

**THE POLITICS OF FAMINE RELIEF:
A STUDY OF UNITED STATES AND CANADIAN RELATIONS WITH
ETHIOPIA, 1984-1986.**

by

Barbara Jean MacKenzie
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1984.

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Approval

Name: Barbara Jean MacKenzie
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of thesis: *The Politics of Famine Relief: A Study of US and Canadian Relations with Ethiopia, 1984-1986.*

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Laurent Dobuzinkis

Dr. Theodore H. Cohn
Senior Supervisor

Dr. Maureen Covell
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science

Dr. Robert S. Anderson
External Examiner
Faculty of Applied Sciences
Simon Fraser University

Approval dated 15 July 1991

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Author:

(signature)

Barbara Jean MacKenzie

(name)

July 23, 1991

(date)

Abstract

This thesis examines the bilateral relationships of Ethiopia with the United States and Canada resulting from the famine in northern Ethiopia in 1984, and the subsequent provision of famine relief. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye's model of complex interdependence is adapted to these bilateral relationships between highly dissimilar societies with low levels of interaction and transaction. The use of the interdependence model is supported by the view of R.J. Barry Jones that two states can be interdependent with respect to single important issues even though there is a low level of interdependence in their overall relationship. While the Keohane and Nye model was originally used to examine the relationship between industrial states, it has been applied in some subsequent studies to relations between a developed and a less-developed country. Robert L. Paarlberg and others have examined the relationship between the US and Mexico, and the US and Iran using this model.

The purpose of the thesis is to identify the reciprocal costs and benefits to the participants in the food aid relationship. The hypothesis, that the weaker actor for non-economic reasons will have influence in the political bargaining, directs the study. Ethiopian value systems and political and economic history are an integral part of the country's response to the famine. Likewise, the values and pluralist nature of the donor polities influence the donors' responses. Private Voluntary Organizations, International Organizations, and the media also have influential roles affecting donor-recipient relations.

An analysis of the reciprocal political costs and benefits of the famine relief relationship reaches the following conclusions. First, the preponderance of donor power does not confer matching power resources in the bargaining because of the nature of the issue and its politicization. (However, a donor with a political agenda has greater influence than a benign donor.) Second, indigenous characteristics are important factors influencing the recipient's bargaining position. Third, participation of outside actors and policy differences between the donors affect the capability of both donors and recipient in the bargaining process. Finally,

short-term and long-term costs and benefits may differ for both donors and recipient.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the peoples of Ethiopia.

Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge the support of the Department of Political Science and of my committee. My supervisor Dr. Theodore Cohn's patience and critical sense and Dr. Maureen Covell's optimistic encouragement and belief in my ability were of untold assistance to me. The scholarship of both contributed to the development of this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1984 a famine of immense proportions swept across the four northern Ethiopian provinces of Eritrea, Tigray, Gondar and Wallo.¹ One million Ethiopians are estimated to have died of starvation or famine-related disease.² Although the famine occurred during a period of world food surpluses, the major agricultural exporting countries, particularly the United States (US), were slow to respond to the crisis. However, the US and Canada subsequently became major food aid donors. From December 1, 1984 until the end of 1986, 2,057,153 metric tons (MT) of food were delivered to Ethiopia: the US provided 36 per cent, Canada 12, the European Economic Community (EEC) 17, and all others, including individual European countries, 35 per cent.³

This thesis examines the bilateral relationships between Ethiopia and the US and Canada resulting from the famine in northern Ethiopia in 1984 and the subsequent provision of famine relief. The period covered is from late 1984 when increased food aid started to reach Ethiopia until the end of 1986. The purpose is to identify the reciprocal costs and benefits of the food aid relationship resulting from the famine within a framework of asymmetrical interdependence.⁴

¹Consistency in the spelling and use of Ethiopian names is sought. For example, "Tigray" is used rather than "Tigray" to describe the province and Tigray, the people. Caution is necessary as Tigray live on both sides of the Eritrea/Tigray border, having been the dominant peoples in the region before the Italian colonisation of Eritrea. Another ethnic group live in Eritrea, called "Tigre" who speak a different language than the Tigray and are not Orthodox Christians. See *Eritrea: A Multi-national component of the Ethiopian Polity*, (Ministry of Information, Government of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, June 1988), p.15.

²Minority Staff Report of Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Policy to Committee of the Judiciary, United States Senate, *Ethiopia and Sudan One Year Later: Refugee and Famine Recovery Needs*, (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1986), p.7.

³*Ibid.*, pp.7,10 and 16; Canadian International Development Agency, *Food Crisis in Africa*, (Ottawa, May 1985), p.2 and Table opposite p.6; USA Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, *GIST*, (March 1985), p.1; and United Nations Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, *Status Report on the Emergency Situation in Africa*, (New York, 1 September 1985), p.11.

⁴Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, (Little Brown & Co., Boston, Toronto,

Ethiopia has been chosen as the subject for this thesis because it has a long history of recurring famine; received massive food aid between December 1984 and the end of 1986 from the US and Canada; has widely differing political objectives from the donors; and had the political and military support of the Soviet Union, East Bloc countries and Cuba in this period.⁵ An important African country, situated in a strategic region in the Horn of Africa,⁶ with prestige and status both inside and outside Africa, Ethiopia has a tradition of pursuing independent behavior while gaining benefits from external actors.⁷

Government of Ethiopia

The Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), popularly called the “Dergue” (Amharic for ‘committee of equals’), governed Ethiopia from September 1974 when the late Emperor Haile Selassie I was deposed until the Peoples’ Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) was established in September, 1987 following the promulgation of a new Constitution.⁸ Originally espousing nationalistic and vaguely socialistic goals in the proclamation *Ethiopia Tikdem* (Ethiopia First) in December 1974, the Dergue led an increasingly radical transformation of the Ethiopian economy and society centred on the

1977), pp. 10-11. Where bilateral relationships are marked by asymmetry of power resources and where the outcome of the political bargaining does not necessarily reflect the distribution of power, the relationship may be one of asymmetrical interdependence. This is discussed in the theoretical portion of this chapter.

⁵The changed situation with respect to the amounts of support now available to Ethiopia from the USSR and the East Bloc affects its ability to be uncompromising on economic policy. Insofar as this affects the long term outcome of the famine relief relationship it is mentioned in Chapter four.

⁶The Horn of Africa includes Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti and borders on the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean and Red Sea.

⁷Marina Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa*, (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1982), p.32 and Harold G. Marcus, *Ethiopia, Great Britain and the United States, 1941-1974* (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1983), pp.108-114. Historical accounts of the 19th century are also interesting in this respect. See Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Mennilek II*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975) and Sven Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, (Heinemann, London, 1976).

⁸The Dergue continued to govern the PDRE under the new constitution, having positions in both the WPE and the administration.

nationalisation of land in March 1975.⁹ In 1977, Mengistu Haile Mariam, who had already demonstrated his forcefulness and ruthless revolutionary singlemindedness as an original member of the Dergue, was successful in consolidating his power, eliminating his rivals in the Dergue and becoming chairman. As a hardline Marxist-Leninist, he received the support of the Soviet Union, the eastern bloc countries and Cuba.¹⁰ In September 1984 at the height of the northern famine, the tenth anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution was celebrated and Chairman Mengistu launched the long-heralded Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE).¹¹

The problems the Dergue faced in 1984 were not only those of famine. It was responsible for the well-being of all Ethiopia, for preserving the revolution, and defending the integrity and sovereignty of the Ethiopian nation. Donor concentration on famine relief diverted international attention away from the overall distress of a poorly performing economy and from the serious domestic political problems faced by the Dergue.¹²

The Dergue inherited two wars from the old regime, one irredentist in the Ogaden and the other secessionist in Eritrea.¹³ In addition in September 1974 the governor-general of Tigray, representing the conservative and royalist opposition, revolted against the Dergue. In response, the Dergue launched a campaign of terror in Tigray, giving rise to a people's

⁹Glen Bailey, *An Analysis of the Ethiopian Revolution*, (Paper No. 40, Ohio University Centre for International Studies, Africa Program, Athens, Ohio, 1980), pp.64, 72-80.

¹⁰Mengistu also received financial support from Libya and military support from South Yemen, although this may only have been transshipment of Soviet equipment which had left Somalia. There are many accounts of Mengistu's rise: two of note are René Lefort's *Ethiopia, An Heretical Revolution?* (Zed Books Ltd., London, 1983) and Bereket Habte Selassie's *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*, (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1980).

¹¹Mengistu has been criticized for the exaggerated spending which accompanied this celebration while the northern peoples were starving and foreign aid was being sought.

¹²Morris D. Morris, "What is a Famine?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, 9 (44), 2 November 1974:1855-1864. Morris assesses the formidable burden for the decision makers in allocating national resources to an overall distressed society in times of famine, particularly under the pressures exerted by external donors.

¹³The conflict in the Ogaden was long-standing and came to a climax when Somalia invaded Ethiopia in 1977 attempting to unite the Somali of Ethiopia with Somalia. The Eritrean conflict stemmed from 1961 when Emperor Haile Selassie had 'annexed' Eritrea. (See Chapter 2).

insurrection, now organized chiefly around the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF).¹⁴ The guerrilla nature of the Tigray and Eritrea wars and the harsh response of the Ethiopian army and airforce contributed to the dislocation of food production.

Because of these conflicts and other smaller scale rebellions, the Dergue found it necessary to increase military expenditures to about 45 per cent of the annual budget. This high level of military expenditure was made possible through the assistance of the Soviet Union.¹⁵ The drought and famine placed severe strains on the country's programs for agricultural reconstruction as well as on the ability to apply military solutions to political problems.

Donor Food Aid Policy Environment

Famine evokes an emotional response which appeals to humanitarian principles. However, the world food aid environment, into which famine injects a sudden demand, is not established primarily on such principles. The politics of food aid exist in a criss-crossing of bilateral relationships of trade, security, strategic and ideological concerns as well as humanitarianism.¹⁶ Economic and political self-interest, far more than humanitarianism, motivates major agricultural exporting countries to provide or withhold food aid. The US, for example, has periodically withheld food aid for strategic reasons, or for foreign policy requirements.¹⁷ Canada has been far more reluctant than the US to withhold food aid for political purposes. As a smaller power, Canada does not have the political objectives which

¹⁴David A. Korn, *Ethiopia, the United States and the Soviet Union*, (Croom Helm, London and Sydney, 1986), p.162; and Ottawa, p.113.

¹⁵Korn, pp.92-3. Korn reports that the Soviets have refrained from pressing the Ethiopians for payment on the arms debt, suggesting that it is considered a political debt.

¹⁶Theodore Cohn, *The Politics of Food Aid: A Comparison of American and Canadian Policies*, (McGill Studies in International Development, No. 36, Centre for Developing Area Studies, McGill University, Canada, January 1985), p.1.

¹⁷David Baldwin, "The International Bank in Political Perspective", *World Politics*, 18 (October 1965), pp. 76-78. Cited in Cohn, p.1.

would lead to using food aid as a weapon.¹⁸

Both countries, however, are involved in increasing competition to sell their agricultural products, in what Emma Rothschild calls a “politics of trade, not charity”.¹⁹ Multilateral mechanisms to provide food to hungry people are also affected by these various interests. For example, both the US and Canada on occasion have refused to contribute to World Food Program (WFP) projects when the potential recipient government followed ‘undesirable’ policies.²⁰

Many studies of food aid focus on donor policy-making. The withholding or the threat to withhold food is seen as an attempt to change the behaviour of the potential recipient or as a form of retribution as in the case of Indonesia and India.²¹ The recipients are regarded more as ‘provocateurs’ than as actors with some potential for influencing the donor-recipient relationship. Two recent studies of the Ethiopian famine, however, express the view that the donors are not only influenced, but are also manipulated by the recipient.²² Their argument, that the food aid donors have been duped into participating in Ethiopian government policies which allegedly cause famine suggests that the recipient has considerable influence over donors.

Most donor-recipient relationships between strong and wealthy donors and weak and poor recipients are considered to be dependent, i.e. the recipient is relatively powerless. This thesis questions the usual assumption that the donor-recipient relationship is *a priori* one of pure dependence where the recipient is lacking in influence. Some of the concepts in the

¹⁸Cohn, pp.2 and 36.

¹⁹Emma Rothschild, “Food Politics”, *Foreign Affairs*, 54 (2), January 1976:285-307, p.286.

²⁰Cohn, pp.35 and 36.

²¹Ibid., p.37.

²²Jason W. Clay and Bonnie K. Holcomb, *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine 1984-1985*, (Cultural Survival, Inc., Cambridge, 1986) and Jason W. Clay, Sandra Steingraber and Peter Nigglik, *The Spoils of Famine*, (Cultural Survival, Inc., Cambridge, 1988).

interdependence literature are therefore relevant to this study of famine relief. The broader implications of this study lie in the investigation of the relationships between advanced industrialised countries (AICs) and less developed countries (LDCs) that have low levels of interaction and transaction between them. The hypothesis, that an LDC dependent on an AIC for a critical resource has influence over the outcome of the bilateral bargaining, suggests that a new emphasis is needed in development theory and practice which assigns more regard to the LDC's system of values and political and economic history, from which its interests derive.

Interdependence and the Donor-Recipient Relationship

The bilateral relationships under examination in this thesis (between the US and Ethiopia and Canada and Ethiopia) are between highly dissimilar societies with low levels of interaction and transaction. Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world, at the bottom of the United Nations (UN) list of least-developed countries (LDCs) with a per capita income of \$140(US) in 1982.²³ Paradoxically, it was also at the bottom of the list for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), receiving less aid, on a per capita basis, than any other country in the Third World.²⁴ The US and Canada, on the other hand, are among the wealthiest.]

²³World Bank, *Toward Sustained Development in Sub-Sahara Africa. Africa, A Joint Program of Action*, (Washington, D.C., 1984), Table 1, Basic Indicators, p.57. In 1987 the income per capita has fallen to \$110(US) according to *The World Bank Development Report, 1987*, cited in John W. Harbeson, *The Ethiopian Transformation* (Westview Press, Boulder, London, 1988), Table 3.1, p.72. Ethiopia is last in the world rankings for per capita incomes.

²⁴Graham Hancock, *The Challenge of Hunger*, (Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1985), p.58. This has also apparently changed. See *Per Capita Aid Receipts, Selected Countries, 1988*, (Development Assistance Committee of the OECD and the World Bank). Ethiopia ranks eighth. In 1987 *The Sunday Times*, 29 November 1987, "News Focus", p.17 reported as follows: Ethiopia gets \$16.8 per head in development aid; Somalia \$65, and Sudan \$51.

Table 1. Gross National Product in Current Dollars and Per Capita

	(in billions of \$s, except per capita				
	Current Dollars		Per Capita		
	1975	1984	1975	1980	1984
US	1598.0	3765.0	12850	14520	15380
Canada	152.3	340.8	11630	12800	13100
Ethiopia	2.1	4.8	104	113	111

(Source: US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*, Annual. Data from International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and US Central Intelligence Agency)

On the face of it, the use of an interdependence framework may appear to be somewhat unorthodox, as the bilateral model of interdependence is usually associated with a complex relationship where there are many transactions and interactions between the actors.²⁵ However, the Keohane/Nye model, originally used to examine the relationship between industrial states, has been applied in subsequent studies to relations between a developed and a less-developed country. Robert L. Paarlberg and others have examined the relationship between the US and Mexico and the US and Iran using this model.²⁶ Furthermore, R.J. Barry Jones points out that

... two societies might be dependent upon one another in some critically important respect, even though these dependencies constitute but a small proportion, in volumetric terms, of their external relationships and transactions.²⁷

In addition, Mark W. Charlton suggests that the process of giving food aid is not simply a

²⁵Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, (Little, Brown and Co., Boston, Toronto, 1977), pp. 24 and 25.

²⁶Robert L. Paarlberg, ed., *Diplomatic Dispute*, (Harvard Studies in International Affairs, No. 39, Centre for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1978).

²⁷R.J. Barry Jones, "The Definition and Identification of Interdependence", in *Interdependence on Trial*, Jones and Peter Willetts, eds., (Frances Pinter Publishers Ltd., London, 1984:17-63), p.22.

unilateral transfer of resources but a complex one of mutual dependence.²⁸ This thesis also argues that interdependence does not depend solely or necessarily on economic transactions. Dependence can arise from political, social, psychological, cultural and other conditions.²⁹

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye in *Power and Interdependence* define interdependence as mutual dependence in situations characterized by reciprocal effects, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional.³⁰ Power, interpreted thus as a process of cause and effect, is a state-to-state phenomenon.³¹ Independent variables (relative invariants) affecting the outcome of the bargaining (for example, the nature of the polities, the societies' values, the commitment, concentrated attention, unity and purpose of government and differences in size) become significant in relationships between dissimilar societies with low levels of economic transactions. Keohane and Nye use the term asymmetrical interdependence to cover relationships between states which are not balanced in their respective possessed power resources. The advantage of the stronger state in asymmetrical interdependence is offset by attributes which the smaller state brings to the bargaining. For example, asymmetry of coherence counters the asymmetry of power of the donors.³² Smaller states who can take advantage of the difference in size and the great diversity of interests of the larger state, have a distinct advantage in the bargaining in creating an asymmetry of coherence.

²⁸Mark W. Charlton, "The food aid conundrum and Canadian aid strategy: the issue of donor control", *International Journal*, XLII, Summer, 1987:473-508, p. 476.

²⁹Keohane and Nye, p.12 and David Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power: a conceptual analysis", *International Organization*, 34 (4), Autumn, 1980:471-506, p.502.

³⁰Keohane and Nye, pp. 8 and 9.

³¹J.H. Nagel, *The Descriptive Analysis of Power*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1975), p.12.

³²Keohane and Nye, "Transgovernmental Relations and International Organizations", *World Politics*, 27 (1) October 1974:39-62, p.48 footnote 27. Keohane and Nye point out that smaller states like Spain, Nationalist China, Israel and Canada have taken advantage of the size and diversity of the USG to create asymmetries of coherence in their favor to counter asymmetries of power in favor of the US. Ethiopia, a considerably less advanced state than those mentioned by Keohane and Nye, is however one with a long history of cohesion and this concept is useful in this study.

The difficulties are apparent in finding some common measure between non-economic and economic factors. For example, Kenneth Waltz views the nuclear arms relationship between the Soviet Union and the US as symmetrical interdependence, while there is no overall interdependence.³³ As Keohane and Nye observe, the source of power gained by favorable asymmetries (economic) in interdependence does not guarantee similar patterns of control over outcome. "Political bargaining is the usual means of translating potential (power) into effects, and a lot is often lost in the translation."³⁴

The weak actor may, for important non-economic (or non-military) reasons have influence over the outcome. At the politico-military level the US attempt to coerce North Vietnam in the Vietnam War provides an example. Obviously the commitment of North Vietnam and its greater willingness to suffer, as well as its unity of purpose, contributed to a defeat for the enormous military power of the US.³⁵ This is a case where the asymmetry of power was countered successfully by the asymmetry of coherence, in both the long and short term. However, this is not usually the case in relations between weak and strong actors. The preponderance of power in the donors, for example, provides ongoing strength to the donors under changed longer term conditions, whereby they may be able to 'outlive' the asymmetry of coherence presented in the initial bargaining by the weaker recipient. This is evident in the relations between OPEC and the West. The cohesion of OPEC has broken down for various reasons, not unrelated to Western political, military and economic strength, thus changing the political bargaining considerably. OPEC can no longer dictate oil prices to the world. In this thesis, therefore, the element of the duration of time will be considered in assessing how asymmetry of coherence and asymmetry of power are related to the bargaining process. In the

³³Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, Mass., 1979), pp. 183-193.

³⁴Keohane and Nye, p.11.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p.18.

shorter term, a less developed country (LDC) with severe food shortages may benefit from asymmetry of coherence for reasons related to effects on US public opinion, as Keohane and Nye discuss:

Television, by vividly presenting starvation . . . to Americans about to sit down to their dinners, is almost certain to increase attention to and concern about the issue in . . . American societ(y). Sensitivity to such an issue may be reflected in demonstrations or other political action, even if no action is taken to alleviate the distress (and no economic sensitivity thereby results).

. . . The vulnerability of an American administration to domestic protests over its lack of a food aid policy would depend on the ease with which it could adjust policy (for instance, by shipping more grain. . .) without incurring other high political or economic costs.³⁶

Such observations are pertinent to Ethiopia in 1984 where television pictures of starving peoples were shown to Americans and Canadians about to sit down to their dinners. Ethiopia was able to influence donor policy by appealing to the humanitarian constituency in the donor countries and had enormous indirect political influence consistent with Keohane and Nye's definition of interdependence as a cause and effect relationship. In the longer term, however, US involvement in the aid effort provided some support to domestic and external forces unfriendly to Ethiopia, which contributed to a breakdown of Ethiopia's cohesion. This is discussed further in chapters 3 and 4.

Keohane and Nye emphasize theory in *Power and Interdependence*, and their cases were selected for their potential significance for theory.³⁷ Thus they were able to develop a model of complex interdependence, which they consider an ideal type.³⁸ The three characteristics of their model: multiple channels of communication; absence of hierarchy among issues; and the minor role of military force, are clearly those of a system rather than a part of any one bilateral

³⁶Ibid., pp.12, 13 and 15.

³⁷Ibid., p.viii. Such an approach might lead investigators to unduly emphasize some factors while missing others. The authors acknowledge this in "Power and Interdependence Revisited", *International Organization*, 42 (4), August 1987:725-753.

³⁸Ibid., p.24.

relationship within the system, what Barry Jones calls a “dilute form of holistic perspective”.³⁹

John MacLean views interdependence as an ideological intervention which masks the underlying structural relationships of inequality. According to him, we cannot establish a content to the concept of interdependence solely through methodological assumptions of objective externalities, but must explain the material and historical development of the concept.⁴⁰ Without such an explanation, the actions of the ‘interdependent’ partners are not fully understood. In other words, the wrong questions are asked.

This thesis argues, however, that an analysis of the bilateral relationships in this study can be undertaken without a consideration of structural relationships. Donor and recipient actions, although they arise from attributes acquired from the historical experience of the actors, are objectively observable. An analysis of the causes of famine, on the other hand, would doubtless include a consideration of the material and historical development which the actors experienced as a result of their place in the international economic system or from their isolation or exclusion from it.

In interdependence, the nature of the issue, its scope and domain, must be defined.⁴¹ Famine relief policy cannot be considered the same way as, for example, tariff policy.⁴² A deeper sensibility is involved which in the case under study has had an effect on policy. Moral imperatives, which are not solely those of the donor governments, prevail. Michael Reisman, for example, views such values as independent of states.

The validity of humanitarian intervention is not based upon the nation-state-

³⁹Jones, p.30.

⁴⁰John MacLean, “Interdependence -- An Ideological Intervention in International Relations?” in *Interdependence on Trial*, Jones and Peter Willetts, eds.:111-162, p.146.

⁴¹Baldwin, “Interdependence”, p.497.

⁴²Joseph D. Sneed, “A utilitarian framework for policy analysis in food-related foreign aid”, in *Food Policy. The Responsibility of the US in the Life and Death Choices*, Peter G. Brown and Henry Shue, eds., (The Free Press, New York, 1977:102-144), p.140.

oriented theories of international law; these theories are little more than two centuries old. It is based upon an antinomic but equally vigorous principle, deriving from a long tradition of natural law and secular values; the kinship and minimum reciprocal responsibilities of all humanity, the inability of geographic boundaries to stem categorical moral imperatives, and ultimately, the confirmation of the sanctity of human life, without reference to place or transient circumstance.⁴³

This clearly goes beyond the holistic view of the world as a 'global commons' or what E.L. Morse labels common fate interdependence.⁴⁴ Some scholars, however, have used the concept of a 'global commons' to deny responsibility for the starving of the world. Garrett Hardin's "lifeboat theory", for example, suggests that if the carrying capacity of a region will not sustain the peoples' use, it is their own responsibility and they must take the consequences, be it famine. In other words, push them out of the lifeboat.⁴⁵ This, of course, besides ignoring the moral imperatives discussed above, is also flawed in its scholarship by viewing the political boundaries of states as barriers, ignoring the overuse of the world resources by the peoples of the advanced industrialised nations.

Clearly, the fundamental beliefs and values of western democracy are put to the test during times of foreign famine. The US and Canada claim to abide by these fundamental humanitarian values, indeed, to base their democratic societies on them. Undesirable consequences of food aid policy, such as strengthening an unfriendly or hostile government in a strategic area of the world, therefore, must be viewed as part of the cost of, rather than a barrier to, humanitarian action.⁴⁶ This is discussed in chapter 4.

⁴³Michael Reisman, with the collaboration of Myles B. McDougals, "Appendix A. Humanitarian Intervention to Protect the Ibos", in *Humanitarian Intervention and the United Nations*, Richard B. Lillich, ed., (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1973), p.169.

⁴⁴E.L. Morse, "Interdependence in World Politics", in *World Politics: An Introduction*, J. N. Rosenau, et al., eds., (Free Press, New York, 1976). Cited in Jones, p.59.

⁴⁵Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons", *Science*, December 1968:1243-1248, and Harold Hays, *A Conversation with Garrett Hardin*, (Candida Donadio and Associates, Los Angeles, 1981).

⁴⁶Sneed, p.139.

Applying the Model of Complex Interdependence

Keohane and Nye's model of complex interdependence is adapted to provide the framework for this study of the donor-recipient relationships arising from the Ethiopian famine. Keohane and Nye's objectives were to develop an ideal model of complex interdependence to contrast with the Realists' 'ideal' model of international relations.⁴⁷ The objectives of this study are to bring some understanding to bilateral relationships between extremely different societies, the modern 'advanced' donors, and the traditional 'backward' recipient. The scholar who tries to slip a theoretical model around such an undeveloped society, using assumptions derived from relations between advanced industrialised countries must show why it is relevant and how it works.

Ethiopia's unwillingness or reluctance to relinquish any measure of sovereignty to external arrangements or relationships, arises from a political and cultural history of many hundreds of years of national survival in a sea of Islamic hostility and colonial encirclement (see Chapter 2). The use of military force to maintain its national integrity and sovereignty has been and still is an important part of its foreign and domestic policy, a Realist characteristic. Paradoxically, the firm identification of Ethiopian national interest, as national survival, arising from this history, is a significant independent variable affecting the outcome of the donor-recipient relationship. It is argued, therefore, that Realist attitudes are subsumed in the dynamics of bilateral interdependence. Ethiopia, while continuing to guide its policies according to a Realist view of global relations, at least within the region of the Horn, has nevertheless participated in the bargaining of interdependence to obtain famine relief, transforming those Realist characteristics in part into influence.

The extension in this study of the Keohane and Nye model of complex interdependence to extremely asymmetrical relationships between such dissimilar societies, illustrates its

⁴⁷Keohane and Nye, p.24.

flexibility and usefulness beyond its original intentions.

Characteristics of Complex Interdependence

Multiple Channels of Communication.

Multiple channels of communication, according to the Keohane and Nye model, are **interstate, transgovernmental and transnational**. **Interstate** relations are those between governments at the formal level of foreign office arrangements. **Transgovernmental** are the relations between governmental elites which operate relatively autonomously from central governmental control. Thus bureaucrats from different countries deal directly with one another, and may complicate national agenda setting by developing issue areas in which they are chiefly interested. **Transnational** communicators are large and dynamic organizations, not directly controlled by governments, pursuing their own interests, but also acting as transmission belts, making government policies in various countries more sensitive to one another.⁴⁸ In the economic model, these are identified as multinational organizations, like banks or corporations, but Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) and/or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), like aid agencies, churches, etc., as well as the media, can all be described as transnational actors.

Other actors are **international organizations**. According to Keohane and Nye the potential role of international organizations in political bargaining is greatly increased in interdependence, as they act as catalysts for coalition-formation and as arenas for political initiatives and linkage by weak states.⁴⁹

Interstate.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp.24-26, 34 and 35.

⁴⁹Ibid., p.35.

The interstate relations between Ethiopia and the two donors, the US and Canada, were not active in the period leading up to the famine, i.e. from 1981, when Ethiopia first raised the issue of the impending crisis at the First Conference of the UN on Least Developed Countries, and the end of 1984 when massive famine relief commenced.⁵⁰

In the case of the US/Ethiopia relationship, there was active hostility on the part of the Ethiopian government towards the US administration, after, and even before, the 1977 cancellation of the US military assistance agreement of 1953. Such interstate relations as did take place were episodic and full of misunderstanding on both sides. Except for short periods, from 1974, the year of the revolution, to 1984, there was no US Ambassador in Addis Ababa.⁵¹ In Washington, there was a strong lobby group of Ethiopian refugees unfriendly to the revolutionary Government of Ethiopia, who united their voice with certain members of Congress to pressure the administration. Ethiopia, as a 'communist' country also fell under the Congressional prohibition on Title I commodities of Public Law 480, the enabling legislation for food transfers.⁵² In 1979, President Carter formally terminated American development assistance programs to Ethiopia. After President Reagan took office, all trade and government to government aid (including food aid) was cut off effective the end of 1983.⁵³ It was therefore necessary before government to government famine relief could commence in 1984 for Ethiopia

⁵⁰Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *The Challenges of Drought: Ethiopia's Struggle in Relief and Rehabilitation*, (RRC, Addis Ababa, 1985), p.162.

⁵¹David A. Korn, p.9.

⁵²Mitchel B. Wallerstein, *Food for War - Food for Peace*, (MIT Press, Cambridge, London, 1980), p.43. On the question of preventing the allocation of aid to unfriendly nations, an amendment was adopted by Congress in 1964 to PL480 prohibiting the sale of Title I commodities to Communist-controlled governments. For exceptions, see T. Cohn, *The International Politics of Agricultural Trade: Canadian-American Relations in a Global Agricultural Context*, (University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1990), pp. 115-116.

⁵³Korn, pp.53,124 and 182. President Reagan agreed, however, in 1983 to allow Boeing to sell two 767 passenger aircraft to Ethiopian Air Lines. EAL had been built under the tutelage and direction of Trans World Airlines and had a special connection with the US. As a first class airline with a good reputation, it needed to be sustained as an offspring of TWA. No doubt President Reagan came under pressure from both Boeing and TWA. This trade has continued through to the present.

to be declared a friendly government. This, according to US Agency for International Development (AID) officials, was accomplished in 1984 by executive order.⁵⁴ US/Ethiopian relations are discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3. For purposes of this section, it is sufficient to make the point that there were no frequent or close interstate relations between the US and Ethiopia in the years prior to the famine.

Canada did not have the same political barriers to relations at the interstate level with Ethiopia that the US did. However, for the period prior to the famine, Canada had a low profile in Ethiopia, and most of its interstate communication was with respect to food aid, refugees and immigration, at a functional level. Canada also had Ethiopian refugee groups in various parts of the country and some well-placed Canadian friends of the late Emperor Haile Selassie, who urged less, not more, normal interstate communication.⁵⁵ Canada, however, had continued to provide food aid to Ethiopia in the years prior to the famine and had, in fact, increased it year by year. Therefore, there were state-to-state relationships with regard to food aid. This is further discussed in Chapter 3. For purposes of this chapter however, interstate relations between Canada and Ethiopia can be described as at a very low level, not contributing much to providing channels of communication as described in the Keohane and Nye model. There was no Ethiopian Embassy in Ottawa, but Canada had an embassy in Addis Ababa which also served the Sudan.

Transgovernmental

With such a low level of transaction and interaction between the donors and the recipient, it could not be expected that transgovernmental relations would be significant. The

⁵⁴US General Accounting Office, Report to the Honorable Byron L. Dorgan, House of Representatives, *The United States Response to the Ethiopian Food Crisis*, (GAO, Washington, D.C. April 8, 1985), p.5.

⁵⁵Robert N. Thompson was a leading lobbyist who worked to get the Canadian government to use pressure on the Government of Ethiopia to ease the conditions of the Royal family who were in prison in Ethiopia. By 1988 Canadian pressure had gained their release and Canada agreed to give them entry to Canada. Personal contacts have informed the author however that the GOE did not wish to appear to have formally buckled to outside pressure and without any announcement, dumped the Royal relatives on the street. Mengistu's attitude was "do what you like but don't involve me in it".

aid communication between, for example, US Agency for International Development (AID) and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), which had been cordial and extensive in the pre-revolutionary years, had ended. Indeed there was no AID mission in Ethiopia.⁵⁶ It is interesting to note, however, that transgovernmental communications did take place in this period between visiting Congressmen and the Ethiopian revolutionary elites, including Chairman (later, President) Mengistu.⁵⁷ Congress was also a transgovernmental conduit, responding to transnational pressures. Some of the objectives which Keohane and Nye assign to transgovernmental channels were achieved, i.e. an altering of perspectives and a gaining of influence over the political agenda. This is further discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

In the Canadian case the lack of hostility at the interstate level, and the continued functional aid relationship, led to some transgovernmental relations. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was engaged in negotiating government to government memoradums of understanding (MOU) on food aid. Ethiopia was not a country of concentration for aid purposes but as a country identified by the UN as least developed it received some special consideration. These relations, however, were not of a kind to alter perspectives and exert political influence.

Transnational

Transnational actors played a major role in agenda setting and largely offset the absence of interstate and transgovernmental channels of communication. They provided an influential and more or less continuous channel of communication between Ethiopia and the two North American donors. These organizations can be divided into two categories: first, the PVOs, such as OXFAM, devoted solely to providing humanitarian aid to Ethiopia, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) connected through its many Red Cross societies in both

⁵⁶USGAO, *Response*, p.12.

⁵⁷Kom, pp.64,65, and Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (The Red Sea Press, Inc., Trenton, NJ, 1989), p.126.

donors and recipient; church organizations, such as the Lutheran World Relief and the Mennonite Central Committee, religious organizations committed to peace and development; and second, the media: news and entertainment organizations (television, radio and print).

The PVOs provide permanent channels of communication which influence the formation of coalitions of opinion around the issue of aid and development, and thus have a permanent lobby presence in the two donor capitals, particularly in Washington, about the aid issues in which they are primarily interested. The media not only provide information which in part shapes public opinion and energizes agenda setting but also uses its significant independent power base in Washington to influence the government directly. It is important to point out that, although Congress certainly is not a transnational actor, Congress (both the Senate and the House of Representatives) responded directly to the lobbying of the PVOs and the information provided by the media. Transnational actors, therefore, can be seen to be taking over the communication role that would also exist at the other two levels in complex interdependence.

International Organizations

The role suggested by Keohane and Nye for international organizations in interdependence between countries, as catalysts for coalition-formation and arenas for political initiatives and linkage by weak states, was not evident in the Ethiopian case. The two organizations most concerned, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP) were subject to considerable US influence: FAO because of its dependence on US financing and the political manipulations of its Director General, and WFP because of its dependence on US donations and its control by FAO. As well, inter-agency politics and United Nations 'member' politics affected the performance of these two agencies. Thus, the Ethiopians were largely 'shut out' of the process when trying to get these organizations to respond in a timely way to the impending famine.⁵⁸ The Canadian Minister of Agriculture

⁵⁸CBC Documentary, *The Fifth Estate*, March 11, 1986 and Peter Gill, *A Year in the Death of Africa*,

who was President of the World Food Council (WFC) at the time, also encountered bureaucratic resistance to his initiatives.⁵⁹ This does indicate that the role of the international organization as communicator, mediator or agenda-setter, was limited. Certainly the international organizations did not provide Ethiopia with an effective arena for linkage or a coalition of opinion around the issue. Whether this is due to the identifiable behavior of the bureaucratic elites, or to a deeper institutional malaise is discussed in Chapter 3. (The active participation of the UN in the coordination of famine relief in phase two is a different matter.)

Absence of Hierarchy among Issues

The absence of hierarchy among issues means, in Keohane and Nye terms, that military security issues do not dominate the agenda. There are multiple issues on the world agenda many of which affect domestic and international interests differently. The distinction between domestic and foreign issues has become blurred.⁶⁰ Different issues generate different coalitions, both within governments, and across them. In the Ethiopian famine a political decision of the White House 'basement strategists' to delay food aid to Ethiopia was overtaken by domestic pressure groups, both within and outside government.⁶¹ The Ethiopian famine dominated the agenda only after the general public became aware of its magnitude. Prior to the television exposure of the famine in October, 1984, previous attempts as early as the spring of 1983 by the Senate, and the House of Representatives, the *Washington Post*, and aid and church groups, had

(Paladin Grafton Books, London, 1986), pp.41 ff.

⁵⁹Interview with the Right Honorable Eugene Whelan, Ottawa, May, 1987.

⁶⁰Keohane and Nye, p.32.

⁶¹USGAO, *Response*, Appendix I, p.2. No written record of the deliberations of those instrumental in the decisions to delay aid were available to the GAO investigation. Those who had made the decisions were not available and could not even be identified.

not been successful in bringing the famine to the top of the agenda.⁶² The bureaucratic process of international organizations, had also been unsuccessful in getting response from the US government.⁶³

Agenda setting is therefore the result of many influences in the pluralist democracies in the two donors, and also to some degree of an international expectation of appropriate behavior defined by the substantive norms of the international organizations concerned.⁶⁴ In the Ethiopian famine, however, public pressure was the final factor in placing the famine at the top of the national and international agenda.

The Minor Role of Military Force

As Ethiopia knows very well, "survival is the primary goal of all states, and in the worst situations, force is ultimately necessary to guarantee survival".⁶⁵ However, the use of force is not appropriate to issues such as famine, although some influential decision makers in Washington, considered whether or not the famine created an opportunity to intervene in Ethiopia.⁶⁶ [The US no longer had a sustainable strategic interest in Ethiopia, and was, of course, unwilling to challenge the Soviet Union, the military and political sponsor of the Ethiopian Government.⁶⁷ The use of force by the US would also not have been acceptable to

⁶²The actions of the Congress are discussed in further detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

⁶³USGAO, *Response*, Appendix I, p.3. UN Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) letter of April, 1983 was sent to all donor countries asking for an urgent response to prevent the Ethiopian famine. Others believe that the UN's response to the famine did not itself come until after the television exposure of October 1984 in any meaningful way. (See Chapter 3)

⁶⁴Keohane and Nye, p.36.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p.27.

⁶⁶Private conversation with an Ethiopian in Washington, D.C. who admitted that many Ethiopian refugees were disappointed that the US did not use the famine as an excuse to intervene to unseat Mengistu.

⁶⁷US bases in Somalia and Kenya served its needs with respect to the US Indian Ocean navy.

either the Congress or the people of the US, and, indeed, the world in the circumstances.⁶⁸

The US was, however, giving clandestine support to the secessionist 'liberation' movements in Tigray and Eritrea who were engaged in fighting the central government. This does not appear to have included direct military assistance but salaries of the leaders, and other "aid" funding both from the US and its Arab allies, like Saudi Arabia.⁶⁹ Interestingly, the liberation fighters were themselves revolutionary Marxists' and so did not attract Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) support to the degree, for example, of the Contras in Nicaragua. Ethiopia, geographically remote from the continental US, was not a direct threat to the US. Moreover, US aid to Somalia, one of Ethiopia's enemies, included military aid.⁷⁰

Military force used in the regional conflicts did complicate the relationships between the donors and the recipient and seriously compromised the ability of the aid agencies to deliver food to the starving in the areas wracked by civil war. The wars also interfered with the government's ability to meet the challenge of the famine. In addition, the US interpreted the Ethiopian government's military solution to the political problems as sufficiently compromising the integrity of the government's request for famine relief, to delay the government to government relief program for almost two years.⁷¹ The use of military force did therefore indirectly affect the bilateral relationship between the US and Ethiopia, but the threat of military force was never a bargaining chip between the donors and recipient, and therefore the role of

⁶⁸Keohane and Nye, p.29. See also Henry Brandon, *The Retreat of American Power*, (Doubleday, New York, 1974), p.218. In 1991, after the Gulf War, a considerable enthusiasm was expressed in the US for the military solution of the Iraq/Kuwait problem. Some observers, and the President himself, have viewed the military performance of the US as the "retreat" from the "Retreat" of Brandon. At the time of the Ethiopian famine in 1984 no such gusto prevailed.

⁶⁹*Africa Confidential*, 27(10), 7 May 1986, "Ethiopia: EPD What?", pp.5-6.

⁷⁰Paul Henze, "Getting a Grip on the Horn: The Emergence of the Soviet Presence and Future Prospects" in *Patterns of Soviet Conduct in the Third World*, Walter Laqueur, ed., (Praeger Special Studies, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1983), p.181, footnote 12. The aid to Somalia was a longer term Cold War initiated program.

⁷¹USGAO, *Response*, Appendix I, p.9.

military force was minor as in the Keohane and Nye model.

Summary

Important characteristics of the model of complex interdependence are present in the donor/recipient relationships under study, but they appear with different emphasis. Interstate relations are important when famine relief starts to flow from state to state, but hostility in the interstate relationship, from both sides, complicated the relationship between the US and Ethiopia. The friendly Canadian/Ethiopian interstate relationship operating at a minimal functional level was continued and led to an increased level of interest in Ethiopia on the part of the Canadian government. Transgovernmental relations were minimal or absent, as institutionalized practice, but private visits from Congressmen to Ethiopia provided an equivalent channel. Transnational communication was the major channel through which policy was influenced in the bilateral relationship of famine relief between the donors and the recipient. Agenda setting, i.e. raising the famine to the top of the donor and recipient agendas, was possible, indicating that there was no hierarchy of issues controlling the agenda, particularly, a Realist agenda where military security issues dominate although the Cold War slowed up the US response. The governments responded to pressures through both transgovernmental and transnational channels. Use of military force was never threatened in the bilateral bargaining but its use by the Ethiopian government and the liberation movements in the country complicated the famine relief relationships between the donors and the recipient.

Methodology, Sources and Organization of Thesis

Methodology and Sources

This thesis uses a combination of historical, theoretical and empirical methods. Both primary and secondary sources were used. To gain an understanding of the general

environment, a wide reading was undertaken of secondary sources dealing with US and Canadian foreign policy, African development, famine, international disaster relief, relief agencies and international organizations, climate, food policy, and food production. The theoretical literature on dependence, dependency and interdependence was also surveyed. Data have been consulted from a number of government documents, reports and files, which include those of CIDA, US Department of Agriculture (USDA), US Congress, USGAO, and others.

Interviews were conducted with officers of CIDA in Ottawa, USAID in Washington, as well as officers of the World Bank. The Honorable Eugene Whelan, Minister of Agriculture and President of the World Food Council in the period under review granted an interview. The Hon. David MacDonald, Canadian Ambassador to Ethiopia, and former Coordinator of African Famine Relief, answered questions when in Vancouver in March, 1986.

A limitation is the absence of data from the Ethiopian government. However, material which was especially helpful in writing this thesis include the following: a book on relief and rehabilitation which covers the activities of the last decade, up to the end of 1985 published by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC); a thesis from the University of Wisconsin-Madison by a former officer of the Ethiopian National Settlement Authority, concerning the Ethiopian government's policies on land settlement and resettlement; and the 1989 report of Dawit Wolde Giorgis, former Commissioner of the RRC from 1982-1986, who defected in 1986. Furthermore, I had discussions with individual Ethiopians in Washington, including an officer of the Ethiopian Embassy. Between 1960 and 1980 I made several visits to Ethiopia and gained some understanding of the country and of its people. In addition, I have closely followed events in Ethiopia as reported in newspapers and periodicals, including *Africa Confidential*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The London Times*, and *The Weekly Manchester Guardian*.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. This first chapter introduces the problem, identifies the purpose of the thesis, and discusses the theoretical framework which is applied to the examination of the bilateral relationships between the donors and Ethiopia.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the nature of the Ethiopian polity because the proposition of this thesis, that non-economic factors deriving therefrom are important independent variables, must be supported. This chapter develops the theme of national survival as a motivating force for Ethiopian government policy, reflecting the age-old traditions of Ethiopia. In addition, the impact of the Cold War on Ethiopian affairs is discussed.

Chapter 3 examines the response to the famine by the two donor governments and the government of Ethiopia. The roles of the PVOs, the media and international organizations are discussed, particularly with respect to their designation as transnational channels of communication. It is argued that neither the donor governments nor international organizations responded adequately to the famine until public pressure resulting from the television exposure of the famine in October 1984 forced a changed agenda.

Chapter 4 discusses the nature of reciprocal costs and benefits to donors and recipient, the difficulties of measuring them, and the long term political effects on the recipient of the famine relief relationship.

In Chapter 5, the implications of this study for overall relations between Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and Advanced Industrialized Countries (AICs) are appraised. The use of the interdependence model to examine relations between countries with low levels of interaction and transaction is deemed appropriate as two states can be interdependent with respect to single important issues without an overall relationship of interdependence. Conclusions are drawn from the analysis of reciprocal effects of the donor-recipient relationships studied in this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF THE ETHIOPIAN POLITY

Thus had God made for the King of Ethiopia more glory and grace, and majesty than for all the other kings of the earth because of the greatness of Zion, the Tabernacles of the Law of God, the heavenly Zion. (*Kibre Negest*)

The theme of this thesis, that non-economic factors are significant determinants of the outcome of the bargaining between donors and recipient in the famine relief relationship between 1984 and 1986, requires an understanding of the nature of the Ethiopian polity.

At the heart of Ethiopia's modern political problems is the question of whether Ethiopia is an 'ingathering of peoples' or a polity in the process of disintegration and break-up.¹ The modern political awakening of Ethiopia's diverse ethnic and regional groups was given impetus, paradoxically, by the 1974 revolution. The complex relationships of the previous 'subjects' of the late Emperor Haile Selassie I and his imperial system reverberate through the equally complex relationships between the 'peoples' of Ethiopia and the revolutionary central government.

However, the sources of Ethiopia's commitment, political unity, concentrated attention, hostility, etc. are traceable in part to traditional Ethiopian characteristics.² Therefore, much of this chapter is concerned with the historical experience and myth which underlay Solomonid Ethiopia.³ The task of the revolution is to exchange revolutionary socialism for the traditional

¹Donald Levine, *Greater Ethiopia, the Evolution of a Multiethnic Society*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1974), p.26.

²Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, (Little, Brown and Co., Boston, Toronto, 1977), pp. 18 and 19. Keohane and Nye point out that weaker actors, like Canada in the US/Canada relationship, gain influence through their greater commitment to the "cause", relatively greater political unity, concentration on the issue and other characteristics, like nationalism. Albert O. Hirschman identified the recipient 'backlash' that may result in increased influence for the economically dependent actor, expressed in commitment, concentrated attention, and hostility. See Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (University of California Press, Los Angeles, London, 1945- reprinted 1979); and Albert O. Hirschman and Richard M. Bird, *Foreign aid - a critique and a Proposal*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968).

³The Solomonid line of Ethiopian emperors ended with the deposing of the late Emperor Haile Selassie I in September 1974. For a chronology of Solomonid Emperors, see David Mathew, *Ethiopia, the study of a polity, 1540-1935*, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1947).

Solomonid myth of legitimacy. Only by understanding the impress of history on Ethiopia can the contradictions inherent in this exchange be comprehended.

This chapter is concerned, therefore, with the political, social, cultural and historical characteristics of Ethiopia and with its relations with external actors. It is divided into the following sections: the national character; social, cultural, religious and economic patterns; ethnic and regional conflict; the revolution; and the dynamics of super-power involvement in the Horn.

The National Character

Ethiopia's national character has been shaped by the successful political and cultural domination of the Amhara rulers over the diverse peoples of Ethiopia for centuries.⁴ P.T.W. Baxter cautions, however, that

The absolute political domination and cultural dominance of the Amhara has resulted in the public presentation of Ethiopia as a state with a much more unitary culture than, in fact, it has.⁵

In his study of the age-old interactions of the various peoples of 'Greater Ethiopia', Donald Levine argues that there is good reason to consider Amhara expansion as an 'ingathering of peoples with deep historical affinities, rather than a subjugation of alien peoples'.⁶ The Amhara representation of Ethiopia's national character in this thesis is supportable for several reasons. First, Ethiopia has been defined to the world, both politically and culturally, by the Amhara. Second, without the Amhara spirit of 'manifest destiny' there would be no overriding national

⁴The Amhara, together with the Tigray, are the historical bearers of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and of the Solomonid monarchy. The Amhara are located principally in western Wallo, northern Shoa, Gojjam, Begemdir, and Harerge, but are also to be found in most other parts of Ethiopia today. Their language Amharic has a Semitic source and is the official language of Ethiopia.

⁵P.T.W. Baxter, "Ethiopia's unacknowledged problem: the Oromo", *African Affairs*, 77 (308), July 1978:283-296, p.283.

⁶Levine, p.26.

character, and there would probably be no Ethiopian nation as we know it today. Third, Amhara political subjugation of other groups was accompanied by a diffusion of Amhara cultural and religious influence.⁷ And, fourth, the revolutionary central government has many of the same characteristics as the previous Amhara Imperial regime.⁸

Belief System

Ethiopian beliefs originated in the infusion of Hebraic and Christian culture into an African culture, the Cushitic. This belief system, which became vigorous and peculiarly Ethiopian, enabled Ethiopia to survive as an independent polity for over two thousand years of recorded history.⁹ A small group of 'Ge'ez' speaking peoples bearing political, cultural and religious elements of Semitic and Hamitic migrants from Southern Arabia established the Aksumite Kingdom which expanded and flourished from the 1st Century, A.D., to the 6th Century.¹⁰ In the 4th Century, A.D., the Aksumite King was converted to Christianity, under the influence of the Byzantine Emperor, and the monarchical tradition of Aksum became fused with a Christian culture.¹¹

In the 6th Century, the great Arab expansion, while not directed primarily at the Aksumite Kingdom, cut off its normal trade, cultural and religious contacts with Yemen, Egypt and the

⁷Ibid., p.74.

⁸Baxter makes the assertion that Amhara officers dominate the Dergue. This is disputed by others. Whether or not true, it is clear that political necessity dominates policy-making in the Dergue, leading to some national policies similar to the old regime and the need to recall tradition.

⁹Sven Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, (Heinemann, London, 1976). Rubenson contradicts the isolation theories of others and the theme of his book is the vitality of the national mission as the source of Ethiopian independent survival.

¹⁰Levine, p.70.

¹¹Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1960), p.55. Levine differs from Ullendorff, and says that small groups of Syrian missionaries introduced Christianity to the northeast Ethiopians and it became a component of ethnic identity, first of the Aksumites, then the Tigray, and later the Amhara. Both Ullendorff and Levine are probably right, one event reinforcing or complementing the other.

Greco-Byzantine world. The Muslim Arabs established a ring of coastal centers around the Horn of Africa where they settled. The Islamized Somali moved southwards from the 11th to the 13th Centuries subjugating and displacing indigenous Bantu cultivators and hunting and fishing people and establishing Islam in the vast area of the Horn which they have occupied ever since.¹²

The Aksumites continued to play a significant role in the Horn, however, until the 10th Century. There were important political and cultural differences between the Arabs and the Aksumites. The Aksumites enjoyed holding power over diverse peoples, receiving tribute from them, and bringing them into a single cultural orbit, under the Aksumite King of Kings.¹³ These political, religious, and cultural traditions were subsequently encribed in a 'national script' the *Kibre Negest*, by the Tigray successors to the Aksumites. The *Kibre Negest* is a kind of repository of the 'Great Tradition' of Ethiopian rulers and provided a powerful prescription for the future. As such it is a permanent guide to understanding the national character of the Amhara empire. It legitimates the myth of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, establishing the Solomonid succession of Ethiopian kings from the son of Solomon and Sheba, Menilek I. It authenticates the Ethiopian Kings' special claims to glory in the myth of the abduction of the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem to Ethiopia by Menilek. It transfers the mission of the Jews, as the chosen people of God, to the Ethiopians and, having established the supremacy of the King of Ethiopia as the King of Kings, denies Ethiopia's early Hebraic identity. Ethiopia emerges as the sole authentic bearer of Christianity, believing in the true doctrine of Monophysite Christianity which the *Kibre Negest* 'celebrates with prophetic certainty and apocalyptic grandeur'.¹⁴

More significantly, however, the *Kibre Negest* glorifies no tribe, no region, no linguistic groups, but the Ethiopian nation under her monarch, and declares this nation superior to all

¹²Levine, p.70.

¹³Ibid., p.70.

¹⁴Ibid., pp.92ff.

others. It thus provides a mandate for the Ethiopian Kingdom to expand in the name of the Lord of Hosts. Guided thus, the Amhara successors to the Aksumites and Tigray went forth to conquer other peoples and the clergy to convert and reform them. The monarch was a constant reminder of the supraregional and multiethnic community, the 'community of subjects' to the King of Kings. The mission of a national community, hierarchically ordered, vertically linked to the King, with a parallel hierarchical order of clergy as teachers and missionaries was charted. The imperial hierarchy, free of religious duties, devoted itself to politics and war.¹⁵ This empire survived the devastating attacks of the Turks under Ahmad 'Gran' in the 16th Century and the continuous waves of invasion of the Galla (Oromo) which followed over the next centuries.¹⁶ Its staying power was demonstrated in the breakthrough of Amhara political expansion in the 14th and 15th centuries and in the 19th and 20th centuries when the 'modern' Emperors Tewodoros II, Johannes IV and Menilek II reinvigorated the national mission and carried it into modern times.

During the reign of the Emperor Menilek II (1889-1913), the Empire expanded over vast reaches of the Horn.¹⁷ Perhaps the most significant moment was in 1896 when the great chiefs from all Ethiopia, including the Galla, responded to Menilek's call to arms. They gathered with their "barbarian" armies at Adowa to defeat the modern Italian army, thereby preserving indigenous national institutions, elites, and cultural patterns from displacement by European colonisation, except for the region which was renamed 'Eritrea' by the Italians.¹⁸ The battle at Adowa was viewed by Sven Rubenson, as "a confrontation between two *essentially* equal

¹⁵Ibid., p.94.

¹⁶Ibid., pp.77-8.

¹⁷An excellent account is in Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II, 1844-1913*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975).

¹⁸In 1889, by the Treaty of Wichale, Menilek II ceded Eritrea to Italy. See Sven Rubenson, *Wichale XVII*, (Haille Sellassie I University, Department of History, Historical Studies No. 1, Addis Abeba 1964).

partners" and led to a different appreciation of Ethiopia by the European powers.¹⁹

The Emperor Haile Selassie I (Regent 1916-1930, Emperor 1930-1974) consolidated the power of the Amhara elites. However, confronted by the Italian invasion and occupation (1936-41), Haile Selassie fled the country, to reappear in Europe before the League of Nations. Appearing in the Assembly Hall of the League of Nations at Geneva on June 30, 1936, he made a dramatic appeal for justice for the Ethiopian people who were suffering under the savage Italian military occupation. Fifty-two nations heard his plea, and except for the Italian and German delegates, he was accorded full respect and silent attention. As he withdrew thunderous applause broke out.²⁰ He had appealed to the members of the League from a position of moral strength in the name of God.²¹ His dignity, confidence and assumption of Ethiopia's equality before the world was in the long custom of Ethiopian Emperors. He established Ethiopia on the world scene and gained much prestige and status for the beleaguered backward empire.

Social, Cultural, Religious and Economic Patterns

The most important value in traditional Amhara-Tigray society was status. Carefully delineated status hierarchies were observable within every societal group, household, seignory, and church.²² The manners that supported this system were very important. Rituals were performed to show deference to one of superior status at each meeting, within the family and also in the other groups of society. At the Imperial Court, a scrupulously detailed and periodically revised status hierarchy was based on royal favor. Similar hierarchies existed in the Ethiopian

¹⁹Rubenson, *The Survival*, p. 4. For a detailed and interesting military narrative of the battle, see George F-H. Berkeley, *Campaign of Adowa and the Rise of Menelik*, (Negro University Press, New York, 1969. Originally printed in 1902).

²⁰Robert Norman Thompson, *Liberation - The First to Be Freed*, (Battleline Books, Vancouver, 1987), p.1.

²¹Ibid., p.4.

²²Levine, p.123.

Church, though resting on different criteria. Religion was not deeply spiritual but had a profound effect on the organization of daily life.²³

Two abiding traits grew out of this status-ridden system of relationships. First there was little sense of loyalty to the group, like the family. Kinship was therefore not important in establishing relations of affection. Divorce was common and marriage, particularly in the higher levels of society, was often a political liaison. Second, individuals were competing for favor and therefore personal relations were often bounded by suspicion, distrust, secrecy and restraint. In the political sphere this provided the Emperor with an environment amenable to adjustment and revision of status positions thus ensuring vertical loyalty. There was little basis for the forming of horizontal relationships of solidarity.

Slavery and Caste

The Amhara political and cultural dominance over the diverse peoples of Ethiopia was accomplished through conquest. There were two types of warfare: first, the conquest of the 'marches' of Empire, and second, internecine wars for power and status in Christian Ethiopia. A result was the massive acquisition of slaves by the Amhara and Tigray elites.²⁴ Slaves were also acquired through trade and slave-raiding expeditions. The Muslims, who were the traders (most of the slaves were destined for Arabia) operated great slave markets where Christian Ethiopians purchased and sold slaves. During Menilek II's reign, a proclamation forbidding Christians from buying and selling slaves was issued. At the same time, however, Menilek himself had returned from the conquest of the Kingdom of Wallamo in 1894 with many slaves for presents to his relatives and chiefs. He also accepted convoys of negro prisoners from his generals.²⁵ Slavery

²³Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1945), p. 115.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 229 and 233. In Tigray, there were said to be fewer slaves than in any part of Ethiopia, and Ras Seyoum, contrary to the practice of other great nobles, was said to possess few slaves.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p.221.

was an important institution in Imperial Ethiopia, being a significant feature of the social and economic structure. It was not an accidental consequence of war, but was considered to be a right of the ruling Ethiopians to enslave other races, on the ground that, according to Mosaic law, they were entitled to reduce to bondage the negro and Hamitic tribes which were said to be descended from Ham.²⁶ It was customary to describe a person's wealth or status by the number of slaves he owned. By 1919 one-quarter or even as high as one-third of the Ethiopian population were estimated to be slaves.²⁷ It was not until just before the Italian invasion that Haile Selassie I, wanting to gain the sympathy of the British Government, or to avoid British intervention in the slave trade, took some measures to reduce it. Events were overtaken by the Italian invasion. The Italians promulgated decrees abolishing slavery.²⁸ In 1942, after being restored to power by the British, Haile Selassie I issued a proclamation to "provide for the abolition of the legal status of slavery" which led to the gradual emancipation of slaves. However, up until the revolution in 1974, there were still slaves who remained with their owners, especially in the 'noble' households. Ex-slaves, children of former slaves, and *de facto* slaves in some regions occupied social positions much like those of their predecessors.²⁹

Traditional Ethiopian society despised trade and manual work other than agriculture. The caste system, a division of labor with a cultural and even religious basis, was therefore an integral part of the society.³⁰ These castes were submerged classes, outcasts, pariah groups, held in low

²⁶Gibre Selassie, Vol. 2, *Chronique du regne de Menelik II*, (M. de Coppet, 2 vols. Paris, 1931), pp.599ff. Cited in Perham, p.217.

²⁷Perham, p.222. See also Richard Pankhurst, "The Ethiopian Slave Trade in the 19th and early 20th Centuries: A Statistical Inquiry", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 9, Spring 1964:220-8; and Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800-1925*, (Haile Selassie I University Press, Addis Ababa, 1968), Chapter III.

²⁸Perham, p. 232. The slave trade was also an impediment to Ethiopia gaining admission to the League of Nations, and Haile Selassie's actions should be viewed in this light as well. The Italians used the slave trade to advantage in their rhetoric supporting the invasion and occupation of Ethiopia.

²⁹Levine, p.56. It is interesting to note that Mengistu Haile Mariam is said to be descended from a slave in the household of the Empress Zaudito.

³⁰Pankhurst, *Economic History*, p.43.

repute, their group being attached to a particular occupation. They lived separately from the Ethiopians and were regarded with disdain and even disgust. In this way, the castes had a lower status than slaves, who lived intimately with their masters. There were no personal relationships between the Ethiopians and the caste groups. The Falasha Jews were one such group.

These two groups, slaves and castes, have not benefited in the same way as the peasants from the revolution. Not having access to land they did not gain from land reform; and many were refused membership in the newly formed peasant associations.³¹ Ethiopian attitudes towards slaves and caste groups have persisted making Mengistu Haile Mariam's succession to power of dramatic interest, as the alleged descendant of a royal slave.

A Culture of Famine

Ethiopian attitudes to famine have been formed over many centuries. Ethiopian farmers (the peasants) and pastoralists have suffered starvation for over 2000 years as a result of war, pestilence, drought and the political system which required them to deliver their grains and/or cattle to the Governors, the Church and the Emperor. The cultivator must

. . . carry upon his shoulders all that very large proportion of the population which had withdrawn themselves from work on the land. This included the Emperor, all his officials, central and provincial, great and small, the vast hierarchy of the Church, the large armies of soldiers, the elaborate systems of land tenure and of tribute with all their provincial variations.³²

More recently Frederick C. Gamst reiterates that “. . . the Ethiopian peasant produces not just to support his family but additionally to maintain the State, the Church, and their administrators who constitute the power-wielding elite of the Ethiopian civilization”.³³

The rhythm of the rains and harvests established the rhythm of war and conquest. This

³¹René Lefort, *Ethiopia, An Heretical Revolution?* (Zed Press, London, 1981), p.118.

³²Perham, p. 278.

³³Frederick C. Gamst, “Peasants and Elites without Urbanism in the Civilization of Ethiopia”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 12 (1970):383-85.

ensured that the soldiers were fed, pillaging the granaries of the lands through which they passed. With their grain gone and the new harvest awaiting the next rains, the peasants starved. During times of severe famine, it was traditional for the royal granaries to be opened. However, such relief was available only to those in the vicinity and was given according to status, i.e. the Church officials first, the soldiers next, and so on. The peasants starved.

Two phenomena appeared during times of famine: prayer and celebration. Famine was viewed as punishment by God for wickedness, or to mark the death of a great ruler. The Emperor led prayers, day and night, and urged the people to pray with him. This interfered with productive recovery but diverted attention away from the political system. Thus relieved of responsibility, the Emperor then celebrated some religious festival (which represented also a “state” occasion) re-establishing or reinforcing the grandeur of the divine Emperor, who fused state and Church in his person. At the time of the Great Famine in the late 1880’s and early 1890’s, Emperor Menilek II combined prayers with example as he personally went into the fields to till the soil with his bare hands, trying to overcome the peasants’ traditional reluctance to work without oxen, all of whom had been wiped out. He then celebrated the Death of the Virgin Mary, providing a sumptuous banquet for thousands:

. . . though “the entire country was ruined, the people assembled at Entoto from the four corners of the realm”; the Emperor set before them an abundance of red meat which in those lean years “was truly surprising”.³⁴

Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1972-73 failed to acknowledge that famine was raging in Wollo, fearing to lose status in the eyes of the world. Nevertheless, he celebrated his Jubilee with great pomp and expense. His failure to respond to the famine probably cost him his throne.

Paradoxically, Mengistu Haile Mariam has erred in the same manner. In September 1984 at the height of the famine he celebrated with much pomp and circumstance (and expense), the Tenth Anniversary of the Revolution. At the same time, his government’s Relief and Rehabilitation

³⁴Richard Pankhurst, “The Great Famine of 1888-1892. A New Assessment”, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 21 January 1966, Part I:95-124; July 1966, Part II:271-94, pp.283-5.

Commission was trying to deal with the famine, and to urge the international donor community to respond.³⁵

Famine in Ethiopia has always had political consequences. For example, expansion and conquest usually followed famine to provide new sources of food and resources. As famines have occurred at least every decade, it is evident that they have much to do with Ethiopia's political and regional problems. Twenty-three famines were recorded from 1540-1800.³⁶ In 1828-29 famine struck Shoa, where Emperor Menilek II's grandfather Sahle Selassie was King. This famine resulted in the conquest of southern regions which could provide cattle, grain and slaves to Shoa, an expansion which provided the resources for the later power base of Menilek II. The Great Famine of 1889-96 not only weakened the northern areas and made them vulnerable to Italian penetration, but also delayed the preparations for the massing of Ethiopian armies to confront the Italians at the Battle of Adowa in 1896. The shortage of food prevented the Ethiopian armies from following up their victory and chasing the Italians into the sea. At the same time, Menilek II, in the years following the famine, continued to conquer regions in the south, thus acquiring resources to sustain his stricken Shoa and to maintain his power.

Of course, the social, economic and political costs of frequent famine have been high, particularly in the north, which century after century bore the brunt of external pressures and attacks. As a result Tigray lost its preeminence and the Shoan Amhara gained dominance. In 1984 the northern regions were at the centre of the famine with much the same conditions as in the past; engaged in warfare, suffering severe drought, thus losing the ability to be self-sustaining, and even unable to receive relief because of central government intransigence and the refusal of the

³⁵Interestingly enough, such celebrations were traditionally the occasion for much feasting, as great banquets of meats and all kinds of foods and drink were served. In May, 1988, at a press conference, Mengistu Haile Mariam decried Haile Selassie's celebration of his Jubilee at the height of the earlier famine, while making no connection with his own more recent celebration at the height of another famine. See Mengistu Haile Mariam, *Responding to International Media*, Press Conference, May 28, 1988, (Ministry of Information Press Department, Addis Ababa, July 1988), p.25.

³⁶Pankhurst, "Great Famine", p.96.

liberation movements to negotiate over such aid. Whether traditional attitudes to famine are mixed in with the Ethiopian government's policies in responding to the 1984-86 famine is discussed in Chapter 3. Certainly the patterns of war, drought, pestilence, over-population and overuse of the highlands continue.

The Economy

The history of expansion and contraction of the Empire is one of conquest and subjugation not only of peoples, but of their lands farmed by peasants or grazed by pastoralists. Land was at the base of the economy of Ethiopia throughout its history as well as today. The land tenure system in the ancient heartland of empire differed, of course, from that in the conquered south where over fifty percent of the peasants' produce was forceably extracted to support the hierarchy: the lord, the governor, the church, on up to the Emperor and his court. The peasant was without power and while in the north (traditional Ethiopia) he had developed a loyalty to his lord, and church and emperor, in the south no such ties existed. Instead, the economic system in place in the conquered regions at the time of Ethiopian expansion was coopted and placed at the pleasure of the Emperor. This meant that one-third of the land became imperial lands, one-third church land, and one-third remained for the coopted chiefs.³⁷ The peasants became tenants on their own land.

In the northern highlands different systems of land tenure existed side by side (e.g. kinship, village, communal), which resulted in practice in some feeling of ownership, at least during one's lifetime.³⁸ However, the church still retained one-third of the lands, and the emperor received tithe through the local lords and chiefs. The burden was an onerous one on the peasant, who continued to farm the same lands, over and over in smaller and smaller parcels as

³⁷John Harbeson, *The Ethiopian Transformation*, (Westview Press, Boulder, London, 1988), p.35.

³⁸Ibid., p.73 (and others).

the population increased.

The pastoralists, who were largely Moslem, for example, in the Ogaden (Somali) and in the lowlands of Eritrea (Afar) were often displaced from their grazing lands and from their water holes. In more recent times, after Haile Selassie introduced some modern agricultural schemes, the pastoralists were driven off their lands by such initiatives as the Awash Valley Irrigation Scheme, and cash crops were planted.³⁹ The modern agricultural sector (mechanised commercial farms on the lands of the great landowners) which might have been expected to improve agricultural practice, benefited only the wealthy, and particularly the imperial family. Haile Selassie also participated directly with his oligarchy in commercial monopolies and acquired great personal wealth.⁴⁰ Nothing much had changed in the life of the peasant and pastoralist in Ethiopia by the time of the 1974 revolution. Land use was the key to reform and to a modern economy. After the Land Reform Proclamation of 1975, the land was held by the Government of Ethiopia instead of by the Emperor, Church and nobles.⁴¹

However, it is a mistake to view Ethiopia's economy as solely vertical, that is providing income from the bottom to the top of the social and political hierarchy. Rather, as in most of Africa, a vigorous market system operated which provided the means by which horizontal commercial activities took place. The long distance trade routes throughout the Horn were in the hands of the Arab traders, as traditional Ethiopians viewed commerce as beneath them. However, the markets were at the centre of regional economic activity, selling not only slaves, but all kinds

³⁹Ibid., p.50. Also see Lars Bondestam, "People and Capitalism in the Northeastern Lowlands of Ethiopia", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 12 (3), 1974:423-439.

⁴⁰Harold G. Marcus, *Ethiopia, Great Britain and the United States, 1941-1974: Politics of Empire*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983), pp.45ff.

⁴¹There are many accounts of the land system, the land reform and the results for the peasant. Some are: John M. Cohen and Dev Weintraub, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia: The social background to a revolution*, (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1975); Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1974); Paul Brietkze, "Land Reform in Revolutionary Ethiopia", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14(2), Summer 1978:249-67; and John M. Cohen and Peter Koehn, "Rural and Urban Land Reform in Ethiopia", *African Law Studies*, 1, 1977:3-62.

of products which were needed or available: ivory, gold, silver, hides, spices, etc.⁴² Today, most of the trade, including that of grains, is still in private hands. The government grain marketing body does not have the staff or the capacity to handle more than 30-40% of grain trading.⁴³

The commercial interactions between the various peoples who were from time to time under political domination of the Ethiopians, may have resulted in a common sense of belonging to a larger entity. It is therefore important to view Ethiopia's economic activity in the broadest sense and not to see it only in terms of vertical "feudal" or "socialist" arrangements. However, Ethiopia had not experienced the full thrust of capitalism under the old regime. Although foreign capital dominated both the service and industrial sectors, Haile Selassie was not interested in promoting capitalist development which might lead to creation of economic and political forces outside his control.⁴⁴ There were few initiatives which altered the economic or social basis of the "feudal" arrangements, especially, of course, in agriculture.

Under the new regime enormous changes have taken place in the economic and social relationships, but Mengistu has, like Haile Selassie, tried to keep these changes under his control. As he pushed programs forward to reorganize rural agriculture, he was alienating the very peasants and pastoralists they were designed to help. Given the very low level of foreign assistance which the revolutionary government has received, however, it is fair to say that lack of resources also hindered progress. Ethiopia, as in the past, has had to survive in virtual isolation. The Soviet Union's assistance (providing oil at cost and some other modest programs) has largely

⁴²Richard T. Jackson, "Nineteenth century market systems in Ethiopia and Madagascar", in *Periodic Markets, Hawkers and Traders in Africa and Asia*, R.H.T.Smith, ed., (Centre for Transportation Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1978:64-80). See also Pankhurst, *Economic History*.

⁴³Harbeson, pp.200 and 208. The February 1988 agreement with the World Bank lifted restrictions on private grain trade without abandoning collectivization.

⁴⁴Glen Bailey, *An Analysis of the Ethiopian Revolution*, (Paper No. 40, Ohio University Centre for International Studies, Africa Program, Athens, Ohio, 1980), p.40. Ethiopian Air Lines, Ethiopia Electric Light and Power Authority and the Telecommunications Service of Ethiopia were exceptions and were owned by the imperial government.

been dominated by expensive military aid. The reluctance of Mengistu to moderate socialist policy in order to attract western development assistance has been a factor, and is discussed in another context. In 1990, as a result of the disintegration of the economic systems of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Ethiopia has fallen into line with the new socialist realities. The WPE has changed its name to the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party, ostensibly to include non-socialist members, and private enterprise is 'being encouraged'.⁴⁵ However, during the period under examination in this thesis, Mengistu's government has been reluctant to bend to Western influence to change economic policies. Table 2, following indicates the poverty of Ethiopia.

Table 2. Ethiopia's Economy in Comparative Perspective

	<u>Ethiopia</u>	<u>World Rank</u>	<u>Africa Average</u>
<u>Per capita income</u>	US\$110	119/119	US\$410
<u>Ave. Annual Per Capita Income Growth</u>	0.2%	82/104	1.0%
<u>Ave. Annual GDP Growth in Agriculture 1980-1985</u>	-3.4%	91/96	-0.4%

(Source: World Bank, *World Development Report*, Washington, 1987)

Ethnic and Regional Conflict

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic society. The partition of Africa by Europe in the late 19th century, and the legitimating of these colonial borders in post colonial Africa, was, in effect, the 'Ethiopianization of Africa'. Nearly every country became multi-ethnic, with national borders dividing great tribal affinities. Many different groups within the new nations either competed with each other for political power or seized power with the help of an army often representing one tribal group.

Emperor Haile Selassie I took the lead in 1963 in founding the Organization of African

⁴⁵*Africa Confidential*, 27 (20), 1 October, 1986, "Ethiopia, new party, same President", pp.2-3.

Unity (OAU). Forty-one African nations agreed on two significant founding principles: the recognition of the colonial borders and respect for national sovereignty within them; and, the liberation of all Africa from colonialism.⁴⁶ These two linked principles, denied any legitimacy to so-called liberation movements in member states with multi-ethnic populations like Ethiopia. The OAU established the African Liberation Committee (ALC) to organize and deliver support to the liberation movements fighting for black independence, in places like Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. It was not commissioned to give support to the Somali in the Ogaden of Ethiopia, or the Oromo, or indeed, the Eritreans, themselves the product of European colonisation.

Ethiopia, however, appeared to be somewhat different from 'colonial' Africa. The one African country which had remained independent (except for the Italian occupation from 1936-41), Ethiopia had participated as an equal with the European powers in drawing the boundaries of Ethiopia.⁴⁷ Ethiopia became the symbol for oppressed black people around the world of black pride and independence, particularly after Emperor Haile Selassie's dramatic plea to the League of Nations in Geneva. Paradoxically, Ethiopia was the result of expansion of the Amhara rulers over diverse peoples, (the 'subjects' of Empire) and was ruled in an arrangement that was far from democratic, and was also perceived by many to be racist.

The dilemma facing Ethiopia was not that facing other multi-ethnic African states which had experienced the emotion of 'national liberation' in the anti-colonial struggle. Ethiopia had never considered itself a colony. The liberation of Ethiopia from Italian occupation in 1941 by British and Commonwealth troops, was the 'restoration' of power to Haile Selassie. Token forces led by Haile Selassie, joined by loyalist "patriot" soldiers who had continued to resist the Italians, marched with the British into Addis Ababa.⁴⁸ Had Haile Selassie and his ruling cliques

⁴⁶Organization of African Unity Charter, Articles (ii) and (iii).

⁴⁷See, for example, A.C. McEwen, *International Boundaries of East Africa*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971), p.104.

⁴⁸See Thompson's account of the liberation of Ethiopia.

been up to the modern task of restructuring the political relationship between rulers and ruled, Ethiopia would have been more than just a symbol of free Africa. Such was not to be the case.⁴⁹ The headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (UN), and of the OAU were in Addis Ababa.⁵⁰ Ethiopia accepted the great principles being enacted in General Assembly resolutions on the rights of self-determination of peoples, and the economic rights of people to participate in development, but continued to deny its own people such rights. In the new age of self-determination of peoples, various ethnic and regional groups rebelled. The confluence of regional and ethnic demands for self-determination with the Cold War competition in the Horn of Africa, opened up Ethiopia's Pandora's Box of ethnic and regional conflict.

The Ethiopian revolution in 1974 and in particular the land reform of 1975, brought change to the countryside, which stirred up old revenges and inter-tribal animosities, but more importantly gave encouragement to ethnic groups to seek autonomy from the always despised central government.⁵¹ Paradoxically, the centrifugal forces unleashed by land reform and the various separatist or liberation movements, made a strengthening of the central government of prime importance. This added a dimension to the revolution that was not foreseen. The origin of the conflicts with which the new government's future was concerned, however, pre-dated the revolution.

The question of whether Ethiopia is a 'conquest' state which resisted colonization, or a 'colonizing' state is therefore of more than scholarly interest.⁵² It is a matter of practical politics. For example, A. Triulzi suggests that the alleged 'feudal' nature of the Ethiopian polity, has itself become a political question, because it conceals a more important question, that of the alleged

⁴⁹See Marcus, *Ethiopia*, for an interesting account of the Haile Selassie regime after the restoration.

⁵⁰Haile Selassie presented Africa Hall to the ECA for its headquarters.

⁵¹Lefort, pp. 100ff.

⁵²Sally Healy, "The Changing Idiom of Self-determination in the Horn of Africa", in *Nationalism and Self-determination in the Horn of Africa*, I.M. Lewis, ed., (Ithaca Press, London, 1983:93-109), p.107.

colonial nature of post-conquest Ethiopia.⁵³ The sharp disagreement amongst scholars is repeated in the positions taken by the national government and by the liberation movements, who view their struggle against the central government as anti-colonial. The orthodoxy in international relations is to link self-determination with the process of decolonization. As newly decolonised countries gained their independence they became members of the UN and in Africa, of the OAU. Naturally, it was important that they continue to recognize colonial boundaries within which they ruled over their own citizens. It follows that those who wish to argue that they are fighting an anti-colonial war in Ethiopia, now must shift the question from "What is a nation?" to "What is a colony?"⁵⁴ Claims to the right of self-determination are increasingly based on opposition to political oppression which may be said to resemble a colonial relationship. The clarity at the international level linking the principle of self-determination with decolonization, obscures the meaning of the principle within independent states.⁵⁵

The revolutionary government of Ethiopia in providing a new constitution and new institutions which recognize the equality of the different 'nationalities' making up Ethiopia, and in establishing the principle of regional autonomy for these nationalities, has responded to this situation.⁵⁶ However, in the present political environment of Ethiopia, regional strife continues to provide political difficulties for the central government, and the military option was being played out during the period under review. A brief summary of the three major conflicts which affected the 1984-86 famine follows.

⁵³ Alessandro Triulzi, "Competing Views of National Identity in Ethiopia", in *Nationalism and Self-determination in the Horn of Africa*, I.M. Lewis, ed., (Ithaca Press, London, 1983:11-127), p.116. Also see Gene Ellis, "The Feudal Paradigm as a Hindrance to Understanding Ethiopia", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14 (2), 1976:275-295.

⁵⁴Healy, p.107.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp.107-8.

⁵⁶Harbeson, pp. 168ff. Also see *Africa Confidential*, "Ethiopia - Some Constitution", 27(13), 18 June 1986:6-8; and "Provisions of the PDRE constitution guaranteeing the quality of nationalities", in *Eritrea: A Multi-national component of the Ethiopian polity*, Ministry of Information Press Dept., Addis Ababa, June 1988:25-29.

The Somali Conflict

At the founding of the OAU in 1963, Somalia reserved the right to dispute its boundary with Ethiopia. The area in dispute, the Ogaden, is the home of millions of Somali pastoralists who, it is contended by Somalia, wish to secede from Ethiopia. It is far from clear, however, that this is the case. Several Somali groups are in contention with differing goals.⁵⁷

The Somali government of President Siad Barre, professing socialist principles, asked the Soviet Union for military support in return for military bases.⁵⁸ Between 1974 and 1977, at least \$300 million was given in Soviet military aid to Somalia in return for the Berbera naval base on the Indian Ocean and an air base in Mogadishu.⁵⁹ This prepared the way for Somalia to invade Ethiopia in 1977 when the new revolutionary government in Ethiopia was weak.⁶⁰ The revolutionary government in Ethiopia continued to receive military supplies and spare parts from the US in fulfilment of commitments under an agreement of 1953 but the US was finally not willing to do more for what it increasingly viewed as a tough Marxist Leninist regime. Mengistu Haile Mariam, who was hostile to the US, asked for Soviet assistance in December 1976. However, it was not until October 1977 that the promised Soviet military support arrived in

⁵⁷Marcus, *Ethiopia*, p.53. The Ogaden problem began with Menilek II's defeat of the Italians on 1 March, 1896, which rendered nugatory various Anglo-Italian frontier agreements in the Horn of Africa. Thereafter the Ethiopians infiltrated well over half of what was considered the British Somaliland protectorate. The area was conceded to Ethiopia in 1897. Again, after the restoration in 1941 this area was occupied by the British Army and became the centre of an Ethiopian/British dispute. Finally the British withdrew. The best account of this from an Ethiopian viewpoint can be found in John Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years* (Reference Publications, Algonac, Michigan, 1984).

⁵⁸President Barre was deposed in January, 1991. He had been leader of Somalia since 1969.

⁵⁹David A. Korn, *Ethiopia, the United States and the Soviet Union*, (Croom Helm, London and Sydney, 1986), p.18.

⁶⁰Paul Henze, "Getting a Grip on the Horn: The emergence of the Soviet Presence and Future Prospects", in *The Patterns of Soviet Conduct in the Third World*, W. Laqueur, ed., (Praeger Special Studies, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1983), p.181. U.S. aid to Somalia during 1962-77 amounted to twice the aid on a per capita basis to Ethiopia. It was probably equal to and may have exceeded Soviet economic aid to Somalia.

massive amounts.⁶¹ In what became a celebrated *volte face* the Soviet Union, failing to prevail on its erstwhile junior partner, Somalia, to withdraw from Ethiopia, switched its support to Ethiopia. The Ethiopian army and airforce with Cuban soldiers and airmen, Soviet generals and equipment, drove the Somali National Army back to the border, but did not cross the border themselves.

The Somali war, however, devastated the area and interrupted the relief and rehabilitation programs that were bearing fruit in southern Ethiopia.⁶² The war had a continuing deleterious effect on the capacity of the Ethiopian government to transform the countryside using socialist methods and therefore had an effect on the ability of the government to reverse the agricultural declines in other parts of the country. In particular, it laid a heavy burden on the government to care for the millions of refugees who lived in camps on both sides of the Somali-Ethiopia border.

The Eritrean Conflict

In the Eritrean conflict different ethnic groups have made common cause against the authority of the central government. These include the Tigray, the Tigre, the Beja, Bilen, Nara, Kunama, Saho and the Afar nationalities, each speaking their own distinct language. In addition, the Beni-Amer, referred to as an aristocratic caste, reside in Eritrea. Some of these peoples are Moslem and some Christian. As in other parts of Ethiopia, there was traditionally much strife between these various groups with some dominating and exploiting others. The ruling Beni-Amer cooperated with the Italian colonialists between 1889 and 1941. Following the defeat of Italian colonialism, the 'serfs' rebelled against this ruling group.⁶³

⁶¹Richard B. Remnek, "Soviet Policy in the Horn of Africa: The decision to intervene", in Robt. H. Donaldson, ed., *The Soviet Union in the Third World: Successes and Failures*, (Westview Press/Croom Helm, Boulder/London, 1981):125-149.

⁶²Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *The Challenges of Drought: Ethiopia's Struggle in Relief and Rehabilitation* , (Addis Ababa, 1985), Chapter 6.

⁶³Ministry of Information, Government of Ethiopia, *Eritrea*, p.18.

In 1941/42 the British occupied Eritrea as enemy land and introduced political parties and modern political organization. The result was two parties, one opposing union with Ethiopia and the other supporting it. The Beni-Amer ruling group became the dominant force in the Muslim League which opposed union. The British occupation lasted from 1942 until 1952 when Eritrea was constituted an autonomous unit to be federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian monarch by United Nations Resolution 590A(V) of December 2, 1950.⁶⁴ The resolution of the Eritrean problem was impossible under the UN scheme. For ten years Eritrea had enjoyed a democratic parliament with modern political parties and had experienced a modernising influence under Italian colonisation for some 60 years. Ethiopia, on the other hand, was a backward autocratic monarchy, with no modern political life at all. The impossibility of grafting a more politically and economically developed society onto an oppressive 'feudal' system was obvious. Haile Selassie connived during the next ten years to undermine the authority of the elected government of Eritrea. In 1962 he had succeeded and on November 14 annexed Eritrea, following the action of the elected Eritrean assembly to dissolve itself.⁶⁵

The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was formed in 1961, and in 1970 the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) split off from the ELF. Both were dedicated to fighting a secessionist war, but there was strife between the various groups and a civil war often raged within Eritrea.⁶⁶ The EPLF espoused Marxist-Leninist principles, but after the 1974 revolution in Ethiopia, it became apparent that the regional conflict was based on deeply felt divisions, which superseded ideological bents. The ability of the Dergue to survive centred around Eritrea and the central government's ability to sustain the unity of Ethiopia. The killing of General Andom by the

⁶⁴The Soviet Union voted against this resolution.

⁶⁵Berekte Habte Selassie, *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*, (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1980), p.62.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp.66ff.

Dergue was the watershed between a negotiated settlement and a military solution.⁶⁷ Mengistu seeking to continue the policy of the *ancien regime* refused to negotiate. Ultimately, the assertion of the secessionists that Eritrea was an Ethiopian colony seeking self-determination was refuted by the government who pointed out that it was absurd to claim that a country colonizes itself or its integral part and ancient heartland.⁶⁸ The policy of a military solution similar to that of the Haile Selassie regime was strictly adhered to by the new government with respect to Eritrea and the unity of Ethiopia. The Eritrean fighters henceforth were referred to as *shiftas* and terrorists.⁶⁹

The competition of the Soviet Union with the US in the area led to Soviet support being given to the Eritreans until 1977 when the Soviet Union transferred its support to the GOE. As in the case of Somalia, the Soviets transferred their support to Ethiopia's revolutionary government; but unlike in the Ogaden, where the defeat of the Somalia Army was at the top of the Soviet agenda, the Soviets (and the Cubans) have never been enthusiastic supporters of the government's Eritrean policy.⁷⁰

The Tigray Conflict

Tigray is the heartland of the old Empire. However, Emperor Johannes IV, a Tigray, was killed in battle with the Sudanese Mahdist forces in 1889, and imperial power returned to Shoa. Menilek, the powerful King of Shoa, representing the Amhara elites, had submitted to Johannes,

⁶⁷General Andom, an Eritrean, was appointed Head of State by the Dergue, but exhibited independent behaviour on the Eritrean problem and was eliminated by Mengistu the same day as the 'aristocrats' held under arrest were executed in October 1974. Ironically, the brutal murder of Andom resulted in an influx of young Eritreans from Ethiopia to join the EPLF.

⁶⁸Ministry, *Eritrea*, p.21.

⁶⁹*Shiftas* is the Amhara word for bandits and was often used by Haile Selassie to refer not only to Eritrean fighters, but also to Tigray rebels after 1942. It is the same technique used by other governments, e.g. Israel and the PLO, and South Africa and the ANC. One might also note however, that even in Canada, at the time of Oka, Mohawks were referred to as criminals, or terrorists. Such a technique is of course intended to deny the 'freedom fighters' legitimacy but always appears to backfire.

⁷⁰The Soviets have long been urging Mengistu to negotiate a peaceful solution of the northern conflicts, particularly in Eritrea.

while strengthening his own power base through external arrangements with the Italians, and southern expansion. On Johannes' death he became Emperor.⁷¹ As Emperor, in 1889, he entered into negotiations with the Italians and ceded the area which became known as Eritrea to them, thus dividing the lands of the Tigray. Menilek married a Tigray and ruled carefully but recent reports suggest that the old bitternesses are still present in Tigray complicating the more recent resentments.

Always bearing the brunt of external pressure and attack and the accompanying deterioration of productive agriculture, Tigray became weak during the reign of Menilek complicated by the Great Famine. Paradoxically, some of the great chiefs in Tigray were amongst those called Patriots who resisted the Italians during the modern occupation (1936-1941) and viewed the restoration of the throne to Haile Selassie as a miscarriage of not only tradition, but also justice.⁷² They rebelled and Haile Selassie sought and received the assistance of the British in putting down the rebellion brutally, using modern bombers against the Tigray.⁷³

After the 1974 revolution, the governor of Tigray rebelled against the Dergue rule and once again the central government put down the rebellion with brutal force. The Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) was driven into exile and became nothing more than a group of monarchists seeking

⁷¹Rubenson, *Survival*, pp. 368-384; and Marcus, *Life and Times*, p.112. Johannes, on his death bed, designated his son Mengasha as his successor and placed him under the protection of Ras Alula. However, Menilek, who had the power, moved into the vacuum and named himself, with due traditional ceremony, Emperor. The heirs of Mengasha are members of the EDU as mentioned later.

⁷²For a discussion of the Patriots, see Richard Pankhurst, "The Ethiopian Patriots: The Lone Struggle, 1936-41", *13 Ethiopian Observer*, 1, 1970:140-57.

⁷³Marcus, *Ethiopia*, p.33. This uprising is characterized as a serious peasant uprising sparked by 'maladministration, excessive taxation, (and) official corruption. The author however, believes it must be placed in the context of the rivalry between the Tigray and the Amhara, and the behavior of Haile Selassie during the occupation.

to regain power.⁷⁴ However, the rule of terror to which Tigray was subjected by the Dergue resulted in the resistance of the Tigray on a larger scale and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has carried the battle ever since, sometimes in cooperation with the EPLF. As a Marxist-Leninist organization, following the Albanian model, it is an ideological curiosity but now a successful fighting force threatening the central government, and engaging the sympathy of the outside donor community.

One of the chief concerns of western donors during the famine was the condition of the Tigray and Eritreans who were under "liberation" control and therefore could not be fed through Ethiopian government relief efforts. This has continued to be a major point of conflict between donors and the recipient government.⁷⁵ For example, western aid agencies have formed a consortium, The Tigray Transport and Agriculture Consortium (TTAC), operating to bring aid to Tigray through the auspices of The Relief Society of Tigray (REST) the relief arm of the TPLF.⁷⁶ The continuous support of the western donor community to the relief arms of the liberation movements has strengthened those movements.

The Revolution - Change and Continuity

The Dergue-ruled Government of Ethiopia, under the leadership of Mengistu Haile

⁷⁴Harbeson, p. 18, footnote 7. The EDU was formed in March 1975, the same month as the Land Reform proclamation. The leaders were Ras Mengasha Seyoum, Governor of Tigray, and a descendent of Johannes IV, General Netga Tegegne, formerly governor of Gondar, and Commander of Third Division, and General Iyassu Mengasha, who had been ambassador to Britain. Many of the EDU were opposed to the old regime, but the author believes it was Haile Selassie whom they opposed, and not the imperial system. They sought a more conservative change than the Dergue was providing and wished to take power themselves, no doubt intending to bring the imperial power back to Tigray. (The author had several personal contacts with General Iyassu in 1960 and 1961 at which time he appeared to be a critic of Haile Selassie.)

⁷⁵In December, 1990 an agreement was finally negotiated by the UN between the EPLF and the GOE, opening the port of Massawa for food shipments. The pressure of the impending Gulf War created a situation where unless food awaiting on ships in the region was offloaded before war, there would be fewer opportunities to relieve the pending famine in 1991.

⁷⁶Document received from the TTAC, which describes itself as "supporting transport and agriculture programmes in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia in cooperation with the Relief Society of Tigray". The Lead Agency is NOVIB and the operation runs from the Africa Desk of NOVIB (the Dutch equivalent of CIDA).

Mariam, is the government with which this study is concerned. To better understand the political problems faced by the Dergue and its behavior in solving them, it is useful to examine the traditional behavior of the imperial elites, particularly during the previous regime. There are two aspects to be reviewed, first, that of the lack of any meaningful relationship between a newly emerging civil society and the imperial regime; and second, the methods which the Emperor used to remain at the centre of the Ethiopian universe.

On the first aspect, a comparison with the imperial traditions of Japan is useful. Masao Maruyama has concluded that the divine nature of the emperor in Japan as the centre of the universe where governing became a somewhat blurred practice prevented any democratic solution to Japan's serious political problems. First, it prevented Japanese from viewing other parts of the world as equal, and second it was a government 'without a head' much like that of Ethiopia. According to Maruyama, the economic success of Japan was a continuing 'narcotic' on political development, extending the apathy or 'depoliticization' of the people which the imperial divinity created.⁷⁷ In Ethiopia it can be argued that the dictatorial nature of the regime under Mengistu has had the same narcotic effect, preventing the civil society from becoming politicized and thus preventing political development. The Mengistu government has chosen to rule in the same manner as the *ancien regime* in what may be a fusion of the old and the new.

Politically, during the fifty year reign of Haile Selassie, Ethiopia appeared to have changed considerably. Various institutions were established, the place of the nobility was considerably weakened, a parliament was elected, a modern bureaucracy was established, and a national army, owing loyalty only to the Emperor replaced the system of regional levees and personal armies of the provincial nobles. However, the Amhara tradition of vesting power in the Emperor as a divine being placed him on a 'pinnacle of prestige', thus preventing modern institutional developments

⁷⁷Masao Maruyama, *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, Ivan Morris, Ed., (Oxford University Press, London, 1969). Cited in Robert W. Cox, "Middlepowermanship, Japan and future world order", *International Journal*, XLIV, Autumn, 1989:823-863, pp.854-5.

from being systematically exercised.⁷⁸ Collective responsibility had no place in the traditional system. Haile Selassie adapted the political system, which had been one of balance between the nobles and the Emperor, by emphasizing those aspects of it which favoured imperial power. This reinforced the separation of the supreme authority (divine) from the practical governance. His methods were to encourage factionalism, reward loyalty, keep the army under his personal control and to integrate the newly educated 'modern' men into the slow-motion 'ballet' around the throne. Dependent on him for their positions, they naturally refrained from opposing him or introducing policies without prior knowledge of his approval. There was no government legislative program, no coherent government policy, and no united impetus for such policy.⁷⁹ Decisions were made in some magic cloud in the heavens, which was constantly changing shape, diffusing, floating and disappearing.⁸⁰

At the practical institutional level, decision making was impeded by the Amhara habit of not revealing one's position until one knew the position of one's enemies. Although there were nineteen or more ministries, the authority of particular Ministers could always be undermined by the system of 'proteges'. For example, a ministry could be laced with those who were loyal to another powerful person. It was not necessary to be of noble birth to become a protege, and the Emperor's close Palace clique were usually men of less than noble birth who owed their positions to him and whose loyalty could therefore be more fully depended upon.⁸¹

The traditional Amhara hierarchical system with its extreme deference to imperial authority

⁷⁸Christopher Clapham, *Haile-Selassie's Government*, (Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, New York, Washington, 1969), p.10.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁸⁰Keith Griffin reported that he had found this same situation prevailing in Ethiopia in 1983 when he headed a Commission of the International Labor Organization sent to Addis Ababa to make recommendations to the Government of Ethiopia on solving its economic problems. No minister would take responsibility for anything, and there was such an overlapping of jurisdiction that it was difficult to understand where decisions were made. They seemed to be made somewhere 'up there in the sky', by the Dergue and Mengistu. Lecture at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, on November 14, 1986.

⁸¹Clapham, p. 72.

could not accommodate such fundamental changes in political life as the establishment of political parties, thus providing some meaningful communication between the rulers and the ruled. Foreign advisers, far from changing imperial policy, were adroitly manipulated within the confines of the system and also had to use traditional techniques to have any impact.⁸² The arrogance and superiority complex of the ruling clique prevented them from seeing where the Imperial Tradition had now led the country -- to a stagnating, ritualized, meaningless, corrupt and stupid circle of favor and power. Most elements of Amhara/Tigray elite society remained embedded in the archaic attitudes and relationships of the past and could not comprehend what was happening in the revolution of 1974.⁸³ The Emperor was probably the only one, though suffering from episodic forgetfulness because of his age, who viewed Ethiopia as a nation greater than the sum of its parts, symbolized by his Imperial person.⁸⁴

The Transition to Revolutionary Socialism

What is of interest to this study is how the Dergue-ruled government, although espousing Marxist-Leninist principles, adopted, through its leader Mengistu Haile Mariam, many of the ruling habits of the Emperor, and inherited the national myth of superiority. Exchanging the traditional Solomonid myth of political legitimacy for that of revolutionary socialism is a most complex task. Does revolution bring abrupt change: a break in continuity, a full displacement of a ruling class, a destruction of old institutions, the creation of a new relationship between the governed and the governing, and a different mode of production and commercial exchange? If so, a new consciousness must accompany it. Without a new consciousness, the revolution must feed on tradition.

⁸²Ibid., pp.103-7.

⁸³Levine, p.181.

⁸⁴Mengistu Haile Mariam, the President of the revolutionary government, also appears to view Ethiopia in this light, i.e. that he symbolizes the nation in his person.

It is argued that to claim legitimacy in Ethiopia, two traditional imperial imperatives must be satisfied: that of succession and that of national survival. The intervention, or some might say, the subvention of tradition, compromises the new socialist vision, but cannot be avoided in Ethiopia. John Harbeson points out that 'the regime's assertion of autonomy in its difficult quest for survival, far from facilitating a successful social revolution, may indeed have been a prominent factor impeding its realization'.⁸⁵

In the past, to become Emperor meant that all other contenders had to be defeated or otherwise subjugated. The imperative of succession was therefore usually a bloody affair. Haile Selassie I became Emperor after being Regent. But before that, the imperative of succession had to be enacted by the Orthodox Shoan Amhara elite, of which he was a member. His father, a cousin of the late Emperor Menilek II, led an army to battle against the army of the father of Lij Iyassu, the Emperor-designate, and a grandson of the late Menilek. During the battle, "20,000 Wellos and 12,000 Shoans died, and an incalculable number were wounded and maimed".⁸⁶ This was the price to keep the Solomonid throne in Shoa hands, orthodox and traditional. In 1932, Regent Ras Tafari to attain his goals of succession, fought a battle against the husband of the Empress Zaudito, killing him. The Empress died in mysterious circumstances a few days later.⁸⁷

The past lies like a prophecy over Ethiopia. After the peaceful taking of power by the soldiers in 1974, bloody battles for power took place until 1977. The ritual of succession had to be enacted between rivals to prove the strength, power and leadership of Mengistu.⁸⁸ Although

⁸⁵Harbeson, pp.10,11.

⁸⁶Marcus, *The Life and Times*, p.280.

⁸⁷Mulatu Wubneh and Yohannis Abate, *Ethiopia, Transition and Development in the Horn of Africa*, (Westview Press, Boulder; Avebury, London, 1988), p.16.

⁸⁸At the time of the bloody battles an Amhara friend expressed the view to me that Mengistu would have to shed a lot of blood to prove he is a strong leader. Another Ethiopian friend commented that "as a slave, he had no right to rule Ethiopia".

power struggles take place in periods of transition anywhere, in Ethiopia tradition demanded a bloodletting. Marxists with varying degrees of commitment to ideology fought other Marxists, sacrificing lives freely to the imperative of Ethiopian succession. To inherit a powerful myth of 2000 years required not only the exhibition of ruthlessness, courage and bloodiness, but also the 'enthronement' of a single powerful leader with a single powerful mission, not unlike the imperial one. Although Mengistu's ruthlessness pales beside that of his predecessor, nevertheless, he has probably fulfilled the imperative of succession in Ethiopia. The point here is that he has earned his high post in the traditional way. However, most scholars view the bloody rivalries as struggles between civilian and military revolutionaries or as part of an unfinished class struggle.⁸⁹

No one is better aware than Mengistu that, having fulfilled the imperative of succession, he had to fulfill the imperative of national survival, by fusing the socialist mission with the *raison d'etat*: i.e. national survival in the old terms, where he is the symbol of the nation. Ethiopia, the one traditional African state to survive the European partition of Africa almost unscathed and even augmented, had strengths the new government must recall, echo and transform into its own service. In an erstwhile status and prestige-ridden class, caste and slave society, he can easily be regarded as a usurper, fully out of the line of Ethiopian succession. His success depends on his personal forcefulness in commanding respect, and on using the symbols of imperial power, but chiefly on his ability to carry out the imperative of national survival.

He appears to use the symbols of imperial power to enhance his stature. David A. Korn, who was in charge of the American Embassy in Addis Ababa from 1982 to mid-1985 observed that

. . . In his rare public appearances in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian leader sits on a kind of throne, a red velvet upholstered gold-lacquered chair emplaced above and in front of the less ornate seats provided for the other senior figures of the regime. In these and in other ways, Mengistu Haile Mariam is a figure in the mainstream of Ethiopian tradition, one who can be looked upon as a monarch, an emperor, a

⁸⁹For example, see Wubneh and Abate, pp.53-54 and Bereket Habte Selassie, pp.30ff. However, Bereket acknowledges that "feudal values and methods that have existed for centuries are not easily destroyed", p. 43.

successor to Haile Selassie and to Menelik.⁹⁰

Mengistu would probably eschew his comparison to Haile Selassie, whom he deposed, but appears to enjoy connecting himself with Menilek, whose image in Ethiopia no doubt outshines Haile Selassie's as a symbol of the greatness of Ethiopia. I.M.Lewis regards Mengistu's tendency to focus state ceremonies in Addis Ababa on the statue of Emperor Menilek as hardly accidental suggesting ". . . an equivalence between the present military strongman and his illustrious predecessor, the founder of the expanded Ethiopian Empire".⁹¹

Mengistu, however, is the leader of a socialist revolution with a vision of a new Ethiopian society without inequality and ethnic domination. The first proclamation of the Dergue in 1974 was called *Ethiopia First*, emphasizing the wholeness and preeminence of the nation. Internal division, whether through rivals to revolutionary power, or regional and ethnic disputes, as well as external threats, was to be overcome, not solely by offering a new vision but by recalling the old. Traditionally, Ethiopia, as a nation, was the result of the rule of an elite, constituting a fusion of state, monarch, church and subjects. That this minority was able to subjugate and rule so many other groups was due to its political and military skills, but also because these skills were directed to a national goal, what has been called earlier the Amhara Mission, but is now the Ethiopian socialist mission. To explicate the theme developed here, it is useful to compare Ethiopia with other states where a 'chosen people' transfer their mission to the state. Both Israel and South Africa resemble Ethiopia in this respect.

The past survival of Ethiopian political independence in the midst of an Africa under colonial domination depended, not on the impregnability of the 'mountain fastness' as so often claimed by historians, but on the survival of Ethiopia's Monophysite Christianity in the borderlands between Islam and paganism and on the survival of the Semitic language and the

⁹⁰Kom, p.107.

⁹¹I.M. Lewis, "Introduction", in *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa*, Lewis, ed., (Ithaca Press, London, 1983), p.7.

Solomonid myth of succession.⁹² Unlike Israel and South Africa, however, the Amhara imperial mission provided for the inclusion of everyone as 'subjects' of the Emperor.

By a strange twist, in Ethiopia, the descendant of a former slave, has won power in order to provide a socialist revolution but maintains power in the spirit of the old traditions. This is a very unusual scenario and makes Mengistu one of the most interesting third world revolutionary leaders alive today. Continuing the inclusionary nature of the imperial system, rather than trying to exclude regional ethnic groups from the process of government or from the Ethiopian polity, Mengistu is trying to strengthen the ties which bind the nation. By supporting a large army and fighting the secessionists, and providing a new constitution which recognizes regional autonomy within national unity, he serves the tradition of 'survival' of the Ethiopian nation. The 'survival' benchmark is placed high in Ethiopia, and external intervention is not welcome. Nevertheless a definition or redefinition of the underlying basis of an Ethiopian polity from which government institutions must derive their legitimacy must take place. Harbeson contends that 'historical foundations for the Ethiopian state have existed that are more durable than the institutions of the imperial regime'.⁹³ Now the old myths must be exchanged for the new socialism at the same time that the integrity of the state is defended, legitimacy is claimed and a new polity is constituted.

The attempts of donors to influence the path of political development is a major source of conflict and impeded cooperation during the famine. The point being made here is that the strengths of Ethiopia derive not only from traditional Ethiopia but also from the new Ethiopia. These two have become fused and to offend either will bring a hostile reaction from the government.

For the regime, the problem is which concessions, if any, it might make to gain both needed international development assistance and satisfactory agricultural performance while still avoiding a slippery slope toward abandonment of the political and socio economic transformations that have been its well publicized

⁹²Rubenson, *Survival*, pp.1-2.

⁹³Harbeson, p.15.

The Dynamics and Consequences of Superpower Involvement in the Horn of Africa

The so-called 'Cold War' has governed Soviet-American relations since shortly after World War II. After George Kennan, in 1947, in his famous Mr. "X" letter, recommended containment of communism it became the chief tenet of American foreign policy. Kennan had observed from his 'listening post' as Ambassador in Moscow, what he perceived as expansionary intentions in Stalin's Russia, which he interpreted as a danger to U.S. power.⁹⁵

[President Truman, faced with the urgent problem of rehabilitating Europe, to 'make it safe for democracy and capitalism', added ideological rhetoric to what was largely a realist policy of global power politics. In order to encourage a reluctant Congress into supporting U.S. intervention in Greece, and into voting massive amounts of money for the Marshall Plan, he laid out the Truman Doctrine.⁹⁶ This Doctrine laid the foundation stones of US foreign policy which in subsequent years led to US intervention around the world in opposition to nationalist regimes which were perceived to have Soviet leanings, and also to gain strategic advantages vis a vis the Soviets.]

[The Soviet Union, on the other hand, fairly consistently, demonstrated an ideological (political) approach to the Cold War and gave support to those regimes which were politically compatible. While the Soviet Union combined strategic with ideological considerations, its foremost objective was to support regimes which were adopting socialism in some way.] [This

⁹⁴Ibid., p.208.

⁹⁵Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War, 1949 to 1980*, 4th Edition, (John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1980), pp.64-66.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp.49-59. The Truman Doctrine laid out the ideological reasons for commitment to the Marshall Plan and for intervention in Greece. However, Truman failed to place any geographical limits on where Americans must commit themselves and was criticized for "reckless adventury" by Henry Wallace and for dividing the world into adversarial zones with the Soviets by Robert Taft.

difference in Cold War motivation helps explain more clearly the dynamics of superpower involvement in the Horn, which has often been the subject of confusion.]

[After World War II, the US replaced Britain in the Middle East and the Horn. The Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie skillfully manipulated the Americans into supporting Ethiopian interests over British and was able to get British withdrawal from the Ogaden and a UN resolution on Eritrea, federating it with Ethiopia. In addition, the Emperor had American advisers, who were very important to the reorganizing of the financial and banking systems. These men were, of course, private citizens and not acting for the US government but for the Ethiopian] government, and in the service of the Emperor.⁹⁷ [In the 1950's and through most of the 1960's, the US communications facilities at Kagnew Station in Eritrea were deemed to be the greatest single element of American interest in Ethiopia.⁹⁸ By the 1960's there was an overwhelming American presence in Addis Ababa; the American Embassy appeared to be at the 'centre of things'.⁹⁹ [However, American interest in Ethiopia fluctuated with the fortunes of the US in such neighboring countries as Egypt, the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The whole area, as in the centuries past, was interconnected geopolitically. For example, when the Soviet Union was invited into Egypt and the Sudan, American interest in maintaining Ethiopia as a Middle Eastern

⁹⁷John Spencer is perhaps the best known of these advisers, as foreign affairs adviser, but Canadians were also serving the Emperor. Examples are: Dr. J.G. Perry, an economist from British Columbia and Robert N. Thompson, later a Conservative Member of Parliament from Alberta. See John Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years*, (Reference Publications, Algonac, Michigan, 1984).

⁹⁸Korn, p.73.

⁹⁹Harold G. Marcus, *Ethiopia*, preface, p. ix. The author was also in Addis Ababa in the immediate post-coup (1960) period and later. While it was evident that the British diplomats were important, nevertheless there was an American aura over the affairs of the country. The US Embassy publication was awaited by everyone who appeared to give more importance to it than the Ethiopian daily English paper. What the Embassy reported was considered to be what the case was. The Americans were building a new jet airport; the Americans were drilling for oil; the US presence was ubiquitous. Strangely, however, the Ethiopian traditional life went on including noblemen riding their horses in the thoroughfares with their 'slaves' running along beside them, all in traditional dress, the Ethiopian market operated, almost totally lacking in European attendance, and the 'modern' elites operated socially in both worlds, although not totally welcome in the old. The status the Emperor established for everyone was without regard to the American activities related to modern development. Ethiopian xenophobia was alive and well and few foreigners were invited into Ethiopian homes.

base was increased. When the Soviets were asked to leave Egypt and the Sudan US interest in Ethiopia lessened. The question of how to deal with Ethiopia became, therefore, inextricably intertwined with how best to protect American interests in the Middle East. Later, the events in Iran and Afghanistan persuaded the US that, having lost Ethiopia, they needed the use of the naval and air facilities in Somalia, by then evacuated by the Soviets.¹⁰⁰]

[Since the military aid agreement signed in 1953 with Haile Selassie, the US had been equipping and building up the Ethiopian army and airforce, although it had never supplied as much assistance as the Emperor desired and requested, or even as the US had committed. After the Emperor's fall from power in 1974, paradoxically, the US increased its military assistance, hoping to encourage the emergence of a moderate government favorable to US interests. Whereas the annual military assistance previously had been held to about \$10 million, in the summer of 1974, Washington approved about \$100 million in military aid to be delivered during 1974 and 1975.¹⁰¹ This policy was largely the result of recommendations of the State Department since political power was no longer held firmly in the White House. The revolution in Ethiopia occurred at the same time that President Nixon, facing possible impeachment, resigned (August, 1974), one month before the Emperor was deposed.]

[The Kagnew Station was no longer important to the US as technology had made it redundant. The US's only interest was in trying to keep a foothold and in getting compensation for the Americans whose property had been nationalised. Obviously, neither of these objectives were well received by the Ethiopian leader Mengistu, emerging as the strong-man in the Dergue, who viewed the US as the sponsor of the *ancien regime*. In April, 1977, having been assured of Soviet assistance, he ordered the Kagnew Station and all US offices and installations in Ethiopia closed, and the Embassy staff reduced. Further shipment of arms was stopped, the arms

¹⁰⁰Korn, p.74.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p.8.

agreement was terminated, and the Soviet Union replaced the Americans as the chief supplier of military assistance to the Ethiopian government.

The American involvement over the years had enabled Haile Selassie to build one of the largest military forces in Africa, to fight the Eritrean secessionists, and the Somali irredentists, as well as to put down other rebellions around the country. In addition US support in 1960 enabled the Emperor's forces to suppress the attempted *coup d'etat* of that year thus maintaining power. This American support was a major factor hindering political development, particularly after 1960.¹⁰²

The Soviet Union's interest in Ethiopia was a continuation of a traditional relationship which over the years had been refreshed and enlivened by the annual pilgrimages of clerics, both Russian and Ethiopian, embracing the Orthodox Church. Indeed, this old relationship appears to have influenced the Czar in his attitude towards the emissaries of Emperor Menilek in the 19th Century. The Russians never recognized Italy's protectorate over Ethiopia which Menilek was disputing, and indirectly provided the emperor with moral and political support during a critical period.¹⁰³ Later, in 1936, a communist Russia sided with Ethiopia at the League of Nations, protesting the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the position of the other European states like France and Britain.¹⁰⁴ In a country as tied to history as Ethiopia, these factors assume some importance.

In the post-World War II era, the Soviets, who had opened a legation in Addis Ababa in 1942 after the restoration of Haile Selassie, re-opened the Russian Hospital (1947) which had been originally established during the reign of Menilek, and in 1959 offered \$102 million in economic aid to Haile Selassie.¹⁰⁵ The Soviets, however, were seeking, both in the Middle East

¹⁰²Marcus, *Ethiopia*, Chapter 6.

¹⁰³Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times*, p.117.

¹⁰⁴Korn, pp.88,89.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p.89.

and in the Horn, compatible regimes with whom they could share their socialist goals.] In 1969, when Siad Barre overthrew the parliamentary government in Somalia, the Soviet chance to establish itself more firmly in the Horn had arrived. Barre invited the Soviets to provide increased military assistance to his regime, which he proclaimed to be Marxist-Leninist. The Soviets responded by providing substantial military aid, in both equipment, training and advisory capacities in exchange for a sea base at Berbera on the Indian Ocean, and air and land bases at Mogadishu. However, it was not until 1974, after a Treaty of Friendship was signed, that arms began to flow to Somalia in significant quantities. Having been evicted from Nimieri's Sudan in 1971 and Sadat's Egypt in 1976 the Soviets continued to support the Marxist Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) in Eritrea, as well as the revolutionary Yemenis.¹⁰⁶

[This Soviet interest in Somalia has been interpreted by some, with hindsight, as an intentional Soviet backed threat to Ethiopia, designed to push Ethiopia into the Soviet embrace in its hour of peril confronted by the Somali Army.¹⁰⁷] However, this theory appears to be fanciful at best. The Soviet embrace was not yet open to receive Ethiopia as represented by the Dergue in its early years. [In any event, the Soviets had no control over the Somali Government's decision to invade Ethiopia in 1977.] What seems more likely is that the Soviets were following their policy of supporting socialist regimes to gain not only strategic bases, but more importantly a Soviet political presence.] At the time of the Soviet's assistance to Somalia, that country had declared it was socialist, and Ethiopia was still a wild card. Who could predict that strong-man Mengistu Haile Mariam would be able to wrest the supreme position in erstwhile 'feudal' Ethiopia from others in the name of Marx and Lenin?

The Soviets were keeping a close watch on events in Addis Ababa, and were undoubtedly participating with their East European allies and Cuba in behind the scenes shaping of events. As

¹⁰⁶Raymond W. Copson, "The Soviet Union in Africa", in Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Pattern of Soviet Conduct in the Third World*, (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1983), p.189.

¹⁰⁷Korn, p.166-169. See also Spencer, p.352.

the American position weakened, and Mengistu's position strengthened, the Soviets were forced to respond to Ethiopia's request for military support or bow out. In December 1976 a secret defence agreement was signed, but it was not until the Dergue's very survival was threatened in November 1977 by the Somali invasion, that a massive arms transfer began.¹⁰⁸ The die was cast and Siad Barre ordered the Soviets out of Somalia.

[It is clear that the Soviets regarded the loss of Somalia as a short term loss that was worth suffering. Arguably they regarded the political benefits of establishing themselves in Addis as much greater than the strategic benefits they had gained in Somalia.] In addition, by coming to the assistance of a beleaguered Ethiopia, beset by insurrections in the north, south, east and west, they had the approval of orthodox international opinion. Obviously, the very real threat to the survival of the Dergue posed by the Somali invasion conferred on the Soviets more influence than they would have otherwise gained.

- [According to Marina Ottaway, the Soviets did not gain much of anything in Ethiopia, either of a strategic or political nature.¹⁰⁹] It is true that Mengistu remained independent with respect to Ethiopian decisions, and two Soviet Ambassadors had to be recalled for overstepping their position. [However, a serious examination of the relations between the Soviet Union and Ethiopia shows that the Soviets have had a very strong political link with the Dergue. Both the Soviets and other East bloc countries, as well as Cuba, have influenced the course of the revolution. The route to this strong political presence was through military aid. As the Soviets received no strategic bases it appears that they found the political partnership to be worthwhile and more important than the connection with the smaller less important and probably less 'socialist' Somalia. In Ethiopia, they found a vigorous and serious ideological partner, where Marxism Leninism could guide the political and economic programs.]

¹⁰⁸Remnek, pp.125-149.

¹⁰⁹Marina Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa*, (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1982), p.170.

Summary

While both the US and the USSR strove to have influence in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East during the Cold War era, the USSR gave support to those countries that favored socialist programs and principles. The US tended to support counterpart countries for Cold War reasons. These conflicting motives led to a kind of 'musical chairs' as governments in the area changed their ideological positions, or became offended by the Soviets or by the US. Ethiopia, of all the states in the area provided the Soviet Union with a presence in a country with a determined socialist government.

Obviously, the regional conflicts, both domestic and with their neighbours, created in Ethiopia the need for external military assistance. Both before the revolution and after, the US and the USSR exacerbated the regional conflicts and supported Ethiopia's traditional policy of taking military solutions to its regional political problems. Both the US and the USSR have contributed to the uncertainty in the region by changing their alliances. Ethiopia, on its part, has maintained an independent policy with respect to national survival and its political transformation. Both superpowers have had and continue to have an impact on Ethiopia, but in the period under study it was the Soviet Union that had a strong political role.

CHAPTER 3

RESPONSE TO THE FAMINE

Response to famine depends on many factors - the resources available, political will, economic policy, political relationships, cultural relationships and normative practice.¹

Obviously, these factors vary temporally and spatially and will therefore influence donors and recipient differently. For example, traditional normative practice in Ethiopia has been largely to ignore famine or at best to note it by giving prayers to God for forgiveness of sin and to celebrate the glory of the nation.² This practice appears to have changed with the institutionalizing of relief in 1974 but traditional attitudes may still prevail amongst many Ethiopians.³ The normative practice of the major food producing countries is to relieve famine whenever and wherever it occurs. International organization has influenced the global food environment, by legitimating practices and patterns of behavior, thereby turning them into norms. International endorsement of famine relief, for example, may create barriers to political action by donor governments that would be detrimental to the recipient.⁴ For example, the creation of the World Food Program for the express purpose of distributing food from food surplus countries to food short countries has set an international norm affecting national responses to famine. As pointed out in Chapter 1, however, political objectives may override normative practice where the costs are not too great.

¹Normative practice is used here to mean usual accepted behavior established through custom, principle or law.

²For a full account of famine in Ethiopia, see Richard Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892. A new assessment", *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 21, January 1966, Part I:95-124; July 1966, Part II:271-94.

³Peter Gill, *A Year in the Death of Africa: Politics, Bureaucracy and the Famine*, (Paladin Grafton Books, London, 1986), p.35. Gill reports that his Ethiopian pilot in 1984 on being told of the tragedy in Korem replied that Ethiopians were being punished by God for their sins. Gill, a reporter with ITV who first brought the Ethiopian famine to British television, subsequently returned to Africa to examine the conduct of aid agencies. This book is the result.

⁴Raymond F. Hopkins and Donald J. Puchala, "Perspectives on the international relations of food", *International Organization*, 32 (3-4), 1978:581-616, pp.610 and 612.

Some historical examples may illustrate how such factors have influenced famine relief. In India, in the 19th century, the colonial response to regional famines was guided by economic policy - the principles of the free market system overriding humanitarian concerns. This led to much suffering and was not reversed until late in the century when a permanent procedure was institutionalized for dealing with famine.⁵ Arguments against making a distinction between famine relief and development aid, are also economic. The argument that the supplying of food aid encourages development policies in the recipient which are inimical to agricultural development affects the response to famine.

During the Nigerian-Biafran conflict, the US was accused of standing by and watching the Biafrans starve.⁶ In this case, the US had the resources required but its friendly relationship with the Government of Nigeria inhibited its effectiveness in providing food to Biafra. Cultural relationships also played a significant role in reinforcing the Nigerian government's resolve to keep aid from the starving Biafrans. President Nixon tried to surmount these difficulties unsuccessfully, stating:

. . . US policy will draw a sharp distinction between carrying out our moral obligations to respond effectively to humanitarian needs and involving ourselves in the political affairs of others. . . . We will not intervene in the internal affairs of African nations. . . . we will observe their right to deal with their own problems independently.⁷

In this case, the contradiction is clear. In order to provide humanitarian assistance to the Biafrans the US had to become involved in the political affairs of the Government of Nigeria whose policy was to starve the Biafrans. In Burundi (1971-73) the cultural relationships between the dominant Tutsi (14-15%) and the subordinate Hutu (80-85%) provided a domestic conflict which seriously

⁵Srinivasa Ambirajan, "Political Economy and Indian Famines," *South Asia*, August, 1971:20-28.

⁶E. Ripon, "How the State Department Watched Biafra Starve", cited in Stephen C. Schott, "United States Relief to Civilian Victims of the Biafra-Nigeria War", in *The United Nations: A Reassessment*, John M. Paxman and George T. Boggs, eds., (University Press of Virginia, 1973:105-113), p.111.

⁷*Report of the Special Fact-Finding Mission to Nigeria*, Committee on Foreign Affairs, (USGPO, Washington, 1969), p.15.

impeded international efforts to aid its victims.⁸

[This thesis argues that famine relief is most successful when separated from a consideration of the long term development and political issues, as it must be concentrated, rapid, massive and clearly targetted.] The Canadian response of African advocacy tended to distort the intentions of the donor as it led to the expectation that Canadian aid would be forthcoming without conditions. The US response, when it came, was limited to famine relief and conditional. The ramifications of these differences will be examined in Chapter 4 as they affect the bargaining position of the two donors.

[In this chapter, it will become clear that many of the above factors play a part, in different ways, in influencing the outcome of the donor-recipient relationships in the Ethiopian famine. However, the political processes of the different government systems also play an important role. To be able to come to any conclusion at all about US policy, for example, it is necessary to understand the political relationships which are institutionalized in the separation of the Congress and the Executive Branch.] The Canadian system of government, on the other hand, fusing the legislative and executive branches in Parliament, results in a lessening of the impact of pluralist elements on policy making. Food aid policy appears to be solely a function of an entrenched bureaucracy. There is thus a different relationship between each of the donor governments and their aid agencies, i.e. US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The recipient also has a different political system, characterized at the time of the famine as a military dictatorship, where there is a high level of political unity and commitment. Ethiopia's relief agency, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) has a quite unique relationship with government. Its mandate, targetted to domestic and not international relief, is carried out with a high degree of autonomy from the central government.]

⁸Warren Weinstein, "Burundi", in *Civil Wars and the Politics of International Relief*, Morris Davis, ed., (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1975:5-24), p.6.

Until the 1984 famine, there was no coordinated international policy for food aid to Ethiopia. Programs were carried out by a few public and private agencies, religious institutions and international organizations with widely differing objectives, organization and management.

All these organizations played roles in the response to the Ethiopian famine. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the media was an important link between the donors and the recipient.

This chapter is divided into the following sections: Part one: structure and role of the private voluntary organizations, the media, and international organizations, and Part two: government responses; followed by a summary.

PART ONE

Structure and Role of the Private Voluntary Organizations ⁹

In Chapter 1 the role of PVOs as communicators was emphasized in discussing the model of complex interdependence adapted to this study. Primarily they were described as transnational actors, providing channels of communication, which together with other influences, particularly the role of the media, brought the Ethiopian famine to the top of the agenda of the two donor governments. This was viewed as beneficial to Ethiopian interests, putting humanitarian concerns ahead of politics, and keeping the western governments faithful to their general commitments to meet human suffering wherever it might occur. During the relief operation itself the PVOs continued their role as communicators, beyond the transactions required of them to generate resources and distribute and account for them. From the point of view of the Ethiopian government, the RRC, and the UN Emergency Office in Ethiopia (EOE), this was not always beneficial to Ethiopian interests. Having established their reputations as humanitarians in the first

⁹In this thesis the term PVO is used to designate the aid agencies who participated in the famine relief in Ethiopia. However, many authors prefer to describe these organizations as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and this term is used interchangeably when necessary, in direct quotations and relevant literature.

phase of their activities, the PVOs presumed, for example, to have a superior knowledge of where and how the relief should be distributed. In this second phase, as communicators, PVO criticism of the RRC, often unfounded, or founded on misconceptions according to Jansson,¹⁰ became the source of inflammatory press coverage of the role of the Ethiopian government in the relief operation. Therefore, the roles of both the media and the PVOs as channels of communication between the donor and the recipient had subtly changed, the new status arising in a peculiar way from the first. The media is discussed separately, but in this section it is useful to examine the organizations' *raison d'être* to help explain whether this change is a metamorphosis or an inevitable development.

Private voluntary organizations have many characteristics in common. Legally, - and to qualify for tax exemption status - in the countries in which they are established they are designated as nonprofit organizations established to fill a "charitable" purpose. Their charitable work can be done at home or abroad, but in this study the concern is with those organizations that have third world development as their major goal. After World War II, in a period when relief and rehabilitation of Europe was of primary concern, the three major US PVOs, CARE (first known as Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe)¹¹, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Church World Service (CWS) were founded, and aided in the resettlement of refugees providing food, clothing, and financial assistance to the displaced people of Europe. CARE differed in that it had no well-defined constituency as the religious groups had. It was organized by representatives of CRS, the Cooperative League of the USA and the American Friends Service Committee (the Quakers). With the skilful use of the mass media, and the massive overseas relief

¹⁰Kurt Jansson, Michael Harris and Angela Penrose, *The Ethiopian Famine*, Zed Books Ltd., London, New Jersey, 1987, pp. 68-73.

¹¹CARE was also known, more colloquially, as Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere.

provided, CARE became synonymous with American aid.¹²

The post-war experience of these organizations was in European cultures similar to that of the US, and so the relief operations were transactions of material assistance only. However, as the 'winds of change' blew across the colonial empires, the so-called 'Third World' emerged, and the energies of the PVOs became directed to transferring not only material assistance but also developmental policies, religious creeds, and political principles. American PVOs became part of a larger group of organizations, from the United Kingdom, like OXFAM, and from Canada, Australia and continental Europe dedicated to third world development.

In addition to the problems raised by the ethnocentricity of the PVOs, the Cold War added a new dimension. Both the attitudes of the western organizations and of the recipient countries were affected by the initiatives of the Soviet Union and the US around the third world. For example, CRS remained at work in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania after the communist takeovers in post-war Europe for only about one year and they were forced to leave North Vietnam at the time of independence. Two questions are raised here: first, the acceptability of western PVOs to recipients who have socialist political agenda; and second, the willingness of western PVOs to work in 'socialist' countries.¹³ PVOs were perceived, particularly in the Cold War era, to have ideological as well as humanitarian objectives.

As CARE, CRS, and CWS were active in Ethiopia, their stated goals and objectives should be noted.

To help the less fortunate peoples of the world in their struggle against hunger, ill health, ignorance and low productivity by converting as effectively as possible the voluntary, people-to-people contributions of Americans and Canadians and the support of host governments into various forms of relief and development assistance. (CARE)

¹²John G. Sommer, *Beyond Charity*, (Overseas Development Council, 1977), pp.6 and 21. As CARE became politicized by the State Department a conflict arose and the Quakers left the organization.

¹³Ibid., p.30. The Friends Service Committee appears to be acceptable in places, for example, where CARE may not be. The Friends do not concentrate on development but on a shared concern for peace and human relationships. However, the objectives vary by country and by decade.

To undertake activities in the field of development, sponsor nutrition education programs, distribute relief supplies (food, medicine, clothing, etc.), and meet emergency needs due to natural and manmade disasters. (CRS)

To serve the common interest of US Protestant and Orthodox churches in works of Christian mercy, relief, technical assistance, rehabilitation and interchurch aid. (CWS)¹⁴

These are representative of two types of organizations, those which are primarily serving the interests (secular) of the recipient, and those which are religiously oriented. However, there are two necessary operating objectives which if not met, make the organizations impotent: first, the raising of resources from their constituents, and second, self-fulfilment.¹⁵

To raise funds, particularly during times of emergency, the major PVOs depend on the media to arouse public opinion, and so open the purse strings of individual donors. In normal times, many of the major PVOs engage in commercial activity, hiring fund-raisers, and using high profile television shows to get donations. In addition, regional organization stimulates grass roots participation, and has a ripple effect on fund-raising. OXFAM is a particularly good example of this process, having branches in many countries and regions. (OXFAM (UK), OXFAM (Canada), OXFAM (B.C.), OXFAM (US)). The ups-and-downs of fund-raising, often dependent on publicizing conditions in the Third World, or on disasters, also places one organization in competition with another. This has the potential of making it more difficult during emergencies like the Ethiopian famine, to coordinate relief activities between such rival groups. To some degree, according to the RRC and the EOE, this was a problem in Ethiopia. In addition, PVOs also have in the past had poor relations with the World Food Program (WFP).¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., p.40.

¹⁵Ibid., p.10. According to Sommers, PVOs obtain self-satisfaction and self-fulfilment out of service to LDCs, without which they would be unable to continue to attract volunteers. In the case of religious PVOs, the self-fulfilment may take the form of fulfilling God's will, presumably equally, if not more self-fulfilling than humanitarian service. That PVOs also gain recognition for their work is an additional aspect, not unrelated. There is nothing new about the idea of charitable works bringing feelings of happiness and goodness to the donors. What is new, however, and needs much more investigation is the relationship of this requirement of self-fulfilment to the increasingly secular role of development agencies.

¹⁶Mitchell B. Wallerstein, *Food for War - Food for Peace, US Food Aid in a Global Context*, (MIT Press, Cambridge, London, 1980), p.109.

Several of the major PVOs, both in America, Canada and the UK, rely on government resources for their programs. In the US, for example, CARE, CRS and CWS get most of their funding from USAID. In Canada, the relationship between CIDA and the PVOs is becoming almost as close. During the Ethiopian relief CIDA, through its International Humanitarian Assistance Program (IHA) supported the Canadian Lutheran World Relief and the League of Red Cross Societies, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In terms of working with voluntary organizations in Ethiopia, CIDA's Special Programs Division supports fourteen Canadian NGOs in a total of 48 projects. The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Lutheran World Relief Organization, Interchurch Fund for International Development, Mennonite Central Committee and the Sudan Interior Mission are some of the organizations working with CIDA. During 1984-85 CIDA commitments for on-going NGO efforts in Ethiopia totalled \$2.1 million, exclusive of food aid.¹⁷ As almost 64% of the food during 1984/85 was distributed by NGOs, it is clear that the Ethiopian famine relief operation brought donor governments and PVOs into a much closer relationship.¹⁸

Aside from fulfilling their specific humanitarian objectives, PVOs are influenced by their need for resources, and their imperative of self-fulfilment. The first brings them into close association with government agencies, like USAID and CIDA. This has two effects. First it establishes a relationship between the elites of the government agencies and the PVOs which is friendly and second it makes the PVO dependent on government funding to survive. In both events, it places the PVOs in a compromising relationship with respect to taking positions which might be labelled political, in criticizing government aid policies. This is mitigated to some degree in the US because of the pluralist nature of the society, where other groups both within Congress

¹⁷CIDA, "Canadian Assistance to Ethiopia: The Struggle for Life", *Food Crisis in Africa*, (Public Affairs Branch, Hull, Quebec, May 1985), pp.4-5.

¹⁸United Nations Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, *Status Report on the Emergency Situation in Africa*, (UNOEOA, New York, September 1, 1985), p.35.

and in the society at large are expected to take critical positions. However, in Canada, it is far from clear that the relationship which is developing between PVOs and CIDA will not prevent the PVOs from taking independent positions.¹⁹ Because of the nature of the Canadian bureaucracy as the "insider" club, PVO elites once admitted to the club are likely to lose their independent point of view. Second, in seeking self-fulfilment, PVOs may exaggerate their competence in the field and compromise the overall aid program.²⁰

[PVO roles in the Ethiopian famine, therefore, are several. First, as lobbyists (or catalysts) and communicators, pursuing their humanitarian objectives; second, as fund raisers; third, as distributors and managers of famine relief; fourth as monitors; and fifth as reporters. Separating these roles has been problematic for them and for the other actors concerned. The media have been an essential partner of PVOs in all these roles, linking the field with the home public.]

The International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is not a conventional PVO. First founded by a group of conservative Swiss business men during World War I to provide a 'protecting' agency for prisoners of war, it has broadened its objectives to humanitarianism. Because of its original role, it has legal status under the Geneva Conventions. This has evolved into a pattern similar to government-to-government relationships, which may effectively curtail much of the humanitarian effectiveness of ICRC in certain conditions of domestic strife. The ICRC operates within a country only with the formal consent and agreement of the country, whereas the PVOs, while requiring visas for the individual workers, do not enter into agreements with the recipient government as they do not have the legal status to do so, and as it would not be

¹⁹Mark W. Charlton, "The food aid conundrum and Canadian aid strategy: the issue of donor control", *International Journal*, XLII, Summer 1987:473-508, p.500. The amount of food aid allocated through NGOs more than tripled from \$10.35 million in 1983/84 to \$34.37 million in 1985/86. Undoubtedly this reflects the Ethiopian famine operations, but CIDA has special reasons for pursuing this association, thus relieving CIDA of responsibility for implementing and monitoring. The impact on CIDA policy of PVO participation in CIDA programs might be expected to reinforce the "humanitarian" component in CIDA.

²⁰Dawit, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (The Red Sea Press, Inc., Trenton, N.J., 1989, pp.239-40; and Jansson, p.24.

in their interest to do so. The ICRC is associated with the national Red Cross Societies, who are federated under the multinational Secretariat, independent of ICRC, of the League of Red Cross Societies. There is a lack of clear patterns of authority. Order is produced by tradition and by cooperation among the Red Cross agencies.²¹ However, cooperation between the League (the national Societies) and the ICRC is problematic.

The ICRC receives 75% of its regular budget from the Swiss government. The Swiss people collect annually for emergency actions, but there is no domination of the ICRC by government. National Red Cross societies and the League are also the recipients of government funding and are further connected to government since the government charters the society, and appoints top officials. In addition the Red Cross societies perform quasi-governmental functions, (blood donor clinics) funded by government. During times of emergency particularly the Red Cross Societies make public appeals for donations.

A further complication arises from this attachment to national governments. Red Cross Societies tend to represent the views of the 'establishment' in their countries, and therefore in totalitarian or authoritarian countries, they tend to represent the views of the governing elite. In both the Burundi and Nigerian/Biafra conflicts this was a serious problem constraining the ICRC from providing humanitarian aid through the national societies.²² No serious problem of this nature appears to have arisen in Ethiopia. The ICRC has operated in direct arrangements with the GOE and has been able to achieve almost autonomous status in the regions in which it is providing humanitarian aid to both rebel and government areas. However, this relationship was not without strife. Because of its strong position, the ICRC felt able to stand up to the GOE and

²¹David P. Forsythe, *Humanitarian Politics, The International Committee of the Red Cross*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1977), p. 3.

²²Richard B. Lillich, ed., *Humanitarian Intervention and the United Nations*, (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1973), Appendix A., pp.167-195.

criticize when necessary.²³

While the ICRC, because of its permanent mandate and structure, is well placed to respond to world disasters quickly, it does not appear to have developed a network of cooperation with other PVOs. Because it is guided by its ideal of 'impartial humanitarianism', and does not enter into a country without consent, it has gained a reputation for reliability and neutrality. In Ethiopia the ICRC appears to have lived up to this reputation.²⁴

The Structure and Role of the Media

For anyone who has lived through an international crisis 'on the ground' and at the same time read the western press reports of the crisis it is well understood that the media have a product to sell, "news", and that the decision on what kind of stories to report, or create, depend on what is marketable and on competition with their rivals. The major international news agencies are profit-making enterprises. Thus it is clear, that the humanitarian objectives of the PVOs are not those of the international media. In addition, the media do not rely on the government for funding, and therefore cannot necessarily be muffled in reporting of government activities, whether in overseas war or in overseas aid.²⁵ Information, however, is distorted (i.e. the media do not report the truth, exaggerate, or place events out of context) first, as noted above to shape its marketability, and second, as a result of the internalized western political, economic, cultural and

²³Gill, pp. 133-35.

²⁴During the Ethiopian famine, CIDA provided food aid to the ICRC for Ethiopia valued at \$6,220,000 during 1985-86. See *Development*, IDRC, Ottawa, Winter 1986-87, p.33.

²⁵The exceptions are the national broadcasting systems in Canada and the United Kingdom, the CBC and the BBC. However, these networks must compete with the commercial networks and are not viewed as mouthpieces for the government.

religious values.²⁶

The media, however, unlike the PVOs, have direct access to the public and are therefore in powerful positions to influence public opinion. A 'free' press, which the Western press is presumed to be, has considerable leeway therefore in its reporting as to topic, treatment and style. When the topic (disaster) is also highly marketable, the treatment (political or humanitarian), and the style (visual or print) becomes significant. For example, "the evocative commentary" of the BBCs Michael Buerk and the "stunning camerawork" of Mohammed Amin brought world-wide public attention to bear on the Ethiopian famine. However, as Peter Gill reports, although the BBC film was subsequently shown by 425 of the world's broadcasting companies, and although it was the competition between ITV and the BBC which prompted the making of the film quickly, it was the professionalism and artistry of the BBC journalists that made it the film to rouse the public response.²⁷

The "capital" media, i.e. at the White House or on Parliament Hill, are given the continuing task of monitoring the truth or falseness of the government positions, and at least one of the major newspapers in Washington, the *Washington Post*, focuses on investigative journalism, i.e. blowing the top off scandals and government abuse of power. The *Washington Post*, as mentioned later, was the main print critic of the US administration's response to the famine.

In Canada, as in the United Kingdom, some of the television media are owned by government. The Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC), and the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) have under certain circumstances more freedom to present programs outside the

²⁶UNESCO's New International Information Order recommends some balancing of the monopoly that western media has on the distribution of third world news and information. See *UNESCO and the Third World Media: An Appraisal*, (International Press Institute, Zurich, 1978) and Jonathan Fenby, *The State of UNESCO: Background to the Information Debate*, (Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Medford, Mass. 1982).

²⁷Gill, p. 91. According to Dawit, however, the BBC film was made at the invitation of the RRC, probably at the suggestion of a British PVO.

usual commercial circle of sponsored shows. In the case of the BBC, the decision was made to show the Michael Buerk/Amin film of the Ethiopian famine on prime time television and to let it run for its full time. This was on October 23, 1984, and on October 29, 1984, NBC Nightly News picked it up and ran selected parts of it. The above mentioned elements (topic, treatment and style) came together in the right mix to shock the world into reacting to the Ethiopian famine. Thus, the media was the primary channel which finally moved the famine to the top of the agenda, supported, aided and abetted by the PVOs and the RRC.

The continuing role of the media in keeping public attention on Ethiopia was important, not only because the people donating funds needed to know what was happening to the aid, but also to keep the interest alive, and thereby pressure donor governments and international organizations to keep the famine relief flowing. The media therefore once again had an important link with the PVOs, in that it was through television that BANDAID and LIVEAID concerts were shown to millions around the world. Rock musicians who performed and recorded the now famous songs about the famine, were influential in keeping the issue alive, and also raised considerable funds.²⁸ Rock musicians, like everyone else, and as mentioned previously, certainly PVOs, have a requirement that they feel some self-satisfaction or self-fulfilment, and therefore some like Bob Geldorf, the instigator of the rock concerts, even went to Ethiopia in a hands-on approach to the delivery of aid. The media were the link between all the actors, (the PVOs, the governments, the rock stars, the Inuit and North American public) and the starving people of Ethiopia.

However, with respect to reporting on the activities of the government of Ethiopia, or the RRC, the media were obviously constrained first by their western values and the tendency of certain governments and PVOs to mount criticism of the RRC for political purposes; and second by the unmarketability of presenting a communist regime sympathetically. They became,

²⁸Dawit, *Red Tears*, p.202.

therefore, agents of the PVOs and others in reporting Ethiopian government policies in such a way as to influence Congress and others to try to stop the aid.²⁹ In the US this led to a move for sanctions against Ethiopia even as famine relief was being provided.³⁰

However, the media were, in this same role, used for the purposes of government, for example, the Canadian government. When David MacDonald travelled to Ethiopia as Coordinator/African Famine, he was accompanied by journalists, who reported what he claimed to see and the conclusions he came to. As a result of the relationship between Mr. MacDonald, the NGOs and the Canadian media, there was less critical scrutiny of CIDA than had been the case in the African food crisis of the 'seventies'.³¹ The media had three roles: first, communicating the famine to the general public and criticizing the donor government response; second reporting the ongoing famine and the use of the aid (using PVOs as sources); and third, negative political reporting on the GOE, and positive political reporting on the donor governments.

Ethiopia, it should be noted again, has a history of recurring famine. In previous centuries, without instant reporting of events to the outside world, it remained a domestic affair. In 1972-3, Emperor Haile Selassie attempted to keep it a domestic affair by ignoring it but was forced by western media into acknowledging the northern famine. Any attempt to do the same thing in 1984 was precluded by the presence of western PVOs in the country and their connections with the media. In addition, the RRC was mandated to generate international aid, and the media served the RRC purpose well in the first phase, where no other avenue had

²⁹ Jansson, pp.68-73. Jansson reports on many incidences of improper or unfair and biased reporting.

³⁰In Washington, in the fall of 1986, Congressmen Toby Roth (R. Wisconsin) and William H. Gray, III (D. Pennsylvania) drafted a bill "to express the opposition of the US to oppression in Ethiopia. . . and for other purposes. Bill 588 was introduced in the House of Representatives as "The promotion of democracy in Ethiopia Act of 1987." The author received a notice of a meeting to discuss the socio-economic and political implications for Ethiopia of this Bill from the Centre for Ethiopian Studies, Arlington, Virginia, dated April 16, 1987. The 'other purposes' were economic sanctions against Ethiopia.

³¹Charlton, p.505.

succeeded.³² What stands out, however, is the change from “whistle blower” on the famine to “whistle blower” on the GOE. This change is due to two things, the marketability of horrendous “errors”, and the close relationship with PVOs who wished to criticize the RRC and the GOE for political or ‘self-fulfilment’ reasons. As well, the Ethiopian government tradition of dealing coercively with the people led to much misunderstanding between western donors, the media and the GOE/RRC. The media fulfilled the role as a transnational channel of communication, placing the famine into the international sphere and keeping it there.

The Structure and Role of International Organizations

The role suggested by Keohane and Nye for international organizations in interdependence between countries provides the weaker states with an arena for political initiatives and linkage. As well, they suggest that international organizations act as catalysts for coalition-formation around an issue in which the weaker state has an interest. This role was not successfully enacted in the case under study. Therefore some examination of the structure and role of International Organizations is necessary.

The food agencies of Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Council (WFC) and the World Food Program (WFP), all have different roles to play in solving international food and agriculture problems. In addition, the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF (Children's Fund) all had roles in the unfolding of the Ethiopian crisis.

The FAO became an international organization in the 1943-45 period. It was a creature of the Allied Powers, predominantly the US, the UK and Canada, with the exclusion (by its own choice) of the Soviet Union. FAO's members originally numbered 34; today there are 158, and the distribution of power has been significantly altered.³³ The Director-General of FAO is

³²See Gill for a closer look at the activities of the media in Ethiopia.

³³Ross B. Talbot and H. Wayne Moyer, "Who governs the Rome food agencies?" *Food Policy*,

Edouard Saouma, who runs the organization autocratically but had the support of the US in 1984-85, whose financial contribution is necessary for the operation of the organization.³⁴ Canada, because it had no FAO representative at the Ambassador level, and because it was sympathetic to the group of members who were critical of the Director-General, did not have influence as might have been expected. At the time of the famine, a close and warm relationship existed between the patronage appointed US Ambassador to FAO and the Director-General. This relationship has since been modified on the retirement of that Ambassador and the US subsequently joined Canada and other members to unsuccessfully oppose the re-election of the Director-General.³⁵

FAO is a massive bureaucracy, with 97 field offices in the developing countries. Its original mandate was:

- (1) To collect, analyze and disseminate information relating to food and agriculture.
- (2) To provide an international forum for discussion of such food problems.
- (3) To provide technical assistance to member countries.³⁶

Since the World Food Conference in 1974 it has increased its emphasis on agrarian reform and food production in Africa. However, as the political balance is delicate, significant policy changes await increased funding. The FAO budget has been frozen at 1983 levels, at the insistence of the US.³⁷

The World Food Council is primarily a policy innovator, a 'minor broker' in superpower

November, 1987:349-362, p.350.

³⁴CBC Documentary, *The Fifth Estate*, March 11, 1986. This documentary describes how Mr. Saouma was able to prevent any end-runs around his fiefdom by members with legitimate roles to play. For example, the Ethiopian delegation was pretty well kept out of the picture by bureaucratic manoeuvring when it sought to be heard on the famine requirements.

³⁵Ross B. Talbot, *The Four Food Agencies in Rome*, Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1990, pp. 153-4. Mr. Saouma won a third six-year term of office in November 1987 although by mid-1987 the US became concerned with his leadership and backed another candidate. The Canadian Government had taken aggressive action to obtain US support to defeat Mr. Saouma.

³⁶Hopkins and Puchala, p.608.

³⁷The percent of the FAO budget for Africa increased from 29.9% in 1978-79 to 30.7% in 1986-87. See Wayne Moyer, "FAO as a structure of power: the reality of its limitations", paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 1986, cited in Talbot, p.355.

politics, with the US, Soviet Union, and China as continuing members. Interestingly, the World Food Conference of 1974, which created the Council, was convened by the General Assembly and not FAO, partly in order to bring the communist countries into the discussions, and partly as a criticism of FAO's performance during the 1972-73 African drought and famine. The Council is without any independent power base, and must therefore try to influence policy with respect to world food problems and their solutions through persuasion. It is a high level (Ministerial) international council. For example, the Canadian Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Eugene Whalen, was its president from 1983-1985. In 1986, a senior assistant deputy agriculture minister in Canada, Gerry Trant, became Executive Director. The Council's Executive Director more than its President provides leadership and controls the agenda. The Council attempts to be a broker between the 'haves' and 'have nots', i.e. to keep a dialogue going between the North and the South.³⁸ Since the WFC is not a child of FAO, but was established by Resolution XXII of the UN's Economic and Social Council, as "the highest political institution in the UN system dealing with world food policies and problems", the relations between the WFC and FAO, labelled by Talbot as "mutual incompatibility", are not smooth.

The World Food Program (WFP) was established by a resolution of FAO in November, 1961, following a unanimous General Assembly Resolution 1496(XV), 27 October, 1960, entitled "The Provision of Food Surpluses to Food Deficit Peoples through the UN system".³⁹ The Kennedy administration proposed its establishment building on a scheme which FAO had devised earlier. At first it was financed predominantly by US agricultural commodities and dollars. Presently it is financed primarily (80-90%) by OECD countries, contributing food, cash and services. Every two years a pledging conference is held in New York. In 1963 the value of the pledges was \$100 million. This had risen in 1985 to \$1 billion. In 1985 the WFP devoted

³⁸Talbot and Moyer, p.355.

³⁹John Cathie, *The Political Economy of Food Aid*, (Gower Publishing Co. Ltd., Aldershot, 1982), p.35.

\$642 million to development projects and \$225 million to emergency food commitments.⁴⁰ The Executive Director may approve small projects up to \$1.5 million without the approval of the Committee on Food Aid Policy. Obviously this is insignificant when faced with a crisis of the proportion of the Ethiopian famine. Internally, emergency project proposals have to be approved by FAO's Director-General. He is reported to have delayed the approval in June, 1984 of the first WFP emergency requisition for Ethiopia for 30 days.⁴¹

However, as WFP programs are dependent on the donations of the major food producing countries, like the US and Canada, both these donors have corresponding influence.⁴² In any event, the US treats the WFP as an extension of its own bilateral programs according to Wallerstein.⁴³ Others describe the WFP as a "surrogate marketing organization for the rich surplus agricultural countries".⁴⁴ Both countries can and have withheld food from the WFP in the past as mentioned in Chapter 1. In any event, WFP policy cannot deviate substantially from the wishes of major donors, like the US and Canada.]

The conflicts and rivalry between all the UN agencies involved in the Ethiopian famine affected the response of the international organizations but were crucial in the case of the long-standing feud between the WFP and FAO. This situation was exacerbated by the personal animosity between the Director General of FAO, Mr. Saouma, and the head of the UNDP in Addis Ababa. At a time when these two organizations should have been working most closely, these two men were not on speaking terms.⁴⁵ However, even more serious was the tension

⁴⁰Talbot and Moyer, p.357.

⁴¹CBC Documentary and Gill, pp.129-30.

⁴²One example in administration is the appointment of a former Canadian Wheat Board Commissioner, Gerry Vogel, as Executive Director of the WFP from 1977 until his death in 1981.

⁴³Wallerstein, p.178.

⁴⁴Cathie, p.45.

⁴⁵Gill, p.126.

between the head of the WFP and Mr. Saouma. There was an extraordinary overlapping of responsibilities between the two organizations, FAO and WFP, with the WFP seeking to get out from under the thumb of Saouma. This bureaucratic struggle for power was at its height during the Ethiopian famine crisis.⁴⁶ In these circumstances, it is probably not surprising that when the WFP/FAO mission went to Ethiopia in March, 1984, it returned with inaccurate statistics, which in their report issued three months later (this delay occurred in the middle of massive famine), reduced the amount of grains required from 900,000 MT, the RRC figure, to 125,000MT.⁴⁷ It was because of this incorrect report that major donors, like the United Kingdom, and the United States, had some 'statistical' support for their Ethiopian famine policy. Not only were the figures on Ethiopia misleading, but the official FAO reports to the world community, did not mention that Ethiopia was in a perilous situation. Instead FAO couched its reports in terms of all-Africa food needs, suggesting that 150 million Africans were at risk. This figure was picked up by the *New York Times* and was repeated in serious reports, like the one used as a reference herein for the Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, 98th Congress, 2nd Session, October 1984.⁴⁸ Interestingly, although the FAO reports appear to have been effective instruments in preventing prompt and adequate responses to the Ethiopian famine by the Europeans and the US, Canada and Australia appear not to have been influenced as both countries had increased their food aid to Ethiopia in 1983 and 1984 to appropriate levels.⁴⁹

In the UN system there is a hierarchy which has developed from the history of various

⁴⁶Ibid., pp.128-9.

⁴⁷Jansson, pp.143-47.

⁴⁸Report prepared for the Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives by the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, October 1984, 98th Congress, 2nd Session, *Feeding the World's Population: Developments in the Decade Following the World Food Conference of 1974*, (USGPO, Washington, December 1984), p.556. "In 1984 the US responded to an international appeal for emergency food relief for drought-stricken nations in Africa with \$150 million in additional PL480 funds." Very little of this went to Ethiopia, which did not receive US assistance until December, 1984, and the food aid program did not get underway in any meaningful way until 1985. (Hereafter *Feeding*).

⁴⁹The story of UN and other responses is told in Gill, particularly in Chapters 4 and 10.

agencies, and also out of the 'member' politics affecting their activities. For example, the UN Development Program (UNDP) is a 'senior' agency having somewhat the same or greater 'clout' as the FAO. The UN Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO), on the other hand, was established after the Bangladesh disaster.⁵⁰ The human disasters of the '70s continued in the Sahelian drought and famine. The dissatisfaction with FAO at the time may have resulted in a backlash from that powerful agency against competitors. At any rate UNDRO has been at the mercy of the senior agencies, and has never been given the resources to do the task of disaster relief.

UNICEF, as it is totally concerned with the health and well-being of children, overlaps in the jurisdiction of the WFP and UNDP, but appears to be somewhat freer of the career rivalry and the hierarchical strife of the other agencies. At the time of the 1984 famine UNDP, UNICEF and UNDRO were represented in Addis Ababa, UNDP, as the senior agency had pre-eminence. However, on the advice of the Chiefs of UNICEF and WFP, the Secretary General set up a new office, the UN Emergency Operations in Ethiopia (UNEOE), to coordinate assistance to Ethiopia, and placed its headquarters in Addis Ababa under Kurt Jansson. The Secretary-General then, no doubt fully aware of the exigencies of the hierarchy, established another office to whom Jansson was to report in New York, the UN Office for Emergency Operations in Africa (UNOEOA). The chief of the UNDP, Barry Morse, was appointed its Executive Director. The UNDP having lost face by the appointment of Jansson had now reclaimed status.⁵¹

The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), high on the status hierarchy, was also an important agency, particularly in the Sudan and in Somalia, and its activities impinged greatly on the relief of famine in the north. Fully funded in Sudan by the US it too was nevertheless unable to function as usefully as its mandate demanded. It appeared to lack

⁵⁰For an account of the Bangladesh experience from which recommendations for the establishment of UNDRO came, see Thomas W. Oliver, *The United Nations in Bangladesh*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978), pp.196-7.

⁵¹For a fuller discussion of these problems within the UN see both Jansson and Gill.

leadership and an adequate understanding of its vital role.⁵² It became part of a political dispute over "returnees" to Tigrai, refusing to provide them with food on their journey, and thus discouraging a movement back to their land. This was in accord with the US position to discourage movement back to Tigrai. However, the Ethiopian government complained that the UNHCR was both being used by the rebels, and also "inciting" the rebels. Used as a political instrument, it acted as a magnet drawing people from Tigrai who could not qualify for UNHCR food until they had left Ethiopia, thus drawing enormous international resources away from the feeding programs within northern Ethiopia.⁵³

In responding initially to the Ethiopian famine, therefore, the international organizations, i.e. the UN agencies, not only failed to perform in order to reach their mandated objectives, but in the case of FAO actively impeded the delivery of food aid to Ethiopia, by direct action, by incompetent (or manipulative) reporting of figures, and through the playing out of UN politics. }
On the other hand, EOE performed well during the famine relief period, (as did the WFP and UNICEF) and was instrumental in coordinating relief with the various donor countries, through their diplomats in Addis, and with the PVOs as well as the RRC. The EOE acted as a watchdog, and a neutral referee, guided only by the goal of providing famine relief to as many people as possible. Rivalry between agencies and political manipulation by members prevented the UN from fulfilling the role expected of international organizations by Keohane and Nye. As well, careerism and bureaucratic inertia, the second serving the first, inhibited the process which might have resulted in influence for Ethiopia in attaining its objectives of famine relief.

Figure 1. provides the organizational structure of UN agencies involved in world food policies and programs. (See Appendices).

⁵²See Senator Kennedy's statement before Senate Subcommittee, Chapter 4.

⁵³Dawit, *Red Tears*, pp. 314-317. Dawit accuses the UNHCR of carrying out a political role. See also Gill, p. 159.

PART TWO

Government Responses

As relief activities have been institutionalized in each of the donors and recipient in agencies of government, the structure and role of these agencies is examined prior to examining each governmental response. In the case of Ethiopia, the institution is the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC); in the US, the Agency for International Development (AID); and in Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Ethiopia

Relief and Rehabilitation Commission of Ethiopia

The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) was established in February 1974 when more and more people were being displaced and starvation was widespread in Ethiopia. In the six months between its beginning and the deposing of Emperor Haile Selassie in September, the Commission was constrained by the meagre resources put at its disposal by the imperial government. However, it made direct appeals to the international community for assistance an action which established a precedent for independent behavior in the future.⁵⁴

After September 1974, the RRC acquired funds from the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC -"the Dergue"). It was given authority to solicit funds from domestic and international sources. For example, special funds were raised by a surtax on the salaries of all government employees earning over a certain amount. It was also accorded special powers to use the material resources and personnel of other ministries and government

⁵⁴Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *The Challenges of Drought: Ethiopia's Decade of Struggle in Relief and Rehabilitation*, (RRC, Addis Ababa, 1985), p.27.

organizations, and an exemption from tax on goods and services destined for disaster victims.⁵⁵ Alongside its relief efforts, however, its main importance became a longer term mandate to provide programs for rehabilitation, including the distribution of seeds, oxen and other agricultural items, and the development of an infrastructure to accomplish the rehabilitation of drought victims.

For example, after 1979 the Settlement Authority established in February 1976 was merged with the RRC, which became charged with carrying on its settlement policies and programmes. The early settlement and rehabilitation programmes were conducted in many regions of the country in collaboration with various branches of government. Most of these early schemes concentrated on drought-affected areas, including Wello, Tigray, Eritrea, and war-damaged parts of the Ogaden. By the time of the 1984 famine, the Commission ran a total of 83 settlements in all the administrative regions of the country, except Gojam and Tigray.⁵⁶ The Land Reclamation Department, established within the RRC to study those areas seriously affected by erosion was charged with restoring the ecological balance through proper soil and water conservation activities.

The RRC has its own Early Warning System (EWS) to alert the government and potential donors in the international community, as well as international organizations, to impending food crises.⁵⁷ As early as May 1, 1981, for example, in a presentation to the United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, the Commissioner of the RRC described an alarming deterioration in weather conditions in Ethiopia and predicted famine unless swift action involving the international community was taken.⁵⁸ In its annual report at the end of 1983, the EWS

⁵⁵Ibid., p.28.

⁵⁶Ibid., p.158.

⁵⁷Ibid., p.109.

⁵⁸Ibid., p.172.

predicted that over 5 million people would be affected by food shortages in 1984.⁵⁹ The RRC reports of March and August 1984 noted that the number of people facing famine had risen to over 7.9 million. In March 1984, the RRC convened a meeting in Addis of all the major donor agencies and government representatives and reported the growing desperate situation. While the media picked this up, the RRC appeal was largely ignored by the donor community, evidently because of the conflicting figures being given by FAO, as mentioned above.⁶⁰ During the same month, the Commissioner of the RRC also addressed the UN. It was not until December, however, that the General Assembly passed a resolution which called on "all member states, organs and organizations of the UN system, specialized agencies and NGOs to assist the GOE".⁶¹

Under its Commissioner Dawit Wolde Giorgis (1983-1986), the RRC continued to take the initiative to involve western donors in responding to Ethiopia's food crisis. Indeed, in his statements made in 1987 after he had defected from the regime, it is clear that the RRC was acting quite independently of the government in its efforts to get western aid to relieve the famine. For example, Dawit's initiatives in personally travelling to important donor capitals to seek aid was not authorized by the GOE. In fact, Mengistu was not even informed prior to his trips. While this was, of course, in line with the authority vested in the RRC in 1974, to appeal directly to western donors for aid, it complicated the Ethiopian response to the famine in serious ways. No registration or system of approving the credentials of aid agencies was instituted, no consultation took place between the RRC and the GOE about controlling the influx of Western agencies, and no mutual consideration of the political problems that might result from the "invasion" was undertaken. Thus, the independent actions of the RRC were perhaps partly the result of personal

⁵⁹Ibid., pp.171-2.

⁶⁰It was in March that the WFP/FAO mission was in Addis Ababa discussing RRC requirements. It is therefore quite incomprehensible how the FAO report could come out three months later setting the requirements at 125,000 MT. See Gill for a discussion of this. See also Dawit, *Red Tears*, p.153.

⁶¹Ibid., p.177ff.

inclinations and political rivalries, and not purely an institutional matter related to carrying out the mandate to provide relief. Another point which should be re-emphasized, however, is the mandated role of the RRC in resettlement. Resettlement was not a program designed to meet the famine crisis, but was an established long term program which earlier had the collaboration of the US through its agency USAID.⁶²

The RRC did not have sufficient resources to meet the famine crisis. International assistance had been insufficient in the years prior to the crisis. For example, in 1980 the RRC requested 2,460,000 MT of food and received 439,5154 MT, a mere 18 percent of its requirements.⁶³ Because of the nature of its activities, and the goals assigned to it, the RRC cannot function adequately without international resources and cooperation. The general low level of development aid to Ethiopia has therefore contributed to the incapacity of the RRC to meet its objectives.

The relationship of the RRC to the ruling PMAC ("dergue") and, after September 1984, the Politburo, is ambiguous. It is an institutionalized agency of the government but appears (at least during the 1984-86 period) to have acted with a high degree of independence. This mode of operation, and the requirements of close cooperation with western donors, no doubt contributed to the problems of the Commissioner in 1986, when he was accused by hardline members of the Politburo, according to his own account, of being an agent of western imperialism.⁶⁴

Dawit explains that the RRC was hampered during the 1984-85 disaster by a lack of resources, both from the Ethiopian government and from the international donor community, a shortage of storage warehouse space, and a lack of transport and accessibility. Overwhelmed by

⁶²Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 99th Congress, 2nd Session, March 6, 1986, evidence of Ted Morse, Director, Drought Coordination Committee, Bureau for Africa, USAID, *Ethiopia Update: Forced Population Removal and Human Rights*, (USGPO, Washington, 1986), p.8.

⁶³RRC, p.162.

⁶⁴Dawit, *Red Tears*, Chapter 6.

the volume (at least eight times the amount of assistance was required than in any previous crisis), the RRC resources were totally inadequate. By December, for example, only about 10% of the assistance pledged had arrived, and the death toll from famine reached 16,000 to 17,000 per week. The sheer magnitude of the task was the essential character of the relief operation. None of the major donors was prepared to respond to an international humanitarian crisis of this dimension.⁶⁵ During the crisis, the RRC was also engaged in countering the activities of the donors as well as cooperating with them. For example, donor governments preferred to give aid through PVOs and keep the RRC at arms length. This undermined the RRC's ability to control the relief operation. PVOs, with varying abilities to fulfill their task, were often trying to usurp the RRC responsibilities. Above all, largely as a result of Dawit's *laissez-faire* activities the Politburo was trying to limit the autonomy of the RRC.⁶⁶

The RRC is well organized and administered and provides an outstanding example in all of Africa for providing relief and rehabilitation to its peoples. In the mode of western aid agencies, it has mechanisms for accountability and assessment of its projects. Figure 2 provides an Input/Output Model and Figure 3 an Information Flow Chart. (See Appendices).

The Ethiopian Government Response

The urgency of the famine situation in 1984, and the delay of the international community in pledging aid, led to the establishment on 22 March 1984 of a ministerial committee charged with coordinating government organizations' contributions and assisting the RRC. The RRC distributed grain, vitamin-enriched foods and seeds from 190 distribution centres and 21 shelters spread over 137 *wardas*.⁶⁷ The RRC also set up 38 feeding stations and 114 medical and

⁶⁵Ibid., pp.222-226.

⁶⁶Ibid., p.240.

⁶⁷Administrative regions.

feeding personnel were assigned to work in them. Tanker trucks and pick-up points were organized for the distribution of water, particularly in the nomadic areas of Sidamo and Shewa.⁶⁸ The dimensions of the famine, however, placed its relief well beyond the resources of the Ethiopian government.

The Political Bureau (Politboro) of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE), after September 1984 the country's highest political body, met on 26 October 1984 and established a National Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation under the chairmanship of Mengistu. Twelve committees were formed under this Committee, each chaired by a member of the political bureau of the WPE, aimed at expediting the country's relief and rehabilitation program.⁶⁹ However, in June 1984, remarkably, Mengistu in his welcoming address to the WFC meeting in Addis, appears to have made a conciliatory speech focussing on African food problems in general, and making no special plea for aid for the Ethiopian famine victims.⁷⁰

The changed governmental process after September 1984 had significance with respect to the donor-recipient relationships. The founding of the WPE, ten years after the revolution was a political confirmation at the height of the northern famine, of the socialist programs of the government. The immediate objective of the WPE was to establish the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE), based on the fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist state formation and working procedures. Democratic centralism, socialist legality, internationalism and the conscious participation of the people were its defining characteristics.⁷¹ Mengistu and other leading members of the Dergue continued to hold the important posts, both in the new party and in the

⁶⁸RRC, pp.25,26.

⁶⁹Ibid., p.26.

⁷⁰Ross B. Talbot, "Report on World Food Council's Tenth Session", *Food Policy*, November, 1984:385, p.385.

⁷¹David A. Korn, *Ethiopia, the US and the Soviet Union*, (Croom Helm, London and Sydney, 1986), p.100.

government structure itself. However, the task was clearly set for the new party of integrating Ethiopian nationalism with socialism.

Ethiopia's political intentions were therefore made known dramatically to the world at the tenth anniversary celebration of the revolution in September, 1984 when western food aid was starting to arrive, albeit slowly, in Ethiopia. Mengistu moved politically at this time for two reasons; first, to satisfy the Soviet Union, and second, in a country about to be overrun by western donors, to be seen, not as a military dictator, but as the head of a democratically constituted socialist state. However, in the circumstances the impact on the donors of the 10th anniversary celebrations were different from that intended. The donors saw the celebration as an expensive party, absorbing resources of the government, at a time when upwards of six million Ethiopians were at risk of starving. Few appreciated the political event that was being celebrated. Having set the process in motion for the drawing up of a constitution and the establishment of the PDRE, Mengistu and his governing elite were in a strong position to resist donor influence to change policies with respect to famine relief, civil war and agricultural development. A new era of socialism was opening up, and one which was not intended to embody any western sponsored political agenda.⁷²

Mengistu has been highly criticized, not only by western donors, but also by his own Commissioner of the RRC, Dawit Wolde Giorgis, who defected in 1986, for the extravagant celebration of the revolution. However, recalling Morris' comments on the difficulty of making political decisions during time of famine when under pressure from outside donors, the persistence of Mengistu and his ruling officers in refusing to interrupt the preparations for launching the WPE and redefining the revolution, can be understood if not condoned. Particularly at a moment in its history when the government was politically weak, without resources, and

⁷²For a description of the revolutionary process see Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Grove Press, New York, 1965). Fanon speaks of the action of revolutionary elites transferring the power to the people through a mass political party as "committing suicide" as a bourgeoisie elite. However, in Ethiopia class formation was retarded. Few would see Mengistu as a bourgeois committing suicide.

beset by liberation wars, it was necessary to proceed with the most important transformation undertaken, the forming of a mass political party in accord with the socialist objectives for Ethiopia. As well, the Soviet Union, whose military support was necessary in fighting the civil wars, was further bonded to the regime politically by these policies. Therefore, while in other sections of this thesis the celebration in September 1984 at the height of the famine has been compared to Haile Selassie's Jubilee Celebration at the height of another famine, and even Menelik's celebration of the Death of the Virgin Mary during the Great Famine, clearly, Mengistu's event was more than a national celebration, although it was intended to be that, too. It was a political watershed. One can argue about whether it could have been accomplished without the fanfare and attendance of so many heads of state (socialist) in the circumstances, but the planning had gained its own momentum by the summer. It would be unthinkable for an Ethiopian head of state to appear before the world in rags with a begging bowl at the moment he was launching such a political initiative. That task was left to the RRC and the British Broadcasting Corporation(BBC).

In October, 1984, the RRC invited Michael Buerk and Mohammed Amin of the BBC to film the starving Ethiopian men, women and children. This film eventually shocked the conscience of the world. Governments, private organisations, international organizations, and individuals reacted throughout the world. The enormity of the response and the enormity of the famine, moved Mengistu and the WPE off centre stage. In a sense, the international donor community, finally responding, took over Ethiopia. The regime was forced to accommodate to the arrival of PVOs, and aid workers, the ICRC, and the UN, and negotiations for government to government aid had to be conducted. In this crucial period, Dawit Wolde Giorgis, the RRC Commissioner, was abroad, travelling from country to country to make the case for famine relief to Ethiopia. In the last days of October, 1984 he accepted from the British government, for example, the offer of an RAF squadron to transport food. The response from Mengistu was

"This is a famine, not a NATO exercise."⁷³ Clearly, the working relationship between Mengistu and the RRC chief was a difficult one, as each had a completely different agenda, the one political, and the other humanitarian.

The relief operation was huge, complex, and highly politicised but was carried on with the close involvement of the RRC and government officers, who won the praise of the donors for their professionalism and dedication. With a political agenda, Mengistu was unable to completely escape the inclination to starve the guerrillas out in the areas in Tigray and Eritrea under 'liberation' control. However, according to Dawit, there was no official policy of starvation. It was all propaganda put out by the rebels to enrage and/or engage the west; and the RRC and the relief agencies did not withhold food from any group of people. Quite the contrary, the RRC tried to reach every needy person in Ethiopia. Sometimes the lack of provisions or delays in finding military escorts made getting food into rebel areas difficult but the RRC at no time had instructions to stop sending food to the rebel areas.⁷⁴ However, because it was perceived among donors, and the US believed that Mengistu was withholding food from the rebel areas; and because of the conflict over the resettlement program, the percentage of incoming aid under the control of the RRC dropped considerably from 70-80% in early 1985 to 25-30% by the end of 1985.⁷⁵ Clearly, the Ethiopian government had lost control of donor activities, but had not been influenced to change its political agenda, either with respect to the civil wars, the resettlement

⁷³Dawit Wolde Georgis, "Celebrating while a million Ethiopians starved", *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, July 12, 1987, p.8. The RAF operated in Ethiopia for over a year.

⁷⁴Dawit, *Red Tears*, p.311 and Jansson, p.52. According to Jansson (EOE) there is no doubt that the food distribution organized by RRC was decisive in helping the Tigray survive.

⁷⁵*Africa Confidential*, "Famine Politics", 27 (1), 2 January, 1986. p.3. The early incident of an Australian ship bearing aid marked for "ERA" being held at Assab by the GOE reinforced this view. This incident was given world wide media coverage and had the effect of leading off the attack on the GOE which continued during the whole period concerning the use of food as a weapon. There has been bias in this regard against the GOE, when other offenders have not been subject to such concentrated attack and criticism. According to Jansson, who was directly involved in complaining to the GOE over this alleged delay of a food ship while a Russian ship was unloaded, the port authority took immediate steps to unload the Australian ship.

programs, or economic policy.⁷⁶

Dawit claims, however, that his real problem in fighting the famine was to get Mengistu on his side. Apparently he never succeeded. But he did succeed in getting international relief, and thus stemming the famine. Until he left Ethiopia in 1986 he continued to act in his role of Commissioner as an agent of the government and therefore he was often in a compromising position, defending a government in which he no longer believed. However, without him it would have been impossible to achieve the aim of saving millions of people from death by starvation, according to Kurt Janson, UN Undersecretary for Relief Operations in Ethiopia.⁷⁷ His enormous accomplishment therefore must be viewed as central to the Ethiopian response.

Nevertheless, the account cannot be complete without some details of Mengistu's actions with respect not only to famine, but also with respect to relations with the donors. Mengistu and his Politburo viewed the PVOs as either imperialist agents or religious organizations. In either event, therefore, they were considered threats to the socialist programs of the government of Ethiopia. Mengistu's frustration over donor and RRC policies of feeding the rebel areas, no doubt contributed to the launching of an offensive against the TPLF in the spring of 1985, at a time when the rebel areas were short of food. This should not have surprised any close observer, as Mengistu in November 1984 had stated at a press conference:

We are aware of a conspiracy from ill-intentioned people to take advantage of the drought to force us to make a deal with terrorists and secessionists in the North. Ethiopia will never allow this to happen. We will never negotiate with terrorists.⁷⁸

Mengistu again, at the 1985 May Day Rally in Addis Ababa spoke against "interference in Ethiopia's personal affairs". He condemned the "imperialists who . . . pretend to sympathize and

⁷⁶It was not until after the 'winds of change' in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that Ethiopia modified its political agenda.

⁷⁷Jansson, p.76.

⁷⁸Dawit, *Red Tears*, p.314.

sneer at the socialist goals for which we struggle".⁷⁹

The difficult task with which Dawit was confronted becomes clearer in light of Mengistu's and the hardliners' attitudes to the donors who were overrunning the country. One is tempted to conclude that without the RRC the famine would have been as neglected as the previous famine in 1972-73 by the Haile Selassie regime. The prestige and status of Ethiopia appeared to be more important to both Mengistu and Haile Selassie than starving peasants, particularly when they are from the north. Even Menilek's response to the great famine did not include any great consideration of the starving Tigray over whom he had finally won supremacy. During the famine in 1889 he ceded their lands to the Italians.

When making assumptions about a recipient government's response to famine it is important, however, to keep in mind the dreadful exigencies of holding power in a poverty-stricken Third World country at a time of perceived threats to sovereignty during famine. The lack of meaningful communication on objectives between the RRC and the Politburo also complicated the GOE response. It is a mistake, however, to view these complications as relating to a supposed RRC role as a 'front for the donors'. Such was not the case. The RRC was as committed to Ethiopian interests as the Politburo, and as mentioned above, the differences between the GOE and the RRC were partly the result of long standing personal political suspicions and also a byproduct of the 'imperial' methods by which political power was handled in Ethiopia.

The United States

United States Agency for International Development

[The US Agency for International Development (USAID) administers the food aid

⁷⁹Ibid., p.293.

programs of the US.] The Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act (Public Law 480) of 1954 has been the principal authority for American food aid for three decades. Under PL480 the US provides food on the basis of concessional loans and grants to friendly governments as well as through the WFP and PVOs. A 1977 amendment to PL480 permits an increase in PL480 commodities during times of urgent humanitarian need even if US supplies are limited.⁸⁰

[US AID is a powerful bureaucracy, operating extensive overseas field missions, which generate proposals for overseas development assistance (ODA) programs for 'client' states.] In the case of food aid which began as a surplus disposal mechanism, commercial and foreign policy objectives of the US have become more important than the interests of the recipient country. The White House therefore functions at the centre of the food aid bureaucracies.⁸¹]

[When the political decisions have been made to send food aid USAID manages the transaction, from the buying of the food, to the arrangement for transport, to the monitoring of the disposition and use of the food. In this process, the contracts are given to the private sector, so that the huge multinational grain corporations, and the merchant fleet they control, are the greatest beneficiaries.] US AID is reluctant to enter government to government transactions for food aid, and it is the usual practice to assign the food aid transaction to certain 'national' PVOs, such as Catholic Relief Services, and CARE.]

There are other US food assistance programs which fall under statute. For example, Section 416 of the Agricultural Act of 1949, authorizes the international disposal of surplus. This was amended by Congress in 1984 and surplus wheat was distributed under this authority to Ethiopia. In 1980 the Food Security Wheat Reserve was established which was intended to complement existing PL480 operations, and holds four million metric tons of government-owned wheat available for emergency humanitarian food requirements in developing countries when US

⁸⁰ *Feeding*, p.556.

⁸¹ Wallerstein, p.212.

wheat is in short supply and not available through normal food aid channels.

The World Food Conference held in Rome in 1974 reviewed the worst food shortage in decades, which had resulted from political decisions guiding the allocation of food aid; from production cutbacks in Canada, the US and Australia; and from the huge Soviet purchase in 1972-73 of US surpluses. After this conference in late December 1974 Congress approved a provision in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 stipulating that not more than 30% of concessional food aid should be allocated to countries other than those identified by the UN as those most seriously affected by food shortages. In 1975 a permanent amendment to PL480 was passed mandating that 75% of the volume of Title I shipments must be allocated to countries whose per capita GNP falls below \$300, as determined by the World Bank. The legislation also established a minimum requirement for Title II distributions of 1.3 million metric tons, one million of which would be available only to PVOs and the WFP. This meant that 1 million MT would be available for non-political food aid.⁸² Congress endorsed the World Food Council's recommendation that 10 million metric tons of food aid be made available annually by donors for the world's neediest nations and urged the President to maintain "a significant US contribution to this goal". This goal has not been met.

[USAID, together with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have been called the triumvirate of international aid.] Between them they establish policy which the international aid community follows.⁸³ There has been more and more emphasis in the 1980's on using aid programs as a means for getting policy and program changes within the developing countries. In 1981-82, just prior to the famine in Ethiopia, the World Bank and USAID also began talking about the need for approaches to agricultural development which put more emphasis on the role of incentives, market conditions and improved public policy in the developing

⁸²*Feeding*, p.347.

⁸³In the 1980's and 90's Japan, the EEC, and Taiwan are more important aid donors. However, the influence of the US is still significant, particularly with respect to policy in the World Bank and the IMF.

countries.⁸⁴ These policies complicated the response to the Ethiopian famine and ensured that there would be international pressure on Ethiopia to change its agricultural policies, as a result of the famine relief operation.

USAID has a sophisticated monitoring capability and no aid is administered by this agency which does not conform to the highest standards of accountability. This is a legal requirement.⁸⁵ This was also a problem in the case of Ethiopia, where during the famine it was difficult to foresee that acceptable levels of monitoring and accountability would be carried out.

Various Congressional committees and others from time to time review the activities of USAID and submit their recommendations. For example, the US General Accounting Office (USGAO) report of 1975 with respect to the disincentives of food aid, was criticized by AID who took the position that implementation of the recommendations would inhibit and adversely affect AID's efforts to work collaboratively with the developing countries. Another report to Congress was made by USGAO in 1980 on world hunger.⁸⁶ A Presidential Commission on World Hunger was established and reported in 1980 that responsibility for food aid was so scattered that planning was weak, criteria vague and evaluation difficult.⁸⁷ Finally, USGAO reported on the US response to the Ethiopian food crisis. It is this report that has been useful in examining the US government response in this thesis.⁸⁸

{ There was no USAID mission in Ethiopia at the time of the famine. However, after the US policy towards the famine changed in November, 1984, the Administrator of AID immediately

⁸⁴Ibid., p.298.

⁸⁵In practice, however, there have been extraordinary cases of malfeasance. See the GAO's reports on Zaire and Indonesia.

⁸⁶US General Accounting Office, *World Hunger and Malnutrition Continue*, (USGAO, Washington, 1980).

⁸⁷US Presidential Commission on World Hunger, *Overcoming World Hunger*, (GPO, Washington, 1980).

⁸⁸US General Accounting Office, Report to the Honorable Byron L. Dorgan, House of Representatives, *The United States' Response to the Ethiopian Food Crisis*, (GAO, Washington, April 8, 1985).

went to Addis Ababa and an AID mission was opened. USAID was represented during the famine by a group of five officials. According to the UN Assistant Secretary General for Emergency Operations in Ethiopia (EOE), the USAID team supported the UN role very strongly and a relationship of complete trust and openness developed between USAID and the EOE.⁸⁹

However, because of the stringent requirements that all US aid be closely monitored and accounted for, the relations at times between USAID and the RRC were tense. The RRC felt that too many restrictions were placed on the use of American food and other aid and too many reports and audits had to be prepared.

There was a reluctance on the part of the Ethiopian government to accommodate the needs of Americans entering Ethiopia, and as the USAID staff were additional to the number of Americans authorized on the Embassy expatriate staff, monthly visitors' visas were required for them. Finally, however, through the intervention of the UN Assistant Secretary General, at the highest levels, this matter was dealt with and visas issued. The hostility between the US and Ethiopia, which had existed since 1977, affected the relations between the two governments as the US became a major donor. However, without US food aid, which accounted for about one-third of the total, the relief operation would not have been successful and the Ethiopian Government was aware of this. USAID on its part appears to have acted with restraint in Ethiopia, although its Administrator in Washington was drawn into political disputes by the various interests in Washington, and from time to time was publicly critical of Ethiopia. Interestingly enough, after the Administration changed its position on aid to Ethiopia in November, 1984, the White House represented the moderate position in Washington, and the conservatives in the Congress the extreme position. USAID was 'caught in the middle' and required to pour water or oil on the fires being set in Congress, without damaging the administration's position with the conservative wing of the Republican party.

⁸⁹Jansson, p.20.

In the field, however, it was largely silent on political issues. US support was always available at times of crisis in the relief operation, particularly in funding the provision of trucks and air transport. At one time, American consultants helped to plan a streamlined schedule for the off-loading operation at the port of Assab working with the Ethiopians in charge of the port.⁹⁰

The important and professional contribution of USAID to the relief operation notwithstanding, US policy was to end participation in Ethiopia by the end of 1986.¹ This also meant the reduction of US commitments to CRS and other NGO's who were still trying to meet the persistent need for relief in certain areas as US policy returned to its 1983 status. USAID, however, remained in Ethiopia after the end of 1986, as the relief situation was so precarious. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Figure 4 shows the institutional participants in US food aid policy formation. (See Appendices).

The US Government Response

At the time of the 1984 famine, the US had already reduced its aid program to Ethiopia, and indeed, the administration was reluctant to approve a small feeding program in Makale, at the centre of the distressed Tigray countryside, for the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in 1983, even though CRS had been carrying out food aid programs in Ethiopia for some years.⁹¹ US food aid to Ethiopia declined sharply when the Reagan administration came to power in 1981.⁹² This same phenomenon can be observed for Mozambique, but not for non-radical African regimes included

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 38.

⁹¹USGAO, *Response*, p.13.

⁹²See US Department of Agriculture, *Food Aid and the African Food Crisis*, Foreign Agricultural Economic Report, No. 221 (Washington, June 1986). Table 1, "Portion of recipients' food aid (tonnages) from the US, 1966-83", p.50.

in the table.⁹³

If food aid is allocated as some donors claim to those countries with the recognized criteria of poverty as shown by shortage of foreign currency and nutritional need, Ethiopia should have received the largest per capita allocation and not the lowest. These data point to other reasons for the allocation of food aid, which it can be expected will also impact on emergency food aid for famine relief. [In the case of Ethiopia, there were political problems with Ethiopia. However, despite the serious political differences between them and the termination of development assistance by President Carter in 1979 over the human rights issue, the US had continued to provide about \$5 - 6 million a year to CRS for humanitarian relief programs. These grants came under attack within the Reagan administration in 1982 and in the spring of 1983 were deleted from the USAID budget.⁹⁴ CRS, as mentioned above, had subsequently requested aid for a small program in Makale where starving people were already appearing in November 1982. Money for this small program was not approved until May 1983, five months after it had been requested.⁹⁵]

However, within the context of US foreign policy, the Reagan approach to Ethiopia was an anomaly. With such radical regimes as Nicaragua and Libya the emphasis had been on the removal of the offending regimes, a higher tolerance or even encouragement of conflicts that would impose costs on the radical regimes and their people, a less activist diplomacy, and more reliance on the threat or use of force, and less on economic blandishments.⁹⁶ A more detailed examination of the US/Ethiopian relationship is therefore necessary.

[Since the Ethiopian revolution in 1974, there had been increasingly serious problems

⁹³Anthony Lake, *Third World Radical Regimes, US Policy under Carter and Reagan*, (Headline Series, Foreign Policy Association, New York, 1985), pp.41-2. The US policy in southern Africa was, however, non-ideological, and using the carrot approach, by 1983, the US had reinstated diplomatic relations with Mozambique and in 1984 announced an economic assistance program including generous emergency food aid. There was a turn around on food aid to Mozambique after 1983.

⁹⁴Korn, p.124.

⁹⁵The usual turn around on such requests is between one and three weeks. See Gill, p. 57.

⁹⁶Lake, p. 27.

between the two countries. Some of the problems were exacerbated because of the intermittent attention given to Ethiopian affairs by the US. On the other hand, the Ethiopian government focus on the American relationship was steeped in hostility and suspicion, both because of the US support of the previous imperial regime and because of US relations with Ethiopia's hostile neighbours, Somalia and the Sudan, both of whom were unfriendly towards Ethiopia. At the time of the revolution there was no American Ambassador in Ethiopia, the most recent having left in January 1974, after becoming ill. No ambassador was appointed until the spring of 1975 as Washington was fully absorbed with the Watergate crisis ending the Nixon presidency, at the same time the Emperor's long reign came to an end.

Since 1953 the American government had provided military support to the Ethiopian government. This military channel remained open until 1977 and provided the only tangible link between Ethiopia and the US. Paradoxically, after the revolution the US administration increased its military aid to Ethiopia in the mistaken belief that this would help moderate the revolution, and by the early summer of 1974 had approved a new program of credits and cash sales that would allow Ethiopia to obtain about \$100 million in military equipment during 1974 and 1975.⁹⁷ The general US attitude towards Ethiopia was expressed in a State Department briefing for President Ford at the time.

As long as there exists a distinct possibility that the present situation will result in a strengthened, more moderate state, and in a continuation of the traditional Ethiopian ties with the west, we should continue to carry out our program of military aid and sales as agreed. Suspension of these shipments would only strengthen the hands of radical elements among the military and further frustrate the moderates, perhaps leading them to concur in more radical initiatives.⁹⁸

By 1977, however, the US administration had begun to perceive that it was wasting its time in keeping military channels open: there were no positive results and in fact the regime

⁹⁷Korn, pp. 8 and 19. This is tenfold what the previous regime had been receiving annually and one and a half times more than everything it had been furnished up to 1974.

⁹⁸Ibid., p.8.

appeared to be developing close relationships with the Soviet Union. Therefore, the US advised the Ethiopian government that there would be no further money for the supply of military equipment on a grant basis after the end of the 1977 US fiscal year. The reason given for this change in policy was the violation of human rights by the Ethiopian government. Mengistu was also informed that the American base at Kagnew in Eritrea, which had by the time of the 1974 revolution dropped from 2000 to a few dozen personnel, would be closed September 30th. The Ethiopian leader instantly reacted by demanding the immediate closure of Kagnew, the American consulate in Asmara, the US Information Offices throughout Ethiopia, the US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) office and the US Navy's medical research centre. On 30 April, the Ethiopian government terminated the 1953 Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with the US, one year ahead of its scheduled expiration. The military link with the US which had been increasingly an embarrassment to the Ethiopian government was finally cut. Ethiopia had succeeded in getting the most out of the US and giving the least, and had also succeeded in replacing US arms with Soviet arms, thus protecting the revolution, not only from its domestic and regional enemies, but also from American "imperialism".⁹⁹

The Carter administration, embarrassed by the abrupt nature of the rupture, responded by suspending delivery of military equipment already in the pipeline, some of which had been paid for. A careful observer would not have been surprised that an American attempt to link human rights to arms would appear to Mengistu as an attempt to interfere in domestic political affairs. This unfriendly relationship was further aggravated by the perception in Ethiopia that President Carter was responsible for the 1977 Somali invasion of the Ogaden.¹⁰⁰ It was not until February 1978 that, in a direct discussion with Mengistu, a White House emissary tried to dispel

⁹⁹Ibid., p.19. The Ethiopian government had successfully negotiated a secret arms agreement with the Soviet Union in December 1976. The first Soviet arms arrived in Ethiopia by March 1977.

¹⁰⁰President Carter gave signals to Somalia that it would receive US support. This was construed, mistakenly, in Somalia as a go-ahead. Diplomatic damage control, after the fact, failed to have an effect. It is considered a Carter blunder. See Korn, p.33, and other accounts.

Mengistu's suspicions over US-Somali relations. Not long after this discussion, a recommendation went forward to Washington from the new American Ambassador in Addis that a program of \$20 million in development assistance to Ethiopia be approved.¹⁰¹ This new "carrot" approach was stillborn as it became tied in, of necessity because of US law, with the question of compensation for the nationalised US assets totalling about \$30 million, a very small amount indeed, and not a timely initiative. It is a good example, however, of the enormous gap in understanding between the two governments. It also demonstrated the difficulty a US administration has in carrying forward foreign policy when it must satisfy such US laws as the Hickenlooper amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.¹⁰²

Characteristically, the Ethiopians saw the raising of the compensation issue as another US attempt to dictate unacceptable conditions. No progress was made and the US then turned to the "stick". It opposed International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and African Development Bank (ADB) loans to Ethiopia. On 22 March, 1979, the US, for the first time, voted against an ADB loan to Ethiopia.¹⁰³ On 5 July, 1979 the American Development Assistance Program was formally declared terminated. In addition, later in the year, the US once again sent a strong *demarche* on human rights to the Ethiopian government.

As the Ethiopians continued to strengthen ties with the Soviet Union, relations between the US and Ethiopia plunged to a new low. The Ethiopian government demanded the recall of the new US Ambassador, blaming him for the poor state of relations. This was in fact an opportunity the Ethiopians were providing for the US, by making a scapegoat of the ambassador, to save face thus keeping the channels of communication open. It was not recognized as such in the US where administration attention was now fully engaged by the Iranian hostage crisis. No attempt was

¹⁰¹Kom, p.51.

¹⁰²Ibid., p.52. The Hickenlooper Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act required aid recipient governments to take prompt steps to negotiate in good faith to settle claims of US citizens.

¹⁰³Ibid., p.53.

made to retrieve the US position in Ethiopia during the rest of the Carter administration.

[The Reagan administration, inaugurated in January 1981, had little sympathy for the Ethiopian government. It appeared to want a policy for containing what it perceived as a threat to the region and to American interests in Africa. Although, typically, it wanted to show the Ethiopian government that it was not pleased with its conduct, it did not appear to want to alienate Ethiopia outright.¹⁰⁴ The US was more concerned with its Southern African policy and other important issues and problems around the globe affecting US interests. The new administration focussed on Nicaragua, terrorism and the Middle East, including the behavior of Libya, another radical African regime, one not unconnected with Ethiopia. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), however, was giving some support to the liberation movements in Tigrai and Eritrea. Many of their leaders were on the CIA payroll, although the kind of support the US was giving the Contras in Nicaragua does not appear to have been given any serious consideration. The reason for this is obvious. The liberation movements, or at least those with fighting capacity, are themselves Marxist-Leninist.¹⁰⁵

[It was not until the spring of 1982 that policy in the Horn of Africa was reviewed in Washington. The resulting new policy called for strong support for US friends in the area, in particular the Sudan and Somalia. It advocated greater coordination of policy towards Ethiopia and other area states on the part of the NATO allies. It proposed establishing a 'dialogue' with Ethiopia; however, in the early stage at least, the US administration was not prepared to offer the Ethiopian government any particular rewards for changing its policies.¹⁰⁶] The American policy of supporting its friends in the area, particularly Sudan and Somalia, both enemies of Ethiopia, led to

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p.56.

¹⁰⁵*Africa Confidential*, 27 (10) 7 May 1986, "Ethiopia: EPD What?", pp.5-6. However, in another issue of *Africa Confidential* it is suggested that the CIA at one time did give serious consideration to arming the rebel movements. Obviously, if this was the case it would not have been in line with the administration policy.

¹⁰⁶Korn, p.57.

a preoccupation with their security and an unwarranted condemnation of Ethiopian actions in trying to defend itself. Undoubtedly, Somalia and Sudan were taking actions against the interests of Ethiopia. The Ethiopians perceived the American concern with Somalia and Sudan as a meddling intrusion into Ethiopia's sovereign affairs.¹⁰⁷

The second aim of US policy, to coordinate the policies of the NATO allies in the region, became more important after the US tried to balance food aid to Ethiopia with its political objectives. When the policy was enunciated in the summer of 1982, the Europeans together shared a conciliatory view of the Ethiopian regime. There was, however, a different point of view amongst them on how to conduct relations with Ethiopia. The EEC was the largest multilateral aid donor to Ethiopia, managing a program of about \$100 million a year in development credits extended under the Lome II convention of 1981. The Italians, because of the special relationship developed with Ethiopia from the days of its colonial presence, established generous grant and loan programs. [According to David Korn, the mainstream of opinion in Western Europe favored offering Ethiopia economic assistance, promoting trade and extending the hand of friendship to 'keep a foot in the door'. Their approach was essentially to rely on time, goodwill, and a large measure of hope, to effect modifications in Ethiopia's behavior.¹⁰⁸] The Reagan administration ^{pressed} its European allies, as major donors of development assistance, to exert influence on Ethiopia more forcefully.

There was renewed interest in Ethiopia, however, amongst the American 'liberals' which, for example, led to Congressman Howard Wolpe, Democratic Chairman of the African Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, being welcomed to Ethiopia in August 1983. He reported his impressions as follows:

There is great sensitivity in Ethiopia to the common American view and perception that they are simply the tools of the Soviet Union and do not have their own

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p.86.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp.57-58.

independent freedom of action, and they expressed very clearly to us, the Chairman himself and other officials of government, that the perception just really violated Ethiopia's sense of nationalism.¹⁰⁹

Another Congressman, Mickey Leland (D), who was killed in an air crash in Ethiopia in 1989, made seven or eight trips to Ethiopia. In 1984 he persuaded the House to establish, and therefore became the Chairman of, the House Select Committee on Hunger. In 1985 he led the drive in Congress for emergency aid to the sub-Sahara which resulted in the appropriation of eight hundred million dollars.¹¹⁰

During 1982, Mengistu, as Chairman of the OAU, failed to come to New York to make the traditional address to the United Nations General Assembly, and, as was tradition for the OAU Chairman, to meet with the President of the US. Although this was a disappointment to the UN and members of the OAU, it undoubtedly would have been embarrassing for the US. On the other hand, it seems highly unlikely that Mengistu would desire to come to the US and be snubbed by the President. In the circumstances, he went instead to the Soviet Union, which was also boycotting the General Assembly at the time.¹¹¹

While the Reagan administration had no warmth for the Mengistu regime, it did not give any immediate attention either to unseating that regime, or to improving diplomatic relations. It was in no hurry to take any action at all. Having lost its position in Ethiopia to the Soviet Union, and having no important strategic interest, it was apparently content to wait.¹¹² There were however important lobbyists in Washington, who were interested in US policy towards Ethiopia. Some were Congressmen, chairmen of important Congressional committees, both conservative

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p.66.

¹¹⁰"Notes and Comments. The Talk of the Town", *The New Yorker*, September 11, 1989, p.31.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp.68-70. The efforts of Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs to arrange this meeting with the US President, as described by Korn, indicates that there was often much more enthusiasm for the US amongst some of the ministers than there would ever be at the top.

¹¹²US strategic interests were satisfied by sea bases in both Somalia and Kenya serving the US Navy's Indian Ocean fleet.

and liberal, and the PVO and Church community, as well as local refugee groups: all continued to lobby the administration, though with differing objectives. Refugee problems in Somalia and the Sudan were given some attention and the US continued to send food and medical supplies to these countries, through UNHCR and PVOs. In 1982 the US administration was quite aware of the deteriorating food situation in Ethiopia, and chose to ignore it, or by withholding (cutting off) aid, to send a message to Ethiopia.

In 1983 pressures on the administration started to mount. In particular the Congress became concerned at the US administration's inaction. On June 29, 1983 the Senate passed the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 168.

Whereas the US has a long-standing policy of providing emergency humanitarian relief to the people of a foreign country threatened with starvation regardless of the political differences the government of the US may have with the government of that foreign country; and

Whereas the humanitarian assistance programs of the United Nations and European countries cannot adequately meet the extraordinary needs of the Ethiopian people without the help of the US: Now therefore be it RESOLVED:

The President should exercise the authority vested in him by law to make available immediately to the starving people of Ethiopia emergency food supplies and other emergency supplies and to take such actions as may be necessary to ensure that the food and other emergency supplies made available by the US are transported to those areas of Ethiopia that are experiencing famine.

followed by the House on July 21, 1983:

House resolution No. 280:

Whereas the US has not responded with its traditional generosity to international requests for emergency humanitarian assistance for Ethiopia; and Whereas the US assistance is essential if massive deaths resulting from starvation are to be avoided in Ethiopia; Now therefore be it RESOLVED:

1. The US should expedite and increase assistance which would make available immediately means of transporting food to famine stricken areas in Ethiopia;
2. Should reinstate PL480 Title II food programs for Ethiopia for fiscal year 1984; and
3. Should respond promptly and generously to all pending and future appeals from international and private voluntary organizations for seed, food, medical

supplies, and shelter supplies to relieve the needs created by the famine in Ethiopia.¹¹³

The *Washington Post* carried a series of articles in July 1983 by Jay Ross giving an account of the situation in Ethiopia. In addition, an editorial in *The Washington Post* on July 18, 1983 criticized the US administration for failing to respond to the famine.¹¹⁴ The PVO lobby intensified. On April 23, 1983 a letter was received by the Administration from the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) asking for urgent consideration of the Ethiopian crisis.¹¹⁵ Still, the Administration dragged its feet. Throughout 1983 and 1984 World Vision International ran film clips on the growing threat of famine. In July, 1983, the MacNeil-Lehrer Report carried extensive coverage of the African food crisis.¹¹⁶ A year later, on April 4, 1984, the US Embassy in Addis Ababa cabled Washington that “a very serious situation could develop in Ethiopia this year and we will be remiss if we are not adequately informed and prepared.”¹¹⁷ However, no food aid was offered to the Ethiopian government. According to the US General Accounting Office (USGAO) there were “legitimate questions as to the reasonableness of the delays in approving the requests”.¹¹⁸

[The Interagency Development Coordination Committee (IDCC), made up of the appropriate offices of USAID (Bureau for Africa, Bureau for Food for Peace and Voluntary Assistance, Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance, and Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination), the Department of State (DOS) through its appropriate offices (Bureau of African Affairs, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, and Bureau for Refugee Programs), the

¹¹³ Congressional Record, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁴ Dawit, *Red Tears*, p.179. Jay Ross had been invited to Ethiopia by the RRC according to Dawit.

¹¹⁵ GAO, *Response*, Appendix I, pp.3,19.

¹¹⁶ Dawit, *Red Tears*, pp.185-87.

¹¹⁷ GAO, *Response*, Appendix I, p.4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Appendix I, p.3.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which also represented the concerns of the National Security Council (NSC), assesses and approves requests/proposals for US emergency food assistance to foreign countries.] All these groups had input into the Working Group of the Food Aid Subcommittee, considering the Ethiopian situation. A group was also established to consider ways to provide food to the rebel-held areas in Tigray and Eritrea, called the Interagency Group on Ethiopia and the Sudan (IGETSU). This group was chaired by the DOS, and was concerned as well with the overall Ethiopian situation.¹¹⁹

[The specific concerns of the IDCC in assessing the requests for emergency food assistance to Ethiopia have been difficult to document.¹²⁰ However, it appears that the IDCC had strong concerns about, first, about the ability of the Ethiopian government and PVOs to carry out a food program which would reach all hungry Ethiopians including those in the northern provinces; second, about the availability of detailed and accurate verification of real food needs; and third, about the serious possibility of food diversion to the army. There was thus a sensitivity and caution about committing large amounts of food aid to a Marxist country.] The outcome of the first concern was the establishment, as mentioned above, of IGETSU. This group held up the second CRS application for a feeding program at Makale, until suitable feeding programs were established for the rebel-controlled areas of northern Ethiopia. The cross-border feeding program from Sudan was expanded in the spring of 1984, just as the CRS request was approved. This cross border feeding program was further expanded in the fall and winter of 1984.

This policy in 1983 and 1984 was consistent with US policy in the Horn: to support the neighboring countries who were friends of the US. The cross-border feeding programs, which were the early response of the US to the famine, offended Ethiopian sovereignty, but responded

¹¹⁹Ibid., Appendix I, p.2.

¹²⁰Ibid., Appendix I, p. 2. The USGAO, at the time of making its report, found that orderly documentation of the response to the Ethiopian famine was limited. Much of the data was therefore obtained verbally and from second person sources. Key officials influencing the decisions taken in 1983 and 1984 were unavailable.

to the urgent requests of PVOs in the rebel areas and of the UNHCR in the Sudan for food for the refugees flowing into Sudan; and perhaps also was intended to stem the flow of refugees into Sudan, which was ill-equipped to handle them. The program required direct involvement with the two relief agencies which are the arms of the Tigrai and Eritrea liberation movements, Relief Society of Tigrai (REST) and the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA).¹²¹ Official US policy of respect for the sovereignty of Ethiopia in the rebel areas made it important to send aid through PVOs, a normal US process in any event.

With respect to the second concern, US policy normally restricts food aid to countries controlled by an unfriendly government, and in particular a country that has not paid compensation for expropriated American property.¹²² The second concern of IDCC was therefore quite routine. In addition, many officials argued that donated food was saving foreign exchange for the Ethiopian government, which was being used for military purposes, and the third concern, that food aid would be used to feed the army, arose naturally from this position. Once the first concern had been satisfied through IGETSU and the cross-border feeding programs, accountability became therefore the official issue on which the prompt approval of emergency food aid to Ethiopia foundered.

Coordination with other donors became more important to the US in these circumstances. First, it was essential that some food aid was on the way to relieve the suffering in Ethiopia while the US delayed in order to satisfy the political concerns of the administration. Second, once the food aid program was established by the US, it was essential that there was some consensus on

¹²¹OXFAM Canada also channeled its aid through REST and ERA, although not in response to government policy. Both REST and ERA are closely connected to TPLF and EPLF and according to John Young, who has returned recently from the area, they are one and the same people running the relief agencies and the liberation movements. (Conversation with John Young, graduate student, Political Science Department, SFU). In addition the author has received a document from TTAC, a consortium of US/Canadian and European aid agencies working through REST to bring aid to Tigray across the border. This consortium is ongoing in its efforts which are coordinated through a bureau of NOVIB, the Dutch government international development agency.

¹²²Amendments to PL480, and Hickenlooper Amendment to Foreign Assistance Act. President Carter withdrew Ethiopia's designation as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the Generalized System of Preferences on September 28, 1979.

coordination and distribution. Third, the US preferred to have consensus with its European allies on sensitive political issues, like feeding programs in the north, and 'resettlement' programs. Canada was providing substantial amounts of food aid in 1984 while the US dragged its feet.

Two events coincided to change US policy. First, on October 29, 1984, *NBC Nightly News* aired the Buerk/Amin film of the Ethiopian famine which had first been shown on October 23rd in London on the BBC. This resulted in massive public outrage. The response was unprecedented. Second, the US presidential election was one week away. Although, Reagan was expected to win with a landslide, the lack of previous action in response to the famine was particularly damaging as an election issue. The Reagan administration overnight decided to respond to this "new" crisis in light of the overwhelming sympathy of the American people for the famine victims of Ethiopia. Within hours, Peter McPherson, the Director General of USAID, was in touch with the Commissioner of the RRC who was in New York at the time, and a government to government aid program was negotiated, starting with a direct donation of 50,000 tons of grain to the RRC.¹²³ That same evening Mr. McPherson left for Addis Ababa as it was important to the White House that he be the first American on the scene as a representative of the US administration.¹²⁴

Sometime in the fall of 1984, probably after the exposure of the famine on television, the DOS convened a secret meeting of all interested donors at which time several things were agreed: first, the western donors would support the Mengistu government by meeting the famine crisis with food aid; second, the question remained whether Mengistu could be persuaded to change his policies, and third, would his policies succeed? What appears also to have come out of this meeting, at least unofficially, is that the Europeans would be the donors to try to influence

¹²³Interestingly, this dramatic initiation of the government to government aid program was the only government to government agreement negotiated during the whole crisis. US aid went subsequently through PVOs and the WFP. One can't help but feel that it was grand-standing.

¹²⁴Dawit, *Red Tears*, p.196. The White House in fact requested the Ethiopian Embassy to delay visas for other Americans seeking them until Mr. McPherson had arrived in Addis. The Embassy complied.

Mengistu on behalf of all, as any initiatives in this direction by the US would be provocative given the hostility that the GOE had towards the US. For example, subsequently, during a time of western concern over human rights, the United Kingdom dispatched an Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs to Addis to make a strong *demarche* to Mengistu.¹²⁵ At a time during the food aid operation when the donor governments were greatly concerned over government access to feeding stations, the Italian Ambassador was chosen to call on Mengistu to discuss the problem.¹²⁶

[In summary, the US administration cut off food aid in 1983 and continued to withhold food aid until the end of 1984 from Ethiopia , first because Ethiopia was viewed as an unfriendly state with a Marxist government; second, because the continued military buildup with Soviet assistance in fighting the northern liberation movements was felt to compromise the request for food aid; and third, because it felt that food aid would be diverted to the military. However, policy on this issue was made by 'invisible' strategists from the White House who at the time of the GAO investigation could not even be identified - they had disappeared. USAID was not influential in persuading the administration to institute famine relief, although the American Embassy in Addis Ababa from time to time sought to energize the White House. In spite of resolutions in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, no change was made in US policy until the showing of the Buerk-Amin film on American television, followed by the outrage and response of the American people to the starving people of Ethiopia. However, the decision to send food aid to Ethiopia was not wholeheartedly supported by some groups in the country. Indeed, certain Senators and Congressmen, the Ethiopian refugee community, and some 'ideologues' continue to try to influence the administration against the decision. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.]

¹²⁵Private information received in Washington, D.C.

¹²⁶Dawit, *Red Tears*, p.234.

The Canadian International Development Agency

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was set up in 1968 replacing the External Aid Office of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Like USAID it is a large bureaucratic structure, centralized in the capital. Its mandate to manage Canada's development assistance to the third world is hampered by a shortage of administrative resources. Unlike USAID, CIDA does not operate "country" offices around the world with the task of generating proposals for specific programs and with the capability to monitor results of programs in place.¹²⁷

Food aid is managed from the Food Aid Coordinating Unit. Canada's food aid is given bilaterally (government to government); multilaterally (World Food Program, International Wheat Agreement, CFA); and through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), (generally referred to in this thesis as PVOs). Emergency food aid is provided through supplementary grants approved by Parliament, additional to the annual budget.¹²⁸ However, this does not mean that emergency food aid is held up to political scrutiny or delayed. In the case of Ethiopia, emergency food aid was sent to Ethiopia, and any approval for supplementary additional funding obtained in due course.¹²⁹

Food aid has traditionally been viewed as simply an 'add-on' to the regular Canadian development assistance program. Originally conceived as a short-term response to the immediate problem of the oversupply of agricultural commodities (surpluses in Canada), it was never fully

¹²⁷CIDA does have some country offices, and the report in 1987 of Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade recommended a decentralization of CIDA.

¹²⁸T.H. Cohn, *Canadian Food Aid: Domestic and Foreign Policy Implications*, (Monograph Series in World Affairs, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, Colorado, 1979), p.5.

¹²⁹Interview at CIDA in Ottawa in May 1987 with officer in charge of food aid to Ethiopia during the crisis.

institutionalized as a component of ODA.¹³⁰ Therefore the handling of food aid requests has been a distinct decision making process, completely separate from the program procedures used for other types of development assistance. Canadian food aid is usually disbursed in program form, providing bulk shipments of food commodities in significant volumes directly to recipient governments, which assumes full responsibility for the disposition. This means that the role of the aid planner for food aid in CIDA is little more than that of a 'commodity broker', who matches recipients' requests with the availability of Canadian supplies and recommends approval of the transactions.¹³¹ Canada's bilateral ODA is 80 per cent tied to Canadian products, but program food aid is composed almost entirely of Canadian products.¹³²

A recipient country's eligibility for Canadian ODA is assessed using three categories. Category 1, provides ongoing ODA for certain countries, called "countries of concentration". Other countries, in Category 2 and 3, must make ad hoc requests for aid. CIDA makes a distinction between developmental and emergency food aid, and thus, while Ethiopia was not a Category 1 country of concentration, during the crisis CIDA responded with increased government to government transactions.¹³³ Later CIDA shifted more of its committed aid to PVOs and the WFP. This was in line with the general donor move away from using the RRC for disposition of the aid because of unfounded suspicions that the Government of Ethiopia was using food as a weapon in the civil wars, and also because of the limited logistical capability of the RRC. As well

¹³⁰Charlton, p.478.

¹³¹Ibid., p.479.

¹³²Since the Ethiopian famine there has been a change in the tying of ODA with respect to Sub-Saharan Africa. The percentage is now 50%. Obviously, however, as Canada is a major food producer, food aid will still largely be tied to the Canadian product. Canada did purchase a small amount of accessible food in Africa for Ethiopia in 1984.

¹³³Charlton, pp.497-8. Charlton discusses the eligibility criteria for food aid recipients, indicating that any country eligible to receive ODA was automatically a potential candidate, resulting in a variety of recipients who may have been added for commercial and humanitarian reasons as well as for political ones. The food aid program was traditionally concentrated in six countries, all but one of them in Asia. However, with the growing food needs in Africa, the number of recipients of Canadian food aid has risen to 26 in 1984/85.

other donors were reluctant to make food available for the resettlement program of the Ethiopian Government. In reducing Canadian government to government transactions CIDA was also relieved of the responsibility for monitoring how its food aid was used. Nevertheless, the Canadian government's concern for maintaining a favorable image in Canadian public opinion, led David MacDonald, the Emergency Coordinator/African Famine, to undertake several 'monitoring' trips to Ethiopia, accompanied by journalists, members of parliament, and NGO representatives. He appears to have been able to defuse criticism of Canada's handling of food aid to Ethiopia, and thus avoid the horror stories about donor negligence and use of food aid in the seventies, during another African food crisis.¹³⁴

CIDA is directed by the Canadian International Development Board (CIDB). CIDA chairs this board and the deputy heads of External Affairs, Finance, Industry, Treasury, International Development Research Council (IDRC), and the Governor of the Bank of Canada sit as members. Recommendations are made to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In practice, according to Cohn, this board is often bypassed.¹³⁵

However, CIDA is examined from time to time by various parliamentary committees, and others. For example, after the Ethiopian crisis, CIDA's response was investigated by the House of Commons Committee on External Affairs and National Defence; and a major review of CIDA was undertaken by the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade (SCEAIT).¹³⁶ The latter recommended changes in CIDA's structure as well as policy-oriented recommendations.

¹³⁴Ibid., p.505. See G. Lean, "Scandal of UN's food aid in Africa", *Observer*, 17 June, 1979 and H. Sheets, *Disaster in the Desert: Failures of International Relief in West African Drought*", Roger Morris, Project Director, (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1974).

¹³⁵Cohn, *Canadian Food Aid*, p.10.

¹³⁶SCEAIT, *For Whose Benefit?* Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade on Canada's Official Development Assistance Policies and Programs, (Queen's Printer, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, May, 1987) and for a discussion of the government's response see Cranford Pratt, "Ethics and foreign policy: the case of Canada's development assistance", *International Journal XLIII* (Spring 1988):264-301.

According to Pratt, CIDA elites are bureaucratic insiders.¹³⁷ The concerns expressed by Kim Nossal are therefore germane. He explains CIDA's guiding motivation as (i) prestige - i.e. standing in the international donor community; (ii) bureaucratic interest - i.e. organizational maintenance of CIDA; and (iii) limiting real expenditures - i.e. reflecting government policy to deliver development assistance programs primarily as a means of effecting domestic transfer payments to regional interests, firms and individuals. He concludes that the purpose of CIDA is to achieve for the state the appearance of philanthropy both at home and abroad while at the same time avoiding as far as possible real expenditures.¹³⁸ Therefore, while there is no direct 'political' manipulating of food aid in the Prime Minister's Office for foreign policy reasons, as in the White House, nevertheless, because of the nature of the relationships of the bureaucratic elites in Ottawa, CIDA closely reflects the government policies with respect to ODA, and cannot by any stretch of the imagination be seen as representing its "constituents", i.e. the interests of the recipient countries. There are, of course, CIDA bureaucrats who are dedicated to promoting humanitarian aid. However, they lose out to more powerful groups in the policy-setting environment of the government.

In recent years a number of policy initiatives have been undertaken by CIDA to improve its bargaining position vis-a-vis recipient countries, in order to ensure that Canadian objectives are being achieved.¹³⁹ While provision of food aid generates good will towards Canada, CIDA has not been able to maintain control or to exert influence on the recipients. This is apparent in the Canadian response to the Ethiopian famine. CIDA did not have a presence on the ground in Ethiopia during the relief operation, but relied on the RRC and various NGOs to distribute and account for the use of Canadian food aid. However, the Canadian embassy played an active role,

¹³⁷Pratt, p.276.

¹³⁸Kim Richard Nossal, "Mixed motives revisited:Canada's Interest in Development Assistance", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, XXI:1 (March, 1988):35-56, pp.50-54.

¹³⁹Charlton, p.493

as diplomats became 'relief workers'.¹⁴⁰

CIDA policy has been for some years to use aid for trade purposes. In 1984, for example, the Liberal government announced that it would put 50 per cent of the planned growth of CIDA's budget beyond 0.5 per cent of GNP into an aid/trade fund to be used to promote Canadian exports. However, the 1986 decision of the Conservative government removed the trade and development facility (the aid/trade fund) from within CIDA. The funds that would have come to CIDA under the Liberal scheme were removed from the CIDA budget. CIDA's practice, however, is to emphasize the use of bilateral aid for parallel and associate financing of projects to help Canadian exporters.¹⁴¹ This approach to the use of CIDA for commercial purposes beginning in the late 1970's not only colours the Canadian statistics on ODA but combined with CIDA's newly developed policies of conditionality, confirms the change in direction of CIDA activities from humanitarian to economic.¹⁴²

The relevance of this to the Ethiopian case is perhaps its explanatory value with respect to the CIDA public relations initiatives surrounding the famine (discussed next) and its contribution to the analysis on costs and benefits discussed in Chapter 4. The effect of the Ethiopian famine on stirring long term changes in donor policy appears, however, to prepare the way for western donors to ignore the next famine which is already on the horizon.

The Canadian Government Response

At the time of the Ethiopian famine, Canada had been increasing its food aid to Ethiopia annually. Indeed, in 1984 the increase, according to a CIDA public relations publication, was

¹⁴⁰Jansson, p18.

¹⁴¹Pratt, pp.280-81.

¹⁴²Charlton, pp.488-9. According to an address given at FAO in Rome in October 1985 by the former President of CIDA, Margaret Catley-Carlson, Canadian officials will want to be assured in the future that the recipient government is pursuing the range of agricultural, developmental, and fiscal policies which CIDA officials feel are needed.

50% over 1983.¹⁴³ Unlike the US, Canada has maintained steady bilateral and multilateral contributions to food aid, featuring a strong humanitarian and developmental orientation.¹⁴⁴ As the second largest global food aid donor, it has acquired considerable independent influence in World Food Program (WFP) decision-making.¹⁴⁵ It is erroneous to assume that Canada will adopt identical policies concerning global food problems to those of the US.¹⁴⁶ However, the international food aid system was created largely by US initiative.¹⁴⁷ Food aid decisions, as mentioned previously in the discussion on CIDA, are not made at the political level in Canada, because of the way the government is structured and the mandate given to CIDA over food aid. In the years leading up to 1984, CIDA had increased its annual food aid contributions to Ethiopia, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

Although CIDA is the funding agency for the WFP it is Agriculture Canada which is responsible for decisions on multilateral food aid, and "Agriculture" is the spokesman at WFP.¹⁴⁸ The Honourable Eugene Whalen was Minister of Agriculture in the Liberal Government of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in the years leading up to the 1984 famine. Canada had no evident political or strategic objectives in Ethiopia, and during the Liberal government, the famine was not raised at the political level of cabinet in 1982, '83 or '84. It was discussed in the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade. Mr. Whalen was also president of the World Food Council and in 1984 chose to use this route rather than national channels to raise the

¹⁴³The unpublished figures provided to me at CIDA in Ottawa in May, 1987 did show such an increase, if not greater. The suggestion that CIDA's published figures did not show the true picture is not meant to take away from the fact that Canada did increase its food aid prior to any television exposure of the famine.

¹⁴⁴Wallerstein, p.253.

¹⁴⁵Cohn, p.5,6.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p.2.

¹⁴⁷Wallerstein, p.222.

¹⁴⁸Cohn, pp.12-13.

priority of the Ethiopian famine. According to Mr. Whalen there would have been no famine if everyone had responded to the crisis in as timely and adequate way as Canada.¹⁴⁹

The annual conference of the WFC was called in Addis Ababa in June, 1984. It was an unruly affair, partly as a result of the confrontation between the 'politicians' and the 'bureaucrats'. According to Mr. Whalen roadblocks were placed in his way at every step and he was forced to keep a personal record of the proceedings which indicates that he perceived the conference to be railroaded.¹⁵⁰ However, according to Ross B. Talbot, an "excellent set of pre-conference papers had been provided" by the bureaucrats of WFC, presumably intended to set the groundwork for "an intelligent, perhaps hard-hitting debate. . . . But, alas, the usual Rotarian-type speeches. . . . was the bill of fare, . . .".¹⁵¹ Canadians, familiar with Mr. Whalen's style, may recognize this as a description of his behavior at the Conference. Instead of the President, together with the Executive Director, providing the leadership that was needed to persuade, cajole, and influence the conference, the conflicts became so intense that it was almost impossible to produce any conclusions; the recommendations in the end were a "masterpiece of ambiguity".¹⁵² After Mr. Whalen's international initiatives foundered, and before he could redirect his energies, he was defeated in a national election and also lost his international positions.¹⁵³

The Progressive Conservative Party formed a majority government under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, just as the October 1984 television pictures of the Ethiopian famine were being

¹⁴⁹Interview, Ottawa, May, 1987, with the Honourable Eugene Whalen. The CIDA food aid figures for Ethiopia bear out the view of Mr. Whalen. If, for example, the US had responded proportionately in as timely a manner, there would have been no famine.

¹⁵⁰Ibid. The subordinate position of the World Food Program to FAO and the inability of any of the food aid decision-making committees to be autonomous of both FAO and the major donors was discussed earlier.

¹⁵¹Ross B. Talbot, "Report", p. 385.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 385.

¹⁵³In fact Eugene Whalen was President of the WFC until 1986. He had his patronage appointment to another post in Rome cancelled by the new government when it decided not to create the new position of Ambassador to FAO.

screened across the nation. The government responded quickly to the outrage and outpouring of the Canadian people, rather than to the famine itself. As Canadians across the country overwhelmed OXFAM and other main-stream relief agencies with donations earmarked for Ethiopia, the government promised to match all private donations. On November 1, Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, designated David MacDonald, a former cabinet minister in the short-lived Clark government of 1980 and a United Church minister from Prince Edward Island, Emergency Coordinator for the African Famine. Eight days later a Special Fund for Africa (SFA) was created to provide matching funds for personal donations, totalling in the end, \$65 million. In addition, Africa Emergency Aid (AEA) was created to facilitate and speed delivery of emergency relief to the famine stricken areas of Africa. A consortium of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the federal government, AEA allocated special government funds and public donations for African famine relief to NGO projects¹⁵⁴ The initial one year of the AEA mandate was extended to March 21, 1986.

Canada's assistance to Ethiopia was channelled in three ways: first, government-to-government assistance (bilateral); second, through international organizations, like the WFP (multilateral); and third, through Canadian NGOs (PVOs). In addition, the SFA matched private and provincial government donations. According to CIDA, Canada donated roughly one-third of the food aid that was delivered to Ethiopia between 1984 and the end of 1986.¹⁵⁵ As the volume of food aid increased overall, Canada's Emergency Coordinator recommended that Canada

¹⁵⁴The terms NGO and PVO are used interchangeably, although NGOs are not exclusively agencies devoted to relief, but may be 'think' tanks or organizations devoted to third world issues and lobby activities concerning them. PVOs, on the other hand, are agencies whose sole objective is to bring humanitarian aid to the suffering peoples of the world. PVOs, of course, also engage in lobby activities to further their goals. In Canada, there is a preference for calling all agencies NGOs. PVO is a term used apparently only by Americans. However, the author has used it because of the American origin of the major relief agencies, and also because it expresses perhaps the nature of such agencies more clearly than NGO. See also Thomas W. Oliver, *The United Nations in Bangladesh*. Oliver uses the term 'voluntary agencies'.

¹⁵⁵This is a high estimate and undoubtedly reflects the absence of US food aid during 1984. As indicated in Chapter 1, Canada provided about 12% and the US about one-third, during the period with which this thesis is concerned, i.e. the end of 1984 to the end of 1986. CIDA figures are often confusing as they change their base frequently. A complicating factor in comparing amounts is that the US Fiscal Year runs from October 31st.

maintain that proportion with respect to the increases as well.

Canada has a reputation for 'internationalism', i.e. a concern to act in international affairs as a good citizen. This tradition is, however, new and was established after World War II, when distinguished civil servants, who had served in External Affairs, gained pre-eminence in government. For example, Lester Pearson became prime minister and greatly enhanced Canada's role in the world as a middle power dedicated to world peace, through a functional role in the United Nations Organization and its agencies, and bilaterally in a humanitarian role.¹⁵⁶ The absence of a colonial relationship with the developing world and Canada's economic strength at the time, placed it in a unique position. In the post war circumstances, this was an easy role for Canada. However, as other countries recovered from the war, both in Europe and Asia, Canada's role changed in a competitive global economy. While Canada's rhetoric is still that of a concerned 'internationalist', economic realities have required pragmatic policies. Having dropped from the top of the economic group of industrialized nations it has often found it hard to maintain its unique brand of foreign policy. Significantly in the issue under discussion here it is useful to note that CIDA has become a vehicle for promoting exports as well as managing aid.¹⁵⁷

In considering Canada's response to the Ethiopian famine, as well as the above background, Canada's relationship with Ethiopia must be examined. Ever since Canada's "eloquent support of Ethiopia's claims to Eritrea" at the peace conference after World War II, a period of friendship and collaboration existed between the two countries.¹⁵⁸ The first university in Addis Ababa was staffed by Canadian Jesuits. Canadians served as advisers in the financial system, as teachers, doctors, and technocrats. This relationship has been largely sustained by

¹⁵⁶John W. Holmes, *Canada: A Middle-aged Power*, (McClelland & Stewart in association with the Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, Toronto, 1976).

¹⁵⁷David W. Gillies, "Commerce over Conscience? Export promotion in Canada's aid programme", *International Journal*, XLIV, Winter 1988-9:102-133.

¹⁵⁸John H. Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay*, (Reference Publications, Inc., Algonac, Michigan, 1984), p.181.

Canadians, as individuals, or groups (Churches) and not in government to government arrangements. Nevertheless it has been an important factor linking the two countries.

Canada, therefore, as a concerned humanitarian country, as a functional contributor to multilateral agencies engaged in providing food aid, in the UN and other arenas, and as a friend of Ethiopia, could be expected to respond generously to the famine. Some confusion appears to exist, however, between the claims of the Canadian government to have responded generously to the Ethiopian famine and the figures provided by CIDA. Published CIDA material at the time included aid to other African countries, both before and after the Ethiopian crisis, for long-term projects as well as for emergency famine relief. The Ethiopian famine appears to have triggered in CIDA a public relations response towards African aid. The printed results are far from satisfying either in terms of information or policy. The Canadian government, through CIDA, created a new Africa aid policy out of the African famine,¹⁵⁹ initiated a commission to analyse and recommend changes to Canada's system of delivering development aid,¹⁶⁰ and became an advocate of African interests through Forum Africa and Africa 2000 programs.¹⁶¹ The high profile given Ethiopia in this 'advocacy' approach resulted in David MacDonald, already the Emergency Coordinator for the African Famine, being appointed Ambassador to Ethiopia. The Cabinet also approved the designation of Ethiopia as a core country for receiving Canadian aid, if events proved this useful.¹⁶²

The Africa Forum and Africa 2000 programs accomplished two important things,

¹⁵⁹Forum Africa, "Canadians Launch Forum Africa", Press Release, The Honourable Monique Vézina, Minister of External Relations, Ottawa, September 4, 1985.

¹⁶⁰Foreign Policy Review by a special Parliamentary Committee, and examination of development policies and programs by the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence.

¹⁶¹Interview with Jean Perras, Director, *Africa 2000*, CIDA, Ottawa, May, 1987.

¹⁶²Interview with Bob Miller, Parliamentary Centre for Foreign Affairs, Ottawa, May, 1987. Canada designates countries which will receive annually planned aid as countries of concentration. This is the designation approved by the Cabinet for Ethiopia, although it has not as far as can be determined been carried out on the long term.

however: recognition of the contributions of private citizens and NGOs (PVOs) to Ethiopia; and stimulation of an ongoing interest of private citizens in African development. Funding remains available, for example, through CIDA, for groups of interested citizens to organize programs which raise the level of Canadian consciousness or, more practically, organize projects for Africa, on an ad hoc basis. The enormous response of Canadians to the Ethiopian crisis certainly demonstrated a high level of interest, knowledge and commitment to African development and aid. The government however, decided to fund such ongoing activities to keep the level of interest high and/or to relieve CIDA of responsibility. The argument could be made that the Canadian government has, through these 'outreach' and 'advocacy' programs, been able to sustain the image of Canada as a generous humanitarian country, while shifting the responsibility from the government to the people of Canada. This is in keeping with Kim Nossal's analysis previously mentioned. This objective in no way diminishes the usefulness of CIDA's contributions to Ethiopia, nor its role as manager of aid to Ethiopia, but it does reflect on the politics and policies of the government. However, within the framework of this thesis, Canada's ability to influence the Ethiopian government was diminished because, as an advocate of aid to Ethiopia, it would not be expected to place any political conditions on continued famine relief, or to terminate its aid program. Credibility is an important factor in assessing bargaining positions.

Summary.

The role of the PVOs and the media as channels of communication affected donor policy with respect to the response to the famine. They continued to play this role during the relief operation, but increasingly served their own purposes, i.e. humanitarianism, fund raising and self-fulfilment in the case of the PVOs, and marketing news in the case of the media. This transformed role affected the relations between the donors and the recipient, confirming the importance of their role as communicators between the donors and the recipient.

The relief agencies of the various governments, RRC, USAID and CIDA played important

roles in the delivery of relief to the starving peoples. However, the political interests of both the RRC and USAID hampered their cooperation, and in the end superseded their devotion to solely humanitarian objectives. CIDA, conforming to its mandate, generated increased food aid relief, but did not monitor or account for its distribution. Canadian food aid was distributed through the RRC, PVOs and the WFP. Both USAID and CIDA contributed to RRC's loss of control of the aid program in mid-1985 because of their reliance on PVOs and the WFP. Canada, together with the EEC, continued to provide a limited amount of its food aid to the RRC, in line with its non-political agenda vis a vis Ethiopia.

Both the Ethiopian and American governments had a political agenda which continued to dominate the bargaining between them. Canada took a different view of such issues as 'resettlement' and 'villagization'. Energized by the Ethiopian experience, CIDA quickly developed an all-Africa aid policy in the form of Africa 2000. The US was guided in its aid policy with respect to Ethiopia by its political agenda. These differing policies with respect to the donor-recipient relationships are assessed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RECIPROCAL COSTS AND BENEFITS OF THE DONOR RECIPIENT RELATIONSHIP

A political bargaining process in which skill, commitment, coherence, and other factors, can produce an outcome belied by the distribution of power resources amongst the actors is at the centre of asymmetrical interdependence.¹ Being asymmetrically less dependent is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to exercise influence in a bilateral relationship, particularly on a single issue which has become politicized. A weaker actor with intense preferences on one issue may make great concessions on other matters to attain its objectives.² For example, Ethiopia made the greatest of all concessions for it by allowing Western aid agencies to enter the country and move freely in order to gain its objective of receiving famine relief.³ On the other hand, a more powerful actor may be constrained from exercising influence on a particular issue, for both domestic and international reasons or because of its preponderance of power. In a study of the outcome of various disputes between the US, and Mexico, Japan and Iran, the US was seen to be reluctant to use its power through issue-linkage viewing such tactics as incompatible with its role of world leader.⁴ Nevertheless, asymmetrical interdependence includes the possibility of linkage

¹Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, (Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1977), p. 225. (Hereafter *Power*).

²Harrison Wagner, "Economic interdependence, bargaining power and political influence", unpublished paper, University of Texas, Austin, October 1986. Cited in Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Power and Interdependence Revisited", *International Organization*, 41 (4), (Autumn 1987):725-753, p.734. (Hereafter "Revisited").

³Except for the period of Italian occupation, Ethiopia had for centuries kept foreigners out of the country, unless they were there to serve the Emperor. This attitude towards foreigners has persisted in the 20th century and was very much evident in the Haile Selassie era. Mengistu appeared to be aware of the risk to Ethiopian independence the GOE was taking in opening the doors to Western donors.

⁴Robert L. Paarlberg, ed., *Diplomatic Dispute*, (Harvard Studies in International Affairs, No. 39, Centre for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1978), p.160.

of issues in the bargaining process.

A key feature of issue-linkage is that it involves intragovernmental and intergovernmental struggles. In complex interdependence between the US and Canada, for example, this becomes a significant independent variable.⁵ If the less dependent actor is a pluralist democracy, it may be politically 'weak' as its administration must respond to many sectors of society as well as the legislative branch which may be in conflict with government policy. On the other hand, in an authoritarian country, the government is politically 'strong' and little recourse is necessary to the various sectors of the society when carrying out policy. These are factors which tend to confer bargaining power on the more dependent actor. The potential for linkage, however, will depend in large part on the complexity of the relationship. The opportunities for linkage are meagre in the donor-recipient relationships discussed in this thesis not only because of the low level of transactions and interaction, but also because of the nature of the issue. For example, the US and Canada as economically powerful donors found it difficult to link issues in order to influence the Ethiopian government. Indirectly, however, the US linked the issue of long term development aid to the famine relief relationship, keeping its aid confined to short term relief and using its influence in other world arenas, like the World Bank, to place conditions on long term aid to Ethiopia. Canada made no attempt to link long term aid with famine relief, as a condition of continuing famine relief, although CIDA directed its general policy more and more toward conditional long term aid in the general venue. Ethiopia had little power to influence the donors through issue linkage. Firmly in the Soviet camp in the Cold War, there was no potential manipulation of the West available, such as had been available to Haile Selassie, in playing the West off against the East, and vice versa.

⁵See Sharn Tyakoff, *The Canada-US Softwood Lumber Dispute: An Interdependence Approach*, (Master's Thesis, Department of Political Science, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., March, 1988) for an analysis of how the relations between intra and intergovernmental actors were important in the soft wood lumber dispute between the US and Canada. In the first phase, the weaker actor gained and in the second phase, lost because of changed relations amongst intra and inter governmental actors.

Sensitivity and Vulnerability

The reciprocal effects of asymmetrical interdependence, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional, are measurable by different criteria. Keohane and Nye examine interdependence in two dimensions: sensitivity and vulnerability.⁶ Sensitivity interdependence involves degrees of responsiveness within a policy framework - how quickly do changes in one country bring costly changes in another, and how great are the costly effects?⁷ Vulnerability interdependence is an actor's liability to suffer costs imposed by external events even after policies have been altered.⁸

Sensitivity interdependence, what Baldwin calls "contingency",⁹ includes the reciprocal effects that arise from unintended or gratuitous actions which may have an impact but which do not engage the political attention of the affected state. Fads and fashions which flow from one country to another are an example of such indirect and unintended impacts. A country may be sensitive to unintended but direct impacts which still do not require a political response. For example, a global shortage of coffee will have an impact on life style but not on politics. However, if the global shortage is oil, (or food) political action will become necessary. Many industrialized states are sensitive to oil shortages but Japan, for example, would have a higher level of vulnerability than the US or Canada, which are oil producers.¹⁰ Baldwin refers to this as 'need fulfilment'.¹¹

The sensitivity of the donor countries to the Ethiopian famine is high because of the nature

⁶Keohane and Nye, *Power*, pp.12-19.

⁷Ibid., p.12.

⁸Ibid., p.13.

⁹David Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power: a conceptual analysis", *International Organization*, 34 (4), (Autumn 1980):471-506, p.475.

¹⁰Keohane and Nye, *Power*, p.12.

¹¹Baldwin, p. 475.

of the issue, i.e. famine. When the donor changes its food aid policy it indicates the alternatives, such as refusing to send famine relief, are too costly. On the other hand, Ethiopia's sensitivity to the withholding or absence of food aid (generally) and the absence of long-term development aid, is mitigated somewhat by Ethiopian traditional attitudes. The expectation that peasants will die of starvation from time to time and that political problems will be settled by force, reinforce its reluctance to give up any of its sovereignty to external arrangements which may lead to modifications of policy. Cost tolerance, the willingness to tolerate deprivation or destruction, is an important variable in providing influence to a weaker actor.¹² Ethiopia's vulnerability is, nevertheless, close to its sensitivity, as it has no other source of food than the western donors.¹³ Just as Ethiopian tradition makes it easier to tolerate famine, so the western donors' humanitarian tradition makes it hard to tolerate or ignore famine. Both traditions affect the respective sensitivity and vulnerability of the donors and recipient.

Costs or Benefits

Keohane and Nye take the view that interdependence always has reciprocal costs.¹⁴ Baldwin, logically, suggests that the very maintenance of the relationship is beneficial, presuming that the alternative would be more costly.

The 'benefits' of interdependence should be defined in terms of the values of the parties and the likely effects on those values of breaking (or disrupting) the

¹²Walter S. Jones, *The Logic of International Relations*, (Scott, Foresman & Co., Boston, London, 1988), p.270. Jones points out that in a study of 40 wars almost half were won by the party that suffered more. However, one should be cautious about drawing parallels here to Ethiopia. The willingness of the GOE to inflict suffering on its peoples or to tolerate a high level of suffering of its peoples from famine, is not the same cost tolerance to which Jones refers, but does confer influence in the bargaining initially to the weaker actor.

¹³In 1987 the Soviet Union pledged 250,000 MT of food to Ethiopia, no doubt under pressure from the Mengistu regime. Had events made this possible, socialist Ethiopia would not have remained under the pervasive influence of western food aid donors. Of course events changed rapidly in 'communist' Europe and Ethiopia is now, in 1991, virtually without its Russian sponsor and facing famine again.

¹⁴Keohane and Nye, *Power*, p.9.

relationship.¹⁵

Economic costs or benefits are much easier to assess, as the values of the parties are not involved but assessment of these costs by the parties will be mediated by values. Economic effects, however, cannot be considered in isolation, since they may lead to political action, and thence political costs or benefits.

Values

Costs of interdependence are difficult to foresee because of the difference in the value systems between donors and the recipient.¹⁶ Non-economic factors (such as religious beliefs, attitudes to work and the criteria of social status, etc.) must enter fully into the theoretical system as variables, with causal relationships flowing to as well as from them.¹⁷ Ethiopian values, social, political and economic, as described in Chapter 2, have deep roots and affect Ethiopian behavior and policies, entering fully into the cause and effect relationship with the donors. One of the problems arising out of a relationship between such dissimilar states as the donors and Ethiopia is the absence of donor concern with Ethiopian values and recipient ignorance of donor values. Robert O. Keohane has remarked, "the assumption that individuals are self-interested and rational . . . is ambiguous, since 'self-interest' is defined culturally rather than as an objective given."¹⁸ A misunderstanding of Ethiopian values complicated the donor attempts to influence Ethiopian policy. The World Bank has found that the inflexibility of foreign donors in Africa has

¹⁵Baldwin, p.478.

¹⁶Keohane and Nye, *Power*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁷Everett E. Hagen, "Turning Parameters into Variables in the Theory of Economic Growth", *American Economic Review*, Papers and Proceedings, 50 (.2), May 1960. Cited in Martin Staniland, *What is political economy? A study of social theory and underdevelopment*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1985), p.24.

¹⁸Robert O. Keohane, "Review of Mancur Olson's *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1982), *Journal of Economic Literature*, 21 (June 1983:559). Cited in Staniland, p.39.

led to difficulties for recipient governments in maintaining national control over priorities.¹⁹ Donor and recipient objectives in providing famine relief were not the same, partly because of different value systems, and partly because of donor assumptions that 'they knew best'. Values, therefore, are a necessary consideration when measuring costs and benefits.

Measurement of costs and benefits

When costs are political, psychological, or cultural, there is no generally agreed upon common denominator of value in terms of which they can be measured and compared.²⁰ One way to assess costs and benefits is therefore to examine the alternative costs the parties are unwilling to pay. Costs are the most important aspect of interdependence, but any analysis and comparison of reciprocal costs is an uncertain art at best, what Barry Jones calls "the ambiguous cornerstone of interdependence."²¹ In assessing vulnerability, for example, the dimension of time should be given importance as an unknown factor affecting not only 'relative availability and costliness of alternatives' but also long-term costs.²² Costs may change as conditions change over a period of time.

The significance of relative levels of costs reinforces the view that interdependence must be conceived as a feature of specific relationships: a feature which can be identified only through the detailed examination of such relationships rather than by grand generalization.²³

¹⁹The World Bank, *Toward Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Joint Program of Action*, (World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1984), p.38.

²⁰Baldwin, p. 502.

²¹R.J. Barry Jones, "The Definition and Identification of Interdependence", in *Interdependence on Trial*, Jones and Peter Willetts, eds., (Frances Pinter Publishers Ltd., London, 1984:17-63), p.25.

²²Keohane and Nye, *Power*, p. 13.

²³Jones, p.28.

Constraints

Ethiopia benefits from the international norms supporting the relief of famine, which act to constrain donor behavior. We are accustomed to thinking of constraints being imposed by the lack of necessary material resources, but politics is also about non-material, non-economic constraints.²⁴ Ethiopia's accumulated xenophobia, for example, is a psychological constraint making it difficult for Ethiopia to adapt policy easily in response to outside criticism, therefore giving it a high tolerance of 'opportunity' costs when independent action is attempted, i.e. the pursuit of its 'resettlement' policy. International law may represent a 'cognitive constraint' upon independent action.²⁵ For example, 'genocide' became the clarion call of some more vocal American opponents of the Ethiopian government's resettlement policy and was echoed in the powerful Congressional Committees in Washington, becoming a political and potentially economic problem for Ethiopia.²⁶

This thesis is concerned with non-economic costs and benefits arising from the famine relief relationship of the US and Canada with Ethiopia. The economic costs to the donors of sending food aid, while noted, are not considered important in affecting the outcome, while food aid is of course an economic benefit to Ethiopia.²⁷ This chapter identifies the political costs or

²⁴Peter Willetts, "The Politics of Global Issues: Cognitive Actor Dependence and Issue Linkage", in *Interdependence on Trial*, R.J. Barry Jones and Peter Willetts, eds., (Frances Pinter Publishers Ltd., London, 1984:83-109), p.83.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁶As mentioned in Chapter 3, economic sanctions were proposed in the Congress against Ethiopia for alleged human rights violations, genocide, etc., which offended international law. This is further discussed in this Chapter.

²⁷There is a difficulty, in any event, of measuring the economic value of food aid. Prices fluctuate depending on reserves, trade and stocks held by exporting countries, as well as surpluses. In addition, the cost of delivery of a unit of food to inaccessible target groups will exceed the unit price of the food. The value to the recipient will be different than to the donor. See Shlomo Reutlinger and Marcelo Selowsky, *Malnutrition and Poverty: Magnitude and Policy Options*, (John Hopkins for the World Bank, Baltimore, 1976); Raymond F. Hopkins and Donald J. Puchala, "Perspectives on the International Relations of Food", *International Organization*, 32 (3-4), 1978:581-616; Cheryl Christensen, "World Hunger: A structural Approach", *International Organization*, 32 (3-4), 1978:745-774, and others.

benefits and the donor and recipient attributes contributing to the outcome. Resettlement is examined separately but as a part of Ethiopia's cost and benefits, as it was the most important issue affecting the bargaining. This chapter is divided as follows: Part One: Reciprocal costs and benefits: Ethiopia; Resettlement; the US; and Canada. Part Two: Summary.

PART ONE

Reciprocal Costs and Benefits.

Before assessing reciprocal effects in the donor-recipient relationships under study, the question must be answered: what is the political bargaining about? i.e. what does the recipient want (when, where, how and at what cost); and what do the donors want (when, where, how and at what cost)?²⁸ An assessment of whether or to what degree their goals were achieved helps identify costs and benefits.

Ethiopia.

As early as 1981 Ethiopia wanted the western donor community to respond to the impending food crisis by sending large amounts of food aid, as soon as possible, at no cost to Ethiopia, and under the control of the GOE. Ethiopia had no alternative source of food aid. As a Marxist Leninist state, with the support both political and military of the Soviet Union, it had few channels of communication at the state-to-state level with the western donors. In addition, it had been receiving very little overseas development aid from the west and was tied into a hostile

²⁸Baldwin, p. 497.

relationship with the US, the most important potential food aid donor.²⁹ The influence Ethiopia could exert on the western donors to achieve its goal of gaining famine relief depended therefore on reaching the humanitarian constituency in the West. The human costs of failing to engage the attention of the west and thus achieve a change in food aid policy in the major donor countries, were potentially enormous. These costs, (ultimately, one million peasants dead from starvation and famine related diseases) were already being borne in 1984 as the daily death count mounted. Ironically, the pitiful situation of the daily death count was the crucial factor in reaching the people in the donor countries by television. Even after the donors' food aid policy changed, in the last months of 1984, and with world attention focussed on Ethiopia's famine, very little food had arrived. Not even 1% of the assistance pledged after October, had reached the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) by December. The death toll had reached 16,000 to 17,000 per week and the people needing assistance had reached 7.2 million.³⁰ The cost to Ethiopia of its early failure to influence the donors was therefore already being measured in bodies. The high cost of one million dead can be construed as a cost of the revolution. The GOE was unwilling to abandon its revolutionary goals to gain western aid.³¹ However, had the US and other western donors refused to come to Ethiopia's assistance on political grounds, the Mengistu regime may

²⁹The 'visceral' level at which Mengistu operated with respect to the US has not been sufficiently expressed previously. For example, in 1982 the Americans were conducting a military exercise in the Red Sea called "Bright Star". Mengistu was furious and so he named the program underway in Eritrea to solve the secessionist war "Red Star", commenting, "We will decimate the (rebel) forces they are arming. We will humiliate them beyond any doubt that there is nothing more motivating, more forceful and more bright than Red." See Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (The Red Sea Press, Inc., Trenton, 1989), p.107. This also suggests that as far as the GOE was concerned, at least in 1982, the US was perceived as arming the rebels.

³⁰Dawit, p. 226.

³¹However, this point should not be overdrawn. Other African countries who had been receiving ODA from the West (for example, neighbouring Sudan), were also suffering from the inadequate and late response of western donors. Nevertheless, if one compares the ODA figures between, for example, Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia, it is very clear that the revolution was costing Ethiopia enormously in terms of lost ODA. During 1961-70 per capita averages for foreign aid were as follows: Ethiopia \$13.80, Kenya \$56.90, Somalia \$90.00, and Sudan \$26.62. See US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*. Cited in Paul Henze, "Getting a Grip on the Horn" in *The Patterns of Soviet Conduct in the Third World*, Walter Laqueur, ed., (Praeger Special Studies, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1983), p.181.

have fallen. In the event, the massive aid program which was launched too late, saved the Mengistu regime as well as further millions of Ethiopian lives. Therefore, the short-term outcome of the bargaining was overall of political benefit to the GOE. Other events occurred however during the famine relief period which had long term consequences bearing the highest political costs for the regime.

First, by mid-1985 the GOE and RRC had lost overall control of the aid program. The country was divided up between the PVOs by region. Foreign aid workers and the media, acting independently of the GOE, directed attention to the actions and programs of the GOE, placing Mengistu in a very vulnerable position. At the beginning of 1984, 21 PVOs were in Ethiopia. By mid-1985 the number had risen to 48 with at least 600 foreign staff. Sixty-three agencies altogether contributed to famine relief, although some without staff on the ground. Although the RRC reported that 47% of relief was handled by the RRC and 53% by PVOs, that figure represents the percentage of the 'total relief', including 1984. As reported in Chapter 3, the percentages had changed by the middle of 1985 to about 70-80% in the hands of PVOs and 20-30% in the hands of the RRC.³²

In November, 1984, the alleged 'impounding' by the GOE of an Australian ship carrying food aid for "ERA" was given world wide media coverage.³³ By December 1984 the media attack intensified.³⁴ The human rights issue which had for so many years plagued the US/Ethiopia relationship once again became significant and was used, as before, as a club over the head of Mengistu. It arose chiefly from the allegations made in December 1984 by two groups, *Médecins sans frontières (MSF)* (Doctors without borders) a small French agency and the American

³²Dawit, *Red Tears*, pp.228-9.

³³Kurt Jansson, Michael Harris and Angela Penrose, *The Ethiopian Famine* (Zed Books Ltd., London, New Jersey, 1987), p.31. According to Jansson who was involved in rectifying this situation, after he had contacted the GOE at the ministerial level the ship was docked and unloaded immediately. The press did not report this clarification. The ship had been standing by while a Russian ship was unloaded.

³⁴Graham Hancock, *The Challenge of Hunger*, (Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1985), pp.116-7.

research group, *Cultural Survival*.³⁵ The result was the distinct possibility that not only would aid be withdrawn but also economic sanctions against Ethiopia would be considered. The then US Vice President George Bush travelled to the Sudan in mid-1985 and accused Ethiopia of using famine as an instrument of war.³⁶ This was sufficiently harmful to the GOE that special attention was paid to convincing the US administration that food was not being used as a weapon by the GOE in the rebel areas, and that the resettlement policy would be halted during a period of reflection and consolidation. Mengistu sent Dawit as a special emissary to Washington (as he was trusted and liked in the West) to convince the US administration that it had misinterpreted Ethiopian events. Apparently he succeeded at the time.³⁷ Later at a press conference in May, 1986 Mengistu suggested his bewilderment about American policy.

We, like many other countries, repeatedly urged the US administration to apply the UN comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against South Africa. . . . instead the US legislators moved, to our surprise, to impose a trade embargo on our country. It will mean an import ban on Ethiopian coffee - 20,000 tons per year. Is it fair?³⁸

The second significant development bringing long term costs to the GOE was caused by the interference of the donors and aid agencies in the war in Eritrea and in Tigrai. The relief arms of the guerrilla movements, REST (Tigrai) and ERA (Eritrea), established permanent links with the donors. This relationship has become institutionalized as reported in Chapter 3, and was important in sustaining and strengthening the TPLF and the EPLF and their partners or coalitions.³⁹ Many of the agencies who participate receive much of their funding from USAID.⁴⁰

³⁵The impact of the activities of these two groups is given in the following sections.

³⁶Dawit, *Red Tears*, p. 320.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p.343. Also see President Reagan's conclusions, reported in the next section.

³⁸Mengistu Haile Mariam, *Responding to International Media*, Press Conference given on May 28, 1988, (GOE, Ministry of Information Press Department, Addis Ababa, July, 1988), p.39.

³⁹ERA for example has offices in Washington, DC at the same address as the important agencies, National Council of Churches (NCC) and Christian World Service (CWS); see Medea Benjamin and Andrea Freedman, *Bridging the Global Gap, a project of global exchange*, (Seven Locks Press, Washington, 1989), pp.227,243 and 244. It is interesting to note that most of the PVOs who came to Ethiopia during the crisis were not registered by the RRC nor approved by the GOE. Jansson has criticized the RRC for this lack of scrutiny as he

As well, the US funds the rebel movements directly.⁴¹

An 'adversarial' relationship developed between the US and the GOE. GOE programs, policy and behavior were continuously under attack. The PVOs and the media, as transnational channels of communication, had the continuing effect of modifying policy in the donor, while doing very little to affect or modify the agenda in Ethiopia. As western based organizations, their usefulness as open two-way transnational channels of communication was limited. Ethiopia, on the other hand, was inhibited from responding to donor initiatives by its traditional reluctance to accept external influence, and its dedication to its national socialist mission. The GOE's devotion to national unity prevented a negotiated settlement to the civil wars in the north, and was an integral part of the socialist national mission.

The short term political gain of the Mengistu regime was mistakenly viewed in Addis Ababa as long term. Instead, because of the intransigence of the Mengistu regime with respect to modifications of policy, the attack in the west not only continued, but a considerable constituency in the aid community transferred its ongoing long term commitment to the rebel movements. The skill of the US in sustaining its influence through the aid relationship contributed to the downfall of the regime in 1991.

In terms of the framework of this thesis, Ethiopia benefited greatly from the famine relief

feels that the operation would have been more successful and without the difficulties that ensued if only major PVOs with the required experience and resources had been permitted to operate in the country. The burden of meeting the demands of small donor agencies was enormous and took valuable time of both the RRC and the UNEOE which should have been devoted to improving the relief effort. As well, some of the small agencies who lacked experience became the "whistle blowers". See Jansson, p.22.

⁴⁰In a documentary on Ethiopia by the CBC Fifth Estate, March 26, 1991, a USAID official conceded that the US was now prepared to stop the cross border aid flowing into the rebel north in a very belated effort to put pressure on the rebels to negotiate a peaceful solution. This at a time when rebel armies were within assault distance of Addis Ababa. The 'peace talks' sponsored by the US were, it can now be seen, only 'window dressing'.

⁴¹The US contemplated the covert delivery of high-technology military equipment to the TPLF. Whether or not this happened is hard to ascertain. Most eye witness accounts suggest that their equipment is captured from the Ethiopian army. The US continued to have close relationships with the various 'rebel' groups, encouraging them to join together in an organization that could be perceived as non-Marxist in Washington, so that they might receive fuller US funding. The Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is the result. See *Africa Confidential*, 27 (8), 9 April 1986, "Hard Left in Tigray", p.8.

relationship with the donors in the short term as six million or more lives were saved, and the Mengistu government maintained power. Initially, the GOE was able to influence donor policy and agenda setting. However, the intransigence of the GOE inflamed the hardliners in the US, just as the US attacks on the GOE reinforced the hardliners' position in the Politboro.⁴² This was an escalation process that proved very harmful to the GOE. The American initiatives in 1991 in encouraging the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to take over power in Addis Ababa, representing chiefly the Tigray, but also the Eritreans, and the Oromo, but not the Amhara or the Ogadeni for example, is a violation of orthodox international law commitment to honor the integrity of sovereign nations. It will lead to unduly high costs for the Ethiopian people.

Resettlement.

The Ethiopian position on resettlement was clear and unequivocal. Mengistu, in responding to a question from Associated Press, May 28, 1988, stated:

. . . resettlement is no new phenomenon in the world. Numerous societies. . . are the outcome of resettlement of one sort or another. (One famous example is) the United States. . . resettlement is an essential component of the growth of societies. . . . I am surprised that it is viewed as something unique to Ethiopia. In our case, resettlement is the voluntary relocation of people from drought stricken areas to fertile virgin lands. . . . it was the Land Reform Act which paved the way for implementation of the resettlement scheme.⁴³

While the need for developing a national policy for initiating settlement schemes had been widely recognized for many years, until the Land Reform Act, there was no unified policy for land settlement. Some small scale schemes were carried out by a few public and private agencies, religious institutions and international organizations with widely different objectives.⁴⁴ Following

⁴²Dawit, *Red Tears*, p. 229.

⁴³Mengistu, *Responding*, pp. 24-29.

⁴⁴Sahle-Mariam Mogus, *Land Settlement as a Rural Development Policy: The Ethiopian Experience*, (Master of Science Thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1982, Photocopy), p.4.

the land nationalization and the 1973-74 drought and famine, settlement was given high priority, and a National Settlement Authority was established. Because of the pressures of war, drought and famine, there was little time to develop professional planning for the execution of settlement projects and problems cropped up in nearly all settlement schemes.

In October 1984, the Politburo, faced with the northern famine and without resources, decided to immediately initiate a resettlement program for drought victims. It called on the western donors to provide assistance and on the Soviet Union for logistical (air) support. With ten years of experience and many failures in resettlement projects, the GOE nevertheless launched the resettlement program, diverting staff and resources from the relief effort to the resettlement program. With proper planning, adequate resources and adequate staff, resettlement might have been the best alternative to the “feeding” camps. However, the first movements of people were viewed by some western donors as disasters, partly in reaction to the Soviet Union involvement, but also because there was a coercive nature to the selection process.⁴⁵ As those to be embarked by plane to new regions were already suffering from severe malnutrition and resulting weakness, it was inevitable that there would be deaths enroute. It is also fair to conjecture that had there been wholehearted support of the program by the western donors, planning would have been instituted which, with resources from the donors, would have made the program more viable, if difficult in the short term. The GOE was already facing justified and unjustified criticism from donors and, unwilling to negotiate a cease fire in the north, made the logical but impractical decision to move the people from the famine and war areas to other areas.

A review of the statistics and the movement flows does not support the charges that the GOE was repeating the Amhara expansion of the 19th century from north to south, that the GOE was ‘gutting’ Tigrai of its people and thus depleting support for the TPLF, or that the GOE was

⁴⁵In a society with the cultural history of Ethiopia, it is not surprising that the behavior of officers of the resettlement program would be perceived as coercive by western standards. Jansson criticizes some PVOs and aid workers for failing to understand the values of the society in which they were working. See Jansson, p.66.

committing 'genocide' on certain groups. The media's attention to the resettlement issue was the result of the actions of *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF), the smallest agency which worked in Ethiopia, which claimed in December 1985 that 50,000-100,000 people died because of resettlement.⁴⁶ Kurt Jansson, the executive director of UNEOE in Addis Ababa, whose staff monitored the food aid distribution for abuses, has criticized MSF soundly.⁴⁷ The American *Heritage Foundation*, well known for its conservative views claimed that "by depopulating the rebel-dominated northern highlands, the Mengistu regime hopes to drain the ocean in which its guerrilla opponents swim."⁴⁸ The *Washington Post*, however, reported on January 3, 1985 that such mid-sized countries as Australia, Canada, Sweden, and Italy consider the US denouncement of resettlement as political. A senior Canadian diplomat is quoted as saying:

I would say that the United States, as far as resettlement is concerned, is more worried about East-West relations than it is about starvation.⁴⁹

Indeed, food was provided to the resettlement sites by the WFP, the Italian government, the Canadian government (through Irish Concern), a French group, a German group and Lutheran World Relief. Much of the EEC's food contribution, which went to the RRC, was used in the resettlement areas.⁵⁰ However, US food aid which was managed by American PVOs was not distributed to the resettlement areas. These PVOs as the agents of USAID naturally conformed to US policy, even if it meant carrying out a policy viewed by some as overtly political and offending humanitarian principles.

⁴⁶*Africa Confidential*, 27(1), 2 January 1986, "Famine Politics", p.3.

⁴⁷Jansson, p. 57. Jansson considered the actions of MSF as irresponsible because the evidence was not there to support the charges.

⁴⁸*Ethiopia Update: Forced Population Removal and Human Rights*, Appendix, hearing before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 99th Congress, 2nd Session, March 6, 1986, (USGPO, Washington, 1986), p.33.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, Appendix, *Washington Post*, January 3, 1985, pp.33-34.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, Appendix, Statement of Jason W. Clay, p. 52.

The GOE had already been facing hostility from the US, however, over the issues of extending feeding programs in the rebel areas and the closing of relief camps.⁵¹ However, through some PVO channels, in particular CRS, the UNEOE, and direct communication the GOE had met the US criticism. For example on September 7, 1985, President Reagan admitted that the available evidence did not justify a determination that the GOE was conducting a deliberate policy of starvation. The President even noted that the GOE had taken actions to facilitate an enhanced relief effort, agreed to an expanded feeding program in the north, and the reduction of the pace of its resettlement program, as well as improving its procedures for closing relief camps.⁵² However, stimulated by groups such as the *Heritage Foundation* and *Cultural Survival*, as well as certain elements of the PVO and media channels of communication, Congress continued to keep the human rights issue alive and to push the US administration to use its power as a major donor to influence the GOE to change its socialist policies which were viewed by these critics as leading to, or being part and parcel of, human rights abuses, including, according to Jason Clay of *Cultural Survival*, famine.⁵³

At a hearing before the US Senate sub-committee on Foreign Relations on March 6, 1986 the Ethiopian resettlement program and the alleged human rights violations were discussed.⁵⁴ This hearing was called to respond to a concern that genocide was being practiced in Ethiopia in the resettlement program. The witnesses were Alan Keyes, Assistant Secretary of State for

⁵¹An incident at Ibenet in April, 1985 where severe methods were used to evacuate the feeding camp had been at the centre of the criticism of GOE practice and policy on closing relief camps. There is no doubt that human rights abuses occurred there, but these were shown to be the acts of the local Party official. The GOE later apologized and assured UNEOE that it would not be repeated. Nevertheless, the GOE policy to close feeding camps so people would return home or be resettled, though rational, was opposed by PVOs. See Jansson, pp.59-62.

⁵²*Ethiopia Update*, Appendix, p.35.

⁵³In June, 1986 Amnesty International issued an 18 page report on conditions of imprisonment and torture in Ethiopia for political prisoners. This, while not dealing with famine relief in any way, did add fuel to the fire of Ethiopia's critics. See *Ethiopia: Political Imprisonment and Torture*, (Amnesty International, London, June 1986).

⁵⁴*Ethiopia Update: Forced Population Removal and Human Rights*, hearing before the Sub-committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 99th Congress, Second Session, March 6, 1985, (USGPO, Washington, 1985).

International Organization Affairs, Princeton Lyman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ted Morse, Director of the Drought Coordination Committee at USAID, and Jason Clay, director of *Cultural Survival*.⁵⁵ Ambassador Keyes ended his statement with the words, “We should be concerned not only with whether people are fed, but with whether they are free”.

Ted Morse stated that

. . . in expressing our concerns about the forced resettlement program, I want to clearly reiterate that the United States is still committed to meeting one-third of Ethiopia’s drought-related food needs in 1986, as we were in 1985. . . . We are not against voluntary and well planned resettlement in principle. . . . Ten years ago I personally managed a resettlement program there. . . . We are calling on other donors to put more of their drought contributions through private and voluntary organizations to minimize the possibility that those resources can be diverted to the resettlement program. . . . We have called on the Ethiopian government directly, through other donors and through the UN to declare and extend the current moratorium on resettlement

Senator Boschwitz criticized Mr. Morse’s presentation and suggested that the problem being faced was one of genocide.

The reason I asked for these hearings in the first place is in conjunction with the Genocide Convention. . . What is occurring over there (in Ethiopia)? Is genocide occurring or is it not occurring?

Mr. Lyman explained that the Ethiopian government itself has been embarrassed into a position of slowing down and for a time stopping further movement of people and that the US has been very careful with its own food to be sure that none of it is diverted to the resettlement program. The US had very little leverage, as the other donors were providing food aid in the resettlement areas.

An appendix to the proceedings was provided by Senator John F. Kerry, who could not attend in person, and included a criticism of the Reagan administration.

⁵⁵*Cultural Survival, Inc.* is a nonprofit human rights organization located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Its activities include assistance projects, research and publications which address both urgent and chronic problems confronting indigenous peoples throughout the world. Jason Clay, its Director, has a doctorate in Social Anthropology.

The Reagan administration has consistently followed a short-sighted policy of refusing to give aid for development to Ethiopia, on the grounds that this would be giving support to a Marxist government. . . . The President has portrayed Ethiopia as one of the battlegrounds of "regional conflict" between East and West. . . . The reality is that without long-term development aid from the US and Europe, starvation and famine will continue in Ethiopia into the foreseeable future.⁵⁶

The director of *Cultural Survival*, Jason Clay presented material which supported the view of Senator Boschwitz on genocide, and also, paradoxically, compared the resettlement program to 19th century Amhara expansion. It was therefore not clear against whom the Ethiopian government was being accused of committing genocide, the resettled northerners, or the communities of people into which they were resettled. However, Mr. Clay, as a 'distinguished and respected' scholar received attention and favor in the Congress, which, based on the scholarship of his presentation, was unwarranted. His continuing published reports on Ethiopia are very harmful to Ethiopian interests because they appear in the magazine *Cultural Survival* which engages the attention of the human rights constituency and therefore unites the two constituencies, the humanitarian and the 'Cold War' in the anti-Mengistu lobby.⁵⁷

Resettlement became the centrepiece of US pressure on Ethiopia. First, it was given importance by relating it to the socialist program of villagization; second, it was viewed as a human rights issue, and third, it was an issue almost exclusively of American concern. The US was unable to convince its allies to withhold food aid from resettled areas and failed in its efforts at the meeting of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva to get a united front on the resettlement issue. As it was an American political issue, it was perceived in Addis Ababa as an attempt by the US to interfere with the sovereignty of the GOE, which together with US support for the northern rebels, Sudan and Somalia, made it more difficult for the GOE to compromise.

The Canadian government did not consider the resettlement issue as political in its relations

⁵⁶*Ethiopia Update*, Appendix, written statement of Senator John F. Kerry, pp.30-31.

⁵⁷At an interview with an officer of the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, D.C. in May, 1988, the author produced a copy of the magazine *Cultural Survival*, which contained a negative article on Ethiopia and received the response from the officer, "They are fascists". Ideology and scholarship apparently do not mix well. The work of Mr. Clay has been reviewed critically by Richard Pankhurst in *Anthropology Today*, 2(3), June 1986.

with the GOE, although as mentioned above it did consider the US attitude towards it as political. The matter was brought up in the House of Commons when it first became an issue after MSF accused the GOE of virtual 'genocide' and several times later during the period under discussion. The government stated each time that it was supporting the resettlement program and sending food aid to the resettlement areas.⁵⁸ The EEC as previously mentioned was also supporting the resettlement program, or at least not preventing the distribution of EEC food aid by the RRC to resettlement areas. The US bargaining position vis a vis the Ethiopians was therefore weakened on this issue as it was unable to get a unified position. As will be pointed out, however, such lack of consensus with its allies, did not always lead in the long term to a weakening of US resolve in obtaining its political objectives.

United States.

As set out in Chapter 3, the US had some confusion about what it wanted from Ethiopia. Blocked from participation in Ethiopian affairs by the Soviet involvement after 1977, the US demonstrated pique and disregard. In retrospect there was an inevitability about the Cold War switch of sponsors of the Ethiopian government. After the US support of Haile Selassie's regime for some twenty-five or more years, particularly after the failed *coup* of 1960, it was unlikely that the US could be a partner of the revolutionary regime. In the years prior to the famine, therefore, the US had withdrawn from Ethiopia and had a policy of isolating Ethiopia as long as it, first, continued to have socialist objectives, and second, failed to compensate the owners of businesses which had been nationalised after the revolution. The US objectives, therefore, at the time of the famine, were to end Ethiopia's commitment to socialism, and to gain compensation for the nationalised businesses. All aid and trade was terminated at the end of 1983 and there was little or no interstate communication with Ethiopia.

⁵⁸*Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, November 5, 1984 to July 24, 1986, 33rd Parliament, 1st session, 1984-86.

Therefore the Ethiopian famine and the energizing of American public opinion by the television exposure of the starving placed the US administration in a sensitive and vulnerable position. In 1984, a few days prior to the Presidential election, it was forced into instituting famine relief to Ethiopia. The alternative would have had unacceptably high political costs both domestically and internationally. On balance the administration must have decided that the political cost of sustaining a hostile, unfriendly Marxist regime in a strategic position in the Horn of Africa was less than the costs of becoming an international pariah, alienated from the mass of its own people. As well, by keeping the aid program on a short term emergency basis unconnected to ODA, the US was able to continue its main long term objectives of withholding ODA as long as a socialist regime was in power and compensation was not paid to Americans for property nationalized.⁵⁹ The administration made its position clear to the GOE on launching its famine relief program that famine relief was not contingent upon receiving any political counterpart. The possibility of high level talks was offered but it was emphasized that this would be entirely separate from the matter of famine relief assistance.⁶⁰ However, it was not an easy route to follow because of organized efforts in both Congress and elsewhere to push for the use of a stronger 'stick'. As a result of these efforts, the influence which Ethiopia had initially been able to exert on the US because of the famine was now to some degree countered by the determination in the US to criticize Ethiopia on its own response to the famine, and on human rights issues.

⁵⁹The second concern was successfully concluded when the GOE settled the compensation issue and signed an agreement on Dec. 19, 1985. See *Africa Confidential*, 27 (10), 7 May, 1986, "Ethiopia: EPD What?", pp.5-6.

⁶⁰David A.Korn, *Ethiopia, the United States and the Soviet Union*, (Croom Helm, London, Sydney, 1986), p.127. Korn, however, goes on to express his own (and others?) opinion that it was natural to expect that the Ethiopians would appreciate the "West's Herculean effort to save the lives of millions of starving Ethiopians" and take a second look at its "international position".

Ethiopia's socialist policies were blamed for the famine.⁶¹ The number of US based organisations devoting their efforts to criticism of the controversial resettlement program and to assisting the relief efforts of the liberation fronts increased.⁶²

Domestic Constraints

The US, a complex economically advanced country, with a huge gross national product, superpower status, nuclear capability, and world wide economic and political activities, is unlikely to focus its attention for long on the poorest country in the world, even one in the Soviet orbit with strategic importance, which does not pose a direct threat to US interests.⁶³ However, because of the nature of the democratic system, and the competing sectors of such a pluralist society, the administration's attention was repeatedly brought back to policy concerning the interests of such groups as the humanitarian and 'Cold War' constituencies. Some of these groups appear to be at cross purposes embodying both concerns about human rights issues and ideological issues, as though they were one and the same. One cannot say that famine is not itself a human rights issue, and therefore to have attention diverted from famine relief to specific issues like 'how many are in prison', or 'were the settlers in the resettlement and villagization programs coerced'? seems to be a gratuitous complication of the donor-recipient relationship between the

⁶¹Such a point of view is not restricted to American ideologues. Keith Griffin, the Oxford economist who headed an ILO commission to Ethiopia in 1983, also claimed in an address given to the *Vancouver Institute*, U.B.C., on November 16, 1986, that if the GOE had taken his advice in 1983 there would have been no famine. Economists, who view the world in economic model terms, often miss the importance of the political environment. Perhaps the effects of the famine could have been mitigated by a change in economic policy, but drought is drought and war is war.

⁶²*Africa Confidential*, 27 (10), 7 May, 1986, p.6.

⁶³The US had important strategic interests in the Horn, but had gained access to naval and air facilities in Somalia and Kenya for US Indian Ocean fleets. See Carol Lancaster, "US Aid, Diplomacy, and African Development", *Africa Report*, 29 (4), 1984:62-66.

US and Ethiopia.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, because of the separation of powers between the executive and the legislative branches of government, the US Congress has considerable power to influence the administration. The process is time consuming, and often self-serving as powerful Congressmen use their Committee positions to enhance their own status be they 'liberals' or 'conservatives'.⁶⁵ In the case of the Ethiopian famine, there was a plethora of Congressional committees meeting from time to time with different objectives. By examining the topics of several of these hearings and the evidence provided by the witnesses before them, some understanding of the difficulties of the administration in carrying out policy is gained.

In early 1985 two committees met with different objectives. The first, on January 17, was a hearing before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, sub-committee on African Affairs. The topic was "Famine in Africa".⁶⁶ The second, on February 7, was a hearing before the US Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Policy of the Committee on the Judiciary. Strom Thurmond, a powerful senator was the Chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, but more importantly, Edward Kennedy, a powerful 'liberal' senator, was a member of the sub-committee and provided its *raison d'etre*, although he was not the chairman.⁶⁷

At the first hearing, Chester A. Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Peter McPherson, Administrator of USAID, and others gave statements, parts of which are worth

⁶⁴Joseph D. Sneed, "A Utilitarian Framework for Policy Analysis in Food-related Foreign Aid", in *Food Policy, The Responsibility of the United States in the Life and Death Choices*, Peter G. Brown and Henry Shue, eds., (The Free Press, New York, 1977:102-144), p.131. Sneed comments that no right guaranteed by any Declaration or Constitution has meaning or value once starvation strikes. ". . . The need for food is a universal precondition of the exercise of human rights".

⁶⁵For a description of Senator Edward Kennedy's visit to Ethiopia in December, 1984.see Dawit, *Red Tears*, pp.211-12.

⁶⁶*Famine in Africa*, hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Sub-committee on African Affairs, US Senate, 99th Congress, First Session, January 17, 1985, (USGPO, Washington:1985).

⁶⁷*The Famine Effects on African Refugees*, hearing before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Policy of the Committee on the Judiciary, US Senate, 99th Congress, First Session, February 7, 1985, (USGPO, Washington:1985).

noting. Crocker identified the problems in Ethiopia as follows:

In recent years the Ethiopian government has . . . been openly hostile It has not only contributed to the current problem that country faces with its own misguided agricultural policies, influenced by failed Soviet collective practices, but it has . . . sought to hide the damages of the tragedy from its own people. . . . in Ethiopia our response is sending a powerful message about America, about its values, its ideals, and its relevance to the African tragedy. . . . Economic issues are at the core of our African policy. . . . in the past 3 years US exports to Africa have fallen 33% as a direct result of the African crisis. Africa's economic well-being is important to us, not only in human terms, but because of our interest in African markets and African products. African security and political stability also are important factors for our foreign policy.

. . . there are larger political issues which also affect us (and) we would be foolhardy to ignore the reality of international competition. . . . There is an inextricable link between political and economic issues.

. . . We think that the UN Secretary General (can) play a role in terms of calling for a message (that food be allowed into rebel areas) to come clearly from the international community and from the UN not from the US because there are strains in our bilateral relationship with Ethiopia.

Peter McPherson:

. . . We are very uncomfortable with the situation . . . our only tool . . . might be . . . to hold back something that we are doing . . . but that would clearly hurt innocent starving people. . . .

Chairman:

It seems to me when a nation is literally going under and we are providing half of the assistance to save it, that our leverage is considerable.

McPherson:

Starving people cannot be pawns. . . we are saying this consistently and frequently and forcefully to the Ethiopian government.

Senator John C. Danforth:

We cannot afford to abandon Africa. We have undeniable security concerns in the region. We need access to the continent's strategic materials. We need its potential markets.

Robert J. McCloskey, Senior Vice President, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), New York.:

. . . In Ethiopia the coordination among the private agencies is very effective and efficient. I am not as persuaded that there is a parallel coordination, as I think there should be, among donor governments.

These selected excerpts show that the representatives from DOS and USAID were concerned with

providing the committee with points of view that would appeal to the members' own ideological rather than humanitarian predilections. The USAID administrator, however, is 'hoisted on his own petard'. The suggestion, which he himself makes, of withdrawing food aid, (i.e. using food as a weapon) is taken up by the Chairman, but complicates the US position of accusing Ethiopia of using food as a weapon. Walking the tight rope of trying to satisfy both Congressional supporters and administration objectives is precarious. The postscript contribution of the CRS highlights the conflict this provides not only in the US but also between the US and its allies, the other western donors.

At the second hearing on February 7, before the Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, about "oversight on the issue of emergency food aid and famine relief to refugees in sub-Saharan Africa", Senator Kennedy pointed out that

the international community was slow in responding to the problem. . . and there was a serious underestimation of the number of refugees flowing into Sudan and underestimation of the need for certain commodities. (The Commissioner of) UNHCR . . . quite clearly needs to have the assistance of the Secretary General and the world community to tell him that this is a matter of extraordinary priority.

Canada has made an effective contribution. Canada has a strong presence and an important role. I think the European community, quite frankly, has been well behind . . . in responding from a governmental point of view. . . . the Soviet Union is providing military equipment. . . and have provided helicopters. . . The Soviet Union is involved in the resettlement program. . . .

Both representatives of USAID and DOS appeared, but at this hearing their evidence was confined to reporting on what the US had actually done in response to the refugee problem. This subcommittee subsequently commissioned its staff to make a two week field visit to Ethiopia and the Sudan as a follow-up to the visit of Senator Kennedy in December 1984. The result was the report *Ethiopia and Sudan One Year Later: Refugee and Famine Recovery Needs*.⁶⁸ Both the 1985 hearings and the 1986 report emphasized the role of the US as a humanitarian donor. In the

⁶⁸*Ethiopia and Sudan One Year Later: Refugee and Famine Recovery Needs*, a minority staff report prepared for the use of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Policy to the Committee on the Judiciary US Senate, 99th Congress, Second Session, May 1986, (USGPO, Washington: 1986).

1986 report famine and refugee relief programs were viewed as very successful. This approach was expected to encourage continued U.S. aid.

... led by the United States ... one of the decades more remarkable success stories in international relief has been accomplished in Ethiopia.

... the US should ... patiently use the goodwill of our (relief) effort to build new relations and new access to influence the Ethiopian government in whatever positive ways we can. ... This is the approach every other western donor is taking; only the US appears determined to walk out of step and slam the door in our own face.⁶⁹

The report's authors understand the implications of the failure of the US and its allies to agree on Ethiopia. This failure, however, in the long term has redounded to the US benefit, as the US has had *carte blanche* to pursue its own political agenda for Ethiopia, the other major donors Canada and the EEC being unwilling or unable to counter US influence.⁷⁰

The House of Representatives also carried out hearings with respect to the Ethiopian famine. On December 5, 1985, there was a joint hearing before the House Select Committee on Hunger and the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The topic was "Famine and Recovery in Africa, the U.S. Response".⁷¹ These hearings took place under the chairmanship of Howard Wolpe, who was identified in Chapter 3 as one of the 'liberal' congressmen who made periodic trips to Ethiopia and visited with the governing elites, including Mengistu. The evidence provided before this hearing was by UN and US officials who directly participated in the relief program and was concerned with the sufficiency of the response in

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 5, 23 and 24. The phrase "led by the US" is ironic, given the slow response to the famine of the US, and the 'success story' should be measured against one million dead of starvation. No doubt the authors wished to encourage continued generosity of Americans to Ethiopia and Sudan by suggesting that the US had been a leader in a "successful" aid program as opposed to the position the critics of Ethiopia were taking to reduce aid. Perhaps, too, the US was unwilling to take the blame for the dead and the report was shifting attention from the failure of the response to the famine to the successes.

⁷⁰Later, in the absence of Soviet influence, the vacuum in the balance of power has not been filled by the EEC whose attention has been focussed on eastern Europe and the unification of Germany. This was very apparent in the Gulf War and one could not expect anything more in Ethiopia.

⁷¹*Famine and Recovery in Africa, the US Response*, joint hearing before the Select Committee on Hunger and the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, First Session, on December 5, 1985, (USGPO, Washington, 1986).

material terms.

To provide additional emergency assistance to Ethiopia and to all Africa the *Urgent Supplemental Appropriations for Emergency Famine Relief and Recovery in Africa*, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1985 was passed in the House of Representatives, on February 21, 1985.⁷² A total of one billion dollars for emergency programs was appropriated. A section by section analysis of the bill was included for authorization purposes. Under Chapter II thereof “Funds appropriated to the President, AID International Development Assistance”, the amount was raised to \$112,500,000 above the President’s FY1985 supplemental request of \$25,000,000. The Committee commented that it believed that the administration’s request was unrealistic and unsubstantiated. Additionally, the Committee wanted to be assured that the funds were used for emergency purposes. In March 1984 the administration had been criticized for politicizing food assistance when it asked Congress to attach military aid funds for El Salvador to legislation providing emergency food relief in Africa. This action delayed final approval of part of the African assistance by at least three months.⁷³

Another piece of legislation which affected the donor-recipient relationship was Bill 588 introduced in the House of Representatives as the “*Promotion of Democracy in Ethiopia Act of 1987*”, previously referred to in Chapter 3. This bill was drafted in 1986 by Toby Roth, a Republican, and William H. Gray, III, a prominent member of the Black Caucus, “to express the opposition of the US to oppression in Ethiopia, to promote the development of democracy in Ethiopia, and for other purposes”. It became known as the “Economic Sanctions Legislation”, and provided for a commercial and aid embargo to be placed on Ethiopia, as well as a call for the

⁷²*Urgent Supplemental Appropriations for Emergency Famine Relief and Recovery in Africa*, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, 1st Session, Feb. 21, 1985. Dawit connects Howard Wolpe’s initiatives to the passing of this appropriations bill. Mickey Leland was also instrumental in increasing the appropriations for Africa.

⁷³*Feeding the World’s Population: Developments in the Decade Following the World Food Conference of 1974*. Report prepared for the Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives by the Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, October 1984, (USGPO, Washington, 1984), p. 346.

US government to use its influence to secure votes against Ethiopia in all international financial forums.⁷⁴ However, as a result of the November 1986 Congressional elections the Democrats gained control of both Houses, which meant control of the House Africa sub-committee, under the chairmanship of Howard Wolpe, and the Senate Africa sub-committee, previously under the chairmanship of Republican Nancy Kassebaum. The new Senate sub-committee chairman was Paul Simon, who was regarded as a liberal.⁷⁵

The influence of Congress on US administration policy is two-fold: the hard-liners urging the administration to use its asymmetry of power against the Mengistu regime and to threaten to withhold famine relief, and the liberals urging restraint and understanding as well as increased long term aid. The administration was therefore in the middle position of moderation. The real impact of the Congressional activities was on the GOE. The GOE perceptions of US future policy were thus influenced by Congress, particularly the "sanctions" bill. The initial influence of the liberals on US policy in late 1984 and 1985 appears, even while Democrats gained control of both Houses in 1986 to have diminished as a mind-set amongst the donor agencies and the general public hardened against the GOE.

The whole apparatus of government, the Congress as well as the administration and its agencies, was therefore engaged in influencing Ethiopian policy in the donor-recipient relationship. The influence the US has on Ethiopian government policy must therefore be viewed through many prisms. In Chapter 1 in a discussion of channels of communication, intergovernmental channels were identified as including visits from time to time to Ethiopia by Congressmen. These connections have a role in both influencing the Ethiopian government and

⁷⁴Roth worked closely with the French section of MSF, which was expelled from Ethiopia. Roth went to France to visit former MSF president Claude Malhuret, who was then secretary of state for human rights in the French government. Despite a lack of detailed evidence to support the allegations of MSF over resettlement, Roth and his French counterparts believed them. See *Africa Confidential*, 28 (27), 1 April 1987, p.6.

⁷⁵*Africa Confidential*, 28 (1), 7 January 1987, p.4. Senator Simon's brother, Arthur Simon, is a founder of the charity *Bread for the World*. For a discussion of his activities see Medea Benjamin and Andrea Freedman, *Bridging the Gap*, (Seven Locks Press, Washington, 1989), p.180.

changing the agenda in the US. As well, the role of the Congress itself is important. The role of the PVOs and the media as transnational channels of communication continued to be important in influencing the agenda in Washington. Inflammatory accusations against the GOE made through the media, although countered by newspapers like the *Washington Post*, who continued to provide balanced reports of the situation in Ethiopia, and to use their influence to stabilize the agenda of the US administration, gained wide acceptance.⁷⁶ The CRS, a major American PVO, also continued to present balanced reports on the aid requirements. However, other PVOs continued to complain to the media about Ethiopian behavior. Some observers viewed the “sea change” in donor attitudes to Ethiopia as politically motivated and lasting.

. . . it seemed that the real reason that everyone was there had been forgotten. . . it soon became clear, the heroes of the Ethiopia epic-tragedy were Western governments and relief workers . . . it did not take the media long to identify a new (villain) - the Ethiopian government itself.⁷⁷

International Constraints

Since the Reagan administration came to office in 1981, two new trends have become apparent in US aid to Africa; first, a shift of emphasis from aid for development to the use of aid to promote US security and political interests; second, a shift from “equity” toward “growth” to be promoted by economic policy reforms.⁷⁸ This has resulted in the first instance from an emphasis on the East/West conflict and US strategic and political interests worldwide vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, and in the second instance from a philosophical (ideological) belief in the free market system. It is proper to conjecture that had Ethiopia been free of close relationships with

⁷⁶The *Washington Post* owner is an insider in the Washington elite. Therefore the newspaper has considerably more clout than if it were a 'radical' anti-establishment paper. In addition, the newspaper's African correspondent is David Ottaway, who with his wife Marina Ottaway, is the author of scholarly works on Ethiopia. The CRS is the long-term cornerstone agency for US food aid in Ethiopia. However, in a 'Cold War' mood, influential groups in the US, insofar as the GOE was concerned, preferred to endorse an adversarial hardline approach.

⁷⁷Hancock, p.13.

⁷⁸Carol Lancaster, p. 63.

the Soviet Union, even though a socialist state, it would not have been the target of US policy which resulted in the cutting off of aid and trade at the end of 1983.⁷⁹ The Cold War had an impact therefore on US policy with respect to food aid to Ethiopia. With respect to the second component of policy, i.e. a favoring of the private sector in agricultural and economic development, the US could not condition its assistance on 'performance' alone, as client states like the Sudan and Zaire, who favor private enterprise, perform very poorly economically.⁸⁰ In a rational world, therefore, Ethiopia's economic performance, under socialism, which the World Bank identified as higher than most sub-Saharan countries, should have received recognition.⁸¹

The distinction between the domestic and international agenda has become blurred. The international economic system of which the US is the leader, influences the US but is equally influenced by the US in what can be described as a kind of osmosis. The shift in policy in the US under Reagan with respect to private enterprise is reflected in changes in other parts of the western capitalist system. For example, The World Bank and the EC were holding out nearly \$300 million in grants and loans as a reward for agricultural reform in Ethiopia. The Swedish government, too, had about \$100 million earmarked for Ethiopia if reforms were implemented.⁸² Therefore, both the Cold War and international economic agendas influenced US policy in Ethiopia.

⁷⁹Compare with US policy towards Mozambique. See Anthony Lake, *Third World Radical Regimes, US Policy under Carter and Reagan*, Headline Series, The Foreign Policy Association, No. 272, Jan./Feb. 1985), p.42. In March, 1984, the Reagan administration announced an economic assistance program for Mozambique, in addition to generous emergency food aid. In 1985 it requested \$1 million for nonlethal military aid and raised this to \$3 million in 1986, despite opposition from critics. The administration showed remarkably little concern about the ideological makeup of Mozambique's government.

⁸⁰The US committed nearly 60% of the Economic Support Fund (ESF) in 1985 to Somalia, Kenya and Sudan. Twenty percent of Development Assistance was concentrated in the Horn, none to Ethiopia. See Lancaster, p.62.

⁸¹World Bank, *Toward Sustained Development*, p.38. This report, for example, states that "with acute natural handicaps, Ethiopia. . . (has) achieved returns on investment significantly higher than the average for sub-Saharan Africa". This, although the 'hue and cry' against Ethiopia was because of its socialist government.

⁸²Blaine Harden, "Ethiopia Moving Towards a New Food Crisis", *The Washington Post*, reprinted in *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, September 20, 1987, p.15.

As suggested in Chapter 3, the humanitarian principle of responding to famine is institutionalized in international organization. International endorsement of famine relief thus may create barriers to political action by donor governments that would be detrimental to the recipient. Initially, when the administration was influenced in November 1984 to change its food aid policy, it was constrained by international norms with respect to famine relief as well as by domestic pressures. The alternative of not sending famine relief, as mentioned previously, would have been to become an international 'pariah'.

Costs and benefits.

The political costs and benefits to the US must be viewed against the US objective of getting Ethiopia to abandon its socialist agenda. The US regained influence in Ethiopia during the famine relief relationship. It was able to embarrass the GOE over the issue of resettlement and to encourage an international position of conditionality on aid, i.e. World Bank and others, with respect to Ethiopian development. It strengthened relations with the northern rebel groups through aid and direct assistance. The US also established itself as the preferred country of refuge for disaffected Ethiopians. For example, the number of defections increased, and include Dawit Wolde Giorgis, commissioner of the RRC, his deputy, Berhane Deressa, Goshu Wolde, the Foreign Minister, and Getachew Kibret, Ambassador to France. The Foreign Minister on defecting, stated:

I cannot, in good conscience, continue to serve a Government whose short-sighted and rigidly doctrinaire policies are leading the country and the people into misery and destruction . . . (a government which) has clearly lost the trust of the people as well as the moral right to govern.⁸³

In Washington, this was viewed as a victory for the US position on Ethiopia.

Through its continuing humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia, even after 1986, and through

⁸³*New York Times*, "Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Quits, charging government repression", October 27, 1988, p.A10. Mengistu may also have been paying the price for being the descendant of a "slave", as this made it easy to view him as failing to have legitimacy to govern Ethiopia, at least amongst the descendants of the old elites.

supporting the rebel relief agencies, the US manoeuvred the GOE into a perilous political crisis, where in 1991, the US became the 'broker' between the liberation movements and the government. Although, Mengistu's government had agreed to elections and a multi-party system, arguing however that the unity of Ethiopia must be respected as a principle in any future arrangements, the Mengistu regime was not acceptable to the US.⁸⁴ For example, a high ranking administration official said in May, 1989, "The US is not particularly eager to normalize relations".⁸⁵ Ethiopia's request to send an ambassador to its embassy after nine years of lower-level representation was rebuffed. Ethiopia's socialist leader Mengistu Haile Mariam, while hated by some, was however the prime champion of Ethiopian unity, both through his firm resistance to western influence on socialist policies but also because of his continued insistence on "Unity or Death" with respect to the civil wars in the north. Ironically, in April 1991 the defected Ethiopians, led by Goshu (former Foreign Minister) marched in Washington in support of the unity of Ethiopia, and presumably against the liberation movements. It was reported that the US has also put pressure on the liberation movements by cutting off the northern aid pipeline. This pressure is too little and too late, and now must be seen as 'window dressing'. Mengistu Haile Mariam's persistence in carrying out the traditional role of an Ethiopian leader, defending the state's integrity militarily however was destructive as it assured that famine and civil war continued.

In summary, the US has been able to gain influence in Ethiopia, partly because of the Soviet collapse, but also because of the short term famine relief relationship and the long-term relationship with the northern rebel groups. This can be considered a political benefit, as both in terms of its East/West goals, and its political and economic agenda for developing countries, it has

⁸⁴Since then, Mengistu has resigned and his government has been replaced by a rebel led government. It is unlikely therefore that this principle will be respected concerning Eritrea, as the coalition EPRDF includes the EPLF.

⁸⁵*The Christian Science Monitor*, May 8, 1989, "Ethiopian Regime Looks West for Helping Hand", by E.A. Wayne, pp. 1-2.

gained. Had the US not become involved in famine relief, first, it would have been without any influence in what was to become a massive western involvement in Ethiopia, second, such changes as the Soviet pullout, would not have achieved results for the US, and third, it would have failed to have a voice in the post-famine political settlements in Ethiopia. The admonition expressed earlier that time is an important element when assessing costs and benefits is repeated here. It is too early to tell what US political costs or benefits will be in the long term.⁸⁶

Canada.

The Canadian government had no obvious political agenda for Ethiopia.⁸⁷ Canada was a benign donor. It wanted therefore to be able to send famine relief with the assurance that it would reach the starving, promptly, and without diversion. To this end it sought influence as a major donor by sending its relief in large part in the first half of 1985 to the RRC in government to government arrangements. CIDA delegated its responsibility for monitoring and accountability to the RRC and the UNEOE, who had monitors in the field.

The Minister of External Affairs, Joe Clark, visited Ethiopia in November 1984 on a return trip from India. He reported to Parliament,

There is no doubt in my mind that the priority for the Government of Ethiopia is to get aid to the starving. . . . We have to make use of OXFAM and other non-governmental organizations that have a particular interest in getting money in through the Sudan into the so-called rebel areas.⁸⁸

The Canadian government was therefore following the same program as the US but not for political reasons. Nevertheless, Canada's participation in northern cross-border feeding

⁸⁶There have been economic costs to the USG, but economic benefits accrued to the farm and grain wholesaler sectors, as well as the transport maritime sector. PVOs also received economic benefits from US participation.

⁸⁷Other objectives which may be designated 'political', such as improving its status as a humanitarian country and its international prestige, or surplus disposal of food grains, from time to time have engaged the Canadian government.

⁸⁸*Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, 33rd Parliament, 1st session, 1984-86, p.308.

programs, strengthened the rebel movements and had political consequences.

The GOC supported the resettlement program and did not try to influence the socialist policies of the GOE, even failing to join the US in the attack on the GOE over human rights issues. However, the Canadian government continued to be aware of alleged human rights violations and a year and a half after the US had first raised these issues, in June 1986 made representations to the Ethiopian Foreign Minister when he visited Ottawa. Canada raised the need to slow down the movement of people in the resettlement program; the closing of feeding camps by coercive methods; and the problems of feeding the northern areas. This indicates that there was a consensus building between the US and Canada on policy towards the GOE.⁸⁹ According to Minister of External Relations, Monique Vézina, Ottawa's representations were taken into consideration and the Foreign Minister agreed to modify policy where required.⁹⁰ Canada, therefore, appeared to have some influence as a major humanitarian donor expressing concerns over human rights. Whether any kind of threat of Canada's displeasure or willingness to halt aid was part of the discussion is problematic. The assumption is that it was not, and that Canada was relying on good will and its position as a generous donor.

Canada's famine relief policy embodies strong humanitarian elements and thus a desire can be noted that one Canadian objective is to enhance its international status as a 'humanitarian' nation. Without spending much additional money, the Canadian government was able to achieve a reputation, both at home and abroad, of being a generous humanitarian donor.⁹¹ This appears

⁸⁹USAID and CIDA meet quarterly at the highest levels on a regular ongoing basis. The author's request to CIDA to see the minutes of such meetings was denied. In the US under the Freedom of Information regulations, no doubt these proceedings could be viewed in due course. Obviously such meetings bring about some 'meeting of the minds' between the two government agencies.

⁹⁰*Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, June 12, 1986, 33rd Parliament, 1st session, 1984-86, pp.14598-9.

⁹¹From time to time the government was queried in the House of Commons on the budgeting for the relief assistance, and other programs connected with the Ethiopian famine, like Africa 2000, and the Special Fund for Africa. The opposition members continued to point out that little new money had been assigned. *Hansard*, 33rd Parliament, 1st Session, 1984-86.

to have been important on the national scene, and the achievement of such status, can certainly be considered a domestic political benefit to the Canadian government, offsetting the earlier outrage of Canadians over what was perceived to be a lack of response. Canada's enhanced international reputation as a humanitarian donor is also a political benefit.

PART TWO

Summary.

Ethiopia gained substantial benefits in the short term from the famine relief relationship. The alternatives were starvation for millions of people and the fall of the Mengistu regime. The long-term political costs, however, have been high. The Mengistu regime has fallen, and starvation faces the country again. As a result of, first, the US pursuit of its political agenda, and second, the withdrawal of Soviet political and military support, Ethiopia has been prevented from carrying out its political objectives. As well domestic political problems have continually weakened the government. The end of the Cold War has therefore affected Ethiopia's ability to get what it wants out of either superpower. The US has gained in the long term from the relief relationship, as it insinuated itself into Ethiopian affairs, and was able finally to remove the Mengistu regime. The alternatives of working with the Mengistu regime were considered too high, and in a strange marriage of the US 'right' and the Tigray and Eritrean 'left', the US has sponsored a rebel regime in Addis. In terms of this thesis, this offends 'sacred' Ethiopian independence and may be at high costs to the US in the long-term. Canada, a benign donor, has neither suffered political costs nor gained political benefits from the famine relief relationship, other than improving its international status. However, as a humanitarian donor concerned with the ongoing relief effort, Canada's objectives will be harder to achieve, as political uncertainty and regional chaos follow the ousting of Mengistu. As a high profile donor, with ambassadorial representation in Addis Ababa, Canada's advocacy policy will be tested in the new circumstances.

Canada, and the EEC, both major donors, were not represented at the so-called peace talks in London. The Soviet Union was represented. Canada changed its policy with respect to Ethiopia and had joined the US in achieving the common long term objective of ending the Mengistu regime.⁹² This may be considered by some a political cost to Canada, i.e. losing independence in foreign policy under US duress.

⁹²*Globe and Mail*, June 3, 1991, p. A8, "Ottawa sought ouster of Mengistu". In addition the Canadian government has now admitted that it put Commonwealth pressure on Prime Minister Mugabe in Zimbabwe to find a refuge for Mengistu.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The theme of this thesis, that Ethiopia's strengths lay in its commitment, concentrated attention, political unity, and unity of purpose, which presented an asymmetry of coherence vis a vis the donors, is upheld by the evidence presented for the period under examination, 1984-1986. However, one of the weaknesses of short-term analyses of interdependent relationships is that they ignore how events during the period under examination may have long term effects, bringing about changed conditions. The cause and effect relationship thus may reverse from a state of reciprocity of costs and benefits to one of disproportionate costs to one or the other of the actors. In the long term, therefore, asymmetry of power (economic and other) provides the resources for the stronger donor to not only continue giving the aid itself, but to seek other 'off-limits' routes to obtaining its political objectives, thus countering the recipient's influence gained through asymmetry of coherence. The asymmetry of coherence at first conferring influence on Ethiopia, failed to be sustained when events rising from the original bargaining contributed to a breakdown of Ethiopian cohesion. In this conclusion, the long term as well as the short term effects are considered.

In the theoretical portion of this thesis, relevant concepts from Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye's theory of interdependence and their model of complex interdependence were selected. Emphasis was placed on the following:

- (1) Non-economic factors as important independent variables influencing the political bargaining between donors and recipient. Asymmetry of coherence derived from such factors was seen as important to the study, providing Ethiopia with influence not conferred by asymmetry of power.
- (2) Power as a cause and effect relationship, where changed conditions in one country bring about changes in another. Ethiopia was able to engage the humanitarian constituency in the West to change donor policy but was unable to continue to hold this constituency faithful to the goal of

maintaining the GOE through famine relief.

(3) Reciprocal costs and benefits at the centre of the bargaining with the duration of time as a factor causing short and long term costs and benefits to differ.

Ethiopia, characterized as a country with a national mission (Amhara and now socialist) which had sustained independent survival for 2000 years into the 20th century, derived confidence from this history. The mission fused into the *raison d'etat* provided the Mengistu regime with strength, and the methods and model to transform Ethiopia, gaining benefits from both East and West. In meeting dissent and secession with force, Mengistu called on the Soviet Union for assistance, thus reinforcing the tradition of maintaining the sovereignty and unity of Ethiopia through war. Mengistu's was a determined regime with a high level of coherence (political unity, commitment to its cause, and hostility to external and internal interference). The psychological mind set of the new elites echoed Ethiopia's age-old cultural xenophobia, and the traditional coercive nature of the governing elites towards the governed. Additionally, Ethiopia's culture of famine marked elite behavior in its attitude towards starving peasants, resulting in a higher level of tolerance of suffering from famine than in the West.

Such a government resisted donor influence, was hostile to the US and adept at gaining benefits from both East and West. Even minor attempts to intervene in the implementation of Ethiopian famine policy led to disproportionate reactions. This in return created hostility towards the regime on the part of the donors, particularly the US. In the long term, the strengths which Ethiopia's independent behavior conferred on it in the early bargaining, were weakened by the very characteristics from which they rose (national pride, socialism as a national mission, xenophobia, cultural and social separateness). The asymmetry of coherence collapsed under the pull of the centrifugal forces always at work in Ethiopia, the periphery against the centre. Additionally, the assistance of the donors to the liberation movements and their "aid" arms helped to sustain the pressure from the periphery on the centre. The end of the Cold War, following the breakdown of communism in Eastern Europe and particularly in the Soviet Union, provided the

final blow to the GOE, first because it compromised Ethiopia's socialist policies, and second, decreased the incentive and ability for the Soviet Union to provide military assistance. In these conditions, and with the growing involvement of the US in Ethiopian affairs, the political bargaining process failed to bring benefits to Ethiopia.

The response to the famine, a result of a cause and effect process, whereby the conditions of famine in Ethiopia brought about change in the agenda of the donors, showed how sensitive and vulnerable the donors were to the spectacle of millions of people starving on television. By inviting the BBC film crews into the famine areas, Ethiopia was able to manipulate the humanitarian constituency in the West. However, the US while agreeing to send massive famine relief to Ethiopia, did not abandon its political objectives. By placing a time limit on famine relief, and withholding development assistance, the US brought influence on the GOE in a way that was not seen in the Canadian response. The US relationship became adversarial while the Canadian relationship was marked by advocacy.

The playing out of the US/Ethiopia relationship depended in large part on the transnational channels of communication, which were identified in this thesis as PVOs and the media, supplemented by transgovernmental actors, like Congressmen, and even Congress. The transnational actors were influential in phase one in bringing the famine to the top of the agenda and in phase two in focussing attention on the behavior and policies of the GOE. A belated effort in Ethiopia to attempt changes sufficient to maintain US support failed.¹ A mind-set had hardened in the US which led to an increasingly unsympathetic attitude to the GOE affecting US

¹For example, the USG refused to accept the appointment of an ambassador to the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington. This indicated that the USG did not consider the changes made in Ethiopia satisfactory. Others feel that it indicated that the USG had decided to let the regime "hang out to dry". The GOE appointed an ambassador to Canada, who was well received. For example, Robert N. Thompson, an erstwhile enemy of the Mengistu regime, after receiving the Order of Canada in early 1991, was honored at a reception given by the Ethiopian ambassador. The GOE engaged the Washington public relations firm of Kauffman & Co., a high profile group with good White House connections, to change the perception in the US of the Mengistu regime. Additionally, although the GOE's traditional position on Arab aggression would ensure approval of the US sponsored resolution on the Gulf War in the Security Council, Ethiopia's foreign minister made a special trip to Geneva to tell Secretary of State Baker personally of Ethiopia's support in the vote, hoping to gain some political favors in return.

government policy.

The donors through the aid relationship had established permanent ties with the northern liberation and secessionist movements. As well the US gave covert support to these movements. In the long term these connections strengthened the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF). The donor relationship with the northern liberation and secessionist movements thus reversed the earlier political benefits to Ethiopia. The GOE which had been strengthened by famine relief in 1984-1986, now saw their worst prophecies come true: liberation movements strengthened by the support of the aid community and the covert aid of the US administration. These events which were part and parcel of the bargaining which went on during the 1984-86 period (feeding the north, closing feeding camps, resettlement, cross-border feeding, etc.), combined with the distaste for Mengistu and the withdrawal of Soviet Union support, resulted in high long term costs to the GOE, culminating in the fall of Mengistu. The political skill of the US was evident throughout the famine relief period. The US was able to maintain the aid relationship while undermining the Mengistu government. The bargaining which had earlier been balanced by the determination and cohesion of the GOE, became tilted towards the US reflecting the asymmetry of power. Canada, earlier following a somewhat independent policy, merged its policies with those of the US, and together the two donors sought the replacement of Mengistu.²

The fall of Mengistu is only one long term outcome. Ethiopians from all across the US joined in a mass demonstration in Washington on June 14, 1991, with the theme Unity, Peace and Democracy. Several thousand people marched filling Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capital to the White House, expressing opposition to the US policy of support for the 'rebel' transitional government which succeeded Mengistu. The joy over the flight of Mengistu had given way to

²*Globe and Mail*, June 3, 1991, p. A8. Canada held diplomatic talks with a high level member of the Politburo one year ago (spring, 1990) urging the removal of Mengistu. Canada also used its Commonwealth influence to pressure Zimbabwe into giving him refuge.

serious concerns about the unity of Ethiopia under an 'ethnic' rebel regime. Thus, the many new actors making up the Ethiopian side of the bargaining, both in Washington and in Addis Ababa, recognize that asymmetry of power is important, and that their goals of the unity of Ethiopia, or the division of Ethiopia, will depend on gaining the support of the White House. In the present circumstances, Ethiopia's capability to create an asymmetry of coherence to influence the bargaining is missing.

The reciprocal costs and benefits of the famine relief relationship were sensitive to political constraints in both donors and recipient. In the US the domestic political costs were contained. The international costs of a hard line policy, once famine was stemmed, were few. The dominant place of the US in the donor community, the ability of the US to exert influence on the neighboring states in the Horn, the silencing of the Soviet Union, and Europe's acquiescence, all provided an environment susceptible to US hegemony.

Mengistu was unable to control the domestic spinoffs from his behavior and policies. Domestic political constraints, augmented by external forces, therefore greatly affected the continued capability of the GOE to influence donor/recipient relations. The Pandora's Box of ethnic conflicts which had been opened wide by the revolution, and armed by the Cold War, could not be closed. Traditional methods of maintaining the integrity and unity of Ethiopia failed. Had Mengistu been able to build solidarity with the groups from which he might have expected support, perhaps the revolutionary regime would have become acceptable. However, he alienated the peasants, lost the loyalty of the high level military officers, and finally the support of the army. The fusion of the socialist mission with the Amhara mission failed in the long term to generate the strengths that were sought for the central government.

The role of other actors, and the absence of agreement between the donors influenced the bargaining. In the short term, the activities of these other actors (PVOs, the media and UNEOE), provided support for the Mengistu regime. The disagreement of the donors over, for example, the resettlement issue, also benefited the GOE. In the long term, however, both the activities of other

actors, and the absence of consensus among the various donors harmed the GOE, as the US was able to dominate, and the PVOs and the media came under US influence, at least indirectly. The UN agencies, however, having been negligent in the early phase of the famine, appear to have played no political role on the ground in Ethiopia during this period.

In the short term, Mengistu's dedication to the national mission provided a strong position in the political bargaining with the donors unusual in relations between such a poverty stricken country and wealthy donors. Because of the nature of famine, the international constraints on donors continued to benefit Ethiopia. Famine relief is available but is more than ever constrained by domestic politics. The disintegration of the Ethiopian Army symbolises better than any other event that the 'centre cannot hold'.³ Perhaps it was bound to happen, and the question raised earlier of whether Ethiopia is an 'ingathering of peoples' or a polity disintegrating is more pertinent than ever and will continue to complicate donor-recipient relations.

The Wider Implications for Donor Recipient Relationships

The Ethiopian famine of 1984-85 posed issues of importance to the country concerning the donor-recipient relationship which are also of fundamental significance to the overall relations between less developed countries (LDCs) and the advanced industrialised countries (AICs). First, the preponderance of donor power does not confer matching ability to exert influence in bargaining because of the nature of the issue and its politicization. (However, a donor with a political agenda has greater influence than a benign donor). Second, indigenous characteristics are important factors influencing the recipient's bargaining position. Third, participation of outside actors and policy differences between the donors affect the capability of both donors and recipient in the bargaining process. Finally, short-term and long-term costs and benefits may differ for

³W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming", *Selected Poems and Three Plays of William Butler Yeats*, 3rd ed., M.L. Rosenthal, ed., Collier Books, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, 1986., p. 89. "Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer;/ Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

both donor and recipient.

When short and long term costs and benefits are compared, however, these factors may be ambiguous. For example, the recipient who creates an asymmetry of coherence to counter the asymmetry of power of the geographically large, diverse and politically fragmented donor may see its cohesion and coherence disintegrate. The donors' preponderance of power and willingness to use that power in off-limits routes contributes to the breakdown of the recipient's coherence. Outside actors will tend over time to come under the influence of the stronger donor. The transnational channels of communication, i.e. PVOs and the media, under the influence of the donor's political agenda, become communicators of a different disaster than that of drought and famine. Therefore, the easy analysis that asymmetry of coherence will favor the LDC cannot be sustained over time for two reasons: first, the difficulty of maintaining coherence in troubled politically and economically weak countries; and second, the politicization of the issue which first benefits the LDC, but in the long term focuses the attention of uncommitted constituencies in the donor to pursuing the issue in a way that may not be of benefit to the recipient.

While donors with a political agenda will have more influence than a benign donor, both in the short and long term, the consistent absence of consensus between the donors and other outside actors, while of short term benefit to the recipient, in the long term provides an environment in which the strongest donor, the US in this case, could dominate, even gaining allies in carrying out its political objectives.

The implications for overall relations between LDCs and AICs of the long term appraisal of costs and benefits are many. An LDC which is able to look beyond the critical issue at hand to its longer term objectives, i.e. what it wants out of the donor in the long term, may be able to modify its behavior without losing face in a graduated process, and may also be able to play one donor off against another more fruitfully than did Ethiopia. However, it is recognized that nationalist sentiments and revolutionary fervor, make this a difficult road to follow.

The implications for the donors are also many. A donor that is able to take a wider view

(which may include in the shorter term the achieving of some of its political objectives), and is able to consider the recipient's political environment with less touchiness and rhetoric may achieve both short and long term benefits at less cost. The nationalist sentiments of the donor (ideological), certainly in the case under study between the US and Ethiopia, are as strong as those of the recipient. In this study it has been particularly noticeable that the rhetoric and activities of the 'hardliners' in both the US and Ethiopia brought about a reaction in the other country. This tended to escalate the hostility between this major donor and the recipient preventing mutual accommodation. In this event, the asymmetry of power became more salient.

This study of the donor recipient relationships during the famine in Ethiopia from 1984 to 1986 illustrated that there are constraints on both donors and recipient, but that the political agenda of the donor, backed as it is by a preponderance of power, in the long term will counter the political agenda of the recipient, no matter how fervent the commitment to that agenda in the short term is, particularly without a Cold War between East and West.

The importance of 'extra-national' relationships has not been emphasized in this study, but shows an interesting direction in how political goals are being sought and/or influenced. For example, the offices of the liberation movements in the major donor capitals had more influence than the embassies of the recipient. The aid arms of the liberation movements were integrated into donor aid agencies. Thus, it can be seen that the major players in the future may not be national actors, or at least that national actors will take their cues from the 'extra-national' actors. This is not new, but is reinforced by this study. The Palestine Liberation Organization, the African National Congress, and the Southwest Africa Peoples' Organization are forerunners of this movement towards extra-national influence. By giving observer status to such organizations the United Nations plays a selective political role beyond its mandate. This also is an interesting direction for the future and needs to be studied further. The fascinating question that must be answered is whether the preponderance of power in the advanced industrialised countries will wish to neutralize these new avenues of influence or include them in the bargaining. Any study

about these new relationships must, of course, be specific to actual situations, in order for a body of empirical evidence to be built up from which some theoretical conclusions may be derived.

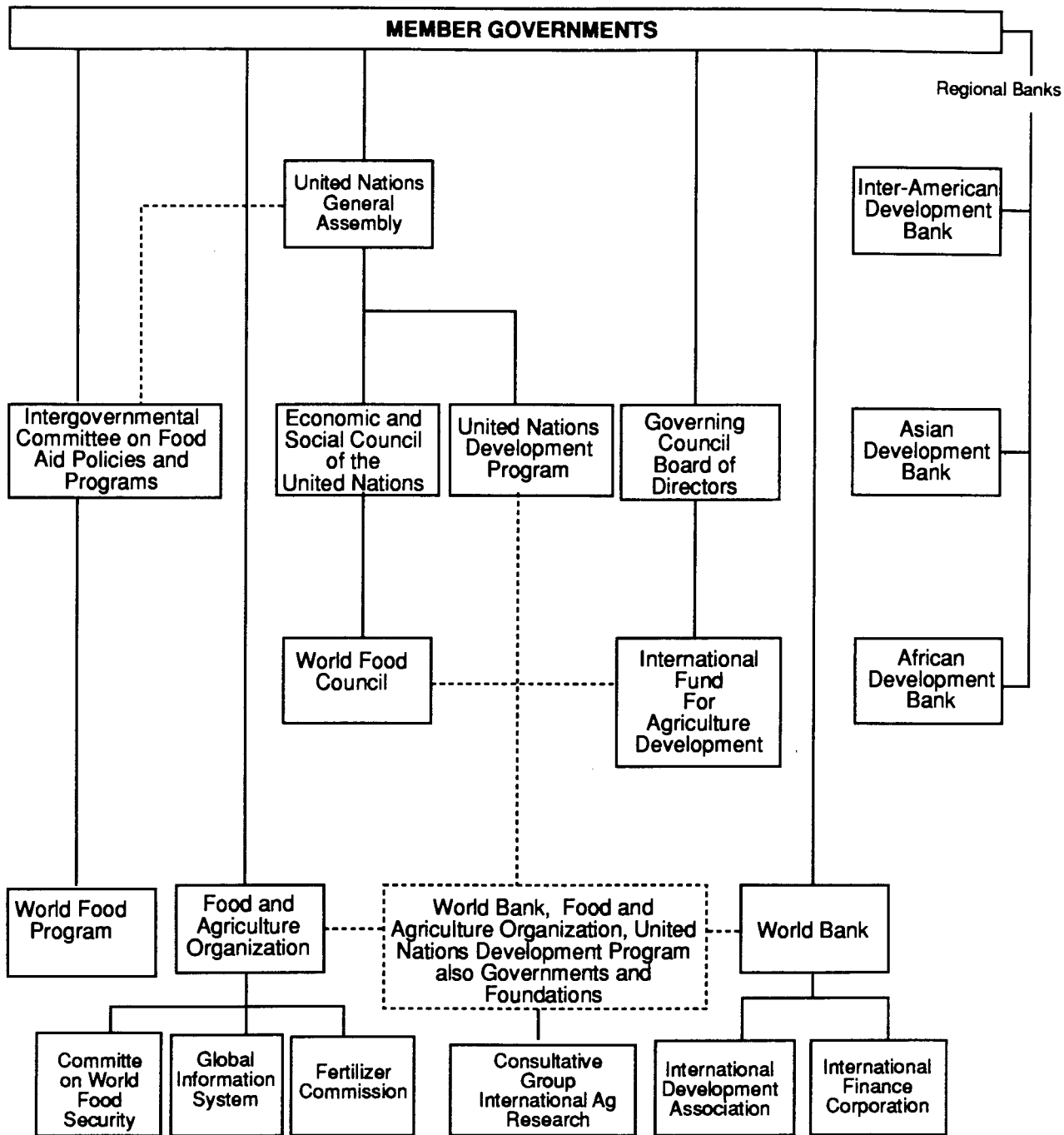
APPENDICES

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEA	Africa Emergency Aid (Canada)
AIC	Advanced Industrialised Country
AID	Agency for International Development (US)
BBC	British Broadcasting Company
CARE	No longer an acronym - US PVO
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CWS	Church World Service
CIDB	Canadian International Development Board
DOS	Department of State (US)
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Union
EEC/EC	European Economic Community
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERA	Eritrean Relief Association
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
GOC	Government of Canada
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDCC	Interagency Development Coordination Committee (US)
IGETSU	Interagency Group on Ethiopia and the Sudan (US)
ITV	International Television Network (UK)
LDC	Less developed country
MSF	Médecins sans frontières (Doctors without borders)
NBC	National Broadcasting Company (US)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSC	National Security Council (US)
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OMB	Office of Management and Budget (US)
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
PDRE	Peoples' Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
PMAC	Provisional Military Administrative Council (Ethiopia)
SCEAIT	Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade (Canada)
SFA	Special Fund for Africa (Canada)
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (Ethiopia)
TPLF	Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front

UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Program
UNDRO	UN Disaster Relief Organization
UNEOE	UN Emergency Operations in Ethiopia
UNHCR	UN High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNOEOA	UN Office for Emergency Operations in Africa
USAID	See AID
USG	US Government
USGAO	US General Accounting Office
USGPO	US Government Printing Office
WFC	World Food Council (UN)
WFP	World Food Program (UN)
WPE	Workers' Party of Ethiopia

Figure 1 Organizational Structure of the United Nations agencies involved in world food policies and programs.

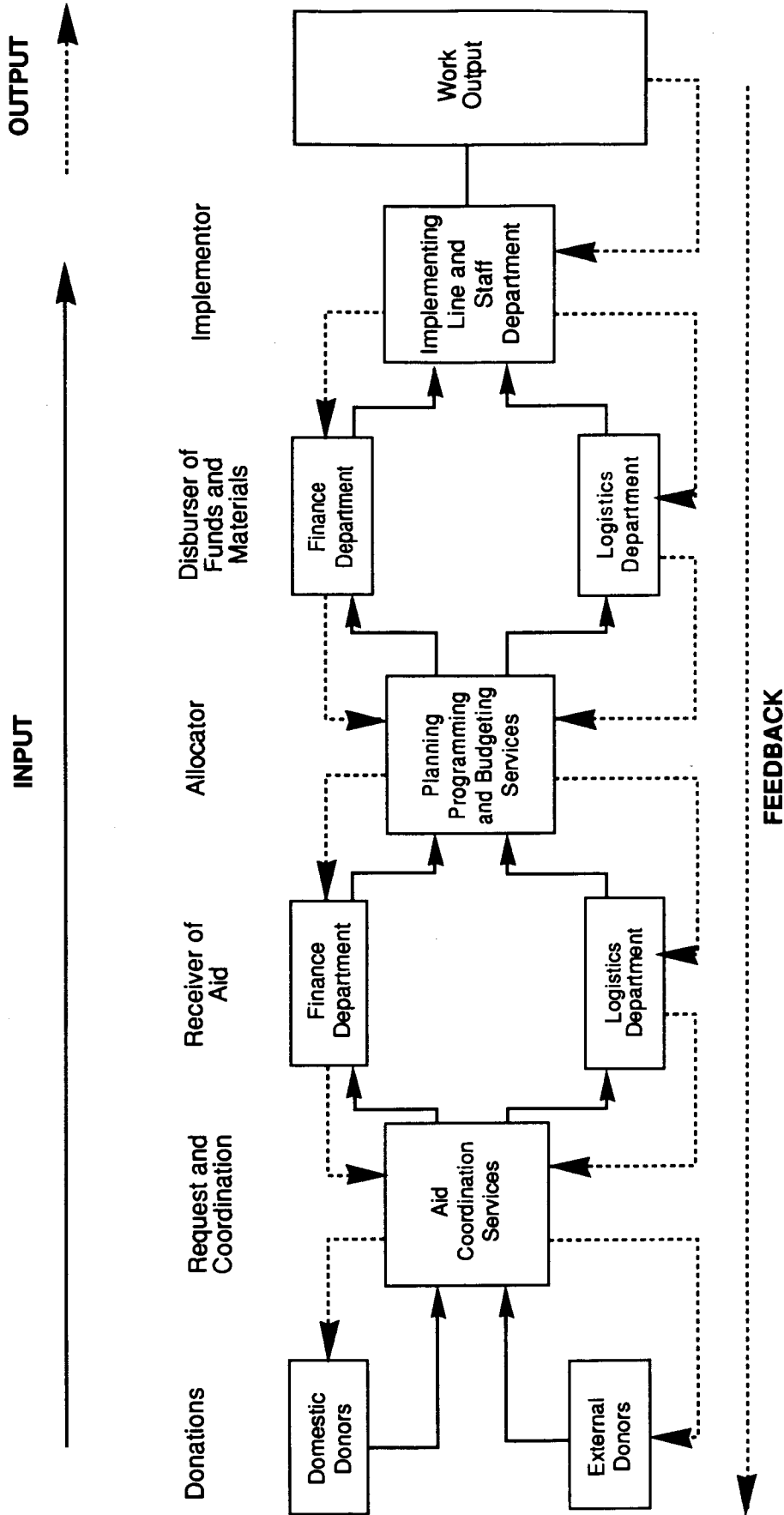


Source: Martin Kriesberg, *International Organizations and Agricultural Development*, Forest Agricultural Economic Report 131, revised (Washington, D.C.: USDA, November 1984), p.5.

Figure 2. Relief and Rehabilitation Commission

INPUT-OUTPUT MODEL

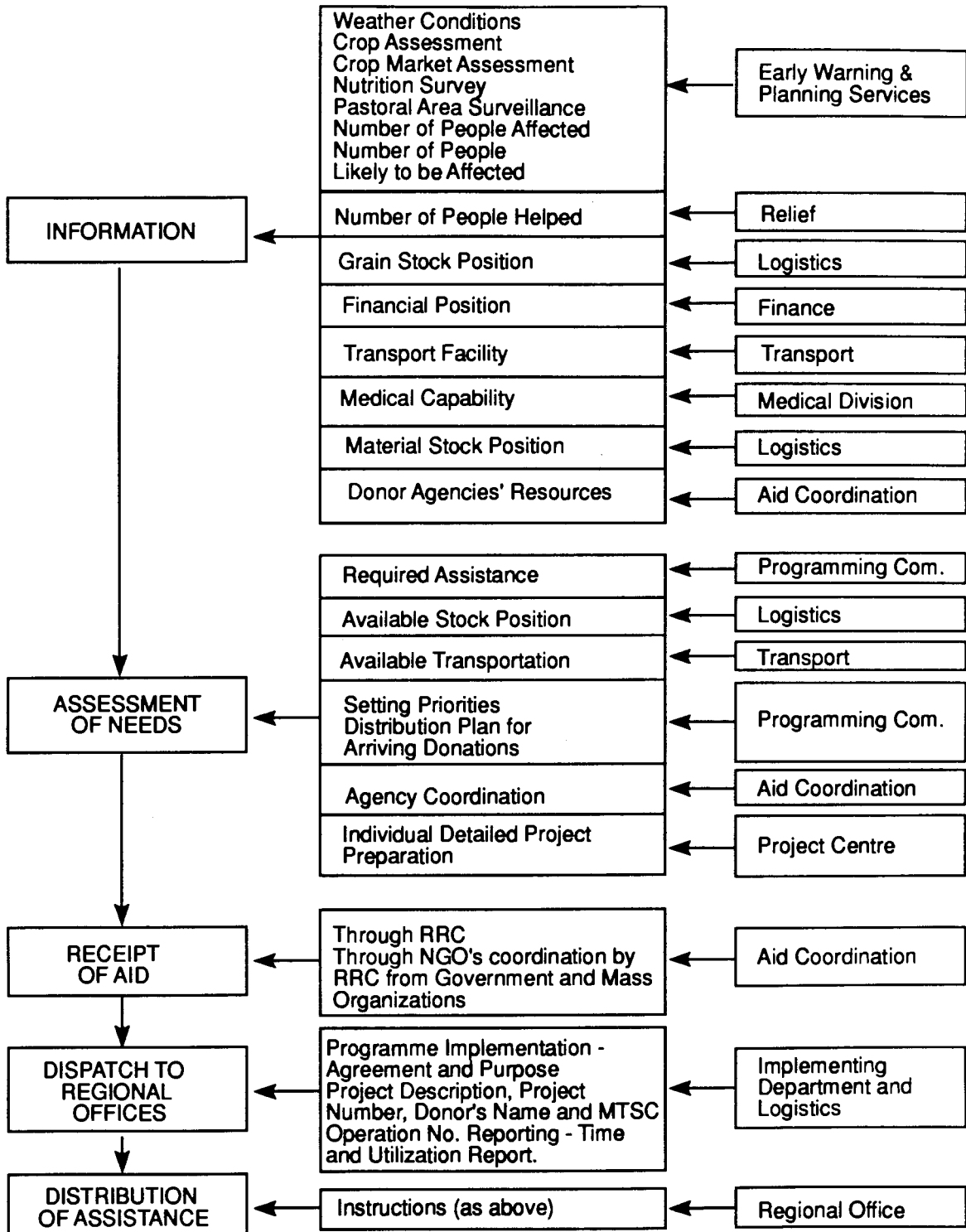
The following constitutes the input-output model operationalized by the RRC. Assistance received by the organization flows in the manner shown in the model below and the feedback reports are treated at each stage and ultimately complete the model.



Source: Input-Output Model for Donations and Their Utilization, Teshome Tadesse, Planning, Programming and Budgeting Services, (Amharic), RRC, 1979, p.7. (adapted from Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, the Challenges of Drought, 1986, p.223.)

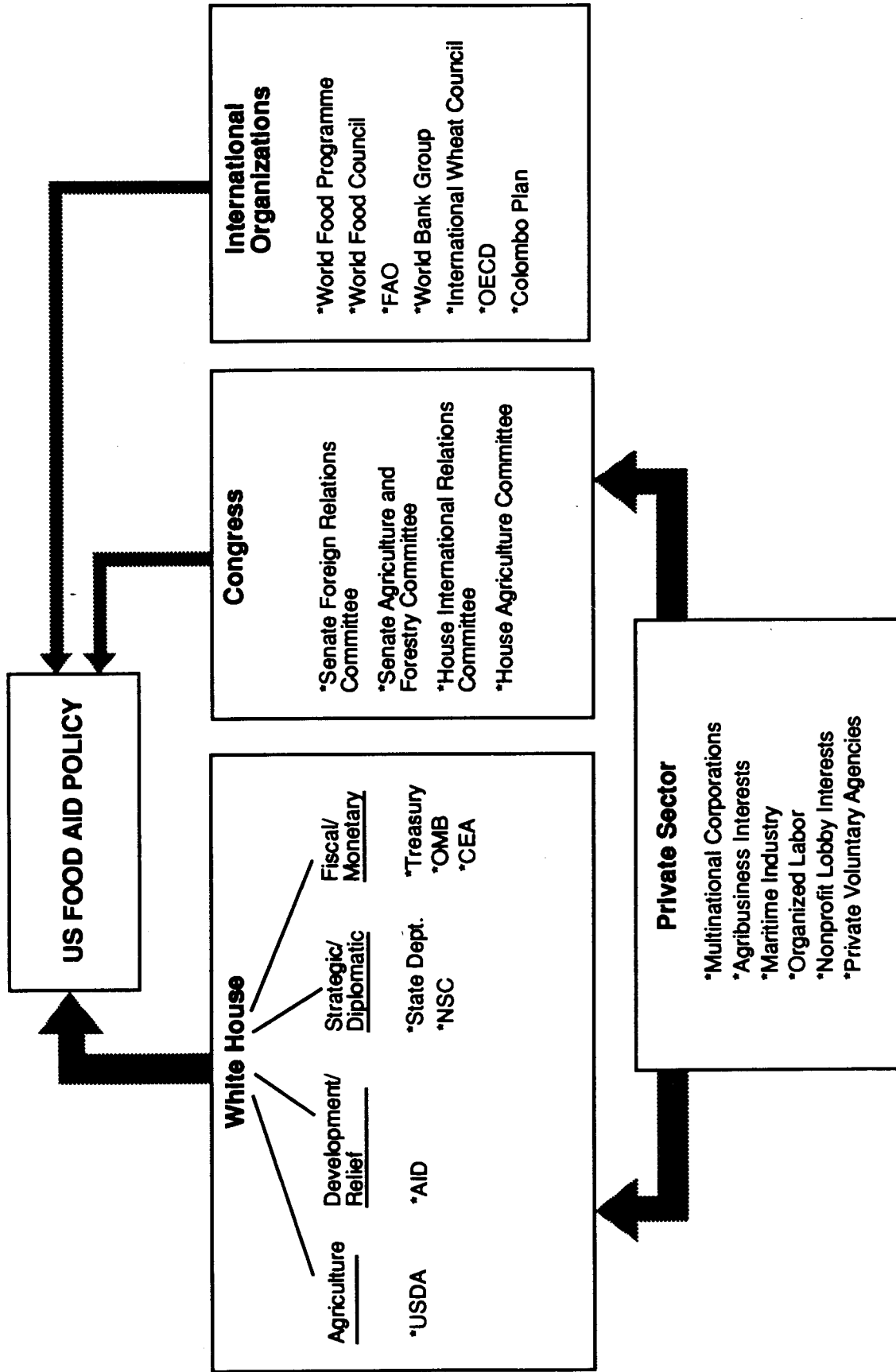
Figure 3. Relief and Rehabilitation Commission

INFORMATION FLOW CHART



(adapted from RRC, Challenges of Drought, 1985, p.224.)

Figure 4 Institutional participants in US food aid policy formation.



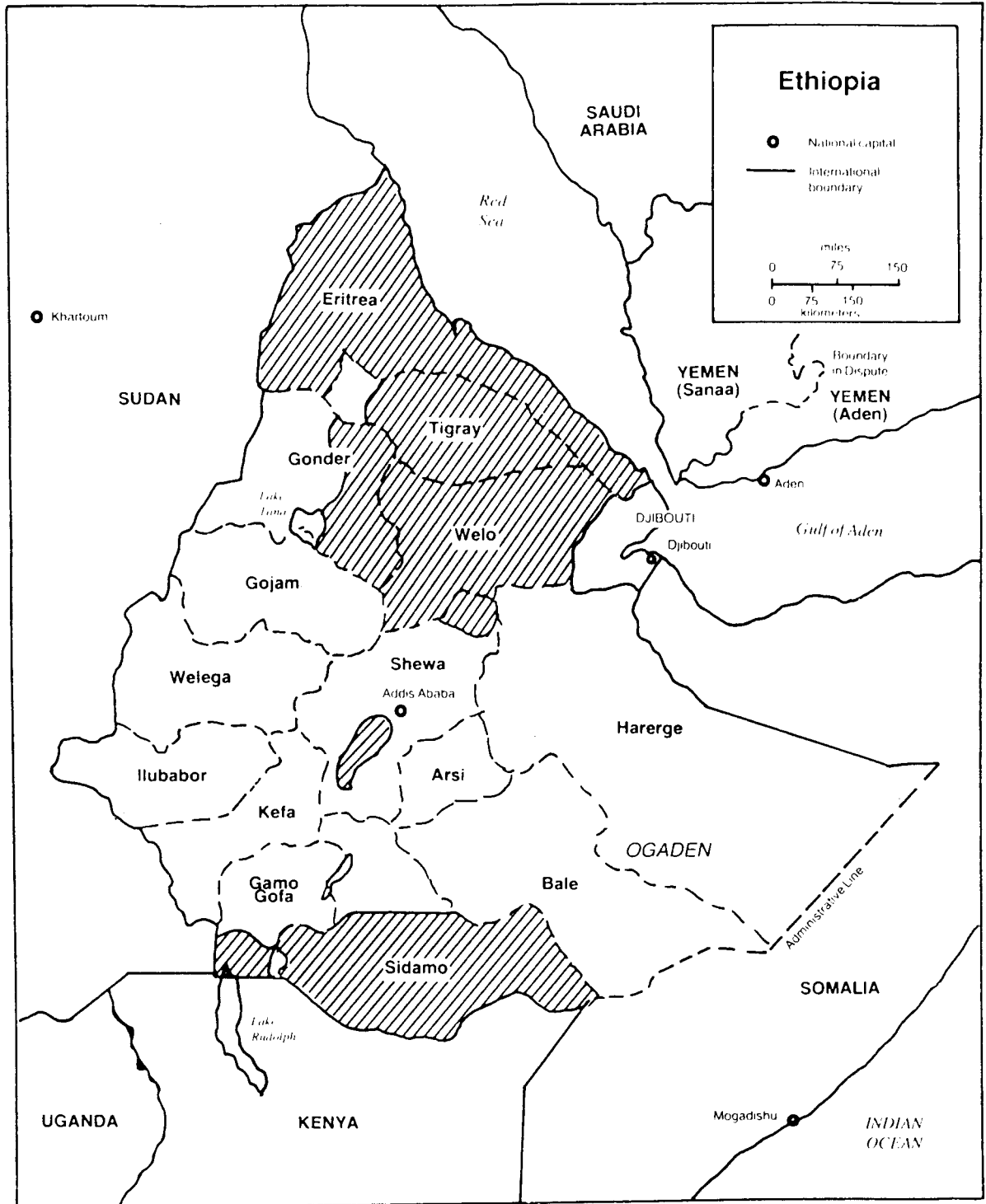
(adapted from Mitchel B. Wallerstein, *Food for War - Food for Peace*, p. 213.)

Figure 5. Map of Ethiopia, Drought Areas, 1984.

Source:

US Department of Agriculture, *Food Aid and the African Food Crisis*, (USDA Agricultural Economic Report No. 221, Washington, December 1984)

(Data from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1984)



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