereignty provides a means to explore the complex ways that agency takes shape beyond the boundaries of the biopolitical projects of the state and the increased militarization of society, landscapes, and agrarian production. Drawing from Agamben (1998), biopolitics do not supersede an archaic form of sovereign power as Foucault argues; rather, they have always been bound up with sovereign rule, so that sovereignty originates in part with the production of the biopolitical body that is able to take shape over the figure of bare life.[3] These concepts are opened up by ethnographic research in compelling ways. Hansen and Stepputat (2005) focus our attention on "issues of internal constitution of sovereign power within states through the exercise of violence over bodies and populations." At the same time they question "the obviousness of the state-territory-sovereignty link" by revealing the ways they are socially constructed. Following this, Donald Moore (2005) points to the ways that state sovereignty comes up against other nodes of sovereignty in rural spaces, nodes that are both "selective and situated" within the always-contested terrain of "place, power, and cultural politics."

Agrarian relations are an important medium through which place, power, and cultural politics are constituted by communities negotiating the demand to rework social ties in the postconflict context. Looking critically at issues of food security and production in Africa, Pottier (1999) reminds us to consider the multiple concerns that shape farmers' production decisions, and the ways that agriculture itself becomes an "idiom for social expression." In this vein, recent studies of agrarian change in Africa write against unilinear models of causality, and point to the need to examine multiple trajectories of social change that often center on questions of social identity and are rooted in historical socioeconomic conditions. Consequently, Englund (1999) views the shift in Malawian communities from communal work parties for beer and food to paid piecemeal labor not as the necessary decision of individual rational actors in the face of agricultural modernization and the growth of a cash economy. Instead, paid piecemeal labor in these villages reanimates traditional practices while exposing and reaffirming social and familial relationships—calling for a "more nuanced understanding of personhood and sociality." Also, while refugees in this area faced exploitation under this piecemeal labor system, for some these labor relations became a means of transitioning from "strangerhood" to "solicitude" and belonging. Similarly, Kea's (2004) work in the Gambia operates in conversation with gendered analyses of agrarian labor in West Africa (Carney and Watts 1990, 1991; Schroeder 1999) to analyze social differentiation *between* women as they actively reinforce host/patron and stranger/client categories in order to secure their claims to increasingly scarce resources of land and labor. Kea describes these micropolitical struggles as fraught with both tension and opportunity as people "continuously reconstitute their social networks and relations" in order to access resources "in a context where they cannot depend on the state, on financial institutions, or even on family and friends" (2004: 378).

These studies push us to consider the ways that identity and social relations shape the micropolitics of agricultural labor relations in the shifting political economy of rural African communities. However, as I explore below, the interactions of farmers and return refugees in Hagaz expose the ways that agrarian micropolitics are also inextricably bound up in negotiating translocal identities and processes—in this case, the meanings of citizenship and national belonging.[4] To this end, I [illegible]

and return refugees in Hagaz engage differently with concepts and practices of community work on the land—practices of labor that provide one medium of constituting place, power, and belonging in the Hagaz community. These practices, I argue, expose fissures in the state-led nationalist discourse by shifting concerns to the local moral economy and people's inabilities to build stable livelihoods and pass on traditions of subsistence-based production to future generations. *Moral economy,* while having a long history in scholarship and debates about peasant production, refers here to the significance of social arrangements of reciprocity in meeting subsistence needs among rural producers, and during times of political economic change, the struggle "over norms, values, and expectations related to the livelihoods of subordinate classes" (Neumann 2002: 37). Consequently, the multiple forms of labor animated by community members in Hagaz suggest that biopolitical regimes themselves may generate the possibilities of "selective and situated" sovereignties in the production of food. I return first to the different kinds of community work, *ma'atot* and *wofara,* and they ways they are communicated by official discourse. I then trace how these different forms of labor are animated in discussion and practice between farmers and returnees.

Agrarian Development in National Level Discourse

Framed through the language of self-sufficiency and "love of work," traits espoused by the revolutionary parties during the thirty-year national struggle for independence, agrarian labor in Eritrea becomes part of a biopolitical project concerned with crafting subjects and consolidating sovereignty—linking the body politic with national territory. On one level, this principle is manifest in the large-scale conscription of youth and adults into the military and national service campaigns. In an article in the government-run English newspaper, *Eritrea Profile,* a Ministry of Agriculture official described the role of students in performing requisite summer service by harvesting the fields of elderly people whose children are martyred or in the military: "We are making them responsible citizens of the future. It is like treating the tree so that it will give a good service ultimately" (Siltanyesus Tsigeyohannes 2005). These students were not only crafted as citizen-stewards of the land, they were also represented as "the nation's children," in this case, substitutes for missing kin, those sons and daughters conscripted into military service and absent from their families and their roles in local, village, and lineage-based agricultural labor.

The coupling of food security with national sovereignty through biopolitical regimes of conscription and work parties has specific meaning in

the region's environment and history. Food insecurity was one argument used against Eritrean independence following Italy's loss of the colony in the aftermath of World War II (Alexander Naty 2003). Since independence, the Eritrean government has justified its rule and right to sovereignty by displaying the solidarity of its people and embracing concepts of self-reliance in the face of aid dependence and the circulating discourses of vulnerability, dearth, and dire need. "The key to economic emancipation is work," claimed a September 2005 anonymous commentary in the *Eritrea Profile,* and the shared responsibility to "prevent relief aid from becoming a disease and an addiction, which gnaws at the body of the nation" (*Eritrea Profile* 2005c).[5] Here, emancipation applies to the national body, which is linked to disciplined work and self-sacrifice in the efforts to conserve and develop agrarian resources as well as re-create an imagined national landscape of verdant fertility, lost during long years of colonial appropriation and violence.[6] In an *Eritrea Profile* interview with a Ministry of Agriculture official, land and people are more explicitly linked through the rhetoric of duty and common national identity that obligates people to attain their "right of living" on the land, which, the official reminds us, "wherever it is, belongs to the government" (*Eritrea Profile* 2005b). In fact, all land is legally national territory since the Land Proclamation Act of 1995. This act, although it has only partially been implemented, overwrites a mosaic of traditional tenure regimes.[7] Equating 'right of living' with national duty on national land collapses different forms of labor into an ideology of working for the nation (or perhaps working for the government, as the Ministry of Agriculture official's statement provokingly suggests).

Articles and images in the *Eritrea Profile* and on *EriTV,* the sole national television station, frequently highlight the various achievements made by the government in cooperation with local communities towards developing land and water resources, and describe rural development specifically as the cornerstone of the government's development priorities. Consequently, the Independence Day celebrations in 2005 involved a parade of new shining red tractors down Liberation Avenue, the center of downtown Asmara, that were destined for prime agricultural areas. Many front covers of the newspaper during my year in the country displayed President Issayas Afeworki on field visits to rural development projects, eyes shaded by a wide brimmed khaki hat as he surveyed the progress of committed communities in distant regions—through media coverage, linking these areas to the nation-building project through visual representations of the gaze and presence of the state. This visual depiction of agricultural production and fertility also becomes an iconic image of an independent Eritrea under the leadership of the party. EriTV frequently intersperses its programming with long

the industrious activity of national service workers digging catchments or performing other agrarian labor activities.

Community-level projects of agrarian development are often enacted in *ma'atot*. Officiated by local administration, all able-bodied people are called to perform mandatory labor in the interest of agricultural or infrastructural development. In growing towns like Hagaz, performing *ma'atot* is a prerequisite to getting the proper documentation that allows people to claim rations or food aid. Consequently, *ma'atot* is one means of tracking the population and making it legible, as people are registered and then conscripted into community work. *Ma'atot* draws on the traditional practice of community self-help, *wofara*.[8] Researchers have noted the persistence of *wofara* among Eritrean refugees living in Sudan as well as return refugees, and the ways it was practiced across ethnic and religious groups in the maintenance of Eritrean identity and livelihood in the creation of communities both materially and symbolically (Sorenson 2000; Bascom 1999). It was often relayed to me that when someone needed help weeding or harvesting, or repairing a home, community members would be called together and the host would prepare food and drink for them. *Ma'atot* was contrasted to *wofara* because it was initiated by the state and did not contain the same norms of reciprocity—as one person described it, *ma'atot* was "a word coined by the government, just calling youngsters to work, nothing in return." While *ma'atot* was obligatory for most, *wofara*'s continued prevalence in the community, and between different kinds of community members, became a more contentious and tenuous matter.[9]

Local Narratives of Work and Community

When the first few thousand people came to Hagaz from Sudan under the official repatriation program in 1994, a project operated jointly between the Government of Eritrea and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), they were allocated plots for housing at the northern edge of a small but growing town. By 1996 the pipes were installed to pump underground water from beneath the seasonal river bed, and the road was tarred that ran through town to link the Eritrean capital with Sudan. By the time I began my research in 2004, there were nearly 18,000 people in Hagaz, which had grown to administratively incorporate three villages to the north. The population of Hagaz was made up of diverse groups of local "stayees" and return refugees who settled in Hagaz both spontaneously and under the official repatriation scheme.[10] Most of the original inhabitants of the region were Blin and Tigre, both Muslim and Christian. Although many of the returnees were also originally from sur-

rounding areas, nearly every other Eritrean ethnic group was represented in the current population, particularly a number of Tigrinya residents who had chosen Hagaz as the resettlement site closest to the highlands.[11]

The community took shape through a municipal zoning project that was to become a model for other Eritrean communities in the context of postconflict development planning. The stayees who came from the northern villages had lost farm and grazing land through rezoning that allocated land for refugee resettlement and urban expansion. Returnees gained this housing land if they were registered and returned under the organized repatriation program—coming back on their own initiative risked losing access to limited land allotments.[12] This process constituted regimes of spatial disciplining informed by idealized notions of modern urban and agricultural development that valued sedentarization, individual titles to houses (all land being national property), and the rationalized zoning of housing and productive activities.[13] Consequently, the informal homes of some of the oldest settlers, many of whom had been forced to relocate to Hagaz by Ethiopian administrators in the 1970s and 80s, were slotted for relocation—from the cacophony of conjoining compounds, tall palm trees, trails, and huts to regimented plots at the southern outskirts of town, a large area nearly bare of vegetation and spotted with few concrete houses between the markers for roads and compounds that have yet to be built. The old settlement currently occupied by these community members stretches along the seasonal river, on land that was rezoned for the expansion of irrigated garden plots. Other parts of the old settlement, adjoining the center market area, have been rezoned in the anticipation of modern houses that would one day be constructed by "returnees"—Eritreans living abroad in the diaspora. In the typology through which the experience of return takes shape, "return refugees" occupied a category quite distinct from "returnees," and were granted land at the northern outskirts of town—an area commonly referred to as "the refugee camp," shortened to *measker* in Tigrinya.[14] *Measker* lay separated from the rest of town by a dry river bed, across which only one electrical line extended to a single wealthier household to form an island of light in an otherwise darkened conglomeration of cement buildings, huts, and shelters.

None of the returnees were allocated farmland, though some had access to ancestral land in their father's villages, and others entered into rental arrangements with local farmers, which I address below.[15] Local rain-fed farms were typically planted with pearl millet and sorghum, with occasional groundnut production. Wealthier community members were able to rent irrigated plots along the dry river bed, where they grew produce for the local market, usually citrus fruit and vegetables such as onions, okra, and a spicy green known locally as [illegible]

plots of land had been allotted to commercial farmers who typically grew onions, and were at that point diversifying into citrus fruits and animal feed.[16] Although they may not have had access to farmland, most community members reared poultry and/or some livestock, particularly goats that shared grazing resources with surrounding villages. Recent years of drought have heavily impacted farmers and those practicing animal husbandry—increasing the difficulties that people experience with deepening poverty in a climate of inflation, economic stagnation, loss of labor through conscription, and underemployment.

Returning to Abdella and Idris: we sat on low stools outside Abdella's hut. Looking south, past the patchwork of crops and beyond a dry sand floodplain, we saw the houses of the return refugees, people they described alternately as "strangers" and "brothers" as they talked about the changes in their lives and landscape. I asked them how *wofara* happened in their community. Both men shook their heads. First Idris explained that communal work was still important for weeding, because most people lacked the capacity to hire workers. Then Abdella described how communal work was stifled not by poverty, but by the loss of kinship and community networks brought about by conscription and national service: "We the old people are here to do the communal work, to help each other. The people with money can hire workers. Otherwise, there is no communal work as such—at least at this time, because the youth died in the battlefield, while those alive are still at the front." Farmers from a neighboring village corroborated these sentiments, one of whom stated of communal agricultural work: "There is almost none. In the past people had a lot of camels and oxen, so they helped the poor people. Now everyone is the same, so you can say there is no *wofara*."

When we returned to the subject of cultivation, these men explained that their capacity to produce food has declined through loss of labor, land, and fertility. Abdella told me, "At this time, we farm every piece of land, but in the past, we had a lot of land and would fallow it for one or two years. Besides, the best land was where Hagaz settlers were allocated housing. This land is dead." In the depiction of lost fertility, and literally, lost land, people crafted claims to place at the same time that they described an erosion of youth from the soil and from the village community. In the farmers' descriptions, this loss of fertility became entangled with a loss of village-level solidarity and autonomy—in contrast to the memory of previous times, when people were not only able to practice communal work, but were able to "prepare our food here, rear our cattle here. It wasn't like now."

Past times, however, also denoted the ways in which farming became [illegible] political act during the Eritrean struggle. Area villagers were

forcibly relocated to Hagaz by the Ethiopian military in order to drain the countryside of support for Eritrean fighters. Many farmers described their displacement and their struggles to produce food in the context of colonial occupation and violence. For example:

> Idris: They told us, warned us, to come close to the Ethiopian flag.
>
> Abdella: Even though we moved to towns, we were able to farm our lands, by some means or another.
>
> Idris: We used to come to our farm during the night, hiding ourselves from the Ethiopians. Then we would pick our crops and fill the sacks. Then we would go to the river and dig a pit to hide our sacks of crops. If they found the crops they would burn them. We were living unsecured. We passed a very hectic and unsecured life. We were in a bad and threatening situation. But what to do? We didn't leave our land though.

These stories were corroborated by the narratives of men and women forcibly relocated to Hagaz during the conflict but who had remained in town, many of them still maintaining familial farmland outside of town. Some however, stressed the inability of people to produce food during periods of intensified conflict and forced resettlement. In the experience of rural agrarian production, the loss of people due to the conscription under current policies recalled earlier periods of forced migration and conscription. One older farmer who had relocated to Hagaz explained: "The drought appeared when the Derg set its foot to Eritrea. So people fled away. Their animals were destroyed. The younger joined the field. People got fewer and fewer, so it is natural that the work will get harder and harder until they stop working." Current agricultural practices exist in a markedly different context—where farmers and other community members described the daily security and freedom from the bouts of violence that had permeated life during years of Ethiopian rule. However, as farming at times took the shape of active resistance to state repression during colonial times in the oral history accounts of villagers around Hagaz, today, these productive practices have become a means by which people place themselves within and remove themselves from the state and its projects of mandatory labor in agrarian development; village and kinship-based subsistence practices, they suggest, are not equivalent with food or labor provided by the state.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the attenuation of the farmers' abilities to maintain practices vital to local communities and landscapes, they maintained expectations about the role of the state—especially its accountability in providing fertilizers and tractor service. At the same time, however, they identified the state's lack of capacity to provide the means for people to craft secure livelihoods for themselves through [illegible]

histories of working the land, traveling with cattle, or accessing markets now cut off by closed, patrolled borders. Two different kinds of mobility are implicated in this context: traditional mobile livelihoods that involved the diversification of production and mobility in search of seasonal resources, and migration out of necessity in the face of collapsed production and the monetarization of farm inputs—particularly in the form of tractors that have become critical replacements for lost labor of humans and livestock.[17] However, mobility and employment outside of national service and other state jobs have been severely curtailed by government policies that restrict the spaces where many groups of people may legally work or travel. As Abdella asserted: "First of all we need peace and security. If there is peace, we can go wherever there are natural resources. We will work hard and eat. We can work with our hands." Now however, at a time when proper work has been constrained, mobility in search of wage labor has become fraught with danger, mostly due to state policies restricting mobility and private sector employment opportunities in the context of conscription and the constant threat of renewed warfare. Abdella continued: "Now, the farmers are searching for manual work by going far from their villages. In the towns they get money so they can hire tractors to farm their land. Some of them return with some amount of money, while others get lost. They disappear. So the people are risking their lives."

These restrictions on agrarian production and pastoralism, along with a slimmed space (both politically and economically) for earning the subsidies provided by wage labor, are entwined with deep ambiguities over the modernization of agriculture in the context of state repression. Consequently, not only do *wofara* activities exist in contrast to mandatory *ma'atot* programs, they are also contrasted to mechanized labor. For example, numerous farmers in the area expressed a desire for equitable access to the few tractors available to plough land before planting. Many however, described the disadvantages of relying on tractor service: it was difficult for some to secure timely access in order to plant when desired, and it was often difficult to find the money to pay for tractor service—particularly in the context of escalating fuel prices. Also, many farmers indicated that the scarcity of oxen and labor forced them to rely on tractor services that were less desirable on stony soil than these traditional forms of plowing that "cut the land as desired": "the oxen cuts the land until the land turns to furrows that can contain water. But the land plowed with tractors never draws water. The water floats over the land and flows away." This statement also refers to the practice of *goso*, or replowing the land by oxen after the crops have sprouted in order to create the furrows necessary to hold rainwater after the brief but violent downpours. Ironically, the few tractors

available in the area were leased from commercial fa ne- tractors were not available around Hagaz. However, of mechanization was often described by farmers a state policies of agrarian development along with the tions that force farmers to rely on tractor service. Consequently, cases, mechanized farming was described to me as a vehicle for deepening a crafted dependency on the state. When I was traveling with a Hagaz resident to his home village late in the summer, we paused our bicycles by a vista of lush fields, some thick with sorghum and pearl millet, others fallowed and filled with tall wild grasses. People farm out of a hope for the future, and out of a sense of tradition, he told me. Then he speculated that grain would soon be threshed by state machines, paid for by the people. "Why not do it traditionally?" I asked. "The people have no choice," he replied. "The youth are all in the military. They don't have the power to do it themselves. It makes them more dependent on the government."

Despite the challenges facing rural producers, Idris was firm about wanting his children to continue farming the land, acknowledging how change is inevitable, but that practices of production should continue. Abdella's response was more ambiguous. He cast his open hand towards the fields around us. "What are they going to farm on this land? Nothing! There is no future here," he insisted. "We have no hope from this land." I asked if he would relocate, but he explained that he would remain here, in this place. There are good things about it: it is better for the animals, the air is fresh, it is close to the brush where they harvest wood. "Maybe things can change," he said finally, "the place will fill with grass. The wild plants will return."

The desire to sustain subsistence livelihoods, and pass them on to future generations, raises a critical point of disjuncture between discourses of food security and what Marc Edelman (2005) describes as "food sovereignty"—the ability of rural producers to have some power over the means of production and markets, rather than simply being provided with adequate access to food commodities. Accordingly, this notion of the power to work the land through continuity of generations casts a valuation for a traditional, lineage-based land tenure system against the state's land nationalization. Also, it suggests how local idioms and practices of work drive social processes in ways that draw on the hope and optimism of community building—things that escape biopolitical mechanisms. Consequently, these farmers contrasted state claims on labor with a focus on autonomy and collective good, however attenuated—suggesting the possibility of rebuilding particular kinds of social ties and reclaiming or rejuvenating land through infusing it with meaningful labor.

Return Refugees and Community Labor in Hagaz

These statements on the atrophy of *wofara* by local farmers paralleled the common claim of people residing in town, particularly among the returnees living in the main part of Hagaz, who contrasted *wofara* among Eritrean communities in Sudan with Hagaz. "Sudan was better," claimed one returnee, "Maybe you work in a small shop, you sell tea, or you work on a farm. Here, there is no work, so no one is working together." Often return refugees, none of whom were allocated farmland under the repatriation scheme, critiqued the inability of people to support themselves through wage labor in light of both inflation and state policies that have closed off spaces for independent business—a condition that inhibits locally initiated community labor.

Although they discussed the lack of salaried work opportunities in the country, return refugees often claimed both community labor and a general "love of work" as a part of their identity as Eritreans in a way that differed from narratives of local farmers. Returnees living in *Measker* (mostly those who returned under the organized repatriation scheme) generally agreed that *wofara* was less common in other areas of town, but that this practice persisted in their neighborhood through a strong sense of cooperation, compassion, and community identity unique to those who shared the experience of exile. A community leader from *Meaşker*, explained, "This cooperative work is mostly done here [in *Measker*] in this time. For example, in other parts of town you don't see much *wofara*. But these people, they work it cooperatively. These people were refugees in Sudan, so they have passed a miserable life, and now here they came organized, so these are one people." As Sorensen (2000) suggests, *wofara* persisted as a means of crafting community sustainability and cohesion across ethnic groups among Eritreans living in Sudan, even as the particular kinds of work done through *wofara* shifted in relation to local conditions that shaped people's livelihood strategies. In addition to the type of labor performed, practices of *wofara* in Sudan and in resettlement replicated and expanded forms of social reciprocity traditionally rooted in village kinship relations (Tronvoll 1998). This observation points to the suppleness of traditional self-help practices as they are mobilized in the search for continuity and cohesion. In the context of resettlement to Hagaz where returnees were often only able to access farmland through rental or sharecropping relations with local farmers, *wofara* generally shifted from agrarian labor to domestic work (particularly with housing infrastructure). However, in marked difference to these earlier studies, *wofara* as it was practiced in Hagaz became a means of building and maintaining solidarity between particular

communities in Eritrea. Consequently, *wofara* became an important medium of both social integration and differentiation between community members. As I describe below, returnees mobilized this practice to distinguish themselves as belonging to a particular civic community that valued local labor and self-help, at times in contrast to local landowners.

Other returnees who repatriated outside of official aid channels and so live outside *Measker*—many of them still waiting for housing land—agreed on the unique nature of "the camp," and contrasted it with other Hagaz neighborhoods. "Yes, the people in the refugee camp help each other. They are compassionate," claimed Kedija, a Tigre woman who came originally from the Semhar region in the northeast of the country, where she said *wofara* was also practiced with a spirit of "brotherhood." She fanned the charcoal under a clay *jebena*, or traditional coffee pot, as we sat beneath the overhanging thatched eaves of her hut, sheltering from the breathless afternoon sun. Kedija described people in the Hagaz center as more divided: "If you have a problem, if you are able to take care of yourself, that is OK. Some people say I am from Semhar, so they don't help me. They help the people to whom they belong. If this is so, how can they agree? How does unity come? Can you sympathize with each other?" Kedija also explained that she turned to other returnees in *Measker* for socializing, rather than her immediate neighbors. "While we were in Sudan, we used to have common interests. We, the people who emigrated together, consider ourselves as if we were created from the same womb."

One returnee woman living in *Measker* drew on idioms of work and labor to distinguish the capabilities and identities of return refugees during the construction and modernization of Hagaz. The returnees were distinctly hardworking, she suggested, and it was due to their labor that Hagaz grew from a village of huts into a town of proper cement brick homes. She explained that it was also due to this labor that return refugees crafted a claim to place: "The refugees or the people who came from Sudan are more hardworking than the people who were here. When we came here there were only huts with no brick compounds. But when we arrived here, we developed Hagaz. We came here and lived in places wherever the *Beni Amer* didn't live.[18] The people who came from Sudan want to live in a nice house, in a nice place. They are very hardworking. But the people who were here are not active. If the worst comes, we can build a single house with bricks. We came here thinking it is our country."

Returnees described themselves as skilled and willing to work, but unable to support themselves through wage labor in light of inflation, conscription, and state policies that close off spaces for independent business. A returnee man from *Measker* explained: "It is because there is no work, people are coming for this aid ... so if there will be any sort of work, peo-

ple will not take aid ... people came from Sudan with artisan skills. People who are coming to Hagaz bring with them skills they wouldn't have obtained here. Some are computer literate, some are mechanics. In fact, exile is a great teacher. To be a refugee means to learn."

While the farmers described their loss of sovereignty over local land and production through their inability to properly work the soil and practice traditional forms of *wofara*, many return refugees reappropriated the category of *refugee* and linked it to other national identifiers, such as "love of work" and sacrifice for the country. In doing so, they made claims of belonging to a national territory through a shared past of suffering during the conflict, and to the land within Hagaz they have worked to develop. However, the contrast between *wofara* and *ma'atot* remained salient in ways that exposed the meanings and significance of locally initiated *wofara* labor in building and maintaining social relationships through supporting individuals and households in the community. A divorced mother of four, Brikty was raising her children in *Measker* after having returned to Hagaz in 2001. She was quick to assert that the government, particularly in its manifestations as the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), does not do *wofara*, which by definition arises from, and is practiced by, the local people.[19] Brikty reaffirmed the "feeling of oneness" of people in *Measker* and the ways this sentiment was reinforced through *wofara*, when she would call her neighbors to help her repair her home in exchange for some food or beer, and they "would work well together." However, she also stressed that the people of *Measker* are unique not only in local solidarity performed through *wofara*, but also in performing citizenship duties such as *ma'atot*: "They are very active in whatever the government says. People from *Measker* go to meetings first, and are not late in doing what the government wants. They want to be first in everything."

Brikty, like many of the returnees I spoke with, demonstrated complex, sometimes contradictory notions of belonging. The sentiment of active citizenship according to the demands of the state and local administration was similar to the claims of belonging expressed through the physical development of Hagaz, the modernization of the community via the returnees' skills, solidarity, and love of work. However returnees may re-knit collectivities and build community, they do so both within and outside of official state mediums—participating in *ma'atot*, but drawing on *wofara* as a distinct and important practice that reaffirms local social relationships through reciprocity and asserts the particular solidarity of refugees that was fostered in the experience of exile and return. In doing so, lines of belonging and identity are redrawn in ways that do not mesh seamlessly with the biopolitical project of nationalizing citizens and territory through

labor on the land. On the one hand, a notion of national labor becomes a means to emphasize differences between people in the community—particularly between returnees and stayees. On the other hand, while return refugee families animate the practice of *wofara* in "the camp," their critique of the lack of salaried work collides jarringly with the powerful expectations with which they returned to Eritrea regarding their own agency within the project of national development and their efforts to secure individual and family livelihoods in an independent country. These frustrated expectations were expressed in stories of skills and job experiences that people had anticipated using when they returned to Eritrea, eventually to find little foothold in the tight economy, the difficulty accessing farmland, and government restrictions on employment and trade. So certificates of training and past employment from Sudan remained wrapped carefully in plastic and cardboard, to be displayed with a mixture of pride and regret in interviews with a foreign researcher. A growing number of young people from both returnee and stayee families were looking for places where they might have the power to create the kinds of futures they imagine, risking their lives to escape back over the Sudanese border.

Finally, it is important to detail that while most local farmers lacked money to pay for agrarian labor, some did hire returnees from town as well as rent them land—relationships that draw important connections across these community groups. While *wofara* seemed to be spatially specific, occurring between neighbors who may not share kinship, ethnic, or religious commonalities, agrarian labor relations (both paid and in exchange for access to resources such as oxen or rented land) provided a means for people from *Measker* to connect with local farmers. At the time of research, the effect of these relations was to put land in production that otherwise people may not have had the capacity to farm—a situation that many farmers described as a positive contribution to crop production and to their own household incomes.[20] Consequently, in the context of diminished labor under programs of national conscription and service, the presence of return refugees refracted the ambiguities that farmers expressed over changes in their lives and farming practices: alongside modern changes like labor-saving tractors and mills, came a loss of land, social continuity, and local-level autonomy.

Conclusion

In the attempt to follow Hansen and Stepputat's (2005) call for "embedded and emic understandings of what sovereign power really means," it becomes necessary to look at the local effects of

zation of society on agrarian landscapes and food production in Eritrea. More than this, however, it allows us to see that although farmers and return refugees in Hagaz may perform both mandatory national service and *ma'atot* in a simultaneous disciplining and production of the national citizenry and landscape, these community members are never just that.[21] As the stories from Hagaz suggest, the terms along which communities are "repositories" for national values are subject to negotiation. This takes shape in the gaps between the power of the discourse and projects of national/food security, and the realities of people's inability to maintain food sovereignty in local spaces. It also takes shape in the difficulties that return refugees face in building stable livelihoods and communities, even as they may claim national belonging through communal work.

In this context it is helpful to draw from the idea of selective sovereignties developed by D. Moore (2005). There is something seductive about the notion of plural sovereignties, the autonomy of local, traditional places. According to Moore's formulation, however, selective sovereignties, while they may appear to be about preserving the local, are always about negotiating with the translocal in struggles over material and symbolic relations to place. In Hagaz and villages that have been enveloped by the resettlement area, people craft claims to local places through the constant negotiation of nationalist visions around citizenship and the ability or inability to work and create communities. It is through the farmers' reputed withdrawal from *wofara* that they describe the erosion of village-level sovereignty rooted in kinship networks that provide cultural continuity, and rooted in rights to land that has since been partitioned. And it is through the returnees' active animation of *wofara* practices that they claim rights to belonging in a national territory, though it may not be on the terms that they had imagined.

Cederlof and Sivaramakrishnan (2005: 27) argue, "Notions of community pose obstacles to national imaginations, and yet clearly serve as the building blocks for them. Investment in and ambivalence with regard to notions of community, especially regional or local forms of community, are the stuff of contested nature because the definition of nature has turned on defining the associated community." In the case of Eritrea, "contested nature" involves the cultivation of a fertile sovereign nation, where citizens in rural areas fulfill livelihood duties through communal work on national land. However, these kinds of labor—communal, paid, traditional, and supple—refuse to be collapsed, and expose the ways in which the struggle for continuity and order exceeds the slimmed but commanding visions of the state. Biopolitics is a useful lens to analyze the nation-level discourse and agendas in linking subjects to territory, and exposing how militarized agriculture works on the levels of both social and material production.

However, as the youth erodes from soil and communities, and local moral economies are violated, biopolitics as an analytical framework falls short of accounting for the multiple ways that people seek spaces outside of the state's nationalist vision through which they might reinvest the land and community with meaningful labor.

Notes

1. The UN delineated this twenty-five-kilometer zone running the length of the border within Eritrea, although the villages around which the dispute originated in 1998 were granted to Eritrea.
2. I use pseudonyms to protect the identities of the community members who worked with me in Eritrea.
3. Agamben uses the term "bare life" to denote those that lay outside the boundaries of the political community but are subject to the exercise of authority.
4. A number of studies detail the complex entanglement of local and translocal processes surrounding resource use and land claims. Donald Moore's (2005) ethnography on struggles over land in Zimbabwe offers a compelling analysis of the ways in which local resource struggles are also always translocal in that they engage with regional or global sociopolitical relationships and nodes of power. Furthermore, in the context of South Asia, Cederlof and Sivaramakrishnan (2006) propose the concept of "ecological nationalisms" to explore how nature is not only a fixed locus for resource struggles at the local level, but is also often the ground where contested identities are mapped onto struggles for rights mediated by place attachments, and mired in the politically potent language of intimacy, stewardship, and national belonging.
5. Although I lack space to do this here, there is much to be analyzed regarding the contentious relation of the government of Eritrea with international aid and development organizations. See Hayman 2003. For a study on the tumultuous relationship between the government of Eritrea and international organizations involved with resettling refugees after independence, see McSpadden 2000.
6. Pauline Boerma (1999) provides an insightful study of the ways in which memories of deforestation in Eritrea become linked to colonial appropriation and violence in people's narratives, and fuel the government's focus on reconstructing a fertile past landscape that may not have existed to the extent that people describe in their memories of place. In my dissertation, I draw from this research and use it to develop the concept of national environmental imaginaries in order to describe the roles played by people's memories of place and perceptions of environment in current political and moral critiques of governance.
7. For a recent review of land tenure policy in Eritrea and its critics, see Tesfai 2003.
8. In this paper I will continue to use the Tigrinya term *wofara* for the sake of consistency, although the Tigre term *kewa* was often used by Tigre and Blin community members.
9. The only ones who seemed to escape *ma'atot* in Hagaz were those who could claim infirmity, or the very few families wealthy enough not to need food aid.
10. Stayees include landowners from villagers in the area, along with a large number of migrants from other villages both within and outside the immediate region. Many of these settlers were forced to move to Hagaz by the Ethiopian military in efforts to consolidate the rural population for surveillance and

ers. More recent settlers include villagers from drought-affected areas. During the year I lived in Hagaz, nearly ninety households had relocated to the main residential area of town from surrounding villages in search of water and food aid.

11. Aside from returnees, there are a growing number of Tigrinya residents who have relocated to Hagaz in order to participate in commercial farming ventures or in administrative positions, while others have been involuntarily appointed to Hagaz for national service (positions that include teaching, military, etc.).
12. Spontaneously repatriated refugees had variable access to housing land—some were able to gain it with relative ease through the administration, while others reported to me that they had been waiting for years.
13. This process has correlates in other postcolonial African projects of state making and resettlement. For resettlement schemes informed by high modernism and state developmentalism, see Scott 1998. Also useful is Alexander, McGregor, and Ranger's (2000) rich historical and ethnographic treatment of resettlement and state-society relations in Zimbabwe's Shangani Reserve.
14. The difference between "returnee" and "return refugee" was a subject of fierce debate within the Ministry of Land, Water, and Environment—stalling the publication of at least one policy and research document regarding the negative environmental impacts of refugee resettlement. I explore this debate more fully within my dissertation.
15. Other pilot sites included farmland for return refugees as part of the resettlement package. However, Hagaz was denoted as an urban area, and returnees were expected to either work outside the farming profession, access farmland from ancestral villages nearby, or rent land from local farmers.
16. In this chapter, I focus primarily on rain-fed farmers. Commercial farmers were also profoundly impacted by the militarization of agrarian production—an issue addressed in other sections of my dissertation.
17. Stepputat (2001) adopts the term "mobile livelihoods" from Olwig and Sorensen (2001) in order to describe "the social and spatial practices of people involved in migratory movements," and to "lift ... the concept of 'livelihood' out of its locally-bounded context."
18. *Beni Amer:* The name given to the population of related ethnic groups that inhabit the border between Sudanese and the Eritrean lowlands.
19. Officially, NUEYS and NUEW are national organizations that exist independent of the government; however, there are multiple complex relations between them and the state. Most people I talked to in Hagaz linked these groups to the government and the sole ruling party, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ).
20. More empirical studies are needed to determine the ecological impacts of resettlement in lowland areas, including Hagaz. I am currently analyzing GIS data to track changes in land use in the area since independence as one means of assessing shifts in forest and brush resources along with the expansion or contraction of farmland on marginal hillside areas.
21. Simon Turner (2005) analyzes political subjectivities in a Lukole refugee camp in Northern Tanzania, demonstrating that refugees "are constantly working on constructing their own political subjectivities—their own sovereign decisions. In other words, sovereignty is complex and multilayered in the camp as are the means of exercising it."

— Chapter Four —

Human Resource Development and the State

Higher Education in Postrevolutionary Eritrea

Tanja R. Müller

Introduction

Education policy commonly has objectives beyond the area of education, comprising a combination of political, social, economic, and pedagogic concerns (Psacharopoulos 1993; Green 1997). Within revolutionary societies such as Eritrea, education is regarded as an important instrument to promote social change. The rationale behind education as a tool for societal transformation is twofold: the formation of conscious citizens motivated by collective goals, coupled with the transmission of skills necessary to overcome underdevelopment and achieve self-sustaining growth (Arnove 1994; Müller 2004; Pham Minh Hac 1998).

One focus of formal education systems in revolutionary settings thus centers on creating a more just social order (Collins 1987; Müller 2005). At the same time, and in line with developments in other developing and transitional countries, education policy centers on the fulfillment of human resource needs, often stipulated by a national development plan (Buchert 1998). The prototypical example for the success of a strategy to achieve the latter is Singapore (Castells 1992), regarded as a model by the Eritrean leadership (Müller 1998). Other examples include South Korea and Taiwan (Hoogvelt 1997), and on the African continent with varying degrees of success Mauritius, Botswana, Tanzania, and Uganda, among others (Desta Asayehgn 1979; Mkandawire 2001; Kwesiga 2002). Most of the latter can, like Eritrea, be to varying degrees described as

bazi and Taylor 2005; Mkandawire 2001).[1] Castells points out the often-overlooked similarities between revolutionary states and developmental states: in both cases, the state "substitutes itself for society in the definition of societal goals" (Castells 1992: 57). He then argues that in cases where the societal project remains confined to a transformation of the economic order, a developmental state is the outcome, whereas if a fundamental transformation of the social order is also envisaged, one can speak of a revolutionary state.

This distinction is here regarded as rather artificial, as the legitimacy of any developmental state arises from the commitment of its population to the transformation of their social, political, or economic order, a societal project that is not short of being revolutionary. Thus, for a developmental state not simply to be a dictatorship of development requires a political leadership quite comparable to the leadership of revolutionary mass movements, able to provide an ideological framework for state policies that might otherwise demand unpalatable sacrifices. And while, as Hall (1996) rightly points out, consent to the project of the state or the governing elite is not maintained only through ideology, dominant ideas become a "material force" and play an important part in carrying that project into the future.[2]

In the context of this chapter, a developmental state is thus defined as having two components: one ideological and one structural. At the structural level, it "establishes as its principle of legitimacy its ability to promote and sustain development" (Castells 1992: 56). At the ideological level, the governing elite "must be able to establish an 'ideological hegemony', so that its developmental project becomes, in a Gramscian sense a 'hegemonic' project to which key actors in the nation adhere *voluntarily*" (Mkandawire 2001: 290, emphasis added).

The focus here is on the ideological component of the Eritrean developmental project. When looking at postindependence Eritrea, one finds a state whose legitimacy is firmly based on the past and on a ruling elite. The latter, in line with liberation movements in other parts of the globe, employs selective narratives and invents new sets of traditions in order to establish not only an exclusive postindependence legitimacy but equally "the sole authority of one particular agency of social forces" (Melber 2003: xiv–xv; see also Müller 2006b). In this case the authority is the former liberation movement, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), renamed the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ).

In addition, strong notions of inclusion or exclusion have been developed as key factors in shaping national as well as personal identities. What has been called "personal nationalism" (McCrone 1998: 40), understood as an active process of affirmation of one's national identity, is of prime importance in a nationalist revolutionary culture like Eritrea's.

This affirmation is often based on militaristic rituals, as more generally within the hegemonic Eritrean narrative the nation and the state appear as one. The material form of this oneness is the mass-conscripted national army. It is here where the synthesis between the citizen and the state is experienced concretely and any distinction between state and civil society disappears. Most visible in this agenda is the mobilization of youth within the nationwide national service campaign that was introduced in 1995. The campaign then consisted of six months of military training plus one year of civilian reconstruction activities, and enjoyed great popularity at the time. And while the ideological underpinnings stressed predominately the service aspects, the military element always remained a crucial part.[3]

Therefore, those who define themselves outside the military collective are ultimately regarded as betraying the nation (see for example Assefaw Bariagaber 2006b). It should not be forgotten, as Buck-Morss argues, that the nation-state and revolutionary classes can trace their origin to the same historical event: the French Revolution, which invented on the one hand the utopian discourse of equality and of the "people" as sovereign, but also produced arguably the two most catastrophic forms of modern political life: revolutionary terror and mass-conscripted, nationalist war (Buck-Morss 2000; see also Arendt 1990). In a country like Eritrea, where 44 percent of the population is below fifteen years of age, those contradictions are bound to come into particularly sharp focus. The majority of the current young generation has no experience of the armed struggle that lies at the foundation of the country's narrative. But they grew up in what can be described as "a moral and political zone of indistinction" where the political is thoroughly embedded into everyday life practices (see Agamben 1998; Müller 2008). At the same time, Eritrea has since 1991 moved from being closed off in a remote corner in the Horn of Africa to being exposed to the wider world and the opportunities this global environment has to offer. This global exposure, together with the disappearance of the (liberation) war that formed part of the thread which held the revolutionary project together, is bound to weaken the ideological hegemony of the political leadership, and questions about the personal versus the communal are bound to be formulated in a new light (see Bernal 2006; Müller 2005).

How, then, does this young generation relate to the hegemonic narrative of the ruling elite, and how is the balancing act of asserting personal and national identities played out in practice among them? To discuss those issues in more detail, the focus here is on young people in higher education, those who are groomed to one day become the new elite and thus carry the torch of the Eritrean revolution into the future. This is also a crucial stage in the process of social reproduction in

of the dominant culture as legitimate (Bourdieu and Passeron 1997). At the same time, whether envisaged as such or not, education opens up avenues for new forms of agency on an individual level and thus acts as what Bourdieu calls a "strategy-generating institution" for personal liberation.

The following draws on data collected between 1998 and 2006 among students at Asmara University and the College at Mai Nefhi.[4] Of particular concern is how the state project as applied to education policies and human resource development initially succeeded at both reinforcing personal nationalism and opening up spaces for personal liberation, but of late has become a tool of oppression. These dynamics, if they are to continue, will not only jeopardize the state's developmental agenda but may lead to the Eritrean polity in its present form becoming unviable.

Education and Human Resource Development until 2001

Similar to other settings where education plays a particularly important role in achieving wider objectives of the state, two factors characterize human resource development policies in Eritrea: a high degree of centralized educational planning accompanied by an integrated approach towards economic development and human capital formation, and considerable emphasis on the social and moral dimension of education.

The education system that emerged in postindependent Eritrea draws heavily on the nationalist "Revolution School" set up in the 1970s by the EPLF in the first liberated areas of the country. At the same time one can find many features that resemble the administration of education under the previous Ethiopian regime. This is not the place to discuss in any detail the exact workings and structures of that system, as the focus here is mainly on tertiary higher education (Müller 2006a, 2006b).

Concerning the latter, the role of higher education within the national human resource development strategy broadly follows the pattern advocated by Thompson and Fogel (1976) for educational development in developing countries, in which higher education is strongly embedded in the national community as a whole instead of being an elitist institution removed from the realities of the majority of the population. The role of the university herein is that of a "developmental university" (Coleman 1994: 334), an institution first and foremost concerned with the "'solution' of the concrete problems of societal development" (Coleman 1994: 334). Such a university sets out to "ensure that the development plans of the university are integrated with or linked to national development plans" (Coleman 1994: 343). This is exactly how Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, former president of the University of Asmara (UoA), used to cite the mission of the

university: "We [the university] should play a leading role in the process of nation-building and social transformation" (Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, interview 13 June 2001).

Within the centralized human resource development planning in Eritrea, this had certain implications for the workings of the university. After having passed the matriculation exam, subjects of study were allocated, and students' personal priorities were given only cursory concern in this process. Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, together with all the ministries, drew up a list in which areas human resources were most urgently needed. Accordingly, it was then decided how many students should be admitted to which departments.[5] For postgraduate studies, the university drew up staff development plans and facilitated sending students abroad for education at the master's or PhD level. In that way it was expected that the country's human resources would be used in the most efficient way. In addition, summer work programs and compulsory university service before graduation, both intended to foster social solidarity, have always been part of the process of higher education.

The success of such a strategy depended largely on a shared vision between the goals of the official policy side, embodied by the government and the university administration on the one hand, and the people, the individual students, on the other. Without such a shared vision, the problem of "brain drain" plaguing many African countries, whose university graduates leave for the industrialized world where salaries are considerably higher, is difficult to avoid.

The Eritrean government claims as one of its major assets that "the culture of governance in Eritrea is the close relationship between the people and the leadership" (Ministry of Education 1999: 3), implying a popular propensity to follow government policy without resistance. And indeed, when looking concretely at the lives of university students in 2001, a majority appeared to be willing to use their educational qualifications not only for individual fulfillment but at least partly to comply with the government's plan for them. The following will discuss possible contradictions that might emerge in the lives of individuals using narrative data collected in multiple in-depth interviews among a group of twenty-nine women students during the academic year 2000–2001.[6]

Human Resource Development versus Personal Aspirations

In the tearoom of the University of Asmara in 2000, one topic surfaced regularly in students' conversations: how to avoid

when students were denied their first choice of subject, they were put into the Secondary School Teachers (SST) department. Equally, many students who studied applied sciences were sent for teaching. The latter was due to the university requiring that most degree programs include four years of academic study and one subsequent year of national service, where students are allocated to a relevant ministry and work for a symbolic salary. Only after students have completed this service year will they graduate.

Students resisted becoming teachers in all sorts of ways. For example, that is why Sultan chose plant science: "When I joined the university, I really wanted to study medicine, but in freshman year my marks were low," she explained. She could have gone for biology and continued in the medical field from there, "but at the college of science they will make you become a teacher." She hated the idea of teaching, so she chose plant science (a subject for which her grade point average (GPA) was enough) "and also some medicine is made of plants, so there is some connection" (Sultan, interview 11 October 2000). In general, when students knew their freshman GPA was too low to join their department of choice, they compromised their aspirations in order to resist becoming teachers.[7]

This overregulation of educational opportunities not only implies a lack of personal choices, but equally a lack of decision-making power over one's future, as Hannah explained:

> We don't have private life. ... Whenever you decide something there are a lot of things you have to consider. ... Even if I get a scholarship ... my going out is not sure. ... Now I can decide minor things, but for the future ... our future is trapped, limited. ... You have to get permission from the government to do whatever you want. ... I mean, sometimes you get scholarship from abroad and the government does not send you there, it is frustrating, but it does not discourage me, I have to try and see what happens. ... I'm hoping things will get better (Hannah, interview 6 November 2000).

This is the other side of a policy that centers strictly on perceived human resource needs of the country. The university in general does not encourage people to get their own scholarships, but wants them to be sent through university channels.

The attitude expressed by Hannah, in which certain drawbacks in one's individual life are accepted as part of what being Eritrean means—an attitude which has been described as an outcome of the EPLF's successful endeavor in forging an Eritrean nation (Ottaway 1999; Schamanek 1998)—surfaces in different ways in the lives of different people.

The story of Mehret, who grew up with the EPLF in the Revolution School and was thus socialized within its culture, demonstrates particularly well the trade-offs potentially faced by young Eritreans at the University of Asmara and how individuals grow to accept them.

Mehret—Child of the Revolution

Mehret was one year old when her parents decided to join the liberation struggle. Her mother took her to the liberated areas, where she grew up first in a children's home and later in the Revolution School. She finished schooling after grade seven and was assigned to teach children in grades one and two. It was only after liberation that Mehret could continue her education while still working as a teacher. She completed secondary schooling successfully in 1995, determined to join the university. After a year of pleading her release from teaching duties with the Ministry of Education—accepting the legitimacy of the ministry's claim on her service—she was finally allowed to join the UoA.

That in itself did not end all the frustrations for Mehret, but it did change her attitude on how to deal with them:

> When I completed my freshman studies I wished to join geology, and I had the grades to join, but I was told I must join this educational faculty. I was not happy. ... At that time, the students in the faculty of education had a meeting with Dr. Wolde-Ab, there were many who didn't like this faculty and they were asking him questions. ... In one of his speeches he said, 'You know you are intending to study something and you are finding obstacles, at this time what we are doing is we are preparing for the needs of the country, not for the needs of you, so if you are ... brilliant enough and if you are strong, you don't become successful through finding all your needs but it's how do you become successful even if there are obstacles, that's what makes you strong people' ... and that influenced me, I can say. ... Most of the time I was rigid: I am going to do this, this, and this; if not, I become frustrated, but from then onward I want to say 'I'm going to do my best and work as hard as I can in the area which I am exposed to, then I am going to try as successful as I can to continue with the chances I can get'. ... so that's the way which I prefer to go (Mehret, interview 13 October 2000).

Mehret, while accepting the institutional plan for her life, developed an approach to overcome her own powerlessness and used it to find individual fulfillment. This approach still guided her life in later years. Mehret had for a long time dreamed of continuing her studies in biology, preferably genetics. But while preparing to go abroad for further study, she explained why she thought differently about it later:

> I have to complete my master's, and hopefully also PhD some day ... but I want to come back and live and work here in my country, do something useful, so there is no point for me going to study genetics, as I can do my research abroad, that's fine, but when I am back here, there are no facilities for this kind of research, I can only read things from books and search the internet, that is a bit pointless and boring. ... So I had to change my focus, I will have to do something where I can carry out research activities here, so I will try to do my

master's in something related to educational biology or early childhood development, as this is a problem in Eritrea (Mehret, interview 26 May 2001).

How Mehret and her fellow students come to accept the obstacles put into their way seems on the face of it to vindicate the EPLF's claim about the "closeness between the leadership and the people"; or observations like Ottaway's that within the Eritrean population, despite their frustrations people are willing to go along with much interference into their personal lives as long as it helps the overall development of the country (Ottaway 1999). But even at the time this did not mean that the student generation would largely follow the script written by the political leadership for their future lives, as the following section will reveal.

"I want a good job": Ambitions for an Uncertain Future

When asked about the long-term future, the women in this study all came up with very personal visions of what they were trying to achieve. Three issues featured prominently in these visions: the well-being of one's (extended) family; the continuation of further studies or alternatively starting a business; and, eventually, marriage and having a family of one's own.

A majority of participants mentioned as one of their first priorities after graduation to help their families financially. Sarah put it like this: "When I finish my BA degree, I will work for at least two years and help my parents. ... After that, maybe I will decide for myself" (Sarah, interview 18 October 2000). The same is true for Esther: "I always feel so [responsible for my family], even it forced me to have good results in my [studies] ... because that is the only way to join a good job then help my parents, after that I then go to my own life" (Esther, interview 08 November 2000).

Together with supporting one's family financially, being able to continue their education or start their own business was the prime ambition for the majority of participants. Simret was a law graduate. Her father was a successful consultant in this field, and she wanted to follow in his footsteps: "I don't want anything, also not marriage, to interfere into my career life. ... I like to work and besides, I do not want to be dependent on anyone, I like to be dependent on myself only" (Simret, interview 04 December 2000). Samira, a graduate in accounting and management, was equally determined to have her own business. She said, "I do not mind doing [university] service for free for one or two years, I feel I want to give my country something," indicating her acceptance of the obligation to contribute to the communal good. But after that, "I want to continue with my business plans, probably start some import-export business" (Samira, interview 31 October 2000). This strong vision of an individual

a rather vague notion of the "good job" they wish to have in the future, which is regarded very much as being related to the possibility of continuing their education.

Rahel described the need to continue one's education: "Everyone is getting the BA degree ... so you have to be different, that's master's degree or PhD degree" (Rahel, interview 24 October 2000). Similar concerns are voiced by Esther, who says, "because nowadays, everybody is trying to have MA, then I will be the lower one ... and therefore, I have to have MA as well" (Esther, interview 08 November 2000). Even with all the restrictions that may lie ahead, all women said they only wanted to go abroad for education but not to live there, "especially when you are educated, you have a very good life here" (Hannah, interview 06 November 2000).

In that sense, the Eritrean human resource development strategy in 2000 seemed to have been successful in building up human capital in Eritrea. Even though many of the students interviewed might not work in the particular field in which they were educated in the future, creating certain areas of shortages in human capital for some time to come, and despite their very individualist, material, careerist, and conventional ambitions for the future, the participants were united by the fact that they saw their future connected to their country. They accepted their social obligation to serve the state and wider community.

Very few participants took their individual career ambitions or advancement as far as openly considering leaving for the diaspora. In contrast, many felt they wanted to contribute something to the development of Eritrea, as the examples of Almaz and Rahel show. Almaz stated, "I want to return to Eritrea. ... There are no [people in my field] in Eritrea, I mean what is the benefit of this university training students and no one is returning back ... so I want to really work here in Eritrea" (Almaz, interview 22 November 2000). In a similar spirit, Rahel wanted to return after having completed her postgraduate education abroad:

> I will come back. ... Other than bringing Indian teachers to this university, you can do it yourself, and if you get educated and you came here you ... are getting some kind of growth and development in your life, also if you came here you help your country to develop ... both of you [you and your country] are getting advantage (Rahel, interview 24 October 2000).

Among those interviewed in 2000, only two felt they would eventually like to leave Eritrea: Azieb and Rihab. Whereas Azieb cited notions of personal freedom from cultural restrictions as her motivation to leave, freedom for Rihab was strongly related to the political:

> I don't know if our government is going to give us a chance to participate in

forever, there must be elections, but I don't know, is it going to happen? ... I don't want to live here for my kids in the future, I want them to grow up more easy. ... Maybe Eritrea is going to be good, it's a matter of time. ... Maybe if some change, or a miracle happens to Eritrea I would like to stay here (Rihab, interview 26 April 2001).

This last statement points to the fact that while in terms of human capital development the centralized development strategy of the Eritrean government in the area of formal education might be regarded as successful, the implications might be different for social solidarity within Eritrean society. Personal freedom has been the main issue in these minority statements. Resistance to restrictions of that freedom, moreover, were bound to become more important in the future, as the Eritrean government failed to offer its people the opportunities they desired. The ultimate resistance for a university student to the government's plan and with it a rejection of nationalist social solidarity is shown by leaving the country and depriving it of the benefits the investment in a student's education should have brought. The results of a survey carried out among an equal number of male and female students in spring 2001 revealed a propensity towards precisely this dynamic.

Among the respondents of the 2001 survey, 80 out of a total of 357 aspired to work and live abroad. While this is still a relatively low number, it was cause for concern. Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, the university president, felt at the time that while on the one hand graduates leaving the country had not yet been a problem, it might soon become one: "I think before the conflict with the Ethiopians [referring to the 1998–2000 Eritreo-Ethiopian border war], the return rate was more than 85 percent. ... Now after the

Table 4.1 | Survey Respondents by Long-Term Plans and Sex (Multiple Responses Possible)

	No. of students		
In "ten years time" I want to:	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*
Work in academia	17	45	62
Work for the government	29	35	64
Work in the private sector	85	96	181
Work abroad	34	46	80
Stay at home and have a family of my own	3	11	14
Have a family and continue my career	80	55	135
Missing	1	1	n/a

conflict [started], lots of people have tried to find excuses, so our return rate has been lower than fifty [percent]" (Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, interview 13 June 2001).[8]

When the survey was conducted, only one student answered an open question at the end by writing: "I don't care about Eritrea, but I can only dream about myself, because the condition of Eritrea does not allow my dreams; I have a vision, we will be winners at last and the constitution of Eritrea will permit participation and citizenship ... and the dictatorial government of Eritrea is not to stay for ever; death for EPLF and PFDJ." Although probably few students would formulate their opinion in such harsh words, many are frustrated and alienated—a process that started in the summer of 2001, when the potentially oppressive features of Eritrea as a "hard" state came into the open.[9]

The Trip to "the Coastal Areas"

I left Eritrea on the day after the university graduation ceremony in July 2001 and returned in November of the same year. On the campus of the University of Asmara, one could sense a subtle change in the atmosphere among students. What had happened during the summer?[10]

Not many students were willing to talk apart from one sentence that seemingly summed it all up: "I have been to the coastal areas." It referred to an event that proved to be a turning point. Students were quite suddenly required to do an additional round of national service during the summer months, justified by the still-difficult situation after the end of the fighting phase in the 1998–2000 Eritreo-Ethiopian war.

Many of their families experienced financial hardship as a result of the latest war and had banked on their sons and daughters earning some money during the summer months. Thus, very few students appeared on the announced day to board the buses that would take them to their station of duty. In a separate development, the leader of a students' union, which had been formed independently from the official, government-sanctioned body that dealt with youth-issues, was arrested and accused of initiating unrest.

All students were then requested to gather at the national stadium and threatened with "grave consequences" should they fail to do so. Others were rounded up in their dormitories. The whole batch was then driven to Wi'a in the Danakil desert, an inhospitable place at the best of times and therefore unbearable in the middle of the summer heat. After two students died from heat-related conditions, the remaining students were transferred to Ghela'elo, a place of similar climatic conditions

and with better facilities. During their stay, students were told that they were there to make their contribution to the nation and that they had to help in road construction activities. While some students did indeed help to collect stones for road building, it was clear to everybody that this trip was the punishment for not obeying the first order to report for service.

The incident ended with a measure that brings the oppressive dimension of the Eritrean polity into clear focus: to be allowed to return, all students had to sign a letter in which they apologized for their behavior and stated that they had been arrogant and failed to serve their people willingly. In sharp contrast to the usual workings of Eritrean policy measures that target the collectivity of the nation or particular groups like youth, here the individual was singled out. Each student had to sign individually and it was made clear that those who did not comply would not be allowed to return to Asmara in the foreseeable future. Quite literally, the choice was between giving in to the state's agenda or risking one's well-being by remaining indefinitely in a geographical location that puts one's health at risk.

Back in Asmara and with the beginning of the new academic year, things appeared normal on the surface. But for those who had been sent to "the coastal areas" this was a rupture that would not be forgotten easily. The father of one of the students summed up a more general feeling: "How can you send young people, who are only exposed to the highland climate, down there at a time when even many people who normally live there leave because of the heat?" he demanded. But most of all, many students were just deeply hurt. Just over a year before, when the war with Ethiopia had resulted in a military confrontation that saw large parts of Eritrea overrun by Ethiopian troops, those same students had refused to continue their studies and demanded to be sent to help defend their country at the frontline. And now they were regarded as dissidents at best and traitors to the nation at worst.

This is not to suggest that the government meant to cause serious bodily harm, and the unfortunate death of two students was more an accident than anything else. Equally, there was no systematic machinery of oppression in place. To the contrary, the soldiers whose task it was to guard and cater for the students reportedly felt sorry for their plight and treated them well. But nobody questioned the rationale behind the official interpretation that what was happening was a just punishment for an action of betrayal.

Tellingly, only very few of their lecturers at university raised their voices in support of the students. One lecturer who did so passed away shortly afterward. Even though his death was due to natural causes, many students believed that "they," as the political leadership suddenly became referred to almost everywhere, killed him because he spoke on the stu-

Looking at the wider picture, the episode narrated above might seem of no great importance. But it exemplifies the dynamics that unfold once a hegemonic project loses its attraction and developmental politics turn pernicious in order to retain control. The events in the coastal areas must also be put into the wider context of continuing war and unrest.

Until 1998, when the border war with Ethiopia erupted—the fighting phase of which ended with a number of international agreements in 2000—people gave the government the benefit of the doubt. The predominant sentiment was expressed in sentences such as: "They have been fighting for thirty years, give them a chance to run the country now." The PFDJ-led government thus commanded significant social and political capital, and in spite of their frustrations, most of Eritrea's citizens were prepared to go along with interferences into their lives as long as it helped the overall development of the country (Hirt 2000; Ottaway 1999).

The war and its conduct, however, have proved to be transformative events, a "rupture" for the postindependence polity. Not only could the political leadership at times not guarantee the state's territorial integrity, but equally, many of the gains made in terms of development were put into jeopardy. At the same time a lively debate emerged, even within the ruling party, about the government's hegemony and national configuration. This was not to last, however, and was followed swiftly by a government crackdown. The private press was closed, journalists were arrested, and a group of eleven members of the Central Committee of the party, all EPLF veterans, were put into incommunicado detention where they remain to this day. The oppressive features of Eritrea as a "hard" state were there for all to see (Assefaw Bariagaber 2006b; Müller 2006b).

In line with the general observation that education is one of the essential terrains of social reproduction, it was here that many of the consequences were felt most severely. To quell future dissent before it started, the government imposed structural changes within the education system aimed at enforcing loyalty. Mechanisms to ensure the latter have been modeled on the military structures that characterized the liberation movement prior to Eritrean independence. At the same time, however, the hidden dimension of any oppressive project had begun to emerge: the generative challenge from within.[11]

(Further) Militarization of Formal Education

The events during the summer of 2001 proved to be a catalyst for the militarization of formal education, especially at its higher levels. Starting with the academic year 2002–2003, all students in the last grade of secondary

schooling, newly introduced as grade twelve, were required to transfer to Sawa, a remote location in the western lowlands of the country, which doubles as the military training camp for national service. Countrywide matriculation exams are also held in Sawa. Those who pass those exams are no longer transferred to Asmara University, but are sent to a newly built campus in Mai Nefhi to complete their freshman year. The Eritrean Institute of Technology at Mai Nefhi, as it is officially known, is located only a few kilometers south of Asmara. But built on an open field site, it feels isolated and remote. Run jointly by an academic vice director and an army colonel, Mai Nefhi in many ways resembles more a military camp than a place of higher learning. Students, at least in theory, need permission to leave the campus, and in private conversations it is often referred to as "the camp."

In line with the rationale behind those changes, at the time of writing the University of Asmara, at least on paper an institution where academic freedom was respected, was being dissolved. Its faculties were in the process of being relocated to different locations all over the country. The official justification for those measures was a move towards greater decentralization of higher education. In practice, the different faculties are to be governed by different branches of the respective ministries in the future and are thus exposed to direct political control and interference.

Indeed, with hindsight the dissolution of the University of Asmara follows a long-term plan devised even before the events in the summer of 2001, but those events have considerably speeded up its implementation (see also Müller 2008). It was in the following year that no students were sent to the university for their freshman studies for the first time. From then onwards, slowly but steadily the foundations were laid to tighten the screw around the university and dissolve it. This process went hand in hand with ever more power being concentrated in the Office of the President, for whom the university was never an institution that merited much attention, but rather a place where youth were potentially being alienated from core nationalist and political values (see Reid 2005). Following this logic, national service requirements for university students have been tightened in different ways from 2002 onwards. Different batches of students were called to Sawa for additional military training instead of being sent to do their year of expertise-related service, as part of a general government drive to reinforce discipline and patriotic commitment among the student community. Even when sent to work in their professions, service rarely ended after one year as originally stipulated, but often continued indefinitely.

In this overall environment of state control, the only options for resis- [illegible] more and more young

people admit to in private conversations, "to get out," to leave the country for a life in the diaspora.

The latter has been made almost impossible for many people of national service age in general and students in particular, who are commonly denied exit visas to leave the country. But as in any oppressive environment, counterdynamics do emerge. On the one hand, many youth find their "way out," be it via Sudan or even Ethiopia, or for women by marrying a foreign national, or in asking for asylum abroad in the course of an official visit. But also those who stay have found ways to create a niche for themselves. Students who in the past would have been sent abroad for further studies now work for the few international nongovernmental organizations still operating in the country. They earn by local standards a high salary, even though they hardly ever work in any position that carries responsibility in line with their education. Not all of those have fulfilled their service requirements and are thus living under threat of being picked up by the military police. But then, many have also developed strategies of their own to evade being caught (Reid 2005; author's observations 2006).

Similar dynamics were observed in 2006 among the students at Mai Nefhi.[12] In informal talks with different groups of students it became clear that the majority rejected "being kept here, of course it would be better to be in Asmara", but developed their own way of dealing with it. Some went home to Asmara every weekend, which is forbidden officially, but can still be arranged. They were well equipped with mobile phones and other gadgets that allow them to keep in touch with their peers and make arrangements to meet their friends. When asked about their future aspirations, the common answer was to do as well as they could in their education and then get "a job in the private sector and have a good life." The statement of one student sums up a general feeling: "Of course we would like to have a choice, what we study, where, but we don't have a choice, we are forced to study here. ... It should not be like this, but we will make the best of it for our future when we are out of here".[13]

Implicit in this statement, and in many other private conversations the author held in Eritrea during her most recent visit in 2006, is a turn towards private and individual fulfillment. This undermines one of the very foundations of Eritrea as a developmental state, the propensity towards social solidarity.

Concluding Remarks

On the surface, one could make the case that the consolidation process of Eritrea as a developmental state has been a success. It has been argued

that one fundamental task of such consolidation is control over population movements (Herbst 1990). If judged by these criteria, the control by the Eritrean government over the movements of its citizens is indeed remarkable, in terms of control over emigration, the "exit-option," as well as in terms of internal population movements. This control extends in different ways to the Eritrean diaspora, who for example by and large pay a two percent tax of their income to the Eritrean state. Most remarkable, however, is that this control has not much weakened despite increasing economic hardship, which has exposed the failure of the "promise of development" that commonly serves to legitimize any postrevolutionary leadership (Fouad Makki 1996).

But, looking into the future, questions need to be raised about the viability of the Eritrean developmental project. The gulf between those running the Eritrean polity, mostly members of the generation of ex-fighters, and the ambitions of younger population groups, especially those with some degree of higher education, seem to the observer to widen by the day (see also Reid 2005). The modern ambitions that have been created by the Eritrean revolution can, in today's globalized world, not be suppressed indefinitely by sending people to Sawa or denying them exit visas. Sawa used to be the place where the torch of the armed struggle and the defense of the country's sovereignty were passed on militarily and ideologically to a next generation willing to carry that torch. In the Eritrea of today, Sawa first and foremost symbolizes state control over the lives of its youth, a control that is increasingly being rejected and evaded. The Eritrean political elite has been described as frozen by its own image of the past, the key parameters of which are sacrifice, struggle, and hardship (Reid 2005). An informant put it to the author like this in 2002: "Sacrifice, that is what those ex-fighters always stress, not the positive, that we reached our freedom, or future goals, what determines their mindset is sacrifice."[14]

Indeed, the primary objective of the present leadership seems to be to mold the next generation in its own image through hardship and sacrifice. That goes as far as the belief that the 1998–2000 war with Ethiopia was not so much a disaster that should and could have been avoided, but a more superior way to teach the coming generation the ethos of the armed struggle than any school curriculum. The Eritrean case thus serves as another example for the forceful repetition of past structures of domination inherent in every revolution (Erdheim 1991).

But the Eritrean political entity, in spite of having shown its oppressive features of late, depends on the propensity of its members to willingly serve the common good to succeed. Eritrea's most valuable asset after liberation has been the degree of social solidarity within the nation that has

led to impressive achievements in terms of human development in general and education and human resource development in particular. This developmental agenda is bound to fail in the future as the measures taken in the course of the militarization of formal education not only damage national development, but perhaps more crucially erode the country's human resource development strategy.

It is simply not sustainable in the long term that the country's brightest graduates, instead of helping build capacity within the country, work in clerical positions for international nongovernmental organizations or spend their time devising "exit" strategies in terms of how to best leave the country. As has been pointed out elsewhere, good human resource development creates loyalty and commitment. In Eritrea, not only are civil servant salaries much lower than those in the private sector, but, following its agenda of absolute control over society, the majority of senior positions are held by individuals who more often than not lack professional expertise but are loyal to the political project of the government (Mussie Tessema and Soeters 2006).

While until quite recently many youth have been willing to work for the state for a comparatively low salary and would have been proud to do so, it now seems that the official bureaucracy will become even less able to grasp the opportunities that would connect Eritrea with the global economy. But frustration cannot only be felt on the part of young people. As a very committed member of the teaching staff at the University of Asmara said in a private conversation: "Why are we teaching here if there is no perspective for the future?"[15]

Ultimately, it could be a renewed war with Ethiopia that draws the population to rally behind the national project again, but such an outcome would be disastrous.

For the moment, the future of the Eritrean developmental project that started out so brightly looks bleak. As long as the only avenues for living resistance are inward migration or the increasingly difficult route into exile, the political leadership will lose more and more of its legitimacy, leading in turn to more oppressive politics. The Eritrean polity is at present experiencing a lesson history should have taught its leaders not least during the time of the Ethiopian occupation (see Rokkan 1975): you cannot reduce both the "exit" option and the option to "voice" opposition without endangering the balance of the whole political system.

Notes

1. While it has been argued that Eritrea lacked the resources to function in real terms as a developmental state, it had the aspirations to do so. And indeed, Eritrea did achieve a considerable amount of success in terms of "modernizing development." For further discussion see Bernal 2004; Fengler 2001; Luckham 2002.
2. For different conceptualizations of the developmental state, ranging from entities primarily concerned with national economic enhancement to facilitators of state-market synergies, see for example Pempel 1999; Wade 1990.
3. According to Minister of Defense General Sibhat Efrem speaking in various public appearances, National Service "means nurturing youths to be active and morally sound citizens." The National Service Proclamation came into force in 1994 and stipulates that all citizens and permanent residents of the State of Eritrea between the age of eighteen and forty are required to perform six months of military training and one year in other (reconstruction) activities. Usually, students are required to go to Sawa, the training camp, after they have sat for the matriculation exam or quit schooling. The first batch of national service recruits in July 1994 comprised 10,000 youth mainly from Asmara; accounts of their service were widely broadcast on radio and TV and made many young people register for the second batch. Eventually, 30,000 youth had registered, while Sawa could only accommodate a maximum number of 20,000 at any one time (see also Müller 2005).
4. The author has visited Eritrea on a regular basis since 1996. The academic year 2000–2001 she spent at the University of Asmara and during that time conducted in-depth interviews and a wider survey. She has returned for shorter research visits from November 2001 to January 2002, in December 2003, in May 2004, and in October/November 2006.
5. At the time UoA offered bachelor's degrees in the following areas: Agriculture and Aquatic Sciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Business and Economics, Science, Health Science, and Education.
6. The data presented here was collected as part of a wider research project on Eritrean elite women published in Müller (2005). All names were changed for reasons of confidentiality.
7. The latter was deeply unpopular for a combination of reasons, the most important being low salaries and continued direct interference by the government into their future professional lives. As shall be seen in more detail later, the vast majority of university graduates at the time aspired to work in the private sector.
8. It should be noted that Dr. Wolde-Ab has since left the country as a consequence of his own difficulties in working with the political leadership.
9. On state "hardness" see Forrest (1988).
10. The following account is based on field notes from conversations and observations from November 2001 to January 2002.
11. It should be pointed out here that as early as 1991 the first cautious attempts were made by different social actors to redefine the space for individual action. The reaction of the political leadership in all those cases followed a similar pattern: different degrees of repression, at times combined with measures to accommodate those demands that were deemed justified (for a more detailed discussion see Müller 2008). But it took the 1998–2000 war with Ethiopia to not only produce intensive political debate and open dissent within the higher echelons of the PFDJ, but to make an increasing number of ordinary citizens question the hegemonic project more generally.
12. The following is based on informal conversations with students in Mai Nefhi in October 2006.

13. The author had planned to readminister parts of the questionnaire on future aspirations she used in 2001 to the current students at Mai Nefhi in 2006. She could not obtain permission to do so, as doing any kind of academic research in Eritrea was very difficult at the time of writing. Having said that, however, in contrast to experiences during previous visits in 2004 and 2005, when many people were afraid to talk openly, people now voiced their criticism of government policy openly and many did not care whether that might have consequences for their future. The level of frustration was simply too great.
14. Male professional, thirty-eight years of age, working in the education sector, field notes January 2002.
15. Interview January 2002.

makes their individual lifestyle symbolic, typical, and collective as well as exclusive towards possible alternatives. Giddens and Bourdieu emphasized the role of daily social practice, leading to Bourdieu's notion of "habitus." But also in the academic tradition of the German-speaking countries ideas of milieu and lifestyle (*Lebensstil*) have been discussed in classical as well as more recent publications: see Hartmann 2002, Schulze 2000, Meyer 1997, Hildenbrand et al. 1984 concerning the field of current sociology, Girtler 2004, Werthmann 1997, and Fuest 1996 in the field of social anthropology. Simmel (2001) and Weber also used the term *Lebensstil*, the latter to describe Protestant ethics (1947), while Husserl (1986) and Schütz and Luckmann (1975) developed a notion of "*Lebenswelt*" (life-world).

21. "Evangelicals face Neighborhood 'Spying'. More Arrests," *Compass Direct*, 13 February 2004. This information has been confirmed by Hussein, who remembered similar "techniques" from his time in the EPLF.
22. Eritrean People's Liberation Front. 1982. "The Eritrean Revolution and the World Revolution." *Vanguard*, January 1973. In *Selected Articles From EPLF Publications (1973–1980)*, 30–35. Rome: Eritrean People's Liberation Front; "Banality of Soviet Propaganda," *Eritrea Now*, October 1979, ibid. 162–68.
23. Hamid Idris Awate, whose group attacked an Ethiopian police unit at Amba Adal in September 1961, thus "started" the armed struggle and led to the formation of the Eritrean Liberation Front and became Eritrea's "national hero," but is better described as the local leader of armed bandits, fighting and looting in his own interest (cf. Treiber 2007a). The early ELF predominantly fought the urban and clandestine Eritrean Liberation Movement (*mahber shewate*, "cell of the seven"), formed by radical members of the educated urban middle class (cf. Pool 2001: 36–58).
24. One of the most contested, but also most famous decisions of the EPLF's leadership, finally proving successful, was the strategic retreat to the mountains of Sahel around Naqfa, which is often referred to as the Eritrean long march, leading to the isolated formation and specific nationalist-communitarian socialization of the *yikealo* generation (cf. Tekeste Fekadu 2002; Pool 2001: 98–101; Selahadin Abdela and Treiber 2007). See also Issayas Afeworki 1998.
25. Eritrea's railway was rebuilt between the mid-1990s and 2003 and was promoted as a postindependence symbol of Eritrean steadfastness and the commitment to develop the country. In order to run and maintain the railway, retired staff in their seventies and eighties, who were trained under Italian rule, were reactivated. See J. Fisher, "A ride in the clouds of Eritrea," *BBC News*, 9 July 2003. See also Kolonialwissenschaftliche Neuigkeiten, "Eine Seilbahn für Eritrea," *Koloniale Rundschau*, ed. C. Troll, Leipzig, 1937, 443–44.
26. See for example Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Manifest des Futurismus," 1909, in *Handbuch literarischer Fachbegriffe*, ed. Otto F. Best, Frankfurt/M., 1989: 167–68; Vanguard, "Reportage: Youth are the bearers of the revolutionary torch," June 1977, in *Selected Articles from EPLF Publications*, ed. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front, Rome, Brussels, 1982: 97–102; Mao Tse-Tung, "The Organization of the Youth Movement," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, ed. Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1967: 241–49.

— *Chapter Seven* —

Seeking Asylum in a Transnational Social Field

New Refugees and Struggles for Autonomy and Human Rights

Tricia Redeker Hepner

Contemporary Eritrea is comprised not only of the diverse populations living within the territory of the nation-state but also a diasporic citizenry that makes up an estimated one-quarter to one-third of the total population of the country. While census data has not been recorded for independent Eritrea, and while no reliable figures indicating the actual size or regional breakdown of Eritrean populations worldwide are yet available, an estimated one million people settled outside of Eritrea permanently during the struggle for independence (see Hepner and Conrad 2005). Despite efforts to repatriate several hundred thousand refugees in Sudan back to their home regions in Eritrea following independence (Assefaw Bariagaber 2006a: 135–52), the numbers of those remaining abroad, or seeking safe haven and better living conditions, has not necessarily declined. New waves of refugees have emerged since the 1998–2000 border war with Ethiopia, after which political repression, economic hardship, and the exigencies of militarization described in rich detail throughout this book reached unbearable proportions for younger, educated urbanites in particular. Eritrea's crisis of human rights, well-documented in humanitarian reports, news media, and by Eritreans themselves, is closely related to the government's strategies of development through militarization. In pursuing its agenda largely through coercion, and disproportionately targeting the most skilled and educated sectors of society for ideological and

physical discipline, the government has precipitated nothing short of a hemorrhage of human capital in recent years.

From 2000 to 2004, almost 15,000 applications for asylum were filed by Eritreans worldwide, with more than half of the total in Germany and the United States (see Table 7.1). Recent news reports indicate another 15,000–16,000 people have registered in the Shimelba refugee camp across the Ethiopian border, many of them reportedly young men and women who have fled the *warsay-yikealo* campaign, political repression, and lack of educational and employment opportunities beyond those controlled by the government and military (Heinlein 2007; Malone 2007; McClure 2007; Mongalvy 2007). Additionally, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported a 57 percent increase in asylum applications filed in industrialized countries by Eritreans between 2005 and 2006 alone.[1] These astonishing figures likely represent but a percentage of the total number of Eritreans not only "yearning to join the diaspora" (Gaim Kibreab 2005) but at various stages of risking their lives, and possibly those of their family members left behind, to actually do so. An Eritrean woman in her forties who fled to Sudan after authorities in Eritrea detained her repeatedly due to her employment with an international NGO described the situation in our ongoing email correspondence:

> Here in ——, Sudan, there are so many engineers and contractors who were forced out of Eritrea by the government taking over buildings and projects and arresting them. The flow is continuous, especially in the labor force, like skilled and ordinary masons, plumbers, electricians etc. There are also others with various other professions like water drillers, auto-mechanics etc. ... It is now getting crowded by Eritreans and Ethiopians who either come from Sudan, Uganda as well as from Ethiopia through the border. ... Before few weeks, we heard in a rumor that the government has a plan also to round up all Eritreans in the area. We were shocked, on what the government of Eritrea is doing, always running after us, when they could have worked for the well-being of their own citizens inside the country, to avoid running from them. ... In general the Eritrean populace [in Sudan] is in a very bad state. Their morale is down, even if they are working. They always think of their family back home. Everybody says if I ever collect small money, I will just move to Europe somehow, and if the worst comes to South Africa. And some of them are with the hope that America will pick them from here. Many of them are in Sudan for the second time; when Ethiopia was pillaging and burning villages in the lowlands of Eritrea before 30 years or so and now for second time. I don't know what is to be done.

Like tens or even hundreds of thousands of others, this woman struggles and waits, building connections with those who might somehow help, hoping to find a way to come to the US or Europe. However, those who [illegible] asylum in places like the

United States find themselves contending with unanticipated challenges as well as opportunities. These challenges are related to the ways that new Eritrean refugees arrive into a sociopolitical field defined at once by the prevailing transnational relationships problematically binding the diaspora to the Eritrean party-state, and the exigencies of the asylum process itself in the post–September 11 world. New opportunities are also available within this field, however, as the observable growth in recent years of Eritrean organizations with agendas based on international human rights, as well as nationalist political opposition, attest.

This chapter addresses the ongoing trajectory of Eritrean political struggle as it plays out transnationally between Eritrea proper and its growing and restive diaspora, amid the pressures of asylum policy and procedure, the institutions and strategies of transnational governance and repression first established by the EPLF in the 1970s, and dramatic new contestations over party-state hegemony, popular autonomy, and the substantive meanings of freedom, liberation, and rights. Based on historical and ethnographic research conducted in 2000 and 2001 in both Eritrea and the United States (Hepner 2003, 2005, 2008), as well as current ethnographic work with recent asylum seekers and emergent transnational human rights initiatives in the US, Germany, and South Africa (see Hepner 2007), the chapter suggests that forced migration as a result of militarism and human rights abuses have begun shifting political consciousness away from the exclusivist nationalism promoted, and enforced, by the EPLF/PFDJ. This shift has reinvigorated struggles for sociopolitical autonomy vis-à-vis the totalizing power pursued by the party-state both at home and abroad. It also illuminates the ways in which the EPLF/PFDJ have long pursued a program of "enforced transnationalism" (al-Ali, Black, and Koser 2001) that has made the Eritrean diaspora a key location for the production of centralized state power as well as the site of public contestation and sociopolitical mobilization all but excised from Eritrea proper.

Eritrea as a Transnational Nation-State

Like many developing and postcolonial societies around the world coming to terms with the political-economic, cultural, and technological changes of the global era, the Eritrean nation-state can be described as transnational (see Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994). As such, it is emblematic of the "reconstitution of the concept of the state so that both the nation and the authority of the government it represents extend beyond the state's territorial boundaries and incorporate dispersed populations" (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001: 20). However, Eritrea remains somewhat

unique in that the transnational dynamic has been present since prior to the state's formation; indeed, the nationalist revolution was waged, and independence secured, at least partly by transnational means.

Beginning in the 1960s, refugee and exile populations scattered across the Northeast African region, the Middle East, Europe, and North America played a crucial role in articulating nationalism and garnering resources for both the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF). As the percentage of Eritrea's population outside the country increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s due to refugee flows and UNHCR-assisted resettlement of tens of thousands of people to North America, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere (see Koehn 1991; Tekle Woldemikael 1998), the EPLF developed formal strategies to effectively channel the energies and financial resources of exiles into the front. These included establishing institutions such as chapters of mass organizations and of the EPLF itself, and later included community associations and wings of the front's relief, development, and research organizations. Additionally, policies intended to mirror and strengthen the EPLF's nationalist orientation, as well as its particular structure of command and authority, were propagated among diaspora communities (see Hepner 2005).

Following independence, these institutions were maintained, and new policies introduced, as important components of governance and mechanisms for the management of long-distance nationalism and citizenship. The 1992 Citizenship and Nationality Proclamation, for example, recognized any person born to one Eritrean parent anywhere in the world as a citizen of Eritrea, with the requisite obligations and rights, and the introduction of a 2 percent flat tax on the annual income of adult citizens abroad assured steady financial support directly to the government. Managed by members of PFDJ chapters, embassies, and consulates, these measures and others, such as formal encouragement for other kinds of financial investments like bonds and property sales, have several important implications. First, they have contributed greatly to Eritrea's incipient economy: an estimated 34.4 percent of GDP was comprised of diaspora remittances and investments in 2004 (see Tekie Fessehatzion 2005) Second, they have enabled the government to monitor the degree of compliance with official nationalism and state-led development by keeping tabs on those who express political loyalty through such contributions versus those who do not. Finally, they increase the centralized power of the party-state by establishing leverage over, and often instilling fear in, potentially noncompliant exiles.

Perhaps most importantly, however, the transnational social field forged by the EPLF and its supporters abroad has been a key location for the reproduction of the front's, and now the party-state's, exclusive control over diasporic identities, organizations, and activities. That is, since the 1970s, the EPLF (and later the PFDJ) pursued a program of transnational governance that actively repressed or destroyed efforts of Eritreans abroad to formulate and sustain autonomous organizations or agendas. Part of this trend was related to the fact that, after 1980, a significant portion of diaspora communities in the United States were comprised of former ELF fighters and civilians who had been pushed into Sudan during the intermittent civil war between ELF and EPLF (1972–1980). Many former ELF affiliates and others who were critical of EPLF's nationalist configuration, its political practice, and/or its economic demands struggled to forge organizations that were independent of the front's administration (including ones that could address their needs as refugees in North America), but were actively thwarted by the front. By relying upon EPLF activists in diaspora who helped extend its ideological authority and carry out its policies abroad, and by sending cadres into diaspora locations to bring exiles in line with proper revolutionary ideology and praxis, the EPLF reproduced its own hegemony over the nationalist movement to retain exclusive claims over the resources and identities of Eritreans abroad. Those who resisted EPLF's administrative authority and continued to pursue autonomous institutions, including those who otherwise supported EPLF's efforts towards independence, found themselves subject to isolation within the nationalist movement and accused of betraying or undermining the liberation struggle.

Thus, Eritrea itself was imagined and forged by complex networks of cross-border relationships and material exchanges, as well as through governance institutions and ideological commitments not unlike what EPLF practiced in Eritrea. By the time independence was achieved, the vast majority of Eritrean organizations throughout the world were directly affiliated with EPLF and subject to its policies and control. Few to no Eritrean groups existed that could genuinely claim autonomy from the front, and those that did were often ephemeral and isolated at best within the wider transnational environment. Because EPLF's particular form of homogenizing nationalism mitigated strongly against the development of ties with non-Eritrean groups, or to agendas linked to either supranational or subnational subjectivities, diasporic associational life was exclusively geared towards Eritrea, with communities exhibiting insularism and disintegration vis-à-vis their societies of settlement. Moreover, these communities themselves were marked by dramatic conflicts and power struggles among those who acted as agents of the front and new party-state, versus those who advocated autonomous or opposition organizations and alternative visions of nationalism or nation building. These conflicts were often expressed in a bewildering mix of revolutionary-era language, postrevolutionary calls for "reconciliation," and debates over democratization.[2]

The ongoing presence of the party-state among diaspora communities in the US and elsewhere has also meant that the current repression experienced by those in Eritrea continues to be felt by those who have left the territory behind. It is not uncommon for organizations and individuals who articulate a critical political stance to receive threats from the government or to find themselves being photographed, videotaped, or otherwise surveilled by PFDJ party members (Conrad 2005, 2006; Hepner 2007, 2008). Thus, one of the party-state's objectives appears to be preventing the formation of an effective transnational civil society that may challenge its ideological and administrative power, and which represents, among other things, a conduit for the pressures of globalization (Hepner 2007, 2008). Relatedly, the characteristics of those seeking asylum in the US suggest that it is precisely those individuals whose identities, opinions, and beliefs are most challenging to the party-state's hegemony and that represent "foreign or external agendas" that are subject to abuses and forced into exile.

"Bare Life" in Eritrea and Exile: Situating the New Refugees

In what is now a nearly classic observation on the refugee under conditions of modernity, Hannah Arendt noted that the plight of those forced outside their territories of origin signaled at once the global triumph of the sovereign nation-state form while highlighting the reduced humanity of those cut adrift from "their" states (Gibney 2004: 2–3; Arendt 1973). Conceiving of refugees as representing "bare life," or those for whom statelessness entailed rightlessness, Arendt critically evoked the Hegelian notion that,

Table 7.1 | Eritrean Asylum Applications, 2000–2004

Year	*Worldwide**	*USA*	*Germany*
2000	1,244	253	251
2001	2,241	220	299
2002	3,884	246	378
2003	4,400	196	556
2004	3,124	193	453

Data source: Migration Policy Institute, http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/asylum.cfm

under conditions of modernity, it is the nation-state that confers human worth and likewise holds the power to reduce humanity to little more than flesh, bones, and breath. Agamben (1998), Harrington (2005), and others have since drawn upon this notion to show how refugees (and asylum seekers as a specific type of refugee) are subject to further biopolitical management by receiving states. Indeed, Agamben observes that "the refugee ... has now become the decisive factor of the modern nation-state by breaking the nexus between human being and citizen" (quoted in Harrington 2005: 442).

In other words, in a world physically divided among nation-states as the most "natural" form of political organization and collectively imagined as such (Malkki 1995b; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), humanity is derived from legal placement or citizenship. When a person's citizenship comes into question as a result of displacement from the nation-state territory, his or her humanity likewise comes into question. Further, when one's own government violates one's humanity through violence, repression, inhumane or unlawful incarceration, disenfranchisement, torture, exile, and so on, the meaningfulness of citizenship vis-à-vis that state falls away. Those who flee such conditions to stake new claims on human rights or citizenship in another state do so not as full, rights-bearing subjects—despite this presupposition in international human rights instruments—but as those already reduced to bare life, the nexus between citizenship and humanity broken (see Gibney 2004).

Thus, the status of "bare life" begins and ends not with the refugee experience itself, but extends both prior to it and after it as well. Abuse and dehumanization by state authorities that occur prior to flight and exile are necessary to make legitimate claims to refugee status under national and international policies and laws, which likewise manage "the refugee" not as a whole person grappling with enormously painful experiences, but as a technical problem to managed and controlled (Malkki 1995; Thieman-Dino and Schecter 2005). The adoption of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees essentially placed states in a position (indeed, obligated them) to reconfer humanity on people dehumanized due to persecution or exile on the basis of nationality, race, religion, political opinion or membership in a social group. It is the biopolitical experience of being rendered "bare life" in one's own nation-state, and then proving as much through the technical, depersonalized asylum process in another, that refugees are in essence *rehumanized* by another nation-state's affirmation of their rights to life and to legal residence or citizenship. New Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers are therefore enmeshed in a complicated and painful cultural, political, and legal situation wherein abuses suffered in Eritrea, rationalized by the party-state as

necessary for the preservation of sovereignty and security—to wit, a "free Eritrea"—are a prerequisite for justifying one's humanity, and thus one's right to reside, in another "free" country.

These issues, and how changes in asylum policy in the US and elsewhere in recent years prolong and intensify the biopolitical experience of being rendered "bare life," as well as shape people's consciousness about legality and rights, will be addressed further in later sections of this chapter. At present, it is necessary to examine the patterned experiences in Eritrea that underpin the reasons for seeking asylum, and the ways in which the Eritrean party-state's deterritorialized, transnational power continues to render asylum seekers vulnerable, as well as inspires their resistance, long after they have departed Eritrea proper.

Bound, Beaten, and Spit Upon: Patterns of Abuse

> I was serving as a teacher in Sawa. ... I told my commander that some of the kids were too young to be serving in the military. My commander told me that my statements were anti-government and anti-Eritrean, and he accused me of being anti-Eritrean. ... A few weeks later I was arrested by military police. They tied my arms and legs behind me and left me in the sun for six or seven hours... I was then placed with ten people in a solid metal box. ... We were only allowed to leave the box twice a day, early in the morning and in the evening. —"Abdu," age twenty-eight
>
> ****
>
> One of the guards led me to a room inside the building. The room was eerily dark and the guard led me into a corner using a flashlight. The smell of urine and stench was unbearable but it took me few minutes to see the silhouette of many inmates sleeping on the floor. I couldn't close my eyes the whole night. At dawn, I could see that room was so crowded and there was a big container at the entrance of the room; apparently it was used as a toilet for inmates. ... The next morning my name was called and I was taken and was kept in solitude for sometime after which two persons in military attire came in. For several hours, I was interrogated and beaten by these two soldiers. I was asked if I was delivering a message to any church or group. I was also asked of any involvement in opposition groups in Europe. ... I was informed to keep everything I went through to myself, and I was made to sign an apology letter addressed "to the government of Eritrea" stating that I was engaged in unlawful acts against my motherland. The officer informed me that the letter I signed is a binding agreement not to talk about politics or take part in any activities not organized by the government. He warned me that he will keep a close eye on me and that breaking the agreement will have serious repercussions on me and my family. He advised me that I was expected to use my knowledge and position to motivate [illegible] the goals of the government rather than engaging myself in unlawful defamatory campaigns against the government. —"Girmai," age thirty-three
>
> ****
>
> The detention center was a high security military prison called Track C. The prison cell was about four meters by four meters and I was held there with 14 other prisoners. It was very dirty. There was a hole in the ground that used as a bathroom. We were not given any blankets and fed a small amount of bread with sauce twice a day. The food was given to us in dirty buckets. One of the other prisoners was about 30 years old and a Jehovah's Witness. Most of the other prisoners told me they had been army officers, and many were in their 30s or 40s. Many had requested to be released from the army or had opposed their superiors and were consequently facing punishment. ... While I was held in this prison, I was tortured about twice a week. For these sessions, I was escorted from the cell by two guards into a separate room that looked like an old kitchen. In this room, two younger guards were armed with wooden sticks. One older officer would ask me questions such as, "Do you know the rules of the military?" Even if I replied "Yes," the guards would beat me with their sticks. They told me over and over again that I had to do anything the government told me to do and that the government did not need educated people. ... Later, I was taken to a military detention camp. ... I also had to go to political education training session for two hours every day with other detained recruits. During these sessions, the military officers told us we had to respect the government and the military. The officers also told us the opposition was evil. —"Philemon," age thirty-one

The statements of recent asylum seekers in the US reveal in wrenching detail the systematic and patterned nature of abuses in Eritrea.[3] Such abuses appear to be common within the context of military service, where they are more easily hidden from public or international view, and under the guise of routine military discipline. Abuses are also closely linked to the party-state's project of self-reliant development through militarization, and its antipathy towards sociocultural or political-economic tendencies that the government views as emblematic of internal social divisions or external political-economic pressures. Internal divisions, including those related to religion, class and educational status, ethnicity or nationality, and political opinion are threatening to official nationalist ideology and authoritarian claims to power. Relatedly, citizens' linkages to "external" or "foreign" agendas or institutions are perceived as compromising independence and national security. Any expression of dissidence—cultural, political, or economic—is not tolerated, especially within the military. Indeed, it is through human rights abuses and other forms of repression that the government seeks to reassert totalizing sovereignty over the whole Eritrean terrain, from the minds and bodies of people themselves to the diasporic locations to which many have gone.

Analyses of a sample of asylum claims filed in the US in recent years suggest a possible correlation between repression by state authorities and a simultaneous shift in social and political consciousness away from the party-state's exclusivist nationalism and militarized approach to development. The government tends to target those individuals and groups who represent not only political opposition, but who also show propensities for identities, values, and relationships oriented towards the "world outside." However, repression by the government, and especially the experiences of forced conscription and labor, detention, and torture, are unsuccessful tools for consolidating national identity and assuring political acquiescence. Rather, repression encourages people to leave the country by any means necessary, and for some, becomes a basis for sociopolitical action once they have joined the diaspora. This may be especially the case for educated urbanites.

Patterns of abuses, and the responses of asylum seekers, are significant for their comprehensive and compounded quality. For example, people who have been persecuted due to their beliefs, practices, and institutional affiliation with "foreign religions" like Pentecostal Christianity may make their religious affiliation the primary basis of their asylum claim, but often indicate that in the process of being imprisoned, beaten, tortured, and/or induced to recant their faith, they developed a political consciousness that ultimately led them to join an opposition group after departure or secretly while still in Eritrea. Similarly, those who claimed to have been abused as a result of speaking out from within the ranks of EPLF/PFDJ tended to become real political dissidents as a result of the government's imputing and punishing of suspected opposition. Finally, most cases in which political opinion is the primary claim suggest that the *warsay-yikealo* program in particular, and especially military service and the harsh forms of "discipline" exacted there, are a trigger for critical consciousness and the search for new ways of defining what national liberation and independence might mean. As the authorities punish conscripts harshly for offenses ranging from owning a contraband Bible to questioning the authority of a superior officer or government official, political critique intensifies and sharpens rather than dissipates. Moreover, political activism in diaspora itself forms an additional dimension of many asylum claims due to the transnational presence of the party-state described earlier. Asylum seekers and others who become active within the transnational public sphere are often personally threatened, but more commonly they are told that their family members in Eritrea will be arrested, forced to pay exorbitant fines, or lose their jobs due to their activism abroad. And indeed this does happen.

Table 7.2 | Categorical Breakdown of 58 Asylum Claims Filed in the US, 2001–2007

Religion Only	*Political Opinion Only*	*Nationality Only (part Ethiopian)*	*Religion and Political Opinion*	*Religion and Nationality*	*Political Opinion and Nationality*
7	25	6	13	2	5

Source: T.R. Hepner, data files

Table 7.2 shows a very simple breakdown of fifty-eight asylum claims in terms of the primary basis on which the claim was filed. However, the table does not reflect the complexity of most people's situations, in whose lives multiple characteristics and histories converge, and through which repression is experienced as a multidimensional assault on one's whole personhood. For instance, the category "political opinion" actually contains many different elements that evoke varied historical moments and lines of fracture in Eritrean history and society. In addition to claims filed by people whose families have long been affiliated with ELF and have maintained an underground allegiance to it over several generations, claims also appear by those who were members of EPLF/PFDJ until targeted for imputed dissidence, usually in the wake of the arrest of the G-15 reformers in 2001, as well as those of the *warsay* generation, who have responded to militarization and repression by joining one of many proliferating opposition or rights-based groups abroad. Other cases are filed by people who worked for international NGOs, foreign embassies, private companies, or the United Nations, and were later targeted by the government for their linkages to "foreign agendas and/or capital."

Similarly, while most religious claims are due to membership in one of the minority faiths banned by the Eritrean government in 2002, and for which people have been harshly punished in both the military and society at large, others continue to be filed by Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs). The small JW religious community was historically persecuted throughout the liberation struggle for adherents' refusal to take up arms according to principles of conscientious objectorship. Today, JWs continue to refuse military service, and as a result experience not only social and political discrimination but deliberate efforts on the part of the government to strip them of both substantive and legal citizenship, effectively rendering them non-persons from the state's perspective.[4] Religious persecution for most Eritreans is difficult to separate from politically motivated abuses, as the government makes little or no distinction between religious and political

dissidence. Maintaining foreign-originated religious beliefs is as much a violation of national security and sovereignty, in the view of authorities, as belonging to a clandestine opposition movement. Indeed, one does often lead to the other, but not because of an inherent link between foreign belief systems and political dissidence, as the party-state would have it. Rather, it is the harsh response of authorities to anything deemed "un-Eritrean" that pushes people to question, and redefine, what national identity, belonging, and governance is all about.

Finally, the category of nationality includes former citizens of Ethiopia or people of mixed Ethiopian-Eritrean heritage who were deported, or whose families were deported, during the border war, and who fear returning to both countries. It also includes Eritreans who lost their Ethiopian citizenship while residing abroad following the border war and may have obtained passports from Eritrea, but whose political opinions, religious beliefs, or cultural attributes make them fearful of returning there. This particular group of asylum seekers faces an especially difficult situation as they are often rendered stateless twice over: first by Ethiopia due to their Eritrean background, and then by Eritrea as a result of their perceived Ethiopianness or other religious, political, and cultural characteristics that suggest that they may not be authentic Eritreans, but rather potential spies for Ethiopia. The propensity of the party-state to charge all imputed dissidents with loyalty or ties to Ethiopia is especially acute when those in question have lived in Ethiopia and held citizenship there, sometimes for generations.

Departing Eritrea proper, however, does not mean that one is beyond either the national terrain or the reach of the government. All Eritreans who migrate abroad are inserted into the transnational social field that conjoins the diaspora and the party-state into a single, if differentiated, entity. Thus, when asylum seekers arrive in the United States, they enter into a vast network of cross-border relationships, institutions, and policies that has long been controlled by EPLF/PFDJ. While marked by conflict since its founding in the 1970s largely due to the tensions among ELF and EPLF political identities and the struggle for popular sociopolitical autonomy vis-à-vis the EPLF/PFDJ, this transnational social field has intensified in recent years as the primary battleground where coercive state power across long distances meets the heightening struggle for democratic praxis and rights among citizens abroad. As the party-state in Eritrea eradicates all social institutions it cannot fully co-opt or control, and removes from the national community or territory people who represent oppositional views or unwelcome aspects of globalization, these re-emerge in the transnational social field that has long comprised part and parcel of Eritrea. [illegible] seekers play an important role in this development.

Experiencing Asylum: Policy, Law, and Rights as Constraint and Consciousness

Seeking asylum is no easy task; it requires ingenuity, courage, resources, emotional and psychological strength, resilience, and patience (see Leach and Mansouri 2004). Anecdotal evidence gathered by new US-based organizations such as the Eritrean Community for Human Rights and Refugee Protection indicate that asylum seekers often traverse a dozen or more countries and must raise more than US$10,000 to shoulder the costs (Yonas Mehari 2007). This suggests that most asylum seekers who make it to the United States are privileged by local standards and/or well connected to friends and relatives abroad who can help support their dangerous journeys. Others who declare asylum do so after they have already been able to come to the US by other means, such as on student visas. The alternatives for their less privileged or unlucky compatriots include languishing in refugee camps across international borders, hoping to be registered and resettled by the UNHCR; fleeing to nearby countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, or Uganda and living there illegally; and attempting to cross the Red Sea or move northwest through Libya, where a boat to Malta may be taken as a way-station to Europe. Many who try do not make it (see Plaut 2007).

The right of asylum, and the obligation of countries not to return asylum seekers to countries where they will be persecuted (*non-refoulement*) has been an important component of international human rights guidelines for refugees since the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. In Germany, the right of asylum was written into Basic Law in 1949; as a result, Germany has accepted more asylum seekers than any other Western industrialized country (Bosswick 2000; Gibney 2004). However, national migration policy changes have steadily eroded guarantees to refugee and asylee rights in countries like Germany and the United States over the past several decades and since 9/11 in particular (Hansen and Gibney 2003; Gibney 2004). Some of these policy changes in the US include a one-year filing deadline and expedited removal practices (HIAS 2005); the increasing incidence of detention and forced deportation of unprocessed or failed asylum seekers (Frelick 2005), often by private firms contracted with the US government; and rendering those who have fought in armed, nonstate (e.g., "terrorist") movements potentially ineligible for asylum (see Mahmood 1992).

Even those who successfully move through the asylum process can find their cases dragging on for months and years. They struggle to find ways to live "normally" while their lives are on hold, feeling vulnerable not only vis-à-vis the US legal system but the transnational Eritrean envi-

ronment as well. Asylum seekers live in paralyzing fear that compatriots loyal to the PFDJ—perhaps even their own relatives—may discover and report that they are filing for asylum, and that loved ones back in Eritrea may suffer the consequences for their "betrayal." Meanwhile, many people must confront the legacies of the abuses they suffered at home, at the hands of a government once idolized for its heroic liberation of the nation. Scarred bodies, deeply injured psyches, loneliness, guilt, and recurring nightmares haunt the survivors of human rights abuses, sometimes for a lifetime (Ortiz 2001). The constant worry about whether the party-state will arrest or levy exorbitant fines on parents, capture and abuse siblings in their stead, or take away employment or property from struggling relatives, is a profoundly heavy weight to shoulder.

In addition to these many constraints, however, seeking asylum may also be a consciousness-raising process that leads to changes in the way Eritreans think of themselves as political and legal subjects. This, in turn, may lead to changes in political behavior within the Eritrean transnational social field. Asylum seekers must articulate their experiences and the social and historical context to American immigration authorities in ways that simultaneously align with international human rights definitions (e.g., that of a refugee), current national migration policy, and the political and cultural predispositions embedded in law and judicial practice. They often do so with the help of attorneys and other advocates who both inform them of their rights and demonstrate how they are defended within a (reasonably) coherent legal framework. This is a striking departure from the Eritrean reality, in which the constitution remains unimplemented and citizens are unable to know and access their rights, and where any appeals to either national law or international human rights norms are either dismissed or manipulated to serve the interests of state power. And while ongoing research and analysis will bring these dynamics into clearer focus, initial findings suggest that asylum procedures require and encourage Eritreans to think of themselves as rights-bearing individuals, often for the first time.[5] Moreover, they enrich the understanding of many Eritreans that human rights principles and laws exist above and beyond national laws, and can provide a means of critiquing and circumventing the hardships introduced by the absence of a legal and judicial system in Eritrea distinct from either government or military and thus capable of defending citizens' rights against the excesses of the state. As a result, people are encouraged to reflect critically on issues of politics, law, and rights not only "back home," but also vis-à-vis the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in countries like the US, and the behavior of the Eritrean party-state within the transnational social field.

The party-state has not been blind to the exigencies of forced migration policy in countries where Eritreans have sought safe haven, and in some cases has tried to manipulate these to punish people who resist the government's transnational authority. The clearest example of this comes from the experiences of Eritrean postgraduate students in South Africa (see Hepner 2008; Daniel Mekonnen and Samuel Abraha 2004). Initially sent to South Africa in 2001 for further study and training by the government of Eritrea under a World Bank-funded program, many of the young people developed critical, activist positions once they were safely abroad. From cities all over South Africa and facilitated by the Internet, they developed a highly sophisticated organization known as the Eritrean Movement for Democratic and Human Rights (EMDHR). EMDHR has criticized the *warsay-yikealo* project, agitated for advances in human and democratic rights in Eritrea, and educated compatriots about principles of nonviolent struggle and political change. In response to EMDHR's formation, the government arranged a visit by President Issayas Afeworki himself and posted an ambassador to South Africa who was made responsible for overseeing the World Bank-funded program as well as monitoring the activities of the students.

As in other countries where Eritrean embassies and consulates have played similar roles, the embassy in South Africa initiated a series of actions intended to crush the autonomous student movement there and silence dissent. In addition to making threatening phone calls and pulling some students' tuition, stipends, and health benefits, the embassy also revoked the passports of at least eight students. It then notified the South African Department of Home Affairs that these Eritreans were in the country illegally (Daniel Mekonnen and Samuel Abraha 2004). Exploiting the already volatile situation facing all immigrants and refugees in South Africa (Handmaker 2001; Klaaren and Ramji 2001; Landau 2004; Nyamnjoh 2006), the Eritrean government essentially asked the Department of Home Affairs to begin deportation proceedings and force the students to return to Eritrea. However, the wider EMDHR organization, which included among its leadership Eritreans trained in human rights law under the auspices of the South African program, was able to intervene successfully on their colleagues' behalf and recast their situation in terms of the South African Bill of Rights and other human rights norms.

This example highlights not only the ways the Eritrean party-state operates transnationally to thwart political resistance and autonomous organizations in diaspora. It also reveals an attempt to wield the constraints of South African migration policy against its own citizens for purposes of repression. But perhaps most significantly, this example shows how Eritrean

citizens abroad leveraged the greater power afforded to them by virtue of being outside Eritrea proper, and that of a more coherent and accountable national and international legal and policy environment, to resist the party-state's impunity and its transnational, authoritarian power.

Transnational Human Rights Initiatives: The Renewed Search for Autonomy and Accountability

Efforts to forge and retain popular autonomy from below, and to assert party-state hegemony from above, have been an important part of Eritrea's unfolding transnational story. Attempts by Eritreans of different persuasions to create organized groups with independent agendas date to the early 1970s, as does the capacity of EPLF/PFDJ to weaken, co-opt, and destroy such efforts (Hepner 2005; Tekle Woldemikael 2005a). And while this dynamic has persisted into the present, the sociopolitical ruptures in Eritrean society that largely coincided with the Ethio-Eritrean border war of 1998–2000 have engendered a structural and ideological shift of possibly great significance.

The increasing authoritarianism of the PFDJ at home; state policies that pursue sovereignty, security, and development through militarization; widespread repression and human rights abuses; and the concomitant spike in new waves of refugees have all converged to precipitate changes in the Eritrean transnational social field. Among these changes are the ways that Eritreans have begun adopting human rights concepts and strategies that connect their organizations and experiences to international institutions, discourses, and identities in new ways. Indeed, this development has little to no precedent in the Eritrean experience, which has long focused on, and fostered, isolationism and exceptionalism as key components of nationalism and sovereign power. Driven by the experience of abuse and asylum, recent refugees have picked up on the ways that human rights discourse and movements connect them to legal and political norms that present genuine possibilities for resistance beyond the nationalist and nation-state framework. In previous decades, the totalizing, transnational capacities of both nationalist ideology and EPLF/PFDJ governance discouraged—indeed, actively prevented—Eritreans from making such connections unless it was clearly in the service of nationalism and under the control of the Front or party-state. Today, Eritreans are exploiting the historic transnational social field, but in novel ways, and with the intention of subverting authoritarianism and redefining the national political environment.

Thus, emergent human rights initiatives signal a structural shift in the transnational social field from one that connects dispersed Eritreans only to one another and the party-state, to one that also connects Eritreans to international and global networks and discourses. As Eritreans "vernacularize" (Merry 2006) human rights concepts to the Eritrean experience, they also genuinely engage with supranational ideas and legal frameworks, inevitably expanding their sense of political subjectivity beyond the confines of a narrow nationalism. As this trajectory develops, moreover, we might expect that Eritreans develop critical new insights on the history of the independence struggle, including the ELF-EPLF civil war and relations with Ethiopia, in ways that help all parties move beyond conflict, alienation, and chronic violence. As anthropologists and others working in the field of human rights have observed in many contexts, specific engagements with international human rights concepts and instruments often precipitate important cultural and political shifts that ultimately help societies confront, and resolve, their legacies of violence (Afflitto 2000; An-Na'im 1992; Sanford 2003).

While the appearance of Eritrean rights-based initiatives and activism in the transnational social field is certainly cause for hope in an otherwise bleak landscape, there are reasons to be cautious as well. The historical evidence to date shows that Eritrean organizational life has been weak, fragmented, and compromised by both party-state interference as well as internal political struggles among contending opposition forces. Indeed, some of the most conscious and critical young Eritreans I have met in recent years have refused to join any organization, regardless of its platform, because of the near-impossibility of retaining autonomy from either the government or from the existing opposition parties. Attempting to develop a nonpartisan, postnationalist human rights platform in a well-established transnational social field is a radical departure from previous patterns of political behavior. Not only are organizations subject to interference, but Eritrean people themselves also continue to work out the legacies of a proud tradition of self-reliance developed over the course of the long struggle for independence. The ethic of self-reliance, at once a great strength and also a great liability (as the party-state's behavior has shown), tends to discourage Eritreans from making the kinds of connections to non-Eritrean institutions that might provide sustenance and insulation from the interference of the party-state or other political bodies and help rights-based initiatives to flourish. Even this may be in the process of changing, however, as emergent rights-based initiatives build new linkages with international rights organizations and humanitarian agencies that handle refugee issues. Thus, from seeking asylum to establishing

rights-based initiatives in diaspora, new shifts are observable in both the individual subjectivities of men and women, as well as structurally within the transnational social field.

Conclusion

The experiences of new Eritrean refugees, whether they remain stranded in camps or declare asylum on foreign soil, are intensely biopolitical ones. From forced conscription and detention to dislocation and dehumanization in both Eritrea and exile, the lives of these men and women illustrate how state projects—from militarism to forced migration policy—are actively engaged in the breaking and remaking of humanity. These experiences are linked directly to the Eritrean party-state's quest for development and sovereignty locally and transnationally, and the national and international policies that structure the treatment of "people out of place." Each of these dimensions is also intensely biopolitical, overseeing the shifts that Eritrean people undergo from bare life and back again. However, amid the many ways that nation-states manage human life in ways beyond the control of individual men and women, we nonetheless glimpse striking examples of agency, determination, and resistance. The emergence of organized rights-based initiatives among transnational Eritreans is one such example, as are the critical reflections articulated by those who possess the courage to speak out against abuses suffered by themselves and their compatriots. These are genuine efforts, it seems, to reclaim liberation, freedom, and rights as long ago promised, but not yet delivered.

Notes

1. "Eritrea Exodus Gathers Speed." News24, 30 August 2007. http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_2174545,00.html. Accessed 30 August 2007.
2. My forthcoming monograph, *Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors, and Exiles: Political Conflict in Eritrea and the Diaspora* (University of Pennsylvania Press), documents these developments from 1970 to the present.
3. Analysis in this section is based on the broad patterns exhibited in over one hundred asylum cases filed since 2001, fifty-eight of which have been analyzed for these purposes. The excerpts from asylum statements are drawn from actual cases with the informed consent of asylum seekers and their attorneys, if applicable.
4. A 1994 directive expelled Jehovah's Witnesses from government employment and excluded them from government services, including basic ones such as obtaining legal documents like birth or death certificates, visas, or passports, or denying them business permits and the right to buy or sell property. In 1995 the Minister of Internal Affairs stated that JWs "lost their right to citizenship because they refused to accept the Government of Eritrea and the laws," and added that "they will not have the rights equivalent to any other citizens" (Amnesty International 2005: 7; Hepner and Hepner, forthcoming).
5. Connection e.V., a German NGO affiliated with both War Resisters International and the Frankfurt-based Eritrean Anti-militarism Initiative, which was founded by Eritrean asylum seekers, quoted one person thus: "It is a new experience for me that there are groups which are engaged with the issues of CO [conscientious objectorship] and advocate against war. ... As a soldier I would have never thought that this was possible. In Eritrea you cannot even talk about it. ... Here I learned that resistance is possible" (EAI/C.e.V. 2004, German edition; trans. by B. Conrad).