

**THE OROMO NATIONAL QUESTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
INTER-STATE RELATIONS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA**

**BY
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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE
STUDIES OF THE ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF THE MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



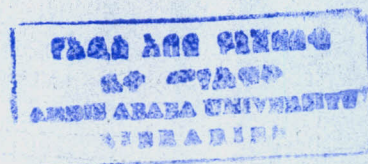
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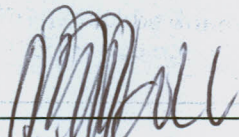
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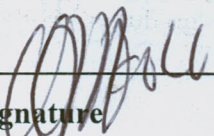
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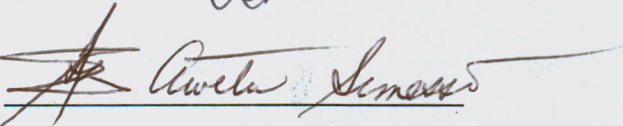
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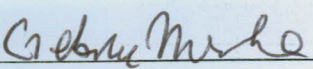
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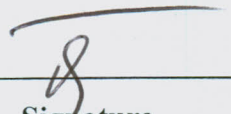
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Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank Dr. Merera Gudina, my thesis advisor, from the very outset for his personal interest to advise me (owing to disagreement made with my ex-advisor) on the Oromo issue and later for providing me with intellectual and constructive comments to accomplish this thesis.

Secondly, I would like to extend my thanks to such lecturers from Addis Ababa University as Fedha Negesse and Dessalegn Fufa for their moral encouragement and proofreading the thesis, there are also others such as Fetene R and Bekele G who deserve this too. Demissie Ferdisa, my intimate classmate, also contributed a lot to the completion of this thesis by reading, commenting and the like. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Asafa Jalata (Toronto University) and Dr. Aneesa Kassam (Durham University) who sent me some relevant materials for the thesis fueling my effort to do the thesis. Regarding materials, contribution of Defar Bekele and Eyob Keno should never be disregarded.

Others are Alemu Merera (provided me with Lab top), Berihun Legesse, Abbebe Lamessa, Feyisa Regassa, Alemayehu Dhuguma, Samuel Assefa, Fekede Terefe, Dereje Mosisa, Asfaw Angasu should deserve special thanks who had usually been with me with their moral support to be successful in this thesis and the study as well. My thanks should further extend to my brothers such as Abdissa Dessa (his special advice during uncertain conditions), Geremew Lamessa (particularly his usual attempts to provide me with conducive working environment with any possible means), Anchalu Yadeta, Akewak Yadeta, Alemu Negeri, Gadise Yadeta for their moral and other supports to effectively do the study in general. Temesgen Beyene, Yedetea Gebosho, Ageru Nemera, Bekila Beyene, Asfaw Negeri also did the same thing.

Lastly but importantly, it may not be exaggerated if I forward my unreserved thanks to Kasech Asfaw (secretary from Adama University), with whom I have already decided to lead my future life. Without any reservation she was assisting me not only with all the writing materials for the study but also with typesetting and printing out the thesis. At the end, I am also grateful to Addis Ababa University in general and College of Social Science and Department of Political Science and International relations in particular for financial and other material support. Similarly, I would like to thank Queens' College and its community members for their moral and material support to my study, particularly Fekirte (Dean Secretary) for her printing out some parts of the thesis, Tigist, Ingida, Tolera.

List of Acronyms

BPLM — Benishangul People's Liberation Movement
EIJ/SM — Eritrean Islamic Jihad/Salvation Movement
EPLF — Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF — Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP — Ethiopian Peoples Revolution Party
EU — European Union
ICG — International Crisis Group
IMF — International Monetary Fund
IRIN — Investors Relations Information Network
NDRP — National Democratic Revolution Program
NDA — National Democratic Alliance
NIF — National Islamic Front
OFD — Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement
OLA — Oromo Liberation Army
ONC — Oromo National Congress
OLF — Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF — Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO — Oromo People's Democratic Organization
ORA — Oromo Relief Association
OSG — Oromo Support Group
PDOs — People's Democratic Organizations
RRA — Rahawan Resistance Army
SALF — Somali Abbo Liberation Front
SSLM — Southern Sudanese Liberation Movement
SPLA/M — Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
TGE — Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF — Tigray People's Liberation Front
UIC — Union of Islamic Courts
UN  United Nations
UNHCR — United Nations Human Rights Commissions for Refugees
US — United States
WSLF — Western Somalia Liberation Front
WB — World Bank

Abstract

This study is about the problem of the Oromo national Question and its implications for inter-state relations in the Horn. From the time of its emergence (1960s) and transformation into national self-determination (1970s) onwards, though there have been changes of different Ethiopian regimes with various political discourses, the Oromo national question has not yet been given proper attention and consequently remained unabated. The regimes have been using the military approach rather than opting constructive solutions for it. Ever since in general and currently in particular, however, the Oromo struggle for national self-determination has been going on – even growing much deeper, wider and stronger. This has remained one of the main sources of the political crisis not only in Ethiopia but also in the Horn region adversely affecting the country's relations with its immediate neighboring states.

The main objective of this study is, therefore, to examine the implications of the Oromo struggle for the Ethiopian relations with the neighbors and the overall region as a whole. To achieve this objective, descriptive method is used to analyze qualitative data gathered from secondary sources. *The results of the analysis seem to suggest*

that the failure to solve the Oromo national question has had negative impact on the Ethiopian relations with its neighbors and fundamentally contributed, and even could continue to do so, to the prevalence and worsening of regional peace and instability in the Horn.

On the basis of the findings, it can be concluded that without paying proper attention to and amicably and genuinely addressing the currently acute national question of this single largest nation in Ethiopia, the country could not have cooperative relations with its immediate neighbors and lead the Horn to peace and stability. Finally, to bring this into effect, it is strongly recommended that there should be meaningful democracy in Ethiopia so that the Oromo people as a nation can get a good political environment to decide their future fate by themselves.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The Oromo people are the single largest nation with rich and most fertile land of abundant resources in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa (Holcomb, 1993; Leencoo, 1998a:126). Geo-strategically, they occupy not only the most sizeable portion of the region but also take significant position of greater socio- economic importance to the region (Hamdesa, 1991; ONC, 1996:9).

Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Oromo were one of the independent indigenous people to the Horn (Asafa, 1993: 17-18; 2005:30; Mohammed, 1999:128). In every aspect of their life – politically, economically, socially, and culturally – they used to govern themselves by the African egalitarian indigenous institutions called the Gada system (Asmerom, 2000; Gadaa, 1999).

However, toward the end of the 19th c., the Oromo people were conquered and incorporated into the Ethiopian empire state by the Abyssinian forces mainly headed by the Emperor Menelik II. Following this major historical event, particularly with the creation of the modern Ethiopian empire state, the Oromo people lost their independence in every aspects of their life: their territory, resources, history, national and cultural identity (Asafa, 1995:31; Mohammed, 2001:3; Temesgen, 1997:114). From that time on wards, they have endured a continuous socio-economic and cultural exploitation, and national oppression under the successive Ethiopian regimes (Merera, 2003:2-3; Hamdesa, 1991:20).

In reaction to all these forms of domination and exploitation, different forms of resistances emerged in various parts of Oromo land against the exploitative system and the exploiting Ethiopian ruling regimes. Typical of these are the Raya-Azabo revolt (1928-30), the Western Oromo Confederacy (1936), the Bale peasant uprising (1964-70) (Asafa, 2005; Keller, 1995:630; Sorenson, 1998:225). In the early 1960s, with the establishment of the Macha-Tulama Association, the pan-Oromo national identity consciousness and national resistance movement developed (Mohammed, 1996; 1998). As the Imperial regime used military approach towards the development

of the association and their peaceful demand for cultural and economic equality of the Oromo people, the movement transformed into the national question for self-determination since the early 1970s. Particularly, the creation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) with an organized military and political force realized the beginning of the Oromo national struggle for self-determination.

Since then, despite changes of regimes in Ethiopia, the Oromo national question for self-determination has been going on—even growing much deeper, wider and stronger. Such a failure of addressing major problems of the Oromo national question has remained one of the main sources of the political crisis in Ethiopia adversely affecting peace and security not only of the Ethiopian state but also the country's relations with its immediate neighboring states — including Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan. Examining the implications of the Oromo struggle for the Ethiopian relations with such neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa is the imperative that underlies the core of this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Oromo nation is numerically the largest, economically important and geo-strategically significant to the Ethiopian state and the Horn region as well.

Nevertheless, since their conquest and incorporation into the modern Ethiopian empire state, the Oromo nation has suffered severe socio-economic and cultural exploitation and national oppression under the successive Ethiopian regimes. In reaction to all these, the Oromo national question emerged in the 1960s and consolidated in the 1970s. Ever since, despite changes of Ethiopian regimes and governments in Ethiopia, the Oromo national question still continues unabated. For the successive Ethiopian regimes have invariably used military approach instead of peaceful resolution, the Oromo national struggle alarmingly continues. The central tenet of this study, therefore, is to appreciate such a failure to peacefully resolve the Oromo national question in the Ethiopian politics and examine its, actual and potential, implications for the Ethiopian relations with its immediate neighboring states.

This is mainly because of the following points. First and foremost, the Oromo are the single largest nation in Ethiopia and the region, which could give them especial privilege in the politics of the region. Secondly, the Oromo national sentiment is

growing much deeper, stronger and wider. Third, the nature of the inter-state relations between or among states of the Horn is characterized by mutual hostility whereby each neighboring state is known to contribute to the aggravation of one another's domestic conflict rather than the provision of the peaceful environment.

1.3 Research Questions of the Study

The major questions in this study are the following:

- What is/are the Oromo nation and national question in the Ethiopian politics?
- What are some basic and immediate causes of the Oromo national question?
- What are the major implications of the Oromo national struggle for the Ethiopian relations with its immediate neighboring states? How and why?

1.4 Hypothesis of the Study

The failure to peacefully resolve the Oromo national question has serious implications for Ethiopian relations with the immediate neighboring states. If this is to remain unsolved, it is more likely that the problem of the Oromo national question could even worsen the regional stability of the Horn as a whole.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of this study include:

- To understand the Oromo nation and national question in Ethiopian politics.
- *To investigate the underlying and proximate causes of the Oromo national question for self-determination.*
- To assess the major implications of the Oromo national struggle for the inter-state relations of Ethiopia in the Horn region.
- Finally, to contribute to the academic discourse on the Oromo peoples' quest for freedom and democracy, and the implications thereof for Ethiopia and the region.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The Oromo are the single largest nation in Ethiopia that occupy an extensive land mass across country stretching from Djibouti and Somalia to Kenya and Sudan. As such, the struggle of the Oromo has already led Ethiopia to have hostile relations with its neighbors at one point or another. Hence, understanding the nature of the Oromo struggle and its effects on inter-state relations are highly significant both for Ethiopia and the Horn region as a whole.



1.7 Limitation of the Study

For this study has been conducted under several challenges and constraints it may lack quality in organization and in depth of analysis. Among others the inconvenient financial environment enforced the researcher not to spare the due time and concentration for the study. Secondly, with this title at hand, it appeared too difficult to collect needed information, for some individuals and institutions met for sources of information were inhospitable. Especially, in the Oromia regional state, where much sources could have been used for the purpose of this study, an access to any forms of data could be difficult. The other is there are no enough literatures on the Oromo studies for which the researcher has depended only on few available materials and may easily be influenced by their views.

1.8 The Methodology and Method of Data Collection

Methodologically, the study employs descriptive analysis using qualitative data. By applying such an approach, the nature of the Oromo national question and struggle and its implications for the inter-state relations in the region are explained. The study depends on secondary sources that are of qualitative in nature.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into four chapters. The First Chapter is the introductory part, and the Second deals with the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. The Third Chapter treats the concepts and natures of the Oromo nation and national question in Ethiopia. It also explains the causes of the Oromo national question and the responses of the successive Ethiopian regimes towards it. The Oromo national struggle against the continued domination is discussed in the same Chapter.

The Fourth Chapter, which is the core of the study, has dealt with the implications of the Oromo national struggle for Ethiopian relations with its immediate neighboring states in the Horn of Africa. In the end, the conclusion and the bibliography are provided as well.

Chapter Two

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is aimed at two major sets of activities. One is with respect to understanding the working definitions of the key variables principally guiding the whole body of the study. These variables include “nation”, “national question” (i.e., for “self-determination”) and “inter-state relations”. Though the variables, particularly the first two, are subject to various debates on how to provide them with universal conceptual clarities, an attempt has been made to conceptualize them so that the empirical part of the study is better informed.

The second activity is about the theoretical explanation under which one could identify, explain, and hence, understand issues with regard to major causes of “national question” usually in the context of “multination states” and the implications of domestic conflicts for the “inter-state relations” between neighboring states.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Nation, Nationalism and National Question

Conceptualizing Nation

Various scholars in general and social sciences in particular have provided the term “nation” with different and sometimes conflicting definitions as a result of which it lacks obvious scientific (technical) definition (Seton-Watson, 1977:5).

However, it is necessary to conceptualize the term so as to develop a working definition in line with the study in question. To begin with, the term “nation” by itself comes from the Latin word called “*nasci*” which means “to be *born*” (Haywood, 2000:25). According to this, it is a group of people that belong together by birth and/or through familiarly inherited language and culture (*Ibid*; Kellas, 1991:2 the latter cited in Seyoum, 1997b:177).

In the *Dictionary of Modern Politics*, Robertson (1993:331) similarly defined a “nation” as “a body of people who possess some sense of a single communal identity, with a shared historical tradition, with major elements of common culture, and with a substantial proportion of them inhabiting on identifiable geographical unit.” Seen in view of the above few definitions, attempts have been made by those authors to define the “nation” in terms of two characteristics (or markers): namely, objective and subjective ones. While the former include such as language, territory, culture, etc. the latter comprise more of psychological factors.

The problem here is, however, none of them have fully and precisely defined the concept and hence, that leads to make this term a sort of confusion with other terms like “ethnic group”, “state”, etc. This is simply because, on the one hand, if conceptualization of the term “nation” is to be made by those objective and subjective characteristics alone, none of the scholars have independently done so. On the other hand, “nation” may not only be conceptualized in terms of those markers to rightly distinguish it from other terms.

Nevertheless, when one comes to a conceptual definition forwarded by Rourke (1989), it is one that fills the gap emanated from and more of inclusive of the above definitions, and by far relevant for the study. First of all, he has singled out *three factors deserving serious attention for a group of people to qualify for a given nationhood and given a brief explanation for each*. These include, *people of a group must share certain similarities; have the feeling of community; and they must have a kind of separatist tendency, or a desire to be separate from others residing in a state* (1989:113 &140).

When Rourke refers to the shared similarities that people of a group should satisfy to form a nationhood, as their preexisting primordial ties or markers, they must have some common objective characteristics such as *common language, historical experience, culture, common heritage*, etc., that make its people *quite distinct* from others and allow them to identify with one another particularly politically (*Ibid*: 140). Similarly, Heywood (1998: 157-58) and others like Seyoum (1997b:177) also defined a “nation” in terms of this factor as a group of people who *bound together* by one or a

combination of these objective markers such as ethnic origin, language, religion, historical traditions and/or other primordial ties.

The other factor Rourke (1989:140) has taken into account is, owing to their shared similarities on those objective markers, these people should be with the feeling (perception) of oneness that they belong to a community (1989:140). In this sense, it means that the common markers should lead to a *feeling of community*. Those constituting the second factor are sometimes given the name called *subjective markers* of the people (*Ibid*). Other authors rightly argue that people of the group should have such subjective markers as perceptions, shared feelings of belongingness, self-identification and other related psychological factors (Breuilly, 1993:6; Heywood, 1998:159).

The last, third and more important factor may be attributable to the already aforementioned two factors that, finally, the group should be with a certain extent of *desire to be separate*: that is to mean, there should be an urge on the part of the group to either get *regional autonomy* or *political independence* (Rourke, 1989: 141). Other scholars add to this that “*national self-determination*” can be taken as the third factor as a key defining feature of a nation (De-shalit, 1996:909; Smith, 1991; Tishkov, 2000:60). In other words, to bring those objective (primordial) markers and subjective markers into a reality (or make them attainable) in the life of its members, the group (which is to qualify for a nationhood) must have a sense of either wanting at least political autonomy or complete independence.

It is particularly this third factor for Rourke and even for others that can serve as an anomaly and identify an “ethnic” “group” from a “national group” whereby the former can at least hardly have a separatist impulse for which it is named as an ethnic or other sub-cultural group. This is simply to mean, to easily distinguish it from other sub-state groups a “nation” should be entitled to or be with the aspirations for “self-determination” (Goldstein, 2004: 199; Neuberger, 1986:33; Rourke, 1989: 141; 1995:379).

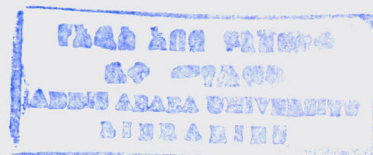
Furthermore, it is in connection with the third factor that a “nation” should undergo an ‘acid test’ of *being willing* to struggle or aspire for and defend its national identity

if there could be any challenges with this regard (Greene, 1964:379). That is simply to mean there should be a search for common security on the part of people of a nation against their common enemy: that could either be historically experienced or perceived to be potential danger to their national identity (Moynihan, 1993: x). So, the third defining feature of a “nation” is very crucial in aspirations of its members for a certain level of freedom.

Although Rourke has failed to include some crucial objective characteristics of a nation such as territory and descent or ancestor that its people are expected to commonly share, his definition is the most relevant for the conceptual working definition in the study.

Accordingly, a nation is a group of people that have some common objective (primordial) markers: such as common language, territory, culture, heritage (tradition), common ancestors (descents) and shared historical experience making them distinct from others; and for which they feel (perceive) that they are belonging to a community as one (sense of oneness); and, finally, in which the people concerned have a certain level of desire to be separate from others in the form of regional autonomy or complete independence. To put this precisely, once people constituting a group share certain *objective marks* (primordial ties) there should be a “psychological force” as *subjective mark*, binding them together (or a feeling of attachment to one another as members of that group) simply by virtue of the former marks they have in common (Rourke, 1989). And, finally, the people should have a sense of wanting political independence or regional autonomy (i.e., “national self-determination”) whose purpose is to make those marks achievable in their life. This is referred to as a nation. And hence, this is not a “state-defined” or “civic nation” but it is ethno-cultural nation (Brubaker, 1996:14&44).

It is in line of this that the study will treat the concept of Oromo nation currently constituting Ethiopian empire- state.



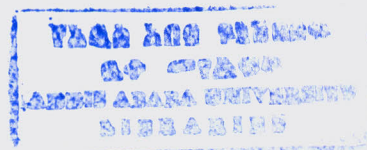
Conceptualizing Nationalism

Before conceptualizing a “national question”, it seems important to be clear with the concept of “nationalism” particularly with reference to how it will be situated in the framework of this study. This is so simply because “nationalism” is strongly related to and presupposing the concept of the nation (Goldstein, 2004; Papp, 1994).

Even if it is a complex phenomenon to easily conceptualize and understand it, for purpose of the study, “nationalism” is “... one of the most important factors in international (inter-state) politics. It defines where we put our primary political loyalty, and that is in the nation-state. Today, the world is divided and defined by nationalism and nation-states” (Rourke, 1989:165). He (Ibid: 143) goes on to say that “... nationalism itself, is a coming together of the concepts of state, nation and nation state.” Similarly, Seyoum (1997b) describes it as an ideology of nations guiding and organizing them in the face of uncertain time and space. Accordingly, “nationalism”, as an organized political movement, is one that is designed to further the alleged aims and interests of nations in which the major one of such aims and interests of the movement is creation of independent nation-state (Seton-Watson, 1977).

When Brubaker builds on this insight, “nationalism presupposes the existence of nations, and expresses their strivings for autonomy and independence [i.e. their quest for “self-determination]” (1996:14). And, he continues to say that it “is a drama in which nations are the key actors” (Ibid). In a similar vein, when Smith (1983: 17) summarizes this, “nationalism” is an ideological movement/struggling for the attainment and maintenance of regional autonomy or political independence on behalf of the people constituting a nation.

Therefore, in view of the above, nationalism can be understood as an ideology of nations that guides and organizes them, and, hence, expresses their strivings (quest) for autonomy or political independence: i.e. for “national self-determination”. This still shows not state or civic nationalism but nation-defined nationalism is the concern of the study.



One important point at issue here is there are two major rival forms of nationalism: notably, ethno-nationalism (nationalism with a nation) and civic, or state-defined nationalism (nationalism without a nation) (Esman, 2004:627; Neuberger, 1986:33-34; Stavenhagen cited in Merera, 2003:29 ;). In this connection, an author is making distinctions between the two issues as “[*Ethno-nationalism (of nation)*] is the movement seeks to build, or consolidate state systems on the basis of pre-existing cultural [*or primordial ties*] of religion, language, ethnic origin etc – by fostering enhanced consciousness of these ties. [*Whereas,*] the civic nationalism movements seek to establish independent states on the basis of common citizenship” (Worsely, 1975:69).

Conceptualizing National Question

It is now the right time to take up with the understanding of “national question” that has strong relationship with nation and nationalism.

As has already been set forth above, people of a nation share some common objective characteristics and have some subjective marks as well. In the case of the latter, they perceive themselves that they belong to the nation for the objective marks they commonly share. Additionally, and more importantly, to make these marks meaningful or bring them into a reality, people of the nation should foster a sense of or have aspirations for regional autonomy or political independence without which that would be next to impossible.

That is to say, people constituting a nation must have a desire to get a right to and/or an opportunity for determining their own government (self-rule) by their consent, or on the basis of their will/interest. This is simply to mean the desire or aspiration for the “national self-determination” (Goldstein, 2004:32; Heatcher, 1994:3, the latter cited in Seyoum ,1997b:181; Jeong, 2000:226; Neuberger, 1986:33). Here, it is this aspiration or the demand for national self-determination what is meant by and should synonymously be used with national question”. In this study, therefore, the concept “national question” will be conceptualized and understood in terms of a quest for “national self-determination”.

To begin with this, Rourke (1995:334) has asserted that, *“one is usually born into a cultural nation for life, but the [multi-nation] state to which one owes allegiance may alter its borders, change its constitution, change its name, even cease to exist through [colonial] conquest or merger.”* When William goes on building on this insight *“we are told, one must belong to a nation, better still to a nation-state. ... a man without a nation is truly lost and to be pitied”* (1994:1, see in Seyoum, 1997b: 178). In light of this one may deal with and understand the question or demand for “national self-determination”. Similarly, an author is on the right track to argue that, *“identity and other types of ... needs or questions [of nations] are more meaningfully applied to understanding the aspirations for [national] self-determination”* (Jeong, 2000:48).

Accordingly, self-determination is an idea strongly related to a desire of people (constituting a nation) for determining their destiny for they have a sense of their own distinctiveness. It is *“the notion that [these people] should govern [themselves] but not be subjected to alien rule...”* (Jeong, 2000:224) This is more explained and acknowledged by the Universal Declaration of United Nations (of 1960) (Jeong, *ibid*: 226) that *“all people are entitled to self-determination by virtue of a right to freely determine their political status and pursue economic, social and cultural development.”* More precisely to Musgrave (1997:2) *“self-determination is understood to occur whenever a people feely determine its [their] own political status.”* And, further on the part of Murswick (1993:22, see Defar, 2005) this political status is including *“the internal status, that means the constitutional status, [...and the other is] above all the external status, [that implies] the international status, particularly the territorial status.”* When the above points are, therefore, condensed with the argument of Nzongola-Nzalaja (1987:65), national self-determination refers to *“at the very least an aspiration [...for] regional autonomy in a multinational state and as a maximal project a commitment to independent nationhood.”*

From definitions forwarded above by some scholars, just for convenience, the question of national self-determination can easily be understood as the desire or aspiration of people of a nation to have a right to and/or an opportunity for determining either internal political status (regional autonomy) or external political status (complete independence) on the basis of their consent or will.

A central issue that needs to be underlined here is that it is the question of national self-determination demanded by a nation that remarkably determines and defines its relations with not only a “multination state” to which it belongs, but also the nature of relations (“inter-state relations”) such state could have with its neighbors, and the region at large.

It is in view of this understanding that the Oromo national question for self-determination will be treated in this study. The next section here under will take up brief discussion of concepts such as “state”, “Multination state”, and “inter-state relations.”

2.2.2 State, Multi-nation State and Inter-state Relations

State and Multi-nation state

In dealing with international relations, the term nation is usually used interchangeably with other terms like “state”, “nation-state”, and “multination state”. Technically, however, they have quite different meanings. With respect to nation, it has already been accomplished in the previous sub-section.

To begin with the concept of a “state”, unlike a nation which is more of cultural term, *“it is a geographically bounded [political and legal] entity governed by a central authority that has the ability to make laws, rules and decisions, and to enforce [... them] within its boundaries”* (Papp, 1994:30). Similarly, it is a *“political organization holding and exercising supreme power through its various agencies over a given people within a given territory, which may include a number of nationalities [nations]”* (Macridis, 1989:238).

In view of these definitions, one can easily understand that all modern states, despite variety of definitions, must be defined in terms of their four essential common elements merely to qualify for a given statehood (Foster and Edington, 1985:79). As such, a modern state is a political organization including such important attributes as a permanent population, a territory, a central/national government and sovereignty (*Ibid*). These are the factors of statehood that help one develop a framework for understanding the nature of the modern state and its position in the environment of “inter-state relations”.

Having done this, by simply taking into account population (especially people constituting a nation) it may be easy to identify a “nation state” from a “multination state”. The population of a state may not be coterminous or congruent with the nation. To Foster and Edington (1985:79), some states contain only single nation, and some others are with two and more than two nations. While the former states are termed as nation-states the latter are given the name called multination states. When Seton-Watson (1977:1) summarizes with this concern briefly:

States can exist without a nation [but perhaps with ethnic or other sub- national groups], or with several nations [i.e. multination states], among their subjects; and a nation can be coterminous with the population of one state [i.e. a nation-state], or be included together with other nations within one state [i.e. still multination state], or be divided between several states [i.e. multistate-nation].

Now, it is clear that a nation-state is the coming together of a nation and a state. This is simply to say that when a nation, constituting multi-nation-state, is seeking and hence achieving political independence on its own account a nation-state is formed, a state consisting only a nation (Meadwell, 1999; Rourke, 1989; Seyoum, 1997b).

Needless to say, a multi-nation state is a state containing several nations within its territorial boundaries. It is a state where the natural boundaries of (stateless) nations are not congruent with its political boundary. Here in multi-nation states there could be a dominant or “core nation” dominating other stateless (the minority)nations, and the latter could be annexed and incorporated in the process of forming such state by the former (Brubaker, 1996:5&44; Papp, 1994:31; Rourke, 1989:142).

In the contemporary world, though one can hardly find a state that is unified both nationally and politically, almost all states are multination states. A crucial point here is that it is” *the interaction between [...such multi-nation]states and the coalescing of nations and the identifications of nations with states*” which is currently the prime concern of inter-state politics (Rourke, 1989:143). There are no compatible interests between the state and nations in multination states. And, this could be the source for rising of problems of national questions within such states and in turn affecting their “inter-state relations” in a region to which they belong.

The study takes the Ethiopian state as multination state having the Oromo people as its major nation in the Horn region.

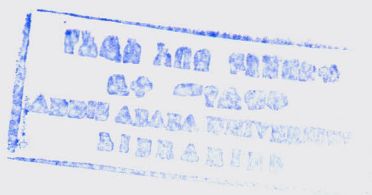
Inter-state Relations

If one takes up the understanding of the concept of “inter-state relations”, conventionally, the subject dates back to the beginning of the modern era (i.e., 17thc) with which the initial establishment (inception) of sovereign states has quite strong ties. When modern states emerged as independent entities they soon began to interact among themselves for which the modern “inter-state relations” (or international relations) came into being (Jackson and Sorenson, 2003). Specifically ever since the 18thc, the relations (or interactions) between these independent states have been given the name called international or inter-state relations (Jackson and Sorenson, *ibid*).

Generally, relations among states may take different forms. Namely: neutral, cooperative, or conflictual (competitive). When Ayoob (1995:56) builds on this, “...any valid measurement of intensity of interaction(s) [...or aspects of inter-state relations in a region] must include [the neutral], cooperation, [...or] conflict.” Inter-state relations can better be understood in terms of those aspects.

If one takes up with neutral relations, it may exist between states when they do have neither cooperative nor conflictual relations. In light of this, Heywood (2000:39) has contended that “[n]eutrality is the absence of any form of [cooperative or conflictual] interactions between states” That is not states that are at neutral relations, benefit nor do they harm each other. However, it is normal to argue that this neutrality can never hold true for the neighboring or contagion states. Because it is commonly understood again that neighboring states sharing common international borders, resources etc cannot be, by any means, at neutral to each other, at least for their security issue. Most of the time, it is natural for such states to be either mutually at cooperative or conflictual, or at friendly or unfriendly relations depending on whether their national interests are compatible or not (Jackson and Sorenson, 2003:4). For this obvious reason, the neutral form may not help us define inter-state relations in this study.

As to the cooperative aspect, it is an aspect of inter-state interactions whereby the states come together to solve their common problems by working together in concert



without prejudicing their sovereignty. Politically, economically, militarily, socially and in terms of others, states usually come to terms cooperatively provided that they do have compatible national interests that significantly determine and guide their foreign policies in relations to one another (Bloom and Heraclides, 1985). Therefore, cooperation is an attempt made by states to adjust their foreign policies in their relations to each other in a way that do not involve any immediate structural impact, and the rationale behind is to make agreements in specific areas for specific purposes.

For neighboring states constituting a region in developing world such as in Africa, however, their inter-state relations can better be defined in terms of conflict than cooperation. When an author comments this rightly, this is “*based on the logic that [...such]states...share cultural traits and historical memories [that] have a greater tendency to be locked into conflict with each other than those that have maintained cultural and historical distance from each other*” (Ayoob, 1995:57). When the same author supplements his argument with empirical example:

Moreover, this assertion is borne out by the intensity of conflict in the Indian subcontinent, as well as that of the ... disputes in the Arab world. [Besides,] given the infancy of third world state-making process, their artificial, colonially imposed boundaries, and the consequent overlap in the affinities of significant segments of their populations [nations] across state boundaries, these states constitute regional subsystems based more of on overt or latent conflict than cooperation (*Ibid*).

Put this differently, the neighboring states tend generally to be similar and mutually competitive rather than complimentary. And hence, cooperative and mainly economic interactions are less important than competitive and conflictual ones. From this it would be possible for one to come up with the understanding that inter-state relations for neighboring states in a region could be defined in conflictual terms. And, also this analogy holds true for the case study in the region of the Horn of Africa.

The simple justification for significance of conflictual inter-state relations is that in developing states, their elites are obsessed with security and insecurity (mainly of the regime and state) issues vis-à-vis their neighbors – the security issue is given precedence over other issues which is marked by the interdependence of competitive and incompatible interests (Ayoob, 1995). When Jackson and Sorenson (2003) conclude this, the security value (related to the state and regime) is the most basic value in inter-state relations particularly within a region today.

2.3 Theoretical Explanation

2.3.1 Causes of National Question

When one deals with the causes of national question (of self-determination) usually in multi-nation states, for the sake of convenience, it is essential to classify them into the underlying causes and the proximate causes. While the former are the root causes of national question that make permissive conditions for violence more likely the latter are the immediate or the catalytic factors triggering or aggravating the underlying ones' in due course of time and turn them into deadly confrontations.

In light of this, some of the underlying causes of national question in multinational states include: colonial conquest and expansion; state-formation and/or building; lack of "fit" between state and nations; and others like deep-rooted historical hostilities/hatreds. These are importantly not exclusive but inclusive of one another: they do have strong links among themselves.

Colonial Conquest and Expansion

Here, before trying to see that colonialism has served as a raw material for emergence of national question, an attempt should be made to be clear with the term itself.

As to the definition of the concept, there are two broad views. Firstly, according to "Salt water theory", it is "European or white colonialism" (Neuberger, 1986; 84-85), which means the forceful territorial control of the Third World states made by the European powers (Neuberger: 1986:84-85; Rupesinghe, 1996:21). This is when the territories of the former were under the annexation or conquest of the latter in which the situation of subservient— superior politico-economic relationship had prevailed between them. This is, of course, defined in line of the views of most governments of states of developing world and other regional organizations such as the African Union and international organizations as the United Nations (Neuberger, 1986). And, hence, since the question for self-determination in such colonial context is more of civic or state-defined, it deserves much less relevance to the study.

Secondly, it is "internal" colonialism" advocating that the "domination of Western state over the non-western people no longer enjoys a universal principle" (Neuberger, 1986:85). That is, the author argues that there is also annexation or

conquest of the non-Western peoples' territories by the nearby Third World states (perhaps jointly with or with the help of the European powers (*Ibid*). Here, the existence of subservient --- superior politico-economic relationship between the conquering and the conquered parties is obvious but the crucial mark is, as Hechter asserted in Neuberger (*Ibid*: 89), their "*geographic contiguity and administrative integration*." It is owing to this that "internal colonialism" is sometimes named as "black colonialism" or "local imperialism" (Rupesinghe, 1996). By the same token, such type of colonialism is the situation whereby "*the two people [the dominating and the dominated] are immediate neighbors [...and] are locked together*" (Rupesinghe, 1996:21). As Neuberger adds (1986), the supporters of internal colonialism are mostly the groups claiming the nation-defined principle of self-determination within developing multination states such as in Africa.

An important issue to be given due consideration here is that it doesn't necessarily mean there is no relationship between European (formal) colonialism and the internal colonialism. Internal colonialism can significantly be attributable to the European colonialism in which perhaps the latter paved suitable breeding ground for the coming into being and prevalence of the former, for example, with a kind of share of administrative experience between the two. Because of this, the way internal colonialism carried out has been almost the same as and, even it is, more repressive and harsher than the formal colonial system- that can facilitate permissive conditions for the arise of national question on the part of national minorities. As Plamentaz builds on this argument:

...there is no basic difference between foreign (to mean European) rule within a state and [an internal] colonial government. ...internal colonial subjects might be worse off because in a formal [European] colony "dependence is not masked; it is public and open. There is not any hypocrisy, it is easy to mobilize international sympathy for the colonized, and [civic or state-defined] separatist decolonization is viewed as legitimate and progressive. In an internal colony, on the other hand, [ethno or nation-defined] nationalism may be used "as a cloak for oppression," [ethno national] separation will be decried as reactionary and oppression of subject nationalities may be harsher than ever (cited in Neuberger, 1986:90).

When Neuberger goes on arguing further, "*the remote and obvious foreigner actually in power may be felt to be less dangerous than the probable future (internal) ruler even though he is closer culturally and geographically to the people ...*"(*Ibid*).

Accordingly, most native people constituting a nation have been with the idea that they were conquered or locally dominated by another nearby alien group, which is termed as “*settler colonialism*”, and lost their former independence (Gellner, 1991:1, see Seyoum, 1997b:179). And, hence national movements can easily raise calling for national self-determination, just like and even more than that of anti European colonial movement (Rupesinghe, 1996). In other words, those who call for national question assume that they are subjects or victims of such internal colonialism and hence, attempt to mobilize sometimes anti- colonial slogan minimally for regional autonomy, or a maximum project to have independent state of their own which they felt lost before.

In connection with this, the nationalists do usually have motto to reverse this situation saying that “*Let all nations have their own political roof*” (quoted in Seyoum, 1997b:179). This is how and why the national movements struggling for national self-determination base their claims on a universal principle of self-determination that makes easier for them convince themselves and even others that their cause is justifiable (Neuberger, 1986). So, colonial conquest by the nearby state or group is one of the underlying causes for emergence of national question in multination states. Here the point is that most multi-nation states were formed through colonial conquest and expansion that could serve as a fertile ground for the emergence of national question on the part of the annexed nations.

State Formation and/or Building

Still in multination states, some scholars argue that how the states came into being can serve as a breeding ground for emergence of national question. As noted earlier, since the root causes of national question are strongly interwoven, state formation has links with that of colonial conquest and expansion.

To begin with, state formation does primarily refer to how the state comes into existence (along with its subsequent process of building) so that it may provoke principle of national self-determination on the part of the national minorities. The principal processes involved in so doing could be two: notably, the “*acquisition, violent or otherwise, of the new territories [of native people] by a state-building [national/ethnic] core. [And,] the elicitation within the new territory of loyalties*

and political commitments reflecting the ascription of legitimacy by the indigenous population to the authority structure emanating from the [national/ethnic] core (Bloom, 1993:55). Because of this, to Heraclides (1991:9-10), “several [multi ethnic/nation states] are the end result[s] of older [colonial] conquests that led to the formation of [such] empire-states, such as Ethiopia, Iran and Thailand....” That is almost each multination states “has emerged from a usually bloody political history of ... conquest ...” (Bloom, *ibid*: 74).

This violent means of establishing or making modern multinational empire-states has served as the underlying cause for the rise of the national questions. Similarly, Brubaker (1996:7) argues, the very process of state formation by forceful means makes the rise of right to national self-determination inevitable. When the same author explains this, in the process of employing war of expansion and conquest for establishment of state there is always a “core nation or a “core ethnic” group that runs the project (*Ibid*:5). This “core nation” is understood as the legitimate owner of the (multination) state formed, which is surprisingly perceived as the state “of” and “for” that “core nation” at the expense of other subservient nations. This is to mean that the dominant nation owns the polity (or state) existing as the polity “of” and “for” a particular nation (Brubaker, 1996:5, 44, 79 & 83).

Again others like Nzungu-Natalaja (1987:64) and Ayoob (1995:169) build on this, in such formed multination states the cultural and other identities of (the dominant nation) would always be given precedence as identity of the state over the culture and identity of other minority (or peripheral or stateless) nations. Therefore, to another author, such definitions and identifications of the state in terms of only a dominant cultural group affect adversely the relative economic, cultural and political positions of other nations, which he has called as “stateless nations” (Meadwell, 1999:262). As he argues, when these “stateless nations” perceive that they are marginalized by the state of the dominant nation they could be compelled to engage in struggling for national self-determination (*Ibid*). That is to say that when stateless (minority) nations in multination state are felt deprived it could amount to the emergence of national question.

Moreover, since formation of state almost goes paralleling with its process of building (integration) the latter also matters in provocation of quest for national self-determination (Bloom, 1993:99). Meaning, once they have forcefully been established, multination states worry for continuation of their existence by virtue of which they engage in various systems of state-building (or “nation-building”) out of multicultural diversity, that in turn may bring about resentment on the part of peripheral nations (Rupesinghe, 1996:18).

Simply because the strategies or policies used in state-building [or sometimes they call “nation-building”] are more of *assimilationists* and *integrationists* that ignore the reality of multinational plurality (Ayoob, 1995:169; Bloom, 1993:56; Rupesinghe, 1996:10). However, when viewed from the reality on the ground, this is not a “nation-building” but a sort of nation destroying that would lead rather the national question seriously to emanate and, hence, later to perhaps disintegration of the multination state for responses made in the form of resentments or challenge on the part of the victimized nations (Rupesinghe, 1996:19).

Therefore, not only how a given state emerged that matters but also the immediate subsequent processes that are related to its building are the root causes for occurrence of national question in multination state. That is, national movements use this as a justifying claim of their quest for national self-determination.

Lack of “fit” between state and nations in multination states

Strongly linking to state formation, it is also possible to talk about how the lack of “fit” between a state and nations within multination state can serve as a factor for emergence of the national question.

Since most multination states are the products of violent conquest and bloodshed and hence containing a number of nations, it is very rare to find unified political and national boundaries (Rourke, 1989:157). When Jeong rightly builds on this,

The aspirations to become a mono-ethnic [or nation] state with an exclusive right to territory [a nation-state building project] is an unattainable dream in that very few states have ethnic [national] homogeneity. [Because of this fact a] pure nation-state is an exceptional phenomenon [...that implies] the territorial frontiers of the sovereign state are rarely congruent with national boundaries. State territories are either larger or smaller than the area inhabited by the corresponding nation (2000:232).

This paves a way for the frequent prevalence of *lack of fit* (for the incompatible interests) between state (which is of and for the dominant nation) and nations in multination states that finally results in the quest for national self-determination of the minorities (Brown, 1996:15). When Goldstein (Goldstein, 2004:2) further argues, since the borders of the perceived nations don't match with that of the state, conflicts (related to national question) almost inevitably arise on the side of the former that relatively feel mistreated or marginalized.

Furthermore, such frequent mismatch between perceived nations and the actual state borders is significantly serving as a major source of not only intrastate but also inter-state conflicts. By the same taken, this issue has been built and concluded by Rourke (1989:157) as follows:

Nations and states do not often coincide. This means that the concept of a nation state in which ethnic [national] and political boundaries are the same is more ideal than real. ...many nations are not politically unified or independent. This lack of "fit" between nations and states is a significant source of [domestic and] international tension and conflict.

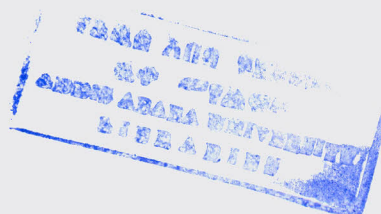
When the same author explains this in African context:

In Africa ... many states are the result of earlier boundaries drawn by colonial powers and do not contain a single, cohesive nation. This lack of cohesion [or fit raises the question of nationalities that] often results in civic discord and causes regional instability [...that the former] often invites outside intervention and thus, becomes a source [inter-state and] international conflict (1987:143).

In other words, for the very obvious lack of compatibility between a state and nations in multination states the drive for self-determination on the side of the minorities has not yet ended (Rourke, 1995:329). This can easily transform into inter-state conflicts in a region. And, Goldstein adds (2004:187) in a similar vein, most contemporary inter-state conflictual relations is understood particularly in terms of conflict of interests prevailing between state and nations in multination states.

Deep-Rooted Historical Hostilities (Or Hatreds)

In multination states, historically deep-rooted hostilities or hatreds could also provide permissive conditions with the emergence of the quest for national self-determination. This factor has a sort of links with those identified and explained earlier.



As one has already been acquainted with the concept of nation under conceptual framework, from among other criteria a nation should be defined in terms of some objective characteristics such as common territory, history and other primordial ties that help people of a nation quite distinct from other nations (Jeong, 2000:227). In light of such pre-existing markers, it may be possible to establish and explain the relationship between historical hatreds (existing between core national group and national minorities) and the cause for national question in multination states.

Before the coming together of such groups (the dominant and the minorities) under the same political umbrella (roof), before the very establishment of the state, there had been continuous and repeated clashes or series of wars between them thinking that they should not be subject to alien rule. This was mainly with the intention to maintain their independent nationhood as they were distinct from each other and hence the outsiders would naturally be incompatible to their survival as well as self-fulfillment (Manz, 2003:17-18). In due course of their historical mutual hostilities, however, a national group could tend to unfortunately conquer other nations through war of conquest and expansion and then came up with the establishment of multination state. And thereafter, the latter had begun to be *of* and *for* the dominant group, or civic nation and other minority groups would be subjugated and began to be marginalized for loss of their preexisting independence (Brubaker, 1996:83 & 44). Consequently, the nations presumed to be victimized could feel that they had never been one and the same (sharing similarity) in history with the core national group and even rather they had been enemies of each other (Neuberger 1986:44). What is equally important here is, the national minorities might calculate "*their historical hostilities of pre-colonial conquest with their conquerors*" elucidating that they had never been one in history bringing them together commonly (*Ibid*). This could in turn serve as a breeding ground for the generation of national question on the part of the annexed national groups.

With this connection, such groups may also further perceive that they have lost their objective markers identifying them from others such as territory and history, on the basis of which they tend to justify their demands for national self-determination to restore them back. With respect to this, they could claim that "*you cannot instill in a people a sense of kinship and brotherhood without attaching them to a place they*

feel is theirs, a homeland, that is theirs by the right of history” and regarding history “*every nation builds its future on its past*”(Neuberger, 1986:42-43). This is to mean, along with the area (homeland), the quest for national question of the national movements seems to resort to history so as to show that the violent conquest and expansion replaced their former freedom and independence. Neuberger (*Ibid*: 43-44) has put this as the “*numerous separatist and irredentist aspirations and claims in ... Africa have revealed that the memory of historic ... [nations] is alive, and that history provides a potential rationale for revisionism.*” Therefore, shortly, the national minorities could pay attention to their historical hatreds with the dominant groups and hence serve as a permissive environment for the emergence of the national question.

When a scholar builds on this insight and concludes, the national question is seen as a “*natural phenomenon spurred by historical memories and other objective differences that can arouse political mobilization of the minorities for self-determination*” (Jeong, 2000:223). For this author (*Ibid*), the simple reason is that national self-determination provides nations with the prerequisite for their survival and continuation implying that the desire for self-rule by such cultural nations is a crucial part of human existence.

The other form of establishing relationship between historical hatreds and cause of national question is by referring to the implications of the very process of military conquest made by the core/dominant national group for those that came under its subjugation. That is to mean that the process of violent conquest and expansion has had adverse implications for those who were conquered. When Latin explains with this regard, while the process of conquest usually tends to preserve the memory of national glory on the part of the conquerors it leaves those who were conquered with humiliation (1991:144). To him (*Ibid*), a multinational state encompassing various nations along with their incompatible and antagonistic historical memories tends to split for the reason that such memories can be reactivated at any time, and as a result generate struggle for national self-determination.

Similarly, a nation that has “*crimes of one kind or another committed at some point in the distant or recent past has legitimate historical grievances*” serving as bases for

the quest for national self-determination (Brown, 1996:21). And, when Brown (*Ibid*) further adds on this, “*it is true that [the dominant] groups tend to whitewash and glorify their own histories, and they often demonize [that of] their neighbors [the conquered], (i.e., whom they perceive as their) rivals and adversaries.*” By summarizing this, the driving forces behind the violent deep-seated conflicts are “ancient (simply historical) hatreds” that many ethnic or national groups constituting a state have for each, which could be the cause of national question.

Having identified and explained some principal underlying (root) causes of national question, it is also worth noting to give highlights on some of its proximate causes that may trigger and instigate it into deadly confrontations. Here the latter do have relationships both among themselves and with the former.

The first of these proximate causes is related to the repressive nature of political system. Here, most multination states are usually dominated by national groups whose very origin of societal nature is inegalitarian and, owing to this, their political systems may be marked by highly repressive and centralized power of every regards (Levine, 1996:312 & 324). This could invoke national question on the side of victims of such system. When this is further argued states that are with “*closed, authoritarian systems are likely to generate considerable resentment overtime, especially if the interests of some [dominant groups] are served while [that of] others [such as national minorities] are trampled*” (Brown, 1996:16).

This could be so for the reason that such states may claim priority in the use of force or coercive means within a large territories inhabited by a number of national minorities (Ayoob, 1995:24). And hence, such states can impose sorts of “*inegalitarian and discriminatory practices*” upon the minority national groups in systematic and organized ways (Jeong, 2000:21), which makes the quest for national determination inevitably arise (Levine, 1996:312 & 315). Moreover, pursuing democratic system in such states containing a number of nations may not even give guarantee to genuinely deal with problems of the minorities.

Therefore, as an author concludes, as far as “*political democracy is not always a solution to ethnic [national] conflict,*” and he went on saying, “*the total lack of*

avenues for political expression in multi-ethnic [nation] societies can accentuate ethnic {national} conflicts and escalate secessionist demand” (Ayoob, 1995: 181).

Strongly linking to this, such nature of a state may also facilitate suitable conditions for the prevalence of systematic domination and discrimination in the system. And this could be another fertile ground for triggering national question. The crux matter in generating nationalist movements for self-determination in multination states is the national minorities may systematically be dominated in and discriminated against all forms of their life (Ayoob, 1995:38 &169; Goldstein, 2004:199; Levine, 1996:315). Particularly, this is the case “*Where there are permanent ethno-cultural majorities and minorities, [and in which the former have] no incentive to allay the minorities’ grievances, and the minority will be disillusioned with a principle which condemns it to permanent exclusion from the levers of power and influence*” (Neuberger, 1986:34). To Heraclides (1991:34), this contributes much in escalating the problem of national question within a state.

In line with this, other scholars also argue that if people of a nation feel that they are economically (or politically) excluded or permanently deprived, they will resort to struggle for self-determination (Ayoob, 1995:38, Neuberger, 1986:71). By the same token, Levine (1996:311) adds that “*political and economic discrimination against [... national] minorities plays a key role in leading groups to prefer self-government over existing arrangements.*” This may be explained on the part of national minorities as justifiable ground when finally “*...this results in denying [these] people important rights such as economic opportunities, social and political equality and a sense of autonomy and freedom*”(Jeong, 2000:21). Therefore, Brown concludes (1996:14), *triggering of the struggle for national self-determination can be attributable to the prevalence of this domination and discrimination in multination states.*

As an immediate factor for the national question, conflicting principles with respect to the right to national self-determination are also cases in point. This may be the case when multination states tend to be with firm position just to continue with grave discrimination against and domination of the national groups, and finally marginalize them under the guise of (rigid status quo of) international principles related to

“sovereignty” and “territorial integrity” (Ayoob, 1995:174). When another scholar explains this in African context:

In Africa, more than any where else, we face the dilemma of having to choose between territorial integrity [and principle of non-interference in the internal affairs] of a state and the self-determination of a people [constituting usually a nation]. The conflict between these two... explains most of the wars, conflicts, and tensions between and within African states in post colonial Africa (Neuberger, 1986:106).

This is when the states usually feel reluctant to pay attention to questions of their national groups in the name of the façade principles related to such as their “territorial integrity” and “sovereignty”. To bring this strategy into a reality, they usually resort to violent means. In such a way the states tend to deprive the national movements of their the right to national self-determination by asserting that “ *we existing states all have our own domestic problems and disaffected [national] groups or regions, so we must stick [them] together behind sovereignty and territorial integrity*”(Goldstein, 2004:190).

Here, this is to mean that such states as that of Africa suppress (ignore) the right to national self-determination of the minority groups, in the name of defense of their “territorial integrity” and of observing principle of “sovereignty”. Since the reality on the ground with regard to those principles has almost been non-observable particularly since the down of the Cold War (Rupesinghe,1996:22), it usually raises and strengthens (aggravates) the quest for national determination on the part of the minorities favoring it (Ayoob, 1995:174; Neuberger, 1986:107-108). For example, those who struggle for national self-determination argue that “*It is foolish for Africans to stand by idly while millions of Africans are being killed by other Africans in the name of territorial integrity*” (Quoted in Neuberger, *ibid*: 107).

Putting differently, Merera (2003:32) concludes that the controversy related to such principles (supported by political elites and other internationally dominant/powerful states) and its impediments on the application of the right of self-determination would further trigger the violent struggle for national question on the part of the national minorities.

The other proximate factor for national question is coupled with both internal and external catalysts. Of course, this is one of the strategies designed and constantly

pursued by hegemonic elites dominating multination states to fiercely resist, oppress and weaken, even to the extent of making decimation against the national minorities struggling for national self-determination. Ayooob (1995) rightly comments that such strategy of the state may include securing assistance from external forces /powers (since its very process of formation) and invariably and systematically overcoming the challenges emanating from the demands for national self-determination. Along with domestic politics can also play significant roles in impeding the success of national question questioned on the part of the oppressed people.

Domestically, the core nations instituted and used local conduits as strategies from among the conquered native nations not only to establish and expand the domain of the empire state, even to constantly maintain and consolidate its power to the time of this day. To this end, *“the state could adopt a strategy of piecemeal incorporation and could overcome opposition gradually by dividing its opponents (by weakening their unity), eroding their support base, and [if possible] neutralizing different segments of the opposition one at a time –even if this meant using force against them* (Ayooob, 1995:32). In such a way crucial roles may temporarily be played by internal forces on the side of the dominant groups to undermine or even to terminate the struggle for national self-determination.

Despite all these attempts, however, to the extent that dominant national group in a multination state systematically use and depend strongly upon such strategies it strengthens and justifies the claims of the national minorities to firmly struggle for national self-determination, which can destabilize the state in question and its inter-state relations as well (Spear, 1996:381; Levine, 1996:312)

In a nutshell, because of some of these the underlying and proximate factors, conflicts coupling with demands of national self-determination form the most sizeable proportion of conflicts not only within states but also among them in general and particularly in Africa (Ayooob, 1995:51). When similarly argued by the same author, owing to problems of national question, most intrastate conflicts in multination states invite action or involvement of neighboring states and consequently transform into inter-state conflicts, which means the latter may be attributable to the former and hence affecting inter-state relations in the region (*Ibid*:54-55).

From this one may deduce with contentions of such scholars as Burton (1985) and Goldstein (2004) that most of inter-state conflicts are of domestic in origin, and most of domestic conflicts are primarily related to the struggle for national self-determination of peoples constituting a nation. The next section will set forth the implications of domestic conflicts for the inter-state relations of the neighboring states. This section is where the major actual and/or possible effects of such conflicts, and the involvements usually made by neighboring states in the conflicts of one another can be identified and explained in the way that it can inform the empirical body.

2.3.2 Implications of Domestic Conflicts for Inter-state Relations

Under this section, two principal sets of issues are to be discussed with respect to implications of multination states' domestic conflicts revolving around the national question. The first takes up the identification and explanation of some major actual and/or ominous effects of conflicts that are domestic in origin for the immediate neighboring states in the same region. The second looks at the patterns of actions, responses or involvements that the states make in each other regarding the conflicts.

2.3.2.1 Major Effects of Domestic Conflicts for Neighboring States

To begin with, domestic conflicts usually do have a number of effects on the neighboring states. Not least of which are including; problems related to *refugees*, *economy*, *military*, *stability* and *inter-state war*. Discussing them separately is important here.

Refugee Problems

Refugee problems are one of the effects of internal conflicts for the neighboring states. They usually affect and pose threats to inter-state relations in terms of economy, security, and political stability (Brown, 1996:592). *Economically*, the refugees can impose heavy economic burdens upon host-states (to which they flee), which may frequently suffer from resource constraints and hence couldn't catch up with such new extra economic demands (Stedman, 1996: 246).

The other is refugee can bring about serious security problems as well. As Stedman (1996:592) argues "*host and home governments often view them (refugees) as a security problem.*" When Brown explains this in a similar manner:

Fighters [usually struggling for self-determination] often mingle with refugee populations, using refugee camps for rest, recuperation, recruitment, and reorganization; offering sanctuary to refugees can therefore invite military reprisal, thereby drawing host countries into conflict. [Particularly,] [i]f refugees flee to neighboring countries where large number of their ethnic brethren live, their plight can lead their compatriots to become more radicalized (1996:592).

In other words, the refugee areas in the host country may serve as rear base for the armed opposition movements of the home country where they presumably take rest, reorganize themselves such as militarily, with recruitment etc., and fight back against the home regime. Consequently, to the author, realizing this, the home state may take military attacks against such rebels and the refugee camps that can in turn pose security problem to the host state. Stedman (1996:246) similarly goes on elucidating that since "*refugee camps are potential pools for rebel recruitment*" government of the home country may take direct military attacks against the camps in the host countries, and destabilizing the domestic affairs of the latter.

In connection with this, refugees can also generate *political instability* in the host countries. They instigate internal turmoil in the state to they fled in the form of radicalizing national groups therein. For example in Central Asia, according to Brown (1996:592), instability problems in both countries of Afghanistan and Tajikistan were attributable to the frequent influx of refugees across their common borders.

Economic Repercussions

These are also emanating from domestic conflicts that adversely affect inter-state economic relations. To Heraclides (1991:50), important "*[e]conomic ties, including trade and investment with the state threatened by secessions [sources of internal conflicts] are important impediments [to inter-state relations]: the more so if there is some [high] level of economic dependence [...]*". This is if there is an increasing economic interdependence between the neighboring states, the intermittent cross-border movements by the insurgent groups can retard their economic ties significantly. Other scholars such as Brown (1996:593) and Bundu (1997:40-41, see



Sibilo, 2005) add, when this occasionally continuous for long, the internal problem can consequently disrupt and break down frequent inter-state economic transactions, for instance, access to raw materials, transportation, communication, and the like in important ways even to the extent of damaging regional economic interests.

Military Problems

Internal conflicts can also create military entanglements to inter-state relations. This would be so when the territory of the nearby states used not only to ship arms for and supplies to rebel (secessionist) groups but also it (territory) serves as bases for their operations or sanctuaries (Brown, 1996). Consequently, the same author adds (*Ibid*:594), “*when the territory of neighboring states is used for [such] arms shipments or military bases, hot-pursuit operations and interdiction campaigns often follow*” that can in turn resulting inter-state military confrontations. Particularly, this “*easy availability of arms and the porousness of borders will intensify civic [and most importantly inter-state] conflicts [...]*” (Stedman, 1996:247). This is to say that along with inter-state conflicts, domestic problems in a state can generate, and even intensify the already existing, internal turmoil in the neighbor.

Instability Problems

These refer to how internal conflict within a state can amount to instability in other states. Specifically, political instability can be generated in several ways among which refugees is the principal ones. As noted a bit earlier, this can be seen from various angles. Firstly, refugees can radicalize national groups in the host states and provoke civil strife. Specifically with this regard, “*...divided ethnic groups [by international boundaries] are... effective conflict transmitters*” across the borders (Brown, *ibid*: 595). Secondly, they impose economic burdens on the countries to which the refugees flee that may politically be vulnerable and weaken host governments. Furthermore, Brown adds (*Ibid*: 594), the other way of generating instability is in relation to “*rebel activities in neighboring states [that] can undermine state control over its territory and provoke military clashes.*” This can be done usually while the armed national movements take advantage of refugee camps in the host state to use for military bases and sanctuaries.

Inter-state War

This demonstrates the way how internal conflicts in a state precipitate inter-state hostilities (military clashes). Needless to mention, hot-pursuit operations and interaction campaigns are one ways leading to inter-state military clashes particularly when a government is trying to root out insurgent groups in a neighboring state, and in which the latter seeks to defend its territory and sovereignty.

The other important way how inter-state war can be generated from internal conflicts is **diversionary war**. This is the one undertaken when governments beset by their domestic problems become aggressive and frequently lash out against neighboring states thinking that this may divert attention from problems at home (Brown, 1996:595).

So far, discussions have been made how internal conflicts in a state can lead to problems in neighboring states and sometimes to inter-state military clashes. It has also been noted that such internal conflicts always involve neighboring states: they involve/take actions in each others' domestic problems. Why do they do so? This may be the concern of the following sub-section.

2.3.2.2 Actions (Involvements/Responses) of Neighboring States in Each Others' Domestic Conflicts

Generally, states tend to respond to, take action or involve in the internal conflicts of their neighbors as active or interventionist actors that could further complicate inter-state conflictual relations and, usually worsen regional stability.

To put it precisely, by virtue of involvement or action of neighboring states in domestic conflicts, the latter may transform into that of inter-state relations and even have regional repercussions (Ayoob, 1995:54-55). This further complicates conflicts in inter-state relations and transforms them into violent confrontations: therefore, "[...] *violence is more likely if neighboring states become involved*" (Levine, 1996:322).

States respond to or involve in internal conflicts of a neighboring state not without reason. Heralides (1991:52) rightly argues that they usually do have motives on which

the extent of their involvement basically depends. These motives can be, to him, *instrumental or utilitarian reasons (Ibid)*. According to another scholar, having these motives in mind, neighboring states can involve or take action with respect to internal conflicts in one of these forms of interventions (Brown, 1996:595). These are: humanitarian, defensive, protective, opportunistic interventions and opportunistic war. It seems essential to treat them separately.

Humanitarian Intervention

Neighboring states may take actions in a state's internal conflicts presumably for humanitarian reasons. They could be overtly initiated to do with the intention to relieve humanitarian problems attributing to internal conflicts (Brown, 1996:596). However, no state could take an action in another state's problems for humanitarian motive, behind which there is always covert aim of calculating its national interest. With this respect, Brown rightly contends that states "*can never launch purely altruistic initiatives because they always have selfish reasons for wanting to see peace and stability resorted to their particular corners of the globe*" (Ibid).

Defensive Intervention

Neighboring states can make involvement with respect to domestic conflicts aiming at putting an end to such cross-border problems as refugee flows or military assaults, or keeping wars from spreading; or, with the ambition of bringing wars to an end (Brown, *ibid*:596-97). The states usually launch such intervention under the general heading of self-defense.

Protective Intervention

It is simply involvement of neighboring states in internal conflicts to protect or assist ethnic brethren taking part in hostilities elsewhere although such involvement is deemed to be internationally unacceptable (Brown, *ibid*). Here, furthermore, in the name of defending the straddled national groups in other side of their borders states could also have hidden motives with the intervention there.

Opportunistic Intervention

Most of the time, a state tends to take this action taking advantage of internal problems in another neighboring (perhaps hostile) state so that this could enhance its

political, economic and military interests and hence improve its regional position. To realize this end, the following strategy may be used:

By supporting insurgents involved in hostilities against a regional rival, a neighboring state can keep its rival preoccupied with internal affairs and perhaps weaken it over time. Leaders in the neighboring state might hope, more ambitiously, that its rival can be dismembered or forced to the brink of collapse. Regional rivals often support insurgents in each other's countries, substituting rebel proxies for direct inter-state warfare. (Brown, 1996:597-98)

Here, *proxy* (indirect) *war* can usually be employed through *tit-for-tat policy* for mutual subversion and destruction, which remarkably attributable to states' internal conflicts. Here, accordingly, the same author adds (*Ibid*: 598), activities to be carried out in such involvements are providing the partisan with "*financial assistance; weapons and communications equipment; manpower, training, and leadership; logistical assistance; and bases and sanctuaries*". This intervention usually poses threats to regional peace and stability.

Opportunistic Invasion

This is simply actions (in the form of launching an invasion) a neighboring state takes exploiting the momentary weakness caused by internal turmoil of a particular rival state. To Brown (1996:598), here, a sort of *direct military* action may be used against a state affected by internal conflicts simply because the latter "*create windows of opportunity for neighboring states, which they often exploit*." An important point here is that no as such launching direct military assaults in the case of opportunistic intervention just like opportunistic invasion but the former may contribute to the latter.

In the Horn region, therefore, it is in light of this that the implications of the Oromo national question (constituting multinational Ethiopian state) for inter-state relations is to be addressed.

Chapter Three

The Oromo National Question in the Ethiopian Empire-State

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to explain the concepts of the Oromo nation, national question, and the latter's causes associating with the evolution of the modern Ethiopian empire-state. In addition, it discusses the responses of the successive Ethiopian regimes to the Oromo national question and the roles played by external and domestic forces in aggravating it. The chapter finally examines the struggle of the Oromo people to realize their pursuit for national self-determination.

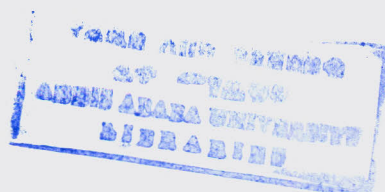
3.2 Understanding the Oromo Nation and National Question

Concept of the Oromo Nation

There are two contending positions regarding the nationhood of the Oromo people. While some argue that the Oromo people can successfully qualify a nation, others contend that the people cannot constitute a nation. These two views will be thoroughly discussed in section.

Ethiopian nationalists and their supporters vehemently argue that the Oromo can not and should not constitute a nation. They perceive the people as the creation of some Oromo elites. For instance, Marcus cited in Asafa (2005:190) claims that the Oromo are *"a fictitious nation created by a few Oromo intellectuals who want to distort history for their nationalist political motives."* Moreover, he audaciously insists (*Ibid*) that the Oromo are a group which does not have any history to qualify for a nation and strive for their self-determination.

Supporting the view of Ethiopian writers, Somali nationalists hold that the Oromo are *"a kind of human population without a set form, a pre-ethnic material, waiting to be turned either into Amharas or into Somalis by the turn of political fortune and religious conversion"* (quoted in Sorenson, *ibid*: 228). Ethiopian nationalists and their supporters deny the fact that the Oromo people constitute a nation and hence, they contend as their central tenet that these people don't have a legitimate ground to



claim for national self-determination. Their evidence is that the Oromo have religious, class, and economic and political differences, which dismiss their claims to be a nation. Sorenson (1998:227) summarizes this as there “*is considerable diversity among Oromos in terms of class, region, urban, and rural differences, (and of) subsistence activities, religion and politics ... the existence of such diversity discredits any identification of the Oromo as one nation and disqualifies Oromo claims for self-determination....*”

In general, in the above position the Oromo nationhood is completely rejected as the making of few Oromo scholars and the people are reduced to a set of unrelated groups lacking any significant feeling of unity, common historical, religious and political backgrounds. Finally, their right for national self-determination is dismissed as a groundless claim.

Despite the claims of the adherents of the above view, a significant number of scholars agree that there is a sufficient and convincing body of evidence to establish the nationhood of the Oromo. In this regard, Mekuria (1996:50) says there are a lot of historical and ethnographic facts which justify that the Oromo had a common past history and national identity existing as a nation.

The people have several ethnographic features that qualify them to be a nation. They share common ancestral descent and tradition. According to their mythology and history, they are thought to have descended from “Orma” which means *Ilmaan Oromoo* (children of Oromo) (Lamuu, 1998:83; Baxter, 1983:131; Mekuria, 1996:50). Thus, regardless of their separation into branches and subgroups residing on different regions and religions, they all claim to be from, or trace their origin back to, this single common ancestor (Asafa, 2001:60).

In addition, they all speak one language which they refer to as *Afaan Oromoo* and this common language points to the very fact that this nation has a common ancestral origin. For example, Mohammed (1999:120) notes that *Afaan Oromoo* is “the foundation of all the springs that give dynamism and validity to the Oromo nation. [And, it] is the most vital, the richest and the finest bond that unites the Oromo into

a single historical whole." So, their common language supposedly creates their unity and helps them to exist as one nation.

It is obvious that the Oromo people have subgroups and branches yet none of them seems to claim to create a different community separating themselves from the other. They have a strong sense of community inspired by common national sentiment. Though there could be variations of national consciousness among different branches and groups in various regions of the Oromo people, Gemetchu (1996:98) asserts that *"intense and deep concern for the ideal of Oromummaa exists in all these [branches and groups]."* Despite others argument, the currently existing new Oromo *"nationalist spirit cuts across class, religious and regional differences and fuses the Oromo [people] into a single nation"* (Mohammed,1996:70; Merera, 2003). The concrete example for this is, in the words of Mohammed (1996:76), the establishment of the Macha-Tulama Association that united and coordinated pan-Oromo national movement encompassing tens and thousands of the Oromo people from various religious backgrounds.

There is also valid and reliable historical evidence which shows that the Oromo people have really existed as a nation. Prior to their conquest, the Oromo people were believed to be guided under an egalitarian social and political institution called the Gada System. This system expresses and justifies the existence of some deep sense of solidarity and feeling of nationhood among the Oromo people (Baxter, 1994:236). Formerly, they had belonged to autonomous nation that for several centuries lived under and ruled by one central Gada leadership (Gadaa, 1988:28). The concept of *democratic Gada system* helped to maintain a unified strength of the Oromo nation against their aliens (Mekuria, 1996:51). Keller (1998:116) holds that although *"there was historically no one, unified Oromo nation-state, there was a distinct Oromo nation, and [whose] national identity was intertwined with the institution of Gada."* Therefore, the allegation that the Oromo are a people without history is baseless and indeed, the people have made an unforgettable and undeniable history by having created a democratic system in the region. This system makes up a strong basis for their national identity. Even the Oromo people commonly refer to the harsh and enduring post-conquest historical experiences of socio-economic exploitation and

political oppression under each successive Ethiopian regime (Baxter, 1994; Mekuria, 1996; Mohammed, 1996).

Furthermore, the Oromo people share common territory as a crucial defining feature of their nation. It was in the southern part of the present-day Ethiopia where they lived for several centuries and from which they began to expand in the 16th c in all directions and later dominated the area in the region (Gadaa, 1988:28). Nowadays, they occupy a large part of the country's total area (Asafa, 1993; Merera, 2003; Toggia *et al*, 2000:50). As Gadaa argues in Sorenson (1998:236) linking the Oromo people with the Cushitic speaking groups that they are indigenous to the country in explicit rejection of historical narratives of Ethiopian nationalists and their supporters which construct the Oromo as the new comers to the area. Thus, the available historical evidence shows that the Oromo are indigenous inhabitants to the area.

In the final analysis, it is possible to see that the Oromo people have common language, common territory, common heritage and historical experiences. On account of these, they consider themselves as having a strong sense of community and as constituting a group longing for self-determination. The Oromo have enough common primordial markers and a sense of unity and identity, which makes them stand as distinct group of people, or develop a strong need for self-determination. Hence, all the evidence suggests that the Oromo people can adequately qualify as nation and that they have strong ground to claim or demand for question of national self-determination.

Concept of the Oromo National Question

Most scholars owe and trace the Oromo quest for self-determination (to address their national question) to the establishment of the first Oromo association, the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association, in 1960s that ushered in the commencement of the united and coordinated pan-Oromo national consciousness. After about a decade, it was transformed into the national struggle for self-determination of the Oromo people with the creation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the mid 1970s. When Sorenson (1998:225-226) explains the contribution of the association:



An effort to form an explicit Oromo national identity [consciousness] was institutionalized in the Macha-Tulama Association in 1963. Although the Association was formed originally as a mutual assistance group for its members, it increasingly took on a political role emphasizing its recovery and renewal of Oromo culture From 1974, with the creation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), these nationalist sentiments became the basis for an armed movement that intended to create [either a regional autonomy or] an independent state on the basis of ethno-national identity.

Though there was resistance before, it did not involve with united and coordinated wider activities of the Oromo people from different regions and religious background (Mohammed 1991). By virtue of this, clear signs of the Oromo nationalist aspirations did not surface until the 1963, the time when the Association was founded.

The Association marked the commencement of the national-wide and unified Oromo national question. The Association was initially set up to improve the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the Oromo people, by attracting a number of them from different areas and seriously discussing upon their harsh economic exploitation, political domination, cultural subjugation they endured starting from their conquest (Asafa, 1993:115); it was later transformed into a pan-Oromo movement for the realization of their political equality within the country, which after few years changed to the quest for national self-determination (Mohammed, 1996:76; Keller, 1998:118). This will be further detailed at some length in the last section of the chapter.

However, the point at stake here is how the Oromo nationalists, scholars and organizational movements understand the Oromo national question and hence tend to treat it as a solution in the people's future relations with the Ethiopian empire-state is very crucial and needs to be addressed roughly in this sub-section. Sorenson (1998) notes that there are three contending perspectives of the Oromo national question basically on the content of its solution in the future Oromo people's relationship with the Ethiopian empire state: unity in equality and democratized Ethiopian context, stronger political autonomy, and independence of Oromia.

According to the view of equality and democratized Ethiopian context, the Oromo question can be abated within a unified democratized Ethiopia on equal basis for three reasons. First, they believe that like other national groups in the country including even some people from the dominant ruling elites, the Oromo people have

been the victims of national or ethnic inequality and social injustice as the principal marks of the "national oppression" (Merera, 2003:96-102). Secondly, the advocates of this view (Merera 2003; Mohammed 1996; Leencoo, 1998b, 1999) and ONC, 1996) fear that the Oromo national demand may not be treated in the form of independence of Oromia due to several factors (of which the geographic and historical ones are principal). Finally, they contend that not the Oromo people as a whole have been victims of national oppression in Ethiopia because some have been taking advantage of this system as oppressors since the inception of the state.

This view could be interesting as it optimistically suggests an authentic democratic system within a unified Ethiopian state to foster equality and unity within diversity so that the Oromo people would take advantage of this and get their national question democratically abated. Furthermore, taking serious account to implementation of democracy, this view may provide suitable environment for Ethiopia and the Horn region, and even beyond, with the prevalence of peace and stability.

However, some scholars forward certain drawbacks of this perspective thinking that proponents of this assumption might be entangled with some essential elements the Oromo as a nation may not agree with. In the first place, according to some other Oromo nationalists and other scholars, those some Oromo people participated in the making of Ethiopia and its subsequent process didn't represent and have not yet been representing the Oromo as a whole nation. Even, they rather by themselves have failed to keep up and denied their being Oromo and further severely endangered interests of the Oromo masses at the expenses of basically interests of their Abyssinian patrons. According to Abbas Haji (2002),

... as a nation, the Oromo feel that they have been excluded from power though individuals were [and currently puppet organizations such as OPDO have been] co-opted into the structure of [Abyssinian dominated Ethiopian] state to better control and govern the empire [so that to exploit the Oromo resources and dominate them politically] since the Menelik's period right down to the current government. [... that is to say] the co-opted individuals, over a century [currently to OPDO have] represented no one but themselves, as there was no [and has not been] meaningful political arrangements to encourage power sharing and participation based on equality guaranteed by a legal framework or constitution.

He holds that the assumptions on the view are wrong as Ethiopian state has been dominated by "Amhara-Tigreans" except the involvement of few co-opted individuals serving only their personal interests and thus, used as a stool to legitimize the nominal participation of the oppressed mass.

Secondly, there has not yet been authentic democratic system that may provide the oppressed Oromo masses with convenient political space to address their national question. This is primarily due to the very nature of societal organization and political culture of the whole Abyssinians in general and the current Tigrean ruling groups in particular (Merera, 2003; Mekuria, 1996; Asafa, 2005). Therefore, Lamuu (1998:98) concludes *"the choice of complete integration in a centralized [Ethiopian] state may be very difficult for many of the nationality groups... because of their bitter memories of victimization by the Abyssinian minorities. ... the Amhara whose elite advocate for national unity and wish to return to the past."* Because of this, therefore, the proposal may not be sound in attempting to address the question of the oppressed Oromo masses on equal basis with the oppressors within a unified Ethiopia.

Regarding the second perspective, to some Oromo nationalists and others, attempting to address the Oromo national question within a centralized Ethiopian state seems to neglect the interests of the Oromo masses, with which the latter feels unsatisfied. Rather, when they argue, there should be a kind of arrangement of self-government for various regional groups constituting the country and that later in turn form a larger association on their voluntary basis (Lamuu, 1998).

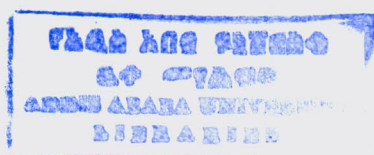
Regional autonomy includes the general models such as cultural, weak regional autonomy and strong political autonomy. According to proponents of this view, what the Oromo people choose as a better alternative to meet the demand for their national self-determination is only the last model, which provides the Oromo with the right to have control over their land and natural resources (Lamuu, 1998: 101-02). According to Buchheit's (See in Lamuu, *ibid*) internal dimension of self-determination is a democratic way of providing the Oromo national question with democratic solution that includes *"fair and free elections, full respect for democratic rights and trust among the national and population groups as well as genuine power-sharing."* The strong political autonomy has acceptance with the Oromo people; however, the acute problem may be its realization due to primarily the nature of the Ethiopian state. Based on the previous and current experience, there could be a strong resistance from the Abyssinian national groups. This is the fact beyond dispute when one seriously considers the nature of their societal organization and

political culture which is significantly marked by hierarchy and traditionally rigid (Mekuria, 1992:7-10; Merera, 2003:95-96).

Mekuria states that Abyssinian national groups don't let the Oromo nation control its formerly conquered and annexed lands and resources, over which they have been and are still competing even among themselves (1992:10). The Ethiopian state that has been dominated by these people was founded and has been survived on the lands and resources of the Oromo people. As a result, the Amhara elites are very reluctant to endorse any form of regional autonomy for the Oromo people. *"They may reject any redrawing of boundaries and the granting of autonomy on the national/ethnic lines"* since especially the settlers have been making, and will tend to make more of their own business from the Oromo resources and on the latter's lands in the name of "Ethiopian unity" (Lamuu, 1998:101).

The third subscribers (Asafa, 1992; 1993; 1998; 2005; Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; Mekuria, 1992 and organized movements like the OLF, 1976) to independence believe that the Oromo national question is purely a "colonial question" and hence it shouldn't be addressed within Ethiopian context. Rather, the Oromo national demand for self-determination would be genuinely abated through the quest for *"the emergence of sovereign and independent unit"* (Lamuu, 1998:98).

Heraclides (1991:20), Jeong (2000), and Meadwell (1999:262) argue that to the extent the regional autonomy and others are resisted and jettisoned, it provides the national groups with a fertile ground to actively strive towards the achievement of their political independence. That is to mean, to the proponents, failure of other options in addressing the Oromo problem within Ethiopia would indicate that the issue is the colonial question that seems to solely be abated with complete independence. They contend that the *"Oromo want a complete political freedom that allows the total destruction of the colonial system"* (Asafa 1992:16). This is because, when further argued (*Ibid*), the *"Oromo are tired of their subordinate position and serving the interests of others. They want to be their own masters [through achieving independent state] by determining their own destiny."*



As the advocates of the view strongly believe that the Oromo have been colonized, they argue that the Oromo demand for self-determination can successfully be satisfied through the establishment of independent Oromo state that can, once for all, take away their colonial oppression and anguish. However, there are some major of the problems with the implementation of the independence of Oromia. In the first place, subscribers of this view have failed to provide the territorial boundary of the would-be independent Oromia with any explanations on how the borders have to be determined and hence locate the exact map of the state (Sorenson, 1998). The other point at issue is that it could threaten the “territorial integrity” and “unity” of Ethiopia. This may affect significantly the interests of other national groups in the country since it could lead to the disintegration of the entire state and finally culminate in situation of war of all against all (Merera, 2003; Sorenson, 1998).

Moreover, there could be demonstration effect not only within the country but also in the region at large and destabilize the latter. Those who tend to jettison this view maintain that the complicated issues could arise with regard to, for example, the other Oromo national group in Kenya, the Afar, Somali and other national groups in the Horn and hence could lead the region to chaotic and anarchic situation. Similarly, what is equally important here is, this quest for independence has internationally generated insignificant sympathy as well.

In sum, three main proposals – democratized Ethiopia, strong regional autonomy and independence – have been forwarded on how to address Oromo national question for self-determination in relation with the future Ethiopia. The proposals are interesting as they may indicate the concerns of different scholars to come to grips

with the issue of Oromo national question in political and academic discourses. The discourses may help to put down the issue to an informed and free debate to come up with the best proposal that can successfully resolve the issue, though the ultimate solution and choice remain to be within the best interest of the Oromo people as a nation.

3.3 The Creation of the Modern Ethiopian Empire-State and Causes of the Oromo National Question

Creation of the Modern Ethiopian Empire-State

A major turning point in history of the Oromo people became evident in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the Abyssinians were provided with extensive modern European military weapons, advisers and diplomats conquered them (Asafa, 1995; 2005). Consequently, due to military imbalance between the Abyssinian succeeded in their many years attempt of conquering and incorporating the Oromo and other southern independent national groups into their militarily expanding empire, which finally culminated in the emergence and creation of the modern Ethiopian empire-state in the early twentieth century (Keller, 1995:265; Mekuria, 1992:5; Mohammed, 1991:13-14). Some scholars argue that it was at this time that the name "Ethiopia" came into being as a big and an extended form of the Abyssinian Christian Kingdom, historic Ethiopia, expanded through the conquest of the vast areas from the south of the present-day Ethiopia (Merera, 2003:57-58; Asafa, 1995:34). Thus, assisted external military, Emperor Menelik II fulfilled the Abyssinians imperial ambition of conquest and domination over the Oromo nation and the rest of the south.

It was basically for this significant external military assistance that the creation of modern Ethiopian empire-state and the conquest of the Oromo nation by the Abyssinians made possible. It is equally important that the European military provision not only helped them to be easily victorious but also further enabled the Abyssinian, particularly the Amhara, leaders to establish administrative and military colonies called military garrisons or *ketemas* in Oromo territory at a long distance from their home base (Mohammed, 1991:198). This in turn significantly helped Menelik to exploit huge Oromo resources and sustain his military and state (*Ibid*).

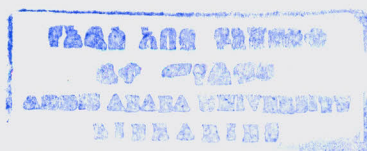
After their conquest, the Oromo people lost total independence in their every form of life: lost their nationhood and became stateless nation (Gemetchu,1996; Mohammed,1996); their land taken away and settled by and distributed to administrative agents, army settlers and the Orthodox Church (Mekuria, 2002:89 ; Mohammed, 1999:139 ; 2001:3 ; Asafa, 2001:2) ; lost their history and became people

without history; lost their culture and language that were ruthlessly replaced particularly by that of the Amhara ethnic group (Merera , 2003:2-3 ; Keller , 1995:265 ; Hamdesa , 1991:20). Further, their egalitarian *Gadaa* and other religious institutions were obliterated and the people became the second-class citizens, owing to which they began to have a subordinated relationship to the Abyssinian core from the late nineteenth century onwards (Mohammed, 1991:16 ; Gadaa , 1999:9). In other words, since the foundation of the modern Ethiopian state while it has been advantageous and fruitful for the Abyssinians the Oromo people have been marginalized in and discriminated against all; politically, economically, culturally (especially in pre-1991) .

Causes of the Oromo National Question

The causes of the Oromo national question are strongly linked to the establishment of the modern Ethiopian empire-state and its subsequent processes. Hence, most scholars maintain that various causes for the Oromo national question include colonial conquest and expansion; the way Ethiopian state was formed; lack of compatible interests between the Ethiopian state and the Oromo nation. In respect to the first, some contend that the Oromo people and their territory were colonized in the late 19th c. by the Abyssinians in conjunction with the then European colonial powers' project of scramble for Africa (Keller 1995: 625).

It is for this reason that the Ethiopia is not regarded as a state but as an 'empire' that had happened in the late 19th c when Menelik II scrambled for the Horn of Africa collaborating with the British, France, and Italy ((Heraclides, 1991; Neuberger, 1986). For example, like Somalia, Oromia was also divided between the Britain and the Ethiopian colonial powers for which the latter was portrayed by the Oromo and other national groups as the "Black imperialist" (Asafa, 1995:33; Neuberger, 1986:87). Here, most nationalists and liberation movements insist that the Ethiopian case is "Internal colonialism", relatively with other distant colonial system, which is very much brutal and harsh for which the Oromo people have considered themselves as colonial subjects (Neuberger, *ibid*: 87). Furthermore, it is important to note that Emperor Menelik himself justified that he intentionally participated in the project of conquering most of the Oromo and other southern peoples of the present-day Ethiopia. When he wrote a letter, "*I do not intend to*



remain silent when governments from the distance countries come to divide Africa among themselves" (quoted in Addis Hiwot, 1975:4). It is for this prime reason that the Oromo people have been striving for self-determination as a legitimate ground and fight against the Abyssinian colonial hegemony (Asafa, 1997:99; Keller, 1995: 625-26).

Thus, the manner in which the Ethiopian state was formed could be one of the causes for the Oromo national question. In other words, the historical process how nations have been brought under a multi-nation state they belong to significantly matters whether there is the demand for national self-determination or not. In this regard, Buchhiet (1978:3) argues:

If history were a chronicle of voluntary association and disassociation of human groups, there would be no need for a doctrine of self-determination. [He goes on arguing further that] it is the distinct absence of such a peaceful evolution of mankind's social organization which ultimately gave rise to the principle of self-determination as the... primary expression of disapproval of involuntary political organization.

Therefore, if a state is formed with conquest, violent annexation, or subjugation, it will give rise to the emergence of national question. Many writers noted that the modern Ethiopian state was created through war of massive military expansion to or through "*bloody political history of conquest*" of huge areas and people of the Oromo nation and other national groups (Merera, 2003:1 ; Seyoum, 1997a:16). In this process, as Brubaker (1996) and Meadwell (1999) indicate, the runner of this project was the Abyssinian national group or "ethnic core" while the victims of the project were other national groups such as the Oromo nation. Since then the latter finally has remained as a stateless nation and the former have been considered as the founders of the Ethiopian state.

Moreover, to maintain and consolidate the modern Ethiopian state, the Abyssinian rulers have attempted to create an artificial "*unified Ethiopian nation*" out of multinational groups despite the fact that there has been incompatibility between the Oromo nation and these "*ethnic cores*" representing the state (Mekuria, 1992:3-4). The lack of harmony between the state of the dominant core and the peripheral nation seems to have provoked the national question on the part of the Oromo people. Mekuria (1992:4) maintains that there "*have been many attempts [of the*

rulers] to create artificial [Ethiopian] nation to which [the Oromo] people were forced to be 'loyal'." The Oromo people were forced against their interest to accept the Amhara (or Ethiopian) identity under the guise of "nation-building" (Mohammed, 1991; Keller, 1998:111). This was done employing the scheme of Amharazation and de-Oromization of the people (and even their land) through educational system, cultural institutions and government bureaucracy (Mohammed, 2000:120; 1991:16). This was also carried out significantly through the settlement of the Amharas among the Oromo people (Mekuria, 1994, 2001:72). For example, the Amhara language was the only official language of the state and medium of instruction jettisoning that of the Oromo majority people.

Despite this and other attempts of building a "unified Ethiopian nation", "unity" or "single national "identity", which is tantamount to that of the Amhara in particular but that failed to be accomplished (Hamdesa, 1991:20), the Oromo people did not and do not have points of communality such as in political culture, psychological make up , future political agendas, history, etc.,) bringing them closer with the Abyssinians and establish strong unity in a nation (Mekuria, 1992:3-7 & 9). This implies that the natural boundary of the Oromo nation would not be compatible with the political boundary of the multination Ethiopian state. For instance, as some argue, "*many Oromo find it increasingly difficult to perceive themselves as Ethiopians [Habashas] at all, indeed they reject that nationality and describe themselves as Oromo [Cut]*" (Baxter, 1989, see Mekuria,1992:4 & Asafa, 2005). Mekuria adds (*Ibid*) that "*there is no time in their history when the Oromo have referred to themselves as Ethiopians*", or Abyssinians. For this reason, there has not yet been agreement between the Ethiopian rulers and the Oromo nation, which in turn enforces the latter to strive for self-determination. Mekuria (1992) notes that though the Abyssinians have worked hard to maintain Ethiopian unity and territorial integrity rejecting the Oromo demand for autonomy, the Oromo have been struggling to realize their aspiration for self-determination.

The Oromo have been denied the opportunity to determine their own fate and this has frequently given rise to a continuous conflict between the Amhara-Tgrean dominated Ethiopian state and the Oromo. The Oromo people usually take their pre- and especially post-conquest historical period as reference point for cause of their

national demand for self-determination. Perhaps to look after their pre-existing (primordial) values and hence maintain their independent nationhood, the Oromo people had made continuous and repeated clashes with the Abyssinian Christian Kingdoms before their conquest (Asafa, 1995; Keller, 1995). In the words of Neuberger (1986:44), the oppressed masses like the Oromo could calculate their historical hostilities of pre-conquest with the Abyssinian conquerors elucidating that they had never been one in history bringing them together, and hence this pre-conquest *"history mobilizes the people for [their] national self-determination...."*

The other important form of historical hatreds is related strongly to event of the post-conquest period when the Oromo nation became conquered and incorporated into the modern Ethiopian empire-state and lost its national and cultural identity, territory, name, origin (Mekuria, 1996; Mohammed, 1996; Gemetchu, 1996). It is the implications of this very process of military conquest that can define relationship between the historical hostilities and cause for Oromo national question. Mekuria (1992:5) says that *"while the Abyssinians were able to curb for themselves an empire to emerge as a dominant nation, the Oromo, along with their confiscated land, were distributed as gabbars (serfs) to Abyssinian colonialists-cum landlords, and became their subjects with a status comparable, in many respects, to that of slaves."* Both national groups interpret these historical episodes differently which the conquerors remember with national pride but the conquered Oromo people with defeats and humiliation.

This is to mean that the dominant groups and the Oromo people are at exactly deep-seated historical cleavages especially on how to interpret the history of modern Ethiopian state. Therefore, such incompatible and antagonistic historical hostilities and their memories tend to split for the reason that they can be reactivated at any time and provide the Oromo people with a fertile ground to struggle for their national self-determination (Mekuria, 1992:7).

While these are some of the root causes of the Oromo national question there are also some proximate causes serving as triggering factors of the Oromo quest for self-determination. After its foundation, this is usually the case in the process of consolidating and maintaining Ethiopian state. Not least of which are the nature of Ethiopian system manifesting the political culture of the dominant groups (Mekuria,

1992; 7). Because of such hierarchical and centralized nature of this political culture of domination and discrimination there have been great obstacles to provide the oppressed masses such as the Oromo people with open political rooms. This can serve as a triggering factor for the Oromo national question (Asafa, 2001:141; Keller, 1998:72; Mohammed, 1999:122-25; Seyoum, 1997c:130; Sorenson, 2000:46-47).

Other causes are related to the roles played by the external and domestic forces that, rather than attempting to facilitate for addressing the Oromo national question peacefully, aggravate and intensify the Oromo struggle for it. Since the very process of creation of modern Ethiopian empire state to its present day, there have been such forces contributing much to its consolidation at the expense of the oppressed Oromo masses like the Oromo people. With regard to external forces, it is the historical fact that military help of the colonial powers like Britain, France, Italy did a lot not only in helping the conquest and incorporation of the Oromo and other people into the Ethiopian empire state but also in creating and consolidating the modern empire state (Mekuria, 1996; Merera, 2003; Asafa, 2004; 1997; Sorenson, 1998; Robinson, 1997). Here, it is equally important to note that some used to assist and some others still assisting the successive Ethiopian rulers. Particularly, since 1991, external financial provisions made by such external donors as World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and even European Union (EU) and financial and military support by the US have been critical for the survival of the Ethiopian state and regime as well (Asafa, 1997,2000; 2005; Robinson,1997).

With respect to domestic forces, along with the historical ones, the current roles being played by the satellite organizations called the “Oromo people’s Democratic Organization” (OPDO) must not be underestimated to know and understand well about the Oromo problem under the existing regime. Both will be treated at some length in the next sub-section. But here, it suffices to raise important questions such as: what have been the responses of the successive Ethiopian rulers to the Oromo national question since the time of its emergence in the form of coordinated and united pan-Oromo movement and armed struggle? What about the subsequent effects as a reaction in the form of Oromo national struggle? These are to be seen in the next two sub-sections.

3.4 Responses of the Successive Ethiopian Regimes to the Oromo National Question

Having already dealt with some of its causes, it is imperative to look at the responses of the successive Ethiopian governments to the Oromo national question since 1960s. Although there were various uprisings and rebellions of the Oromo with limited objectives and scopes before (Merera, 2003:72), the 1960s was the time when the first Oromo association was established ushering in the commencement of a united and coordinated pan-Oromo national consciousness (Lamuu 1998:96). And, the 1970s was the period when this national consciousness was transformed into the national struggle for self-determination of the Oromo people with the creation of the OLF (Sorenson, 1998). Starting from the 1991, as Asafa (1998b, 1998c) and Mekuria (1996) argue, it has gained momentum in the form of massive struggle.

Against these attempts, there have been various responses (using military approach) by the imperial, military and the “federal democratic” regimes of Ethiopia. In the late 1960s, a serious measure was taken against the Macha-Tulama Association to destroy the newly emerging Oromo nationalism. Owing to its great credibility as *“the pioneer of modern Oromo nationalism”* and contributing much to *“self-awareness [of] the Oromo youth”*, the association was *“disbanded, – its leaders detained, silenced or killed”* by the then imperial regime (Merera, 2003:74). Military action was also taken by the government as a means to castigate the Bale armed movement that had strong relations with the association and contributed a lot to the rise of pan-Oromo national movement (Keller, 1995).

Consequently, as the offspring of both the association and the Bale movement, the OLF was created in 1974 with the main objective of the quest for national self-determination (Mohammed, 1996:77). The establishment of the OLF culminated in the mobilization of the majority of the Oromo people with its ideological fire, Oromo nationalism. Because of this, it can be said that this was a new stage that transformed social movement into a political action. To Mohammed (1996:77), it is in view of such logic that the OLF political program clearly stressed the Oromo national demand not only within but also without Ethiopian context as well.

After the broke out of the Ethiopian revolution in 1974, although the Oromo people accepted and hoped that the new military regime would address their national demand for self determination (Asafa, 1998b:11), Seyoum argues (1997c:130) that “*subversion rather than seeking constructive solution was the response*” of the regime. That is, the *Dergue* regime did little to basically transform the Ethiopian state fundamentally different from the past regime’s policy of centralization of power and prevalence of ethnic hegemony (*Ibid*: 131). Merera (2003:79) further adds that the government “*remained prisoners of the imperial past and with less than eager to resolve the national inequalities that had precipitated the revolution.*” The reason was that the *Dergue* was:

not only poorly equipped to transform Ethiopia, but also [...it] had vested interest in maintaining the colonial status quo in Oromia. For that purpose [...it] adopted a philosophy of “Ethiopia First,” which was based on primarily of Ethiopian nationalism and the idea of one indivisible Ethiopia [which was against the Oromo national question but promoting ...the] Amhara-dominated state (Mohammed, 2000:145).

Like the previous regime, Asafa argues (2001:142), the military junta engaged in “*nation building*” project using various strategies to downplay the interests of the oppressed Oromo and other peoples. For example, despite its some positive modifications, the 1975 land reform failed to abate the grave exploitation of Oromo peasants (Leencoo, 1999:196). In response to the various national questions the military regime also came up in 1976 with a façade declaration of National Democratic Revolution Program (NDRP) (Merera, 2003:82). Though it “*was the first official policy that recognized Ethiopia’s national diversity*” (Leencoo, *ibid*: 200), the program simply remained as an empty gesture (Mohammed, 2000:146). Consequently, its promises of equality and self-determination were devoid of implementation and hence suppression of the Oromo and other national minorities invariably continued (Lamuu, 1998:95; Mekuria, 1996:64-65; 2002; 216; Seyoum, 1997c:130).

Weeding out those who struggle for self-determination from their base area was also another strategy used by the regime. In the case of the Oromo, Mohammed argues (1996:78) that the “*military regime was able to contain and isolate the OLF from the [Oromo] people and limit them to small areas of Hararghe, Bale and Wollega.*” When he further notes (*Ibid*), it used “*policies of resettlement, villagization and collectivization... mainly for the purpose of containing Oromo nationalism and*

isolating the OLF from its mass base.” Accordingly, the regime resettled a huge number of people from the north in Oromia among the Oromo people in order to control the expansion of the Oromo nation, which severely affected the lives of the Oromo masses in many respects (Mekuria, 2002; Mohammed, 2000: Leencoo, 1999).

When the armed struggle of the Oromo and other national movements fueled and highly intensified in the 1980s (Keller, 1995:629), the *Dergue* came up again with a “*regional autonomy formula*” that was “*resurrected in the constitution of 1987*” (Merera, 2003:83). Although an attempt was made for some regions (like Asab, Eritrea, Tigray, Dire Dawa) that took little advantage of this program, almost no attention was paid to the issue of the Oromo masses. Finally, the regime discarded the regional autonomy status and opted for the military means as the only solution for the question of nationalities, which finally precipitated in its downfall in 1991 (Mohammed, 1996:78). Merera concludes (2003:83-84) that “*from day one Ethiopia’s inept military elite applied what can be termed a military method to solve all the country’s societal [or national] problems*” and hence, such “*method instead of solving daunting [the] problems provoked massive resistance from any quarters, which finally sealed the fate of the military regime itself in May 1991.*”

By 1991 the Tigrean People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and its umbrella organization, the EPRDF, were able to control the Ethiopian state and soon moved to setup a transitional government (Keller, 1995:629). This was done after the signing of the charter by a number of political movements, typical of which was the OLF. The OLF was one of the co-authors of the Charter and it participated in identifying the core issues in order to peacefully resolve the Oromo national question and similar demands. For instance, the main provision in the Charter reads, the “*right of all Ethiopian nationalities to self-determination [up to secession]; the identity of each would be preserved, and each would have the right to govern its own affairs...*” (see Keller, 1995: 630). These and other democratic values constituting the transitional charter provided the Oromo and other victims of the past injustice with the rising expectations. However, the problem revolving around the 1992 elections was the best testimony to whether the Oromo met their demand for national self-determination or not (Asafa, 1998b:15-17; Keller, 1995:631-32). In this connection, Asafa (*Ibid*: 15) argues that the great “*hope of a democratic transition was dashed*”, and that the new

leaders “*opted for the continuation of Ethiopian colonial domination through brutal force*” as its predecessors.

All of these were and have been carried out basically by using a huge financial and military assistance externally from America and through manufacturing a domestic puppet, the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO) (Asafa, 1997; 2001; Temesgen, 1997). As we shall see below, these external and domestic forces have contributed much to the obstruction of building a democratic system as well as the demand for national self-determination of the Oromo and other peoples in Ethiopia.

3.5 Roles of External and Internal Catalysts in Sustenance of the Ethiopian Empire System

As raised before, the role of the west, particularly of the US-America, in Ethiopian politics has been paramount especially in suppressing the Oromo national question. Historically, though the imperial regime was the best ally of the US and took the advantage of economic and military assistance to cope up primarily with its internal challenges, the military regime was not. It was an anti-US government not for its dictatorial nature, but simply for the best patron of the Eastern communist bloc had been the then USSR (Robinson, 1997:4-5). However, the US assistance to the TPLF against the *Dergue* was very significant, especially in the 1980s and its great contribution to the capturing of Ethiopian state by the EPRDF must not be underestimated (Asafa, 2000:68). But what are the real interests of the US currently in Ethiopia? What about the interest of the latter’s incumbent government?

Because of such issues within its foreign policy as “*free market*”, “*promotion of democracy*” etc., the US began to intervene in Ethiopia after the end of the Cold War with the political slogan of “*No democracy; No cooperation*” (Asafa, 1997;2000; Pollock, 1997; Robinson, 1997). As the result of this, the oppressed masses in Ethiopia, like the Oromo people, were with high expectation that they could meet their demand for national self-determination which they were deprived of for many years (Lamuu, 1998:88-89). That is, they thought that the US, unlike the pre-1991 period, “*would no longer have any reason to block aspirations for authentic democratization ...[against the] popular majorities, and ... the liberation of the*

oppressed groups and nationalities" (Robinson, *ibid*:5). Which democracy American has been claiming to promote in Ethiopia is a point of controversy and difficult to understand especially in light of the Oromo demand for self-determination. In this connection, as Robinson has observed:

What the US policy makers mean when they use the term democracy is actually what political scientist Robert Dahl (1971) has termed *Polyarchy*, a system in which a small group actually rules and mass participation in decision-making is confined to leadership choice in elections that are carefully managed by competing elites. [To the author]..., "Promoting democracy" what they really mean promotion of polyarchy or ... alternatively called "low-intensity democracy" (*Ibid*: 6).

The explanation here is that what the US attempts to build in Ethiopia has not been popular democracy, but which satisfies only its interest and that of the Ethiopian ruling elites and their supporters. This democracy is a real threat to the Oromo and other people struggling for popular democracy. This has been what the TPLF dominated Ethiopian regime practicing with strong support from and careful advice of the US America. Consequently, given this assumption, *"disappointment was [and has been] very great among Oromos when United States, following the May 1991 collapse of the Mengistu regime, facilitated the seizure of power by, and threw its support behind, a new and equally repressive Tigrean regime that has continued to deny the Oromo majority their fundamental human rights and freedoms"* (Robinson, *ibid*:1-2). Therefore, the intention of both is not to bring about popular democracy that the Oromo masses could take its advantage. It is, however, their strategy with which they could establish cordial relationship with each other and promote their interests. In the words of Pollock (1997:81), their relationship has been framed on the basis of *"a marriage of convenience"* that serves vested interests on both sides.

Accordingly, the real interest of America in the region in general and in Ethiopia in particular is, together with the economic exploitation, the containment of the expansion of radical Islam or *"Islamic fundamentalism"* in the name of terrorism (Asafa, 2000:68). Ethiopia has been the best ally in furthering this target in the region, the author adds (*Ibid*), for which as *"a trusted and important friend of America ... the Ethiopian ... [government is] the only one in the region"* whom the US could depend upon to counter the *"menace of fundamentalism."* In turn, the Tigrean regime has been and is still securing both financial and military assistance mainly

from the US and from those international institutions it can easily manipulate. The same scholar argues that this has significantly contributed to the statist nature of the Ethiopian state and its regime stability (*Ibid*). Pollock similarly adds (1997:85), “*through military and economic support, the West [US] has perpetuated centralized control of brutal dictatorial regimes [in Ethiopia], whilst turning a blind eye to atrocities committed by these regimes [against the Oromo majority].*”

With such strategy, the EPRDF has been suppressing the Oromo struggle for national self-determination under the guise of “terrorism”. And, despite officially promoting “democratic” political discourse, it practically contradicts and jettisons the Oromo national question (Asafa, 2000:69). No less serious, in the pretext of suppressing “terrorism” and maintaining “*territorial integrity of Ethiopia*” the US government has favored the subordination of the Oromo people to the interest of the Tigrean-dominated EPRDF regime as inherited from and extension of the previous Amahara domination (*Ibid*: 69). To this end, the Ethiopian government has usually been portraying the political movements based on the Oromo people as “*bandits*” or “*terrorists*” to secure US financial and military assistance (Asafa, 2000:69), or sometimes as “*anti-democracy*”, “*peace*” or “*development*” domestically to suppress the Oromo nationalists in the name of OLF.

In short, the incumbent government has been pursuing the same objective of dominating the state power like its past predecessors with different but thorough strategy. Based on the political environment of their day, the past successive Ethiopian rulers used Christianity, popular revolution and socialism, while the current regime uses democratic political discourse “*to legitimize Ethiopian state power without changing the essence of its brutality, criminality, authoritarianism, and terrorism*” (Asafa, 2000:70; Lamuu, 1998:88). Such system of Abyssinian domination over the Oromo people has also been internally depending upon some Oromo co-opted and collaborationist agents essentially enforcing the Amhara-Tigrean domination and exploitation (Temesgen, 1997:116; Merera, 2003:126).

In fact, this strategy was started by the Menelik II in the very process of “making Ethiopia” by co-opting such Oromo generals as Gobana Dache. And the same strategy is currently applied by the incumbent government, which uses the Oromo People’s

Democratic Organizations (OPDO) as its “surrogate” or “satellite organization” or sometimes named as “neo-Gobanas” (Aneesa, 2002:11 ; Temesgen, 1997: Abbas Haji, 2002). The agents like the OPDO are appendages which devote much of their time and energy in helping the suppression of their people for trivial economic and political advantages from their Abyssinian patrons (Temesgen, *ibid*: 116). This is what has made easy to suppress the Oromo national question. As another scholar argues, the OPDO are one of those People’s Democratic Organizations (PDOs) created by the Tigrean elites just to implement their divide and rule policy among the Oromo and other peoples so that its “hegemonic aspiration” could be met (Merera, 2003:114).

The point at issue here is the creation of OPDO, devoid of legitimate ground from the Oromo mass, has been aimed primarily at promotion of the dominance of Abyssinian ethnic core at the expense of the Oromo and other people’s quest for self-determination. Although the government officially claimed that “*regionalization policy is to promote the decentralization of power [in Oromia through OPDO]..., at the level of practical policies [i]t... has quickly evolved into new type of domination [of state power]*” (Merera, 2003:124). Any form of local or regional government set up in line with this in Oromia are, the author adds (*Ibid*), neither democratic nor autonomous to meet the Oromo quest for self-determination. This is because everything is under the total domination of the government with the understanding that “*TPLF controls and gives orders to the regional governments [of such as Oromia led by OPDO] through its own hardcore cadres who have the last say in all important decision*” (Merera, *ibid*). Therefore, “*understanding the powerlessness of the Oromo intermediaries in Ethiopian colonial system, most Oromo rejected the OPDO and called it ‘Maxxannee’, which means that it is “the organization that doesn’t have its own independent existence” and hence attached to the TPLF to serve the Habasha interest*” at the expense of that of the Oromo as a nation (Asafa, 1998b:14).

When the Oromo people and their organizations have been resisting such a strategy, the government usually opts for and using military action rather than democratic solution specifically through such puppet organizations. As Asafa notes in this regard, against the Oromo people, the government arbitrarily meddled “*in the internal affairs of Oromia through its army and the surrogate organization, the OPDO,*

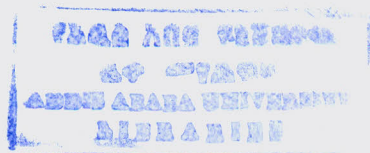
conducted a series of war of aggression and violated [the constitution] by intimidating, killing, imprisoning, and torturing Oromos [in the name of] supporting OLF” (Ibid: 16).

To sum up this part, though it usually talks about “*democracy*”, practically, the Tigrean dominated-EPRDF regime has been attempting carefully to satisfy its ambition of domination and centralization of state power replacing that of the past dominant core with which it shares an ethnic affinity (Lamuu, 1998:88). And consequently, ensuring domination of the Oromo people through closer control of the OPDO and with the military and economic assistance of the US, the TPLF/EPRDF is institutionalizing a de facto one-party, which in turn has been foundering the hoped for democratic transformation of the country (Lamuu, 1998:89; Merera, 2003).

3.6 Struggle of the Oromo Against the Continued Domination and Development of their Quest for Self-Determination

It has been clear so far that the conjuncture of various factors caused the Oromo national question. Similarly, it is evident that the successive Ethiopian rulers have been and are still downplaying the Oromo national demand for self-determination using various political discourses and strategies but with the same agenda of domination. Hence, what is left for the Oromo people is either to accept the Ethiopian state’s unjust system or challenge it with any possible means. This last sub-section takes up the Oromo people’s responses to the continuing domination.

To begin with, the domination by Abyssinian ethnic core had been resisted in various forms and areas by the Oromo people since their conquest in general, and they have been waging political and armed struggles since the 1970s in particular. Since the conquest and forceful incorporation into the Ethiopian empire state, the Oromo people have been resisting the hegemony of Abyssinian empire builders in one form or another (Mekuria, 1992:7; Asafa, 2005:175; Keller, 1995:626). Specifically before the 1960s, there were recurrent resistances in the form of uprisings, revolts, etc, in different areas of the Oromo against the Amhara settlers, typical of which were the Raya-Azabo revolt (1928-30), the Western Oromo Confederacy (in 1936) and others (see Keller, 1995:630; Sorenson, 1998: 225). For instance, as Mohammed observes (1991:17) the “*Oromo did not accept the domination of the armed-settlers without*



resistance. Between the 1880s, when the Oromo were conquered and colonized, and 1936, when the Italians occupied Ethiopia, there had never been a single decade which was not characterized by the Oromo resistance and revolt in different parts of Oromo territory."

However, these widespread resistances were short of coordination. As the same author adds (*Ibid*), it is "owing to the lack of central leadership, the absence of communication, the long distance involved, and the tight control of armed-settlers [*naftanya that*], even neighboring Oromos failed to coordinate their resistances." This is to mean that such resistances were highly isolated and uncoordinated with limited scopes and objectives in relation to what took place after the 1960s, particularly in the mid-1970s (Merera, 2003:72&151; Mohammed, 1991:17). It was for this prime reason that the "clear signs of Oromo nationalist aspirations did not surface again until" the second half of the 20th century (Keller, 1995:267). Asafa has characterized it, the pre-1960s Oromo resistance is termed as the "first phase" while that of the post-1960s is the "second phase" (2005:175). It is this latter stage of resistance that is taken as the turning point of the Oromo struggle for their national self-determination. Here, it is important to note that there were two forms of struggle against the imperial regime — in the early period of the "second phase".

As the same scholar has indicated this:

The first [type of struggle] was started by urban-based Oromo intellectuals, army officers, soldiers, politicians, students, and merchants who could not tolerate colonial discrimination and mistreatment. In the 1960s, these groups created the social movement known as the Macha-Tulama Self-Help-Association [1963-1967]; the colonial government's opposition to this [these] group[s] transformed it into a political movement. The second type of the struggle in the second phase was the Bale Oromo farmer movement [1963-70], which gradually developed into a loosely organized armed struggle (Asafa, *ibid*).

From this, one can easily infer that it was with the establishment of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association and of the peasant revolt in Bale that the Oromo nationalist aspirations began to surface among the wider section of the Oromo people. "These two developments marked the beginning of an Oromo redefinition of their relationship with the Ethiopian colonialists", which ushered in, as Asafa further notes (*Ibid*: 179), the period of the "rise of Oromo nationalism." Particularly, the association "marked the beginning of a new political experience that was crucial to

the growth of Oromo nationalism in the 1970s" (Mohammed, 1996:74). It was following the creation of the association that Oromo leaders of various regions started to come together, for the first time, to form a centrally coordinated and led movement, which began to define the future direction of the Oromo nation (Asafa, 2005:178-79). Therefore, this was a watershed in Oromo history that culminated in the beginning of a coordinated and united Oromo activities, and hence marking the commencement of their pan-Oromo national identity and consciousness (Asafa, *ibid*; 179; Mohammed, 1996:76). As noted earlier, it was here that tens and thousands of Oromo people from different areas and with different religions met and seriously discussed how their nation had been subject to economic exploitation and political oppression (*Ibid*; Mohammed, 1996). Consequently, the Macha-Tulama Association was able to create a new political *"experience that taught the Oromo elites that they needed a liberation movement that would Marshall the resources of their people, harmonize their actions and channel their creative activities against the oppressive Ethiopian system"* (Mohammed, *ibid*: 74).

Along with the Bale armed revolt, the association contributed to the emergence of the OLF, a more militant and organized movement that has come to champion the Oromo national armed struggle (*Ibid*: 76). The establishment of the OLF was, therefore, Mekuria writes (1996: 58), the *"third stage [of struggle that] commenced as elites began to build their own organizations and form an armed front to demand the [1960s cultural and linguistic] rights. Thereafter, the struggle for these rights were conducted particularly by those who opted for [not only regional autonomy but also] independence. Thus, what started as cultural nationalism [in the 1960s] transformed gradually into political nationalism [in 1970s].* The OLF came into being in 1974 as an offspring of the association and the Bale movement to achieve *"national self-determination for the Oromo people and their liberation from oppression and exploitation in all their forms. This can only be realized through successful consummation of the new democratic revolution...and the establishment of the people's democratic republic of Oromia"* (Asafa, 2005:189-90). What is important here is that the demand of the Oromo people for equality or citizenship right in the 1960s was changed into their demand for national self-determination with the establishment of the OLF in 1970s (Mekuria, 1996; Mohammed, 1996; Keller, 1995). As Mohammed contends (1996:77), it was the then *"Ethiopian*

government's brutality [that] produced the Oromo elite's rejection of Ethiopian identity itself" and that after a decade the Oromo politics became never the same again.

In a similar vein, after his field research in Oromia for many years, H.S. Lewis concluded that during *"the period from 1970 to 1990 the Oromo became far more deeply involved in modern sectors and thus became increasingly politically aware and involved"* in the struggle for national demand (1996:43). Such development of the Oromo national struggle has become the nightmare to the successive Ethiopian governments. After the 1974 Ethiopian revolution in general and since 1980s in particular the *"military government perceived the Oromo struggle as an extremely dangerous development and resorted to ruthless measures including killing, detaining, and keeping suspected Oromos in jail in order to wipe out the movement"* (Lamuu, 1998:86). Many Oromos, who were highly suppressed by the military regime, accepted the liberation movements such as the OLF, and decided to struggle against the regime (Lamuu, 1998:87), which finally precipitated its downfall in 1991. With the intensification of the Oromo national struggle in the post-1991 period, as Mekuria puts (1996:58), *"...the Oromo struggle became a mass movement and entered its fourth and current phase."*

Although the Oromo people had the rising expectation that their exploitation and oppression – which they endured for hundreds of years would end under the new government – they have continued suffering under a new system of domination (Lamuu, 1998; Asafa, 1998a; Sorenson, 1998). As noted before, democracy has been used as a political discourse through which the government attempts to ensure its *"hegemonic aspirations"* just like its predecessors (Lamuu, 1998; Merera, 2003; Asafa, 2005; Sorenson, 1998). The EPRDF has been using the policy of consistently and systematically containing the Oromo independent organizations. For this reason, the OLF left the system and has continued its armed struggle while others (like the ONC and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement, OFDM) have joined the struggle in the peaceful quest for the Oromo national self-determination (Merera, 2003). Surprisingly even those that have opted constitutional way of struggle have been frustrated by the divide and rule strategy of the ruling party. The latter has continued to weaken them, particularly the ONC, whose members have been

invariably harassed, killed, detained, etc., following the 2005 elections. By virtue of these and other non-democratic behaviors of the new regime, the Oromo people and their political organizations see the present regime as the continuation of the past – this has left them with no choice except intensifying their struggle for self-determination. In this connection, as Lamuu (1998:91) has correctly observed:

Tigrean-led regime is following the traditional pattern of state control by the Abyssinians even though with some tactical differences [pursued such as in the name of democracy]. [As a general fact, both] Amhara and Tigrean nationalists do not tolerate genuine power-sharing empire. Both [of them] have particularly feared the Oromo, [...] [Because of this... they] have used the Machiavellian technique of divide and rule to weaken and dominate the Oromo. Both of them have seized Oromo property for their own people's use. Both of them have jailed, killed and destroyed Oromo nationals who should sympathy for the Oromo cause. Both of them competed with each other over the Oromo while keeping the Oromo down. Both of them have relied on foreign powers to obtain financial, military and diplomatic support to prevail over the Oromo [...]. Both of them have used a few Oromo's to create an illusion of representation for the sake of domestic and international opinion. [It is therefore] such continuous maltreatment that has forced the Oromo to re-examine their status and continue the armed [and constitutional] struggle for self-determination.

It is against these mistreatments and injustices that the Oromo people are currently struggling. Accordingly, to Lamuu (*Ibid*: 90), the Oromo national struggle is currently “*broadening and widening, passing from the elite and encompassing all segments of the society including the peasants.*” He further explains (*Ibid*) that because, “*millions of Oromos believe that their nation has been and is unfairly oppressed first by the Amhara and currently by the Tigreans. Oromo nationalists are angry that Oromia is occupied by what they see as alien forces [... and are] tortured in their homeland for no crimes committed, but simply for being Oromos.*” Therefore, as Asafa argues in a similar vein (1992:16), the “*Oromo are tired of their subordinate position and serving the interests of others. They want to be their own masters by determining their own destiny [that can only be realized through the quest for national self-determination].*” This is how the Oromo nationalists, scholars and the people at large are reacting against the responses of the successive Ethiopian rulers and their supporters in general and the current government in particular.

To sum up: since its modern form of inception, whatever the sources of its legitimization might have been; imperial, revolutionary, democratic, the Ethiopian state has remained the expression of the Abyssinian “ethnic core”(Abbas Haji, 2002). And as such, it has largely incarnated their vested political, economic, cultural

interests. Because of this, the state is beyond reluctant to give serious attention to the Oromo national question to be addressed even within the context of a united Ethiopia in the form of genuine regional autonomy. The regimes have rather preferred military approach to peaceful way to address the Oromo national demand. Consequently, the struggle of the Oromo people for self-determination has continued more intensely across the Horn with serious implications for inter-state relations in the sub-region. This is the central concern of the chapter to follow.

Chapter Four

The Oromo National Question and Its Implications for Inter-state Relations in the Horn

4.1 Introduction

As the core part of the study, this chapter seeks to make analysis on the implications of the Oromo national struggle for Ethiopian inter-state relations in the Horn region. This is to be done in light of the theoretical explanation already dealt with under the second chapter. To this end, it is organized into three principal sections. A cursory look would be made in the first section with respect to the nature of inter-state relations in the Horn by taking its core states (including Kenya) into consideration. Here, focusing on domestic conditions as their major causes, attempts would be made to give the overview of conflicts prevailing in those states as well as the pattern of interactions among them in the sub-region.

The second section takes up two main tasks lumping them together. Using the logic of the theoretical explanation already given, the first principal task of this section is the identification and explanation of the major implications of the Oromo national struggle in the Ethiopian Empire-state for its relations with the immediate neighbors in the region. The second task is dealing with the patterns of actions, responses or involvements the states make regarding the Oromo problem and also presumably the consequent reactions on the Ethiopian side. The concern of the last section is discussing on the over all regional implications of the Oromo people's struggle for national self-determination.

4.2 The Nature of Inter-state Relations in the Horn of Africa

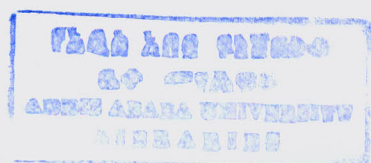
The Horn of Africa – comprising such core states as Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, including Kenya – has been one of the most conflict-ridden and unstable sub-regions of the continent. It is a site of not only endemic intrastate but also inter-state conflicts for many decades (Lyons, 1996; Medhane, 2003). It has always been the case that the former transform themselves into the latter and hence defining remarkably the nature of interactions among the countries in the region.

Which means, *“internal issues ... get transformed into inter-state issues quite readily”* in the Horn of Africa (Ayooob, 1995), in which the internal ones are the principal sources (causes) in defining and characterizing its inter-state relations. A cursory look at each state’s internal conflicts, for better understanding of their consequent reflections in the pattern of inter-state conflictual relations, deserves here a prime concern.

Internal conflicts have been defining almost all states in the region. Particularly since their independence, the recurrent outright civil wars have been the common marks of Sudan and Somalia, including Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, there were and have been various liberation movements with different political objectives (Lyons, 1996; Woodward, 1996). For example, EPLF (1961-1991) and TPLF (1975-1991), the former achieved its independence and the latter seized Ethiopian state power in 1991. Others like the OLF and ONLF, which are still struggling, have been posing a threat to the security of the Ethiopia to date. Similarly, in the case of Sudan, there have been intra-state wars raging for many years, which have not yet fully resolved. First, the Anya Nya military arm (1969-72) of the Southern Sudanese Liberation Movement (SSLM) and later, the Southern People’s Liberation Army (SPLA, 1983 to the present), along with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA, 1989), were and have been domestic forces contesting against the successive regimes in Khartoum, particularly to the current northern dominated National Islamic Front (NIF) (Woodward, 1996).

With regard to Somalia, since its date of independence the regimes had been, on the one hand, preoccupied with the interests of few clans at the expenses of the others. On the other hand, they were with the expansionist dream of “Greater Somalia”, which both finally culminated in total collapse of not only the recent past regime, of Siad Barre, but also the state itself. Now, it has signaled a site of anarchy and disorder (war of all against all among the clan lords) since 1991.

Together with the above states, Eritrea also came into being as a new independent entity in the region of the Horn in 1991. After engagement in thirty years deadly and disruptive conflicts with Ethiopia, there should have been peace for its population. But after few years of its independence, Eritrea began to face challenges from internal tension and conflict. Particularly, lowland Moslems are the victims of political and



economic marginalization by the EPLF-Led government, which precipitated the Eritrean Islamic Jihad or later Salvation Movement (EIJ/SM) against this Christian dominated central unit (Medhane, 2003:37).

Finally, other states, notably Djibouti and Kenya, are regarded as the “*relatively peaceful enclaves*” but “*consumers of security*” problems from their neighbors in the region (Medhane, 2003:41). Despite the intermittent challenges of the Afar insurgent movement in the 1980s and 1990s as a minority group in Djibouti, and resource related conflicts in rift valley areas in Kenyan, both states have been taken, internally, as stable in relation to others in the region. However, same author notes (*ibid*: 49), they have been always under security threat for the spill over effects of internal conflicts from their immediate neighbors.

In connection with this, what is quite essential and to which serious attention should be paid here is, all those conflicts domestic in origin, as noted earlier and shall be further elucidated below, have always interlinkages and significant regional repercussions destabilizing relations of the neighboring states in the Horn. That is, internal conflicts are the principal causes for the hostile linkages of the region’s inter-state relations (Woodward, 1996:3-4). Similarly Medhane argues (2003:50) that internal problems of a state in the Horn usually affect and have links with that of the neighbors and hence defining its relations with them in conflictual terms. It is with this understanding, as Ayoob (1995) asserted in the theoretical explanation, that rather than cooperative, inter-state relations of neighbors (such as of the Horn) can best be explained in terms of conflictual aspect. In other words, this conflict may either take its overt (direct) or latent (hidden) forms in elucidating the hostile relations of the states sharing common borders, ethnic groups and the like.

Furthermore, with the logic of the same author, their cooperative interdependences in such as economic and other areas in the Horn are by far less significant than the conflictual ones (*Ibid*). Rather the states are usually preoccupied with their incompatible but interlinked domestic security issues. This is to mean that in the foreign policy decisions of the states in the Horn, the security issues (of the states and their regimes) always take precedence over the other areas of cooperation (Lyons, 1996:85). Therefore, it is this prime domestic problem (of security) that significantly

determines and defines the nature of a state's relations vis-à-vis its immediate neighbors in the region. This is because, as Lyons explains further (*Ibid*: 86), any problem related to security within the state can easily transform into the neighbors' problems and consequently define its relations with them. And, as to the same author:

[Horn states are those] whose "primary security concerns link [them] together sufficiently [and] closely that their national securities can not realistically be considered apart from one another". For example, Somali policies to create a "Greater Somalia" state that included ethnic Somalis living in Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti led to a series of conflicts from 1960 until the late 1980s. [Particularly,] Ethiopia and Somalia fought a brief border skirmish in 1963-1964 and a major war in the Ogaden in 1977-1978 and [hence] supported insurgent groups and proxy forces throughout the period (*Ibid*:85).

Consequently, as he further notes, their domestic problems that had linkages but incompatible led to series of inter-state wars between Ethiopia and Somalia before the virtual collapse of the latter in 1991. Just to weaken each other, their respective regimes of the day assisted one another's opposition groups using the logic of "*my enemy's enemy is my friend*" in perspective.

Again, after the disintegration of Somalia, the same strategy has been pursued by both states, particularly on Ethiopian side. Although the EPRDF-led Ethiopian regime used to take cross-border military operation in some areas of Somalia in response to the Islamist and other rebel groups attacks against it before the late 1990s, the "*Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000 led to the intensification of the civil war in Somalia as it became a proxy battle ground for both disputant countries*" (Medhane, 2003:45). "*Given weak sovereignty and permeable borders*" of Somalia, Ethiopia has been funneling its supports to the war lords whom it favors against others in the area and its regional rival, Eritrea, which has also been doing the same thing on its side (*Ibid*: 47). Here, the point at issue is, instability from an internal conflict of state is usually transmitted to neighboring state simply because the neighbor suffers from similar conditions. Furthermore, detailed analysis shall be made under the implications part specifically with respect to the current involvements of Ethiopia and Eritrea in Somalia and how it has taken the regional dimension as well.

The other case is regarding Ethiopia and Sudan. As Lyons has observed (1996:85):

Sudan provided critical refuge to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which was [the then] seeking independence from Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s; Ethiopia, in turn, supported southern Sudanese rebel movements (first the Anya Nya until, 1972, then the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement and Army [SPLM/A] from 1983-1991).

The implication of his observation is that internal and external conflicts are tied to each other in security terms and consequently worsening the relations between the two concerned states before the end of the Cold War by using *tit-for-tat* policy. However, after the violent toppling of the Military regime in Ethiopia, with a great contribution of successive Khartoum regimes to the EPLF, which led Eritrea to independence, and to the TPLF-led EPRDF, which captured state power in the rest of the country, there had been cordial relations initially with the National Islamic Front (NIF) -led Sudanese government. Later from 1995 to 1998, it became tense and hostile for the latter's aggressive ideology (export of Islam) in the region and Ethiopia's grave concern of the threat to its national security (Medhane, 2003:34-35). Consequently, confrontation between Sudan on the one hand and Ethiopia and Eritrea on the other escalated because of the NIF's aggressive attempts to export political Islam to the rest of the region. For instance, Eritrea supported opposition forces against Muslim-dominated Khartoum government from which Islamic Jihad movements sought support against Eritrea (*Ibid*).

Ethiopia, as the core state of the Horn sharing common borders with all others, has continued to have a grave security concern, by which it defines at least its latent conflictual relations with not only Sudan but also Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya and Somalia (Medhane, 2003:44). One crucial element defining the nature of inter-state relations in the Horn, and even beyond has been the Ethio-Eritrea war. Politically speaking, both regimes have been obsessed with their respective domestic hegemonic positions presumably to cope up with their internal problems. This internal hegemonic project has got transformed into its regional dimension within which both dominant political elites tend to make regional rivalry over rank and status (Iyob, 1993: 261; Medhane, *ibid*: 38-39). This finally brought them into high intensity inter-state war that lasted from 1998 to 2000. From this time on wards, together with pursuing *tit-for-tat* policy (supporting of their respective opposition movements

against one another), they have been using the weak Somalia state for proxy battle ground and hence destabilize the region at large.

In view of this, the nature of inter-state relations in the Horn region should fundamentally be defined and explained in conflictual rather than cooperative terms, whose principal roots are domestic in origin (Lyons, 1996:86; Zartman, 1996:52). In a nutshell, since the 1960s, internal conflicts inflicting almost all states of the region have been shaping the feature of their relations in general and remarkably that of Ethiopia, which is sharing at least common borders and national groups with all of them.

These domestic conflicts have been quite readily affecting the immediate neighbors, for example, in the form of refugees, breakdown of economic transactions, cross-border armed movements and destabilization, mutual subversion, etc., and consequently marking the region with instability (Lyons, 1996; Woodward, 1996). The Oromo struggle for national self-determination is one of those domestic conflicts affecting Ethiopian relations with its immediate neighbors. The key questions in this regard are:

- How has the Oromo quest for national self-determination affected Ethiopian inter-state relations since the 1970s in general and 1990s in particular?
- What have been the major (actual and possible) implications of the struggle for those states?
- How have the states involved in (responded to) these?

These questions are to be addressed under a section to follow.

4.3 The Implications of the Oromo National Question for Inter-state Relations in the Horn

As noted in the theoretical part, violent internal conflicts within a state can have adverse implications for the relations with its neighbors. Needless to say, not least of which are problems related to refugees, economy, military, stability and inter-state confrontations/clashes (Brown, 1996; Stedman; 1996). And also, neighboring states may respond to these (and consequently the home state may react) depending upon their motives that could either be for affective or instrumental reasons.

4.3.1 The Implications of the Oromo National Struggle for Ethio-Djibouti Relations

The failure to provide the Oromo national question with a viable solution and the people's continued struggle in Ethiopia has some implications for the latter's relations with the tiny state of the Horn, called Djibouti. Notably, refugee problems, economic repercussions, and the related ones can be cited here. Although Djibouti has relatively been taken as the stable state like Kenya in the region (Medhane, 2003), its relations with Ethiopia has been suffering covertly (latent conflict) from the Oromo refugee problems therein.

Generally, after the time of the Oromo people's forceful conquest under the expanding Ethiopian empire-state and particularly since the 1970s, their flow in the form of refugees to almost all neighboring states, such as Djibouti, has been continuous and increasing from time to time (Mekuria, 1997: 27 & 33).

Before the change of regime in 1991, exodus of Oromo refugees did not cease and, as the result of the policies of the current incumbent government, it is increasing in number from time to time to the immediate neighbors. Particularly in Djibouti, it has been estimated that, out of their huge influx in the region, about 20,000 of them are there in the state (Mekuria, 2002:174). Since its independence and specifically from the 1980s onwards, however, the generosity of Djibouti for these alien people has been almost appeared to be insignificant. It's *"government has followed a policy of refoulment (forcible deportation) of [many Oromo refugees] to Ethiopia"* (Greenfield and Mohammed, 1981: 53-54). Partly owing to the pressure imposed on the part of Ethiopian government, and hence intentionally violating international law related to refugees, the country has been engaging in forced repatriation of the fled Oromos to the home state since the 1990s, where they usually experience imprisonment, torture and murdering (Mekuria, 2002; Asafa, 2000:83).

Still some others have been victims of mistreatments in Djibouti, which portraying them as illegal immigrants. If they are not deported back, with significant influence of Ethiopian regime, the life of those refugees in the host state is *"a nightmare because of the violent raffs, detentions and rape by border guards and city police"* there

(Mekuria, 1997:44). They have been usually “*seized from the streets of Djibouti city detained by local police, held overnight and brought by force in the mornings to work on local construction projects*” and then keeping “*their victims at the isolated border ports for days or even weeks*” (Ibid:44-45).

In a nutshell, although huge member of them usually flee to Djibouti so as to escape sever political problems (or persecution) at home (Mekuria, *ibid*: 45), the host government has demonstrated its unwillingness to extend official refugee status to the Oromo asylum-seekers in the country (Ethiopian weekly Digest, 4 September 1997). In Djibouti the refugees are said to be lacking political protection and hence suffering from grave human rights abuses there (Mekuria, 2002:174).

Together with all the above, the Oromo who fled to Djibouti have occasionally been victims of murdering carried out by security forces of the current Ethiopian government. Further more, international agencies like UNHCR, and the local ones such as the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) have not been in a convenient environment to discharge their duties there, which is primarily attributable to reluctance of the host official authorities (Ibid, 2002:174; Fossatti, 1996:3; Asafa, 2000:83). Particularly, the ORA, as “*the only organization that for some years look[ed] after the Oromo refugees, was banned --- in June 1995 by the Djibouti government at the request of the Ethiopian government*” (Fossatti, *ibid*). All these have been carried out in accordance with the series of official agreements of the two states. A concrete example of these is rightly noted by Thomas Ofcansky as follow:

In [the] early 1994, Djibouti and Ethiopia have concluded cooperation agreements concerning border patrols, defense agreement, and treaty for extradition of offenders Based on those agreements and treaties concluded there was a joint following committee to discuss administration followed by formation of joint border administrators committee on cases of illegal immigration and refugee affairs between two countries in 1999. (Also) they have agreed on judicial affairs guaranteeing the equality of citizens before one another's courts, with an accord to provide for extradition of criminals (2001:444-45).

This clearly indicates the precedence of the Ethiopian government's security needs over that of Djibouti, for which the former has been consistently posing threats against the latter (Crisp, No. 30, 1984). The point at stake here is, the Djibouti government's hostile attitude towards the Oromo refugees is not without justification. And, it is not without any reason that Ethiopian government has been imposing its

influence upon the host government, even to the extent of going beyond their formal agreements.

Here, an acute issue is apparent. The Ethiopian government has always been preoccupied with fear of the Oromo refugees in Djibouti. If refugees might be allowed to reside and have camps in the host state, the insurgent movements like OLF would get safe haven there and use the area for military operation to fight back and destabilize Ethiopian security. For precedence of security issue over other issues, Ethiopia may sometimes be compelled to impose its interest upon and terrorize the relatively weak neighbors, like Djibouti. Ethiopia usually tends to influence the latter on its security terms.

But here, why do the neighboring states be in fear of the current Ethiopian regime like what Djibouti does? This is primarily because Ethiopia has been the best ally of the Western Countries, especially the US. Owing to this, as Asafa precisely puts (2000:84), *“the Meles regime pressures neighboring countries such as Djibouti, Kenya, and Sudan and has turned them against the Oromo struggle and Oromo refugees.”* By virtue of the *“alliance of convenience”* between Ethiopia and the US, the former has been preoccupied with the dampening of domestic questions of national groups under the banners of fighting *“terrorism”* – the latter’s goal in the region.

Furthermore, Djibouti has been hostile to the Oromo refugees as the result of the search for rebel groups like the OLF. The Ethiopian military reprisal could be invited and thereby it could lead the host state into domestic instability. The other point is, economically, with which the host government has been fundamentally preoccupied, the refugees could become burdens in due course of their life as asylum-seekers there in Djibouti. Owing to its resource constraints, Djibouti could fail to cope up with the new extra demands.

In this connection, economic repercussion is said to be one of the effects the Oromo issue is contributing to the Ethio-Djibouti relations. Though not as such on Ethiopian side, Djibouti’s prime ties with the former has been of economic interdependence for long (Medhane, 2003:49). Accordingly, although the latter attempts to do away with any thing impairing this economic bondage, as to the occasional media report of

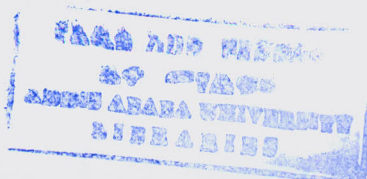
Ethiopian government, this has been intermittently subject to attacks of rebel movements like the OLF and others at their common borders. Portraying the opposition forces as “terrorists” Ethiopian officials have contending that the OLF and other rebels have been occasionally “bombarding” the cross-border bulky vehicles and trains and hence destabilizing and breaking down of the two states economic transactions such as trade, transportation, raw materials (See, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, <http://www.conflict-prevention.net/page.php?id=40&formid=73&action=show&surveyid=100>).

Because of this, as Ahmad Dini (the leader of Afar armed faction in Djibouti) told IRIN (Investor Relations Information Networks), “*Ethiopia has supplied arms to Djibouti and had stationed troops within [the latter’s] territory... and to protect transit-Cargo and other, even across the border*” (IRIN Special Report, 14 May 1999: <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/Para/docs/19990514:htm>). Particularly during the Ethio-Eritrean war, when he added, “*Ethiopian security agents were a common sight in Djibouti city, on the lookout for Oromo opposition activists*” (Ibid). It has been rightly put that, violating the international principle of territorial integrity in Djibouti, the Ethiopian military and security forces usually meddle within the host state in search for the OLF and other movements (Amnesty International AI, 2000, [http://www/wel.amnesty.org/web/or 2000](http://www.wel.amnesty.org/web/or 2000)). For this prime reason, Djibouti (a militarily weak state) has been under the latent security threat of Ethiopia.

4.3.2 The Implications of the Oromo National Struggle for Ethio-Eritrean Relations

To make a cursory look at this sub-section, one should start with the time of Eritrean independence. Particularly from February 1993 onwards to the very onset of (June 1998) inter-state war period, this newly emerged state in the region had warm, but more of tactical, relations with the Ethiopian state. However, since the two states went into and experienced high-intensity war, their temporary alliance has switched into the conflictual one. Here, it is in light of this that the Oromo national struggle and its subsequent effects for the concerned states’ relations may be treated.

To begin with, the EPRDF and PFJD governments (respectively dominated by TPLF and EPLF) had close ties for some years after the end of the Cold War. This was so



due to their historical links – capture of state power by both groups – and their leaders' personal relationship. Forging their military alliance both fought and defeated the then sub-Saharan Africa's largest army in 1991. Thereafter, despite the rising expectations on the part of the masses, both regimes have remained authoritarian, which culminated in their respective internal instability: i.e., the continued struggle of their internal opposition movements (Medhane, 2003:37-38; Toggia *et al*, 2000:248). Therefore, though the Ethio-Eritrean relations were at cooperative levels in such areas as economic, political and others, both have been preoccupied with their internal challenges, with which they have tended to define their relations to each other. This can further be illustrated as below:

The temporary alliance between the groups [regimes] had been instrumental in suppressing [their] internal opposition forces that challenged [their respective...] sectarian rule They had an extradition treaty, for example, primarily designed to expel and imprison political opponents. Accordingly, they extradited political dissenters until their fall out in May 1998 (Toggia *et al*, 2000:248).

Consequently, military extradition of the OLF members and members of other opposition groups began to surface after the 1992 elections. Despite some façade attempts of EPLF in mediating the EPRDF/TPLF with this Oromo nationalist group in the interim period (Leencoo, 1998:53 & 66), Eritrea later decided to militarily side with the Ethiopian regime to jointly root out the OLF. As some argue, EPLF took part with its military forces in the major operations against the OLF and others, assisting TPLF military forces, in the early 1990s (Moti, 1996:242). Similarly, Asafa (2000:82) argues that to wipeout the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and hence defend the TPLF-dominated Ethiopian regime, Eritrea was there militarily in Oromia even as late as 1997. Why was this happening? What could be the interest on the part of Eritrea?

As some argue in this respect, both of them were taking joint military action against the OLF partly to ensure suitable environment for the exploitation of resources from Oromia and other southern areas (Moti, 1996:240-42). Furthermore, rehabilitation of their war-torn respective areas in the past and then strengthening of their respective political domination would not go with the achievement of the Oromo struggle for national self-determination. Again partly, both Eritreans and Tigreans are said to have a sort of ethnic affinity and geographic proximity accounting for their

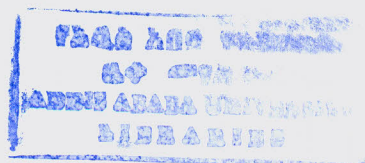
more historical ties with each other during the days of their struggle than with the OLF.

The other equally crucial point had been, their joint military alliance tended not only to destroy the internal opposition forces but also to deter any possible regional aggression posing threats to them. Obstructing the activities of the liberation movements and hence enhancing their own respective hegemonic aspirations, Ethiopia and Eritrea concurrently engaged in military operation against the NIF-led Sudanese regime (in 1995 and 1996) that could have the potential threats to their national security (Medhane, 2003:35 &38). Because both thought that the Khartoum government, preoccupied with exporting Islamic agenda in the region, could provide their opposition forces with partisan support (such as territory as rear base for military operation and sanctuary) with the aim of destabilizing their respective regimes (Woodward, 1996:131). This contentious nature of the two states with their opposition movements and neighbors gradually generated competition between them for regional hegemony.

And, the source for their regional competition has purely been their unwillingness to share political power domestically with other national groups (Toggia *et al*, 2000:248-49). Most also further argue that it was the former (domestic hegemonic ambition) that brought finally the two states into direct military confrontation, and other factors such as "border" issues are said to be pretext (Medhane, 2003:38-39). As Toggia, Lauderdale and Abebe have also noted on their part:

the geopolitical ambition [emanated from internal problem] of the leaders of the two respective nations [states] has created conflicts as they seek to exert greater political influence and military dominance in the region. It seems that neither President Isaias Afewerke nor Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is willing to take a slightly subordinate position as a junior political partner in this bilateral regional power bloc (Toggia *et al*; 2000:248).

Since the leaders of both countries ascended to state power with military means, Ethiopia and Eritrea resorted to the same method to address their internal problems. Likewise, they also attempted to settle the incompatibility of their aspirations for superior political influence and military position in the Horn by the same means (Toggia *et al*, *ibid*: 249). Putting differently, "*Eritrea-Ethiopian war (1998-2000)*



may belong to inter-state rivalry over rank and status” in the region whose source is domestic in origin (Medhane, 2003:38).

After May 1998, both regimes began to take advantages of intervening (opportunistic intervention) in internal political affairs of each other with the logic of “*My enemy’s enemy is my friend*”. It was then, the right time for Eritrea to quickly and separately seek rapprochement with the OLF and others. Accordingly, with the intention to get each other weakened and destabilized, Ethiopia and Eritrea commenced assisting one another’s armed opposition movements. As Toggia, Lauderdale and Abebe have observed:

... both sides rarely hide their intentions politically to destabilize one another by assisting internal opposition groups. The Afewerke regime, for example, is now believed to [side with and] support the Oromo Liberation Front and the Somali liberation forces in Ethiopia’s Ogaden region and Zenawi’s regime is now openly courting exiled Eritrean political opposition groups such as the Eritrean Liberation Front – Revolutionary Council (Toggia *et al*, 2000:252).

This easily explains that the war was not solely limited to direct military confrontation at their border but also indirectly includes the pursuit of *tit-for-tat* policy. Consequently, since that point in time, the war has significantly changed the political landscape in the Horn and has further complicated the nature of inter-state relations in the region. In this connection, Gilkes has shown that:

It has been reported during the war, for example, that Eritrean government was invariably training and sending a number of OLF fighters into Southern Somalia from where they could move into northern Kenya and Ethiopia. In a similar vein, it also transported military weapons via Moqadishu to the military activities of the OLF in the Southern Ethiopia, Borana (Gilkes, 1999, <http://www.geocities.com>).

By virtue of this proxy war, the Ethio-Eritrea military confrontation led to the escalation of the rising “*tension along the Ethio-Kenyan border in the South. The [OLF] in the Southern Borana region recently has stepped up a military operation. In 1999, the [front] was able to overrun a few of the Ethiopia military garrisons in the Southern Ethiopia*” (Toggia *et al*, 2000:252). In response to the threat, heavy counter-offensives by Ethiopian troops forced some fighters of the Front to retreat beyond the Ethio-Kenyan border (*Ibid*). This brought about instability across the Ethio-Kenyan border, and even occasionally, military clashes between the armed forces of the two states concerned (for the details see the next sub-section).

By the same token, given its porous territorial boundary and weak sovereignty, Somalia has not been immune to this inter-state proxy war. To be sure:

Both Eritrea and Ethiopia leaders also meddle with the internal conflicts in Somalia, extending military assistance to the warring Somali militias. [For example,] Hussein Aideed's militia is channeling arms supplies [... from Eritrea] to the Oromo nationalist group in Easter and [even to] Southern Ethiopia. Isaias Afeworke's government is believed to be delivering arms and ammunition to Hussein Aideed's faction in Moqadishu (Toggia *et al*, 2000:253)

As Toggia, Lauderdale and Abebe have further argued:

Zenawi's government often reacts to such secessionist demands with aggressive counter measures, by assisting the Rahawan Resistance Army (RRA) in South- central Somalia. In addition to providing arms to the RRA, the Ethiopian government periodically conducts unilateral and joint military offensives against bases of opposition groups inside Somalia. In mid-June 1999, for example, in a joint military operation with the RRA, the TPLF,/EPRDF regime dispatched 3,000 soldiers in the Beled Waye and Gode areas deep in central Somalia in an attempt to create a 'buffer zone' from surprise attacks from [OLF and other] armed opposition groups [that were allegedly said to be sent by Eritrean government] (*Ibid*).

Here, the Somali territory has been used as the battle ground for the two states proxy war where severe military entanglement precipitated further crisis as the result of the *tit-for-tat* policy. The anarchic Somalia has invariably been used for Ethiopia and Eritrea to supply arms to their respective partisans against each other. And, these military problems in the area significantly has intensified civil war and prolonged the chaotic political situation in the host country.

Generally, this sort of mutual subversion and military confrontation between the two regional rival states has been a grave source for security concern for themselves and other neighbors in the Horn. However, the crucial point here is, what was (has been) the motive of Eritrean regime? Was (has) it (been) supporting the political goal of the OLF?

Although the Eritrean involvement here is seemed to be altruistic, it has always been with its own interest at stake in situations of the war with Ethiopia. Had it been that, Eritrean government would not have been hostile to the OLF in the early 1990s. This deserves some possible explanations here.

First, during the war, Eritrea got a good opportunity with armed opposition forces like the OLF, fighting against its regional rival, which helped it to destabilize and weaken the Ethiopian regime. The Ethiopian regime had the same intention as well.

As Toggia (*et al*, 2000:252) argue, this is because “*they feel seriously threatened as long as the other ruling group stays in power.*” In view of this and as explained in the theoretical part, the real aim of the Eritrean government has been to advance its political and military hegemonic aspirations in the region at the expense of the destabilized and weakened Ethiopian regime.

Secondly, according to several reports during the 2006 war in Somalia, directly and/or indirectly, there have been military confrontations between Ethiopia and Eritrea there. This is because the PFJD ruling elite has had the intention to keep the EPRDF regime preoccupied with Somali war. It also occasionally helped the OLF incursions along Ethio-Kenyan border area to gradually weaken the Ethiopian regime militarily. And, hence, exploiting this condition, Eritrea appears to have the aim of re-launching full-scale military assault from its border with Ethiopia. This could contribute much to the weakening of the latter and relative strength of the former.

In this regard, a consultant at the International Crisis Group (ICG), Mr. Matt Bryden, recently told afrol news that “*Eritrea’s strategy appears to be to stretch Ethiopian military capacity by opening up a second front in Southern Somalia [i.e., 2006-war] while ramping up the pressure along the Ethio-Eritrean frontier ...*” (see afrol News, June 2007, <http://www.afrol.com/articles/22438>). Bryden added (*Ibid*), with this end, Eritrea tends to keep its neighbor arch-enemy with war in Somalia – intensifying it with proxy war – by training and arming Ethiopian rebel groups such as the OLF.

To sum up this discussion here, the Oromo national struggle has contributed to the escalation of military confrontation and security problems of Ethiopia and Eritrea, which it turn have had the effect of economic repercussions for both states.

4.3.3 The Implications of the Oromo National Struggle for Ethio-Kenyan Relations

As noted a bit earlier, relatively, Kenya has been regarded as one of the peaceful enclaves and most stable state in the Horn region. However, needless to add, its security has always been under threat owing to the spillover effects of conflicts from its neighbors, particularly because of the activities of the OLF in Ethiopia. To put

more precisely, the Oromo national question has been creating tensions between Ethiopia and Kenya by producing refugee problems, others such as cross-border security issues and military clashes, and the like.

What should be clear before moving further from the outset is that from all the immediate neighbors of Ethiopia, Kenya has been the most victimized state accounting for the Oromo people's quest for national self-determination. The reasons are many. First, it hosts the largest number of fled Oromo refugees in the region. Secondly, the same Oromo national groups reside on both sides of the border separated artificially by delineated international state boundaries where the OLF activities may enjoy support. Lastly, but not the least, there has been allegedly the usual concentration of the OLF military activities in the southern part of Oromia region, Borana, since the early 1990s. Due to these facts, the Ethio-Kenyan border areas have been considered potentially explosive.

To start with refugees, as noted earlier, there have been numerous Oromo asylum-seekers in Kenya. According to a recent estimate, *"there are now over 50,000 Oromo refugees in [the country], most have fled the current government"* though there were few of them before (Mekuria, 2002:175). In spite of the increasing number of Oromo asylum-seekers in the host state (owing to intensification of the severe repression at home), he further argues (*Ibid*), generally the Kenyan government has been reluctant to entertain them since 1992 in particular.

Generally and historically, having had good relations because of their common Somali irredentist issue, Ethiopia and Kenya seemed to have had currently (latent) conflictual ties, placing primarily the political situation in the incumbent home government and the Oromo issue in context. This has primarily been attributable to the already aforementioned, and highly interlinked, factors. The refugees' situation in Kenya is almost alike with that of those in Djibouti. Here, the Kenyan government has engaged in forced repatriation of many Oromo refugees; some have been detained and others seem to be victims of other various forms of mistreatment (with the help and great influence on the Ethiopian side); only few of them got the chance to be registered by UNHCR (Oromo Support Group (OSG), Aug/Sept., 1998). The Ethiopian regime closed ORA in the host country and confiscated its properties as

well (Asafa, 2000:83). Due largely to Ethiopian pressure against Kenya and arbitrarily intervention therein, the situation has been not conducive for the Oromo refugees.

In connection with this, the Kenyan government has felt threatened intermittently by the Ethiopian forces in search for the Oromo refugees and the citizens among which they resided. A Kenyan Oromo Lawyer has reported that – accusing the current Ethiopian regime for its arbitrary intervention in the internal affairs of Kenya – *“criminal activities [... have been carried out by] the Ethiopian security forces in Kenya since 1992. ... , the TPLF forces assassinated prominent Oromo refugees, bombed the houses of some Kenyan Oromos, abducted civil servants, and shot some citizens in [the country]”* (OSG, 1997; see in Asafa, 2000:85).

It has been argued that because the incumbent Ethiopian government is said to be the ardent supporter of America in her attempt to fight against “terrorism” in the region, Ethiopia has been allowed to terrorize and frighten its neighbors in the name of rooting out its rebels, the OLF, in the area (Asafa, 2000:83). In this regard, the OLF strongly noted that its *“relations with Djibouti, Sudan and Kenya had suffered from “malicious propaganda” sown by the Ethiopian government”* (see IRIN Special Report, 14 May 99, <http://www.fas.org/irg/para/docs/19990s/4.htm>).

The plausible questions that need to be addressed here are: why has Kenya refused to accept the Oromo refugees? Why has Ethiopia been allowed to meddle in the former’s internal affair frequently in search for the refugees and in due course harassing the same national groups in Kenya? Kenya has been taking part not only in forcibly deporting back and mistreating Oromo refugees but also in militarily flushing out the OLF rebel forces from its territory, even jointly with Ethiopian forces (Menelik No.302, *Dagim Wenchif*, No 211,216 and *Seyife Nebelbal*, No.490). This could be so for the following reasons.

As indicated repeatedly before, in the first place, Ethiopia pressures the relatively weaker Horn countries, such as Kenya, under the leverage of the US influence (Asafa, 2001, 2004). Because of such influence, *“Kenyan government quickly [and occasionally] reacted to control its border territories [along Ethiopia even] by*

dispatching troops in the border region" (Toggia *et al*, 2000:252). There is also the idea that there is *"always the possibility that ethnic based armed conflicts may easily spill over state boundaries"* (Ibid: 253). Here, it appears the host regime is seemed taking more of defensive actions.

Similarly, owing to the nature of the national groups along the boundaries, the Kenyan border areas are considered to be potentially explosive. Therefore, the actions of the Kenyan government appear to be aimed at preventing cross-border problems in relation to such issues as refugee flows; military assaults; or keeping the war from spreading to the other side. The other element is, linking with the political goal of the OLF in the future; there is a fear that Kenyan Oromo people may raise similar or related questions there that could be a threat to the security of the country. By virtue of this, Kenya is believed to have been hostile to the Oromo issue.

From the Ethiopian government side it usually believes that the OLF attempts to open military bases along the border while the refugee camps and the Oromo citizens in Kenya would be allegedly the potential pools for the OLF's military operation and serving as an area for rear base to fight back against it across the southern border. Because of this, frequently since the 1990s, as Asafa notes (2000:85), the *"TPLF forces have continued to enter into Kenya murdering [Oromo refugees] and looting the economic resources of some Kenyan Oromos by accusing them of harboring the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)."*

As noted in the previous sub-section, in the late 1990s, the OLF even launched military attacks against Ethiopian military stations in Borana to which the latter forces responded taking a counter offensive, which forced the OLF to retreat back beyond the border (Toggia *et al*, 2000; Schlee, 2003). Needless to add, in response, although the Kenyan government began to react to control its border territories from infiltration of the Oromo rebel groups by dispatching its troops in the area, Ethiopian army has occasionally pursued the OLF insurgents by penetrating deep into Kenyan territory. The Kenyan government has been appeared to be impatient and upsetting with it.

Accordingly, such hot-pursuit military operation and interdiction campaigns usually have instigated tensions and consequently resulted in intermittent military confrontations/clashes between forces of the two states (Schlee, 2003; Menelik, No. 298,305; Dagim Wenchif, No. 211, 216). When Schlee rightly contends, the event has even led to complaints and verbal reactions on the part of Kenyan authorities with recurrent border violations by Ethiopian forces (*Ibid*). Hence, the frequent military skirmishes between Ethiopian and Kenyan forces on the border area have often culminated in worsening their diplomatic relations.

Such a hostile environment is even believed to have further obsessed Ethiopian government with suspicion that the Kenyan government is supporting the OLF and by providing with it military operation area. The Ethiopian regular blame of Kenyan authorities assisting the Front could be taken as vivid testimony to the incident (Schlee, 2003). In response to the alleged support to the rebel group in the area, Ethiopian security forces have time and again extended threats against the Kenyan officials. For instance, according to the Kenyan Newspaper *Sunday Nation* (Feb.4, 1999).

Top officials from Isiolo, Marsabit and Moyale districts [on Kenyan side] have expressed fear for their lives. This follows accusation by the Ethiopian government that [they] were supporting activities of an Ethiopian rebel group.... Politicians linked to the activities of the [OLF] rebel group include [the] then assistance ministers from Moyale, Marsabit, a Minister and a senior army officer from the Borana community (cited in Schlee, 2003:359).

Similarly, Ethiopian security forces have been repeatedly making cross-border raids of various kinds upon the Kenyan Oromos (Asafa, 2000:85). And, this has frequently resulted in deaths of several Kenyan members of border guards and the like (Mekuria, 2002:176). For example, according to the Kenyan *Daily Nation*, "... attacks by Ethiopian forces resulted in over 160 deaths of civilians and Kenyan policemen between 2000 and 2001. A raid conducted by Ethiopian forces at Moyale in [the later period] displaced 600 Kenyan citizens and resulted in the death of ten people, four civilians and six members of the Kenyan police" (cited in Mekuria, 2002:176). That is, all such incursions and harassments in Kenya are simply with the intention of "ostensibly [punishing] Borana Oromo suspected of supporting the OLF" (OSG, March/April: 1997:10, see Asafa, 2000). This is with the understanding that it would make these people refrain from providing the OLF with any kind of assistance again

and, hence, Ethio-Kenyan cross-border security could be safe and secure for the Ethiopian government.

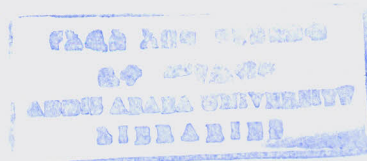
Moreover, the OLF's military activities in the area, the Ethiopian unilateral (and even sometimes jointly with Kenya) military action against it and the military confrontations and clashes between them have contributed to proliferation of the small arms across the border. To Schlee (2003), this has marked particularly northern Kenya by turning it into an "AK-47" and in the process, plunging the area into pandemonium. As Eyob argues in his study, *"the availability of [these] small arms is reported to have brought numerous security and stability problems in the area"* (2005:77). In 1998, IRIN Special Report on North Eastern Province in Kenya rightly adds in this regard that increase of military problems has brought increased incidents of banditry there, and adversely affected their concentration balances among the community in the area (<http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/irin-110998.htm>). This in turn negatively shaped the nature of relations among the pastoral communities along the Ethio-Kenyan border area.

To windup this sub-section, the Oromo struggle has brought such effects (or implications) as refugee problems, political instability, cross-border security problem, proliferation of arms and etc, for Ethio-Kenyan relations. The next two sub-sections to follow are to detail about Somalia and Sudan.

4.3.4 The Implications of the Oromo National Struggle for Ethio-Somali Relations

Since the 1960s, Ethiopia and Somalia have had historical experiences of quite tense and hostile relations. With such background, the Ethiopian government has frequently been meddling in the internal affairs of Somalia since the collapse of the Somali state in 1991. It is this latter period that seems to be more significant to study on the implications of the Oromo national struggle for the relations of the two states.

From the onset of the pan-Oromo nationalism in the 1960s to the state's collapse in 1991, Somalia had reflected very much negative attitudes towards the Oromo people's quest for national self-determination. And even currently, most Somali nationalists have been sharing still similar views. The prime justification for this fact is, as stated



in the third chapter, fundamentally related to the ambition of creating “*Greater Somalia*”.

After independence of Somalia, its people pursued the policy of uniting all Somali inhabited territories in the Horn under one state. And hence, they made territorial claims on those areas in the neighbors, notably Djibouti and Kenya including Ethiopia. In the case of the latter, their claims concern not only the Somali inhabited territories (Ogaden areas) but also, extending beyond, to the extent of including some parts of Oromo land: namely, Arsi, Bale, Hararge, and Sidamo (Gadaa, 1999; Mahammad, 2000; Asafa, 2005). To this end, they used various strategies.

Attempting to peacefully, if not forcibly, convince and convert the Oromos residing on the claimed territories (in Oromo land) has been one crucial method. For example, under the banner of Islam, to call them as “*Somali Abbo*” rather than Oromos of those areas (to retard and do away with their identity) can be a vivid testimony to this (Asafa, 2001:80; Mohammad, 1996; 2000).

Secondly, they established façade liberation movements claiming for those eastern and southern areas of the Oromo just to incorporate them into what they call it “*Greater Somalia*”. For instance, setting up the “*Somali Abbo Liberation Front*” (SALF) in 1976 as another arm of Western Somali Liberation Front was case in point (WSLF) (*Ibid*; Gadaa, 1999). This was done consciously to thwart and even decimate the Oromo struggle with this and any other possible means. Because they “*regarded it [Oromo national struggle for self-determination] as dangerous movement that would abort the realization of the dream of “Greater Somalia”*” (Asafa, 2001:113).

Because of such facts, Somali political elites and nationalists have showed insignificant sympathy to the Oromo struggle and reluctant to cooperate with the organization tending to realize it. In fact, during the 1970s and 1980s, although Somali government used and cooperated with some Ethiopian opposition rebels, it had hostile relations with the OLF (Gadaa, 1999:123-24).

As far as such involvement on the side of Somali government was concerned, it had significantly frustrated and retarded the Oromo national movement. And, despite its

advantage to the Ethiopian government, the latter's relations also had always been at odd with Somali government for similar and related historical factors.

As already been stated, it is possible to look at some effects of the Oromo issue on Ethio-Somali relations after new development of political dynamism has started to take place in both states after the end of the Cold War.

Needless to say, Somalia has been without central government since the ouster of the recent dictatorial regime of Siad Barre in 1991. Chaos has reigned the country for the last sixteen years. Warlords and political factions, rather, control territories, and factional fighting continues unabated. Although some factions created autonomous regions here and there: in the northwest (Somaliland) and northeast (Puntland), the vast area of the South has remained to be unstable area of Somalia (Ted, 2002:11). Such absence of central authority in Somalia, therefore, created conducive environment for neighboring states and rebel movements to rove there.

Since its ascendance to state power, TPLF-dominated EPRDF military and security forces have been intruding into Somalia in general and intensifying civil war in the southern area since the late 1990s in particular. Taking the interplay of Ethiopia's domestic problems and its hostile relations with Eritrea as prime factors for this, it seems essential to look at the implications at some length.

To start with, it has been primarily for its internal matters, particularly problems related to armed national rebels such as the OLF, that Ethiopian state has been meddling itself with similar problems (civil war) in collapsed Somali state. It is assumed that the continuous crisis in the latter, especially its Southern region, has been the fertile ground for the OLF and other Ethiopian opposition forces to take advantage of it as safe haven such as to get rest there and use it as military operation by making alliance with some Somali militias there (Ted, 2002).

This was done and begun to be aggravated with mutual subversive and proxy war during and after Ethio-Eritrea war. As noted earlier, both were, and have even been, providing the Southern Somali factions of their respective clients with a number of military weapons (Toggia *et al*, 2000). For instance, Eritrean government was/is

believed to be providing a faction leader in Mogadishu, Hussein Aideed, with arms and ammunition to be channeled as supplies to the OLF and other groups. And, hence, the latter would infiltrate deep into the Southern and eastern Ethiopia to destabilize the country.

In response to this, Ethiopian government has been doing similar business on the side of RRA faction. There in the area, after Ethiopian regime repeatedly conducted unilateral and joint military offensives against the military bases of opposition rebel groups, it deployed huge number of military troops there (Toggia *et al*, *ibid*). This militarily proliferated area resulted in unheeding on the part of international humanitarian agencies and further dislocated a number of civilians from their homes. Specifically linking with the Ethio-Eritrea war, the already existing civil war in Somalia has been remarkably intensified.

Given Somalia's porous borders and weak sovereignty, availability of small arms for cross-border movements like OLF and generation of the refugees characterize the situation in the country (Medhane, 2003:47). Particularly, Ethiopia has been preoccupied with threatened grave security concern across its long border with Somalia, which is "*vulnerable to [frequent] new influxes of arms and ammunition*" (see IRIN, May 1999, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/irin514990.htm>). To address this and bring about sustainable peace in the country:

Ethiopia organized a number of peace conferences over the years [in the 1990s], but none succeeded in bringing an end to [the problems]. In recent years [Ethio-Eritrean war period], however, Ethiopia has contributed to the unrest in Somalia, supplying warlords with arms and at times sending its troops in Somalia to fight [the rebel groups and] faction leaders. [..., on their parts] regional actors such as Kenya and Djibouti express fear that Ethiopia's military activities and support for warlords may cause an increase in regional instability, and may lead to more refugees fleeing to neighbors (Ted, 2002:15).

Such military intervention of Ethiopia has usually caused military power imbalances between rival warlords and hence exacerbated the problem alarmingly in the area.

The problem in Somalia has been tense and gradually become more intractable after the establishment of the new "Transitional Federal Government" (TFG). Under the dominance of Ethiopian government, this was done in 2004 by a conference held in Nairobi. The TFG has been described by Somali majority groups in the south, the Hawiye clan, as a "*two-legged stool*", "*a hand-picked regime*" one "*headed by a*"

veterinarian with no political experience and a Somali who has spent decades in Ethiopia..”, simply because it does not have any local social base (Whitehouse, 15 Jan 2007, <http://www.socialistworker.org/2007-1/614/614-06-somalia.shtml>).

When US and Ethiopia signaled their supports for TFG in Somalia’s politics, this *“threatened the UIC [Union of Islamic Courts], then a loose confederation of 11 sharia (Islamic law) courts in Moqadishu, to create militias in 2005” (Ibid)*. It was from the time of UIC’s inception onwards that the problem in Southern Somalia has become more acute, which finally exploded with the outbreak of the war in 2006, which has taken regional dimension.

It has been clear that on the side of the TFG, the Ethiopian government has been the pivotal actor in directly launching the war against the UIC. Despite its frequent denial, it has been reported that the Eritrean regime has participated in the military confrontation with Ethiopia by sending its troops there. It has also been alleged that the Eritrean government has trained and sent a number of OLF and other rebel fighters to fight on the side of the Islamist militias (*Ibid*). Here, it is necessary to raise such questions as: what are the motives behind the Ethiopian government’s intervention in the war? What about that of Eritrea?

It has been clear from Ethiopian media reports that the Ethiopian government directly involved in the Somali war for the following presumed rationales. First, to destroy the sources of Islamic “Jihad”; second, responding to the “invitation” of the Somali TFG, to fight on its side; third, repelling the threat of Islamic “*annexation of Ethiopian territories*”; and the like (Gemeda, <http://www.americanchronicle.Com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=24799>.). Despite such objectives advanced by the Ethiopia government, some argue that the Ethiopian participation in the Somali war is said to be fundamentally the extension of its domestic problems. As it is rightly argued in a similar vein: it “*is not a sane action but rather a crazy escapade of a deranged regime desperate to cling on to power by deflecting attention from its mounting troubles at home*” (see World War 4 Report, http://www4_report.com/node/2875). That is to say, Ethiopia, rather than addressing its domestic problems constitutionally, has engaged in this diversionary war.

Putting differently, according to this contention, the belligerence of Ethiopian government in the area “*emanates from a deep sense of internal insecurity born of its minority status and total rejection by the populace*” (*Ibid*). Owing to this, some argue that this could be taken as the Ethiopian regime’s declaration of war (in the name of the parliament in Somalia) against its regional rival (Eritrea) and the country’s opposition movements at home (*Ibid*).

The argument in this connection is that Ethiopia’s interest in the war is said to be frustrating the Eritrean proxy war so that the latter could feel the danger of re-opening another war across its border. This seems to be fighting the Eritrean forces and the Ethiopian rebel groups, using Somali territory as another battle ground (Lyons, 14 Dec.2006, http://www.cfr.org/publication/12216/ethiopia_eritrea-proxy-war-in-somalia-risks-broade...). Such a move has significantly increased the regional instability. When Terrence Lyons rightly puts this:

Conflict in the Horn is escalating rapidly as power struggles within Somalia are exacerbated by military support that both Ethiopia and Eritrea give to the opposing parties there. Ethiopia backs the weak interim government [TFG]; Eritrea sponsors the Islamic militants [and Ethiopian rebel groups] fighting to overthrow it [and even weaken and frustrate Ethiopia] (*Ibid*).

4.3.5 The Implications of the Oromo National Struggle for Ethio-Sudanese Relations

Starting from and owing to the breakout of the civil wars in both states, particularly to the closure of the 20th century, Ethiopia and Sudan have had more of hostile relations than cooperation (Woodward, 1996: Lyons, 1996; Medhane, 2003). Within this context, specifically the Oromo problem in Ethiopia has had a number of implications for their relations. Not least of which, those related to flows of refugees, military problems, cross-border clashes, security and the like are some of them. Basically caused by the repressive nature of the Ethiopian political environment, there has been influx of Oromo refugees in Sudan. And, unlike Djibouti and Kenya, the Oromo asylum -seekers in Sudan were said to have found it as safe haven and more hospitable to them. In this regard, most people like Mekuria argue that “*Sudan, which has a very generous refugee policy, has accepted thousands of Oromo refugees over the years. Still today refugees are crossing into the [country] from the western regions of Oromia. According to a recent report, there are over ten [to fifteen] thousand Oromo refugees in the Sudan today*” (1997:43-44).

True, to such observation, to assist the Oromo refugees in her country, Sudan even allowed the establishment of an independent humanitarian Oromo Relief Association, ORA, in 1970s (Dibaba, 1997; cited in Asafa, 2000:83). ORA began to setup its own refugee camp where looked after the fled Oromos and, importantly conduct literacy and educational activities, which were remarkably significant to Oromo political activities there in Sudan and at home (James, 1994:160; Mekuria, 2002). For example, with respect to ORA's contribution in Oromo refugee camp, Mekuria argues (*Ibid: 201*), "*thousands of Oromo refugees learned to read and write their own language, an opportunity denied to them in Ethiopia (before 1991), through the ORA and other organizations' literacy class. In Sudan, regular schools were even established by the ORA to provide education for refugee children.*"

However, the crux of the matter here is that the then ORA's strong link with the OLF, which gradually became a headache to the Ethiopian government. Owing to this linkage, the Front even setup its Foreign Affairs Office in Khartoum in 1978 and started then to carryout its political activities and military operation there (Gadaa, 1999:124). Accordingly, ORA became the relief arm of the OLF in Sudan with which it was making "*a free movement [in the late 1980s...] down from Khartoum, through Kurmuk and the Garrison at Chali, to the Yabus*" (James, 1994:160). Sudan was supporting the OLF, though not as much significantly as that of EPLF and TPLF, against Ethiopia until the early 1990s. It provided OLF not only with sanctuary and base of operation but also arms and other aids, as well as access to the rest of the world for securing resources and arms (Asafa, 1993: Leencoo, 1998a), which presumably invited privileges to the SPLA on Ethiopian side as well (Woodward, 1996).

Therefore, Sudan supported the Front, and Oromo refugees but for more of instrumental purpose. Specifically with regard to asylum-seekers there, though its hospitality to them seemed to be for humanitarian reason, Sudanese partisan support for the OLF exposed its real interest, which had been to diffuse the threats posed by the SPLA, then supported by the *Dergue*.

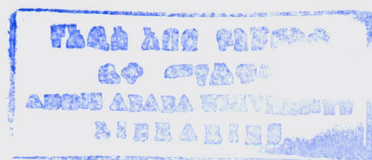
By virtue of this, the Ethio-Sudanese relations became threatened with a sort of policy of intervention, in each other's affairs pursued, through a mutually destructive

proxy game of tit-for-tat. OLF was making military confrontations with Ethiopian forces and the SPLA intermittently in territories of both states (Woodward, 1996:123). Here, the OLF used to operate from western part of Ethiopia, Wollega area, where SPLA made military clashes with it and SPLA was also moving across the border and attacked OLA and ORA refugee camps in Sudan (Mekuria, 2002). As Medhane adds (2003:29), such actions highly intensified civil wars in both states, which later became regionalized. The Sudanese security became threatened as the result of Ethiopia's increased support to the SPLA /SPLM. A vivid testimony for this was there in 1987 *"when the SPLA's brief capture of the "northern" border towns of Kurmuk and Garrison brought charges of active involvement by the Ethiopian army..."* (Woodward, 1996:123).

The support of Sudan to the Oromo national movement was stopped for sometime after major political development made in Ethiopia following the capture of state power by EPLF and TPLF both of which had been supported by the Sudanese government. The new Ethiopian regime responded by closing Ethiopian territories to the SPLA forces. Although the few years of the early 1990s were signaling a sort of peacetime relations, withdrawal of the OLF from the interim TGE, provided another condition for the NIF regime to have cordial relations with the front again. An important point to be noted here is that the EPRDF government had keen interest to have cooperative but cautious relations with Sudanese government. At any rate, the latter began to assist the two Ethiopian rebel groups. In this regard, as Young has noted:

While the new regimes in Ethiopia and Eritrea were thinking in terms of improving their relations with the Sudan (former host country), Khartoum slowly but discreetly began supporting the Eritrean Islamic Jihad in Eritrea and the Benishangul People Liberation Movement (BPLM) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in Ethiopia (1999:33, see in Medhane, 2003:30-31).

The continued support of the Sudanese regime to the Oromo rebel movement while the SPLA had withdrawn from Ethiopia could be explained by the behavior of the post-1989 Sudanese regime, which has been preoccupied with aggressive Islamic based foreign policies – whose principal obvious target being Ethiopia's Moslem population. That is, exporting Islamic militancy to the region which became an acute issue. As Medhane has further noted:



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2002). In almost all of Ethiopia's neighbors, the refugees have been victims of these and such other related problems as raping, detention, forced repatriation, murdering and the like. Similarly, harassment, closing of the offices and confiscating properties of the Oromo Relief Associations have been occasionally happen in those states particularly under the pressure and request of the Ethiopian government (Asafa, 2001; 2005; Fossatti, 1996). For this and other related purposes, the military and security forces of the Ethiopia frequently meddling in the internal affairs of the neighboring states such as Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan and hence posing threats to their national security (Medhane, 2003).

In this connection, as noted before, refugee problems could also bring about economic repercussions. For example, in draining scarce resources, or imposing new economic burdens on the host states. Especially, with regard to Djibouti, there has been frequent allegations that its strong economic ties with Ethiopia have been frequently threatened by the cross-border rebel movements like the OLF; i.e., destabilizing their economic transactions in important ways. In response, the Ethiopian government has been stationing its military forces across the border and even sometimes in the territory of Djibouti. Because of the same rebel movement, the presence of large number of refugees and as the result of the same national groups living across the international boundaries, cross-border security and military problems have been cases in point with Ethio-Kenyan relations, too.

The other obvious form of the implications for regional instability is the pursuance of the *tit-for-tat* policy. This is a sort of mutual subversion and destabilization done by supporting each others' rebel groups, which has been common formerly in Ethio-Sudanese, but currently in Ethio-Eritrean relations. This could be named as "*conflict triangulation*" (Lyons, 1996:88). Here, as discussed before, the OLF could receive support, in the form of save haven and others, from Sudan (before the late 1990s) and Eritrea (from 1998 on wards) in its fight against the home government across the borders. On the Ethiopian side, it has been the issue of reciprocating by providing sanctuary and sustenance to the above states' insurgent national groups. Such "*conflict triangulation*" in turn has been worsening regional instability and making the problems more intractable within each concerned states, and even beyond by extending the intensification of similar problems to another state in the region.

This has been particularly the case currently when Ethiopia and Eritrea have been further meddling in southern Somalia in their proxy war. Their counter-subversion policy has extremely exacerbated the civil war in the host state (Medhane, 2003; Ted, 2002), which is more than “conflict triangulation”. It has been alleged that the OLF has been trained, militarily equipped and sent to the area (by Eritrea) from where it is said to step into the southern and eastern Ethiopia. The latter has been supporting some Somali war lords and even intermittently making frequent unilateral and joint military actions against other Somali militias and the rebel groups to frustrate its regional rival which now includes physical occupation. And, whatever the denial on Eritrean side, the devastating regional effect of the failure to genuinely address the Oromo national question is undeniable fact. To be sure, it could be with such understanding that the Ethiopian regime usually condemns the Eritrean government to deny the OLF assistance from the neighboring states.

To sum up: although internal conflict within a state always generates spillover and demonstration effects and adversely affects inter-state relations in the Horn of Africa, one fact is important in the case of Ethiopia: i.e., its being a core state in the region sharing common borders with all the neighbors (Lyons, 1996; Medhane, 2003; Woodward, 1996). More importantly, the Oromo people are the largest nation who inhabits the country’s largest region. As such, owing to the failure of solving the Oromo national question for self-determination by the Ethiopian successive regimes has been adversely and significantly affecting and continues to affect the country’s relations with her immediate neighbors and the regional stability at large. And hence, in spite of its strategic position in the Horn (which is primarily because of the Oromo nation), the Ethiopian state has invariably failed to lead the region into stability (Medhane, 2003: 44). The author further argues that especially in its early period(*Ibid*), the *“EPRDF’s foreign policy was ...committed to change the age-old conflictual relations of Ethiopia with its neighbors and pursued a policy of [good] neighborliness but slowly and surely getting drawn ever deeper into the concerns of its neighbors as its security was felt threatened”* internally. This is basically attributable to the dictatorial nature as well as the hegemonic aspirations of the past and the present Ethiopian leaders who have refused to respect the democratic rights of the country’s largest nation.

Concluding Remarks

The concern of this study is about the Oromo national question in Ethiopian politics and its implications for the inter-state relations in the Horn region. It is hoped that the study has contributed to the understanding of the Oromo nation and national question by identifying and explaining the underlying and proximate causes of the Oromo national question by tracing back to the creation, establishment and the subsequent processes of the Ethiopian empire state. The roles the internal and external forces played in sustaining the Ethiopian domination over the Oromo people and thereby intensifying the Oromo struggle for national self-determination have also been examined. More importantly an analysis about the implications of the Oromo national struggle for the Ethiopian relations with the rest of the Horn states has been made.

Accordingly, in the attempt to conceptualize the Oromo nation in the Third Chapter, it is found out that the Oromo people constitute a nation and hence justifying that their quest for the right to *national self-determination* is legitimate. It has made clear that the Oromo national question has been the result of the combination of factors primarily linked to the creation and foundation of the modern Ethiopian empire-state and the subsequent processes of its consolidation. As indicated in the study, these are the interplays of the colonial conquest and expansion (Asafa, 2005; Mohammed, 1996), lack of fits between the '*ethnic cores*' (as owners of the state) and the stateless Oromo nation, deep-rooted historical hostilities between them (as the underlying causes); and others as the hierarchical and traditionally rigid nature of the Ethiopian state system marked by domination and repressive ethos, some domestic and external forces playing the catalytic factors (as some immediate causes) (Asafa, 2005; Mohammed, 1996; Mekuria, 1992; 1996; Merera, 2003). After the emergence of the Oromo national question and its development in taking wider acceptance among the people in the form of pan-Oromo national movement since the 1960s, and later after its transformation into an organized armed movement, the successive Ethiopian regimes have been using the military means to address the Oromo problem. Here, it is important to note that though they have pursued various ideological discourses such as Christianity, revolution and socialism, democracy, for the Oromo people, these have been remained to be ceremonial and serving as various strategies but with

the same goal of militarily suppressing and depriving them of their right to national self-determination. And hence, the Oromo national demand has been invariably enduring, since 1960s, and particularly 1970s, as this largest people in the country and the region have been struggling to meet their national demand with any possible means.

The Fourth Chapter has taken up the implications of the Oromo national question for the inter-state relations in the region. As noted before, owing to the failure to amicably solve the Oromo national question in Ethiopia, it has destabilized and continues to destabilize the country's relations with its immediate neighbors; by causing the massive influx of the Oromo refugees, inviting mutual intervention, and etc. These in turn have resulted in the intermittent military confrontations between the Ethiopian state and most of its neighboring countries. As it has been argued, so long as the Oromo national question continues unresolved, the Ethiopian international relations in the Horn region remain to be hostile. And in the long term, the Oromo national problem may turn more violent and have more repercussions for regional peace and security in the Horn. Put differently, the Oromo national question has negatively affected the Ethiopian relations with its neighbors and has fundamentally contributed to the prevalence and worsening of regional instability in the Horn.

In conclusion, paying proper attention to the currently acute national question of the country's largest people by amicably and genuinely addressing their quest for freedom so that Ethiopia, the core state in the region whose core nation is the Oromo itself, could lead the Horn region at large to peace and stability. To this end, first and foremost there should be meaningful democracy in Ethiopia, which the Oromo people as a nation may take advantage of and democratically decide their future fate by themselves. Understandably, such a move could constructively solve the Oromo national question. Consequently, such attempts could pave a way for the prevalence of a sustainable peace and stability not only in Ethiopia but also in its relations with the neighbors and in the overall region of the Horn of Africa at large.

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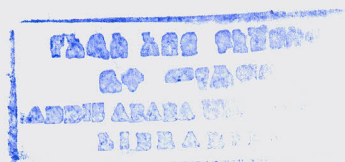
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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Signature of Confirmation

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