The role of political elites in nation-building in contemporary Ethiopia, 1960-2020

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE FORMATION AND EVOLUTION OF ELITES IN ETHIOPIA

4.1 The Development of the Ethiopian Polity

Due to its long political traditions, religious cultures, and literary heritage, Ethiopia is enduringly fascinating to researchers. It is popularly seen as a land of former kingdoms, like Axum and 'Abyssinia,' where powerful kings and queens claimed to have origins in Biblical times and were once governed by fortresses they built at the top of mountains. The Ethiopian 'polity' has undergone many phases, and its current form results from radical historical changes. Understanding its historical outlines is necessary for assessing the role of elites in the country's political and societal formation.

The term 'polity' denotes a state or organized society that is a political body or has a distinct political identity (Corry, 2010). Additionally, it indicates a collection of individuals with a common identity who can mobilize resources and are subject to institutionalized social relations (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000). There are discourses and various explanations by different scholars and elite groups regarding the nature of the Ethiopian polity and its development, including Conti Rossini's 1928 familiar expression of it being a museum of peoples, the Levine 'Greater Ethiopia' thesis (Levine, 2000), Teshale's '*Tabot*/Ge'ez civilization' (Teshale, 1995), the Sorenson notion of 'imagining Ethiopia' (Sorenson, 1993), Markakis' explanation of the dichotomy of the two (last) frontiers (Markakis, 2011), and the current opposing viewpoints of ethno-elites and 'pan-Ethiopianists'.

Levine's (1974) framework of understanding Ethiopian polity attempts to explain the multi-ethnic nature of Ethiopian polity. In his book (1974), Levine claimed that Ethiopia was one of the few traditional African polities that maintained its sovereignty due to internal, structural traits, including institutional structures, social patterns, and cultural codes. How did these several phenomena work together to result in the continued sovereignty of Ethiopia and its lengthy existence as a state? Levine (1974) said that this was because bigger ethnic groups tended to share

ideas about the supernatural, ritual behavior, food attitudes, features of social organization, and practices relating to personal status, language, and other things. The Ethiopian polity, which was for him characterized by certain political-cultural 'paradigms' such as 'the Amhara thesis,' the 'Oromo antithesis,' and the 'Ethiopian synthesis, was the (idealized) result of these intensive contacts and interrelations between these broad ethno-geographical traditions (Amhara and Oromo).

Teshale, in his seminal work, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia: 1896-1974*, illuminated Ethiopia's social and political history and offered a unique understanding of its nature. It significantly impacted Ethiopianist discourse by elaborating on four new concepts: the *Geber* system, *Tabot* Christianity, the Aksumite paradigm, and the Ge'ez civilization. He sought a social-cultural reconstruction of contemporary Ethiopian social history and showed the skillful use of the Amharic language. His work covered the time from the Battle of Adwa (1896) to Haile Selassie's end-of-reign period in 1974. It tackled key factors that shaped contemporary Ethiopia, including class and national tensions, Western paradigms from without, Orientalist Semiticist discourse, and civilization from the inside. He also explained how the world-system perspective, which places Ethiopia in the periphery of the capitalist world economy, is crucial for locating the framework of historical processes that transformed Ethiopia from a long-standing autonomous civilization and state formation into a peripheral region of the capitalist world economy.

Ethiopia is indeed a multicultural and multilingual nation. For centuries, numerous ethnocultural traditions coexisted and communicated in Ethiopia, creating a distinctive amalgam of variety in terms of cultures, languages, and political units. In contrast to other African states, whose social and cultural fabric changed due to the 19th and 20th century colonization, Ethiopia retained such different cultures and languages in a more durable form (Teshale, 2009).

Sorenson (1993) ultimately rejected Levine's Greater Ethiopia concept and explored how images are made, histories are constructed, and identities are formed in Ethiopia. For instance, he claimed that the war for Eritrea's independence and the ethno-regional liberation movements demonstrated the emergence of counter-hegemonic identities, such as those of the Eritreans, Tigrayans, and Oromo people, which inherently challenged the idea of Ethiopianness and the Ethiopian polity as well as the narrative of the extended statehood. According to Sorenson, Haile Selassie, the last Ethiopian emperor and an Ethiopian nationalist, created the myth of the country's antiquity as a means of hegemonic control, and he contended that contradictory and mistaken

statements were made about Ethiopia in Western discourse. Sorenson provides extensive data and analyses of the detrimental effects of suppressing group identities as they are felt regarding the nation's territorial integrity. However, several significant mistakes and omissions frequently overshadow the book's positive aspects. Here are a few illustrations. Oddly, there needs to be consideration of various modes of legitimacy, such as traditional charismatic authority, the decrease in these kinds of authority, and how such decline provokes crises in a book that promises to deal with various representations of Ethiopia. Considering these developments, citizens, especially those from marginalized groups, doubted the government's ability to rule.

According to John Markakis (2011), a prominent scholar on Ethiopian politics for many years, ethnic animosities and the battle for power and resource control are formidable challenges to integrating the Ethiopian polity and developing a viable society. He claims that the monumental task of fusing a multicultural empire into a contemporary modern nation-state still needs to be completed. A process that has been ongoing for over a century remains unfinished, and its eventual triumph is far from certain. For him, to get the intended result, two significant challenges must be overcome, and two boundaries must be crossed. The first is the power monopoly passed down from the empire's founders and has been ferociously protected ever since by Tigray and Amhara elites, members of the governing class with 'Abyssinian' ancestry, to other people in general and elites in particular. He claimed that elites from Tigray and Amhara dominated the other groups/elites of other people/regions while keeping them out of positions of power, leading to political unrest and armed conflict. The second frontier is that of the lands on the 'periphery' of the state, where the integration processes have yet to reach and resistance to it is highest. Once this frontier is overcome, the state will only have the secure borders that a mature nation-state requires.

There are other discourses regarding the history of the Ethiopian polity (Yusuf, 2009). According to some academics, Ethiopia's history dates back three millennia from the Axumite Empire to today. Others dispute this claim and contend that the development of Ethiopia's polity only started in the late 19th century episode of Emperor Menelik's creation of the modern state. Today's elites are commonly divided by argument and debate into two main groups: the Pan-Ethiopianists and the 'ethno-nationalists' (Merera, 2003a).

The pan-Ethiopianists (see Alem, 2003) argued in favor of the long tradition of statehood, which transcends more than two thousand years. They strongly argue that the origin of the Ethiopian polity can be traced back to the Axumite kingdom around the end of the first century

BC. This state included what are today known as Eritrea and northern Ethiopia. The Axum kingdom made Christianity its official religion in 325 AD, at the height of King Ezana's power. Axum is said to have been at its height between the fourth and sixth century when it expanded its territory beyond the Red Sea into parts of today's Yemen. Orthodox Christianity was the primary ideological basis of the Axumite Kingdom. Until the 1974 revolution, which permanently destroyed the royal system in Ethiopia, the Orthodox Church and the monarchy had remained interwoven. Although the formal ties between the church and the state were cut after the revolution, they were never broken, and the church continues to be a significant part of Ethiopia's state.

Besides Orthodox Christianity, the nature of the Ethiopian polity is also shaped by Islam, which was introduced to the kingdom in the 7th century (cp. Abbink, 1998). Islam spread along the Red Sea's coastal areas, and many Muslims (*ibid*.) inhabited its shores and the adjacent hinterland areas. The rise of Islam and its influence on trade routes, which were among the primary economic resources of the kingdom, made the Axum dynasty susceptible to adversaries' manipulation and resulted in its gradual decline of political and economic power (Trimingham, 2007). Since the late 9th century, the successor dynasty of the *Zagwe*, centered on Lalibela, ruled Ethiopia until 1270. The eleven monolithic rock-hewn churches in Lalibela, each named after one of their kings, are a testament to their heritage. The kingdom laid out its political blueprint for Ethiopian polity until its succession by another dynasty, the 'Solomonic', which played a pivotal role in constructing the Ethiopian state and creating long-lasting, successful imperial rule through the succession of several kings (Nebiyu, 2013). The Solomonic dynasty established a durable monarchic political system for about 800 years and significantly contributed to the development of Ethiopia's state tradition. However, in the span of this 800 year's reign, the Solomonic Dynasty experienced countless civil wars and conflicts from within the polity and incursions from foreign powers such as Ottoman Turkey, Egypt, Great Britain (the Maqdala campaign of 1868), and Italy (1896). Despite facing internal and external pressures, the Ethiopian polity was sustained for eight centuries under the leadership of this Solomonic dynasty. The dynasty encountered three key events that seriously challenged and put its survival in question.

The first challenge was the uprising of the Muslim leader Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim (*Gragn Ahmed*), a formidable commander of the Adal sultanate, against the Christian kingdom in 1519, and his remarkable victory over King Lebna Dengel at the battle of Shimbra Kure in 1521 near what is now the city of Mojo (cp. Abbink, 1998). It was a turning point in the long reign of the

Solomonic dynasty. The King fled to the north and kept moving from one location to another to elude the sultanate's army for the next 13 years until his death, which occurred before the Portuguese military support that he had requested a year earlier arrived (Martin, 1974). Christians and Muslims experienced significant socio-economic decline and devastation due to the protracted civil war between the Christian ruler of the North and the Muslim Sultanate of the Southeast, based in Harar (Ahmed, 1992). Because of the war, Oromo forces could easily invade in the following decades and occupy most of the territories under the Muslim and Christian rulers' control (Merid, 1971).

The second challenge was, therefore, the Oromo movement, from the south in the regions between the Dawa and Genale rivers, encroaching on the territories that were formerly ruled by the Islamist sultanates in the southeast, known as modern Bale, Arssi, and Harerghe (Hassen, 2015). Due to this Oromo expansion in the East, the Adal sultanate was forced to confine its holdings to just the walled town of Harar. Similarly, the Oromo pushed northward and reduced the territory of the Christian kingdom (Hassen, 1990). The Oromo expansion into northern highland Christian areas previously under the emperor's control impacted many aspects of the areas' socioeconomic and political affairs and, thus, on the Ethiopian polity (cp. Bahru, 2013).

The third significant event was the conversion of emperor Susenyos (r. 1599–1625) to Catholicism. His action damaged the Solomonic dynasty's fundamental foundation, built on the cornerstone of Orthodox Christianity. The Emperor's conversion caused a political and social crisis that lasted for generations and significantly harmed the dynasty's foundation in the years to come. The 'Era of Princes' (*Zemene Mesafint*) is an example that would not have been possible if Emperor Susenyos had not been converted to Catholicism. For nearly a hundred years (1769 to 1855) of the Era of Princes, the nation was divided between warlords and regional nobility without a functioning central government. This again broke the foundation of the polity and exposed the country to long and endless civil wars by creating a dichotomy of center and periphery relations. The Centre emerged weak, while the periphery often emerged as a contestant of power competing with the Center. Markakis, in his seminal work (2011), explains the dichotomy as the two frontiers'.

The center-periphery dichotomy is essential to analyze Ethiopia's political history (Bach, 2016). According to the influential essay by Edward Shils (1961:117-30), the core of society is made up of the areas 'over which authority is possessed' while the periphery is made up of 'the

hinterland'. According to Lijphart (1989), this paradigm for plural societies implies that a center must have political dominance. The center-periphery cleavage, manifesting itself in various forms, has affected the political landscape of Ethiopia with variable intensity since the 'Era of Princes' (cp. Sherman, 1979). This cleavage continued manifesting in Ethiopian politics for hundreds of years. During the imperial era, the primary source of conflict was the endless rivalry between the monarchy in the center and the regional nobility. With the overthrow of the monarchy in 1974, the ethno-nationalist 'liberation movements' replaced the nobility as regional forces (Woldemariam, 2011). Following the demise of the *Derg* in 1991, the ethno-nationalist liberation movements conquered the Center. This cleavage, in effect, has continued with distinctive features in post-1991 Ethiopia and has constituted the ethno-nationalist at the Center, other rival ethno-nationalist forces, and the pan-Ethiopian forces at the periphery. The center-periphery dichotomy has impacted the evolution and nature of the Ethiopian elites under successive regimes, as illustrated in the next section.

4.2 The Evolution of the Ethiopian Elite

The development of Ethiopia's contemporary elite, both governing and non-governing, has been linked to several significant historical events in the 20th century (Merera, 2003a). The expansion of Menelik II to the South and Southwest parts of Ethiopia was one of these events. Several foot soldiers and devoted followers of the King were elevated to high positions in politics, military, education, commerce, and religion. Expanding to the south brought several notable political elites to prominence, such as *Ras* Balcha Safo, *Ras* Gobena Dache, *Ras* Habtegiorgis Dinagde, and many others. Most of these influential elite members were not members of the nobility; both proved themselves to be important political and military actors due to their merits (Clapham, 1969b).

The triumph of Adwa in 1896 was another significant occasion in the evolution of the power elites (Paulos & Metaferia, 2005). Like the expansion, it once more elevated several anonymous figures and low-ranking soldiers to the power structure. The battle of Adwa ended the Italian forces' advance and established Ethiopia as the only non-colonized nation in Africa (Jonas, 2011). As the researcher previously noted, some foot soldiers were promoted to higher government positions due to their contributions in battle. These new elites later climbed to top positions in

governing and non-governing spheres. The new emerging elites from various parts of the country were thus able to join the central power structure and become prominent figures. The composition of the country's elite was thus diversified, and a new and wider elite structure evolved.

The third event was the introduction of modern education, which was produced by the next generation of elites in several fields in 1908. Emperors Menilek II (r. 1889–1913) and, as noted, Haile Selassie I (r.1930–74) introduced and expanded modern secondary education (cp. Markakis, 1973). He opened the first modern school, the École Impériale Menelik, in October 1908. This and other schools became elite recruitment pools by successfully training future administrators, clerks, and other key players in the growing bureaucracy (Demerew, 2022).

The Italian occupation, which lasted for five years (1936-1941), was the fourth significant turning point in the evolution of the Ethiopian elites. To undermine the power of the royal family and their supporters, the Italians created possibilities for various commoners to join the next generation of elites (Záhořík & Godesso, 2022). The Italians organized their enthusiastic supporters, who vehemently resisted the imperial administration along ethnic and religious lines (Ahmed, 2006). The last significant point was the opening of higher education and military institutions. Emperor Haile Selassie established Haile Selassie University in 1950 (after 1975, it was called Addis Ababa University). He also established other colleges and military academies after the 1950s. The opening and expansion of higher educational and military institutions significantly impacted the evolution of the new generation of the Ethiopian elite (Bishaw & Melesse, 2017). The elite structure of the nation, which has lasted for nearly eight centuries and beyond, was reconfigured because of these events. The expansion of education, especially the proliferation of elitist higher learning institutions, had a profound impact on the trajectory of Ethiopian politics for the next fifty years and beyond. The researcher briefly describes how Ethiopia's contemporary power, education, military, business, and traditional elites have evolved in the following section.

4.2.1 The Power Elite

The term 'power elite,' in the view of Wright Mills, one of the earlier and most well-known elite theorists in the USA, refers to those who held prominent positions in a nation's three-pillar institutions (state security, economic, and political) (Mills, 1956). According to Powell (2007), the term also refers to a small number of individuals who hold disproportionate amounts of privilege,

wealth, power, and access to decision-makers in a political system. The "top positions" held by the power elite include those with the authority to direct the operations of significant political, economic, legal, educational, cultural, scientific, and civic institutions. Mills (1956) claimed that the governing/power elite (in the USA of the 1950s) comprised three groups of people: (1) the highest political leaders, such as the head of state or government, and a select group of important cabinet members and close advisers; (2) large business firm owners and CEO's; and (3) senior military officers. They occupy what Wright Mills refers to as society's highest command positions. They have great power over governmental, financial, educational, social, civic, and cultural institutions.

Therefore, the power elites are a tiny group of social class members with the authority to make important decisions impacting everyone's daily lives (Parry, 2005). The close cooperation of political, business, and military institutions has also increased the authority of the elite. A set of values, beliefs, and attitudes that influence the elite's impressions of government and prevent major divisions from emerging go beyond the fact that the elite share the same attitude, values, and culture depicted in their worldview. The elite share a common understanding of the fundamental principles governing how the government, economy, wealth distribution, and private economic power should function.

During the imperial time, the power elite claimed they were descendants of the Solomonic dynasty. The core power elite constitute those who claim they are direct descendants of the lion of Juda via the legend of Queen Sheba and her son Menelik (Heldman & Haile, 1987). The legend purported to explain how the Ethiopian ruling dynasty was descended from Solomon and through him from Abraham and the early patriarchs. The dynasty followed a succession of rulers from Yekunno Amlak circa 1270 AD to the last Emperor Haile-Selassie, who was deposed in 1974. This lasted for close to seven hundred years, making the dynasty one of the longest and oldest monarchies in the world. This Solomonic dynasty ruled Ethiopia from the 1270s to the 1970s, and the 14th-century religious epic work, the *Kibrä Nägäst* ('The Glory of the Kings'), famously tells of how the dynasty of Ethiopian kings descended from King Solomon himself (cp. Piovanelli, 2013). The descent from Solomon meant quite different things at different times, but the Solomonic succession remained in the Ethiopian cultural landscape for centuries. The monarchical system was governed by complex rules and norms embodied in the *Kibrä Nägäst*, giving an ideological charter for royal rule in Ethiopia since the end of the 6th century (see Budge, 2001).

Before the revolution of 1974, the power elite's inner circle comprised Solomonic families with ties to one another. The *Kibrä Nägäst* states that the heir to the throne is the current King or queen's first son or daughter (*ibid.*). The power elite comprised three layers: clergy, *Mekuannent*s (knights), and *Mesafint*s (nobles, 'princes'). Mesafints had a blood connection to the ruling monarch or dynasty and held their rights and privileges in an inherited capacity. They made up the power elite's inner circle and were few. Mekuannents rose to the pinnacle of the power elite's hierarchy due to their accomplishments, successes, and steadfast devotion to the King. Even though they had much power, the King had the prerogative to revoke any privileges or rights. Compared to the Mesafints, the size of this category was bigger. They served as leaders and administrators at various levels of the government and bureaucracy. The clergy were also members of the ruling class. They gave the monarch legitimacy and frequently used the third power level, mental control.

After the 1974 revolution, the structure of the power elite was uprooted and substituted by a new power elite who predominately came from different sections of the army. The revolution demolished the power structure of the monarch and brought the low-ranking military officers to higher positions of government power. About 120 members of the *Derg* originally made up the inner circle of the power elite (Abate, 1984).

The power elite from the army was replaced by ethno-elites from various ethnic groups in 1991 after the *Derg* dictatorship fell and the EPRDF came to power (Messay, 2003; Abbink, 2006). The inner circle of the power elite was made up of 36 core Executive members of the ruling party, the EPRDF, made up of four political organizations that each claimed to represent three dominant ethnic groups: Tigray, Oromo, Amhara as well as the minorities in Southern Ethiopia (Young, 1996)[2]. The Tigray, who were claimed to be represented in the TPLF, was the most powerful section of Ethiopia's post-1991 power elite, even if equal Executive membership was allotted to all coalition members within the EPRDF. They could control all key political, military, security, economic, and other sectors. After the 2018 political reforms, the EPRDF's old guard, primarily composed of TPLF members, was uprooted and replaced by a new group, predominantly Oromo

[2] The four parties were the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM).

and largely Protestant-Evangelical background power elite, led by PM Abiy Ahmed and the Prosperity Party (the new party since late 2019).

4.2.2 The Military Elite

The term ‘military elite’ refers to the senior commanders in charge of the army's commands (Janowitz, 1957). The power elites frequently collaborate closely with the military elite, relying on the military to stay in power (cp. Kimenyi & Mbaku, 1996). The rise of the military elite in society is correlated with the evolution of military institutions and the war experiences of the nation (Barnett, 1967). The top military officers were promoted to prominence via their role in the command of war or as successful students at the military colleges. As anyone could learn from the experiences of various countries, military elites frequently transform themselves into power elites, either by forging alliances with the incumbent power elite or by toppling them. A tradition of military-civil relations guided the role and function of the military elites. In Ethiopia, the military elites have a long history of serving as custodians of the political system and protectors of the nation’s independence.

The military history of Ethiopia dates back to ancient times, and it is documented in the country's oldest records (see Ayenachew, 2014). Positioned between Africa and the Middle East, Ethiopia was frequently caught in the crossfire of Eastern and Western politics, facing foreign invasions and interference throughout its history (Dunn, 1994). Constant episodes of aggression compelled successive Ethiopian governments to develop strong armed forces. Among their notable triumphs, the Battle of Adwa in 1896 stands out, showcasing the Ethiopian armed forces' abilities and preserving the country's independence. Before that event, Ethiopian forces had successfully repelled invasions by the Ottoman Empire and Egyptian and Sudanese forces. During the Battle of Adwa, the Ethiopian army was led by esteemed military generals and commanders such as *Ras* Alula Engida ‘Abanega’, *Negus* Tekle Haimanot of Gojjam, Sebhat Aregawi, *Ras* Mekonnen, *Ras* Mengesha Yohannes, *Ras* Mikael of Wollo, *Ras* Mulugeta, *Ras* Gobena, *Ras* Tesemma, *Ras* Balcha, and others (Tsegaye, 1996). Their contributions fortified the strength and resilience of Ethiopia's armed forces.

During his regency from 1924 to 1930, Haile Selassie undertook significant measures to modernize the Ethiopian army. A crucial step in this process was establishing the imperial army guard called *‘Kibur Zebegna’* in 1917, as documented by Hess (1970). Several nations, namely

Belgium, Norway, France, Britain, and America, contributed to forming the modern army, providing advisory, training, and organizational support. As Markakis (1974) mentioned, Haile Selassie's initiative to develop a strong and modern army began in the 1930s by recruiting professional military officers. The foremost focus of Haile Selassie's efforts was the *Kibur Zebegna* elite force, created during his regency and trained initially by Belgian officers.

Additionally, the Emperor played a crucial role in establishing the Holeta Military Academy in 1933. This academy admitted talented students from Teferi Mekonnen, a secondary school founded by the emperor in 1925, as its inaugural cadet class. Halldin (1977) and Yohannis (1980) documented that the academy received assistance from Swedish military officers. Unfortunately, Emperor Haile Selassie's endeavors to establish a modern army were interrupted by the Italian occupation from 1936 to 1941.

After liberation in 1941, a reorganization of the army was resumed. The British, who had initially supported this effort in 1941, continued their assistance until 1951, playing a crucial role in restructuring the ground forces. Concurrently, the Emperor persisted in establishing a new prestigious military academy model led by Britain's Sandhurst Academy. With support obtained from the Indian government, he successfully established the Haile Selassie Military Academy in the city of Harar. Indian personnel served as instructors, mentors, and administrators in this new military institution, extending their support until 1969. During the early years of operation, the academy recruited the most talented secondary school graduates and first-year university students as inaugural cohorts of students.

Furthermore, the Emperor sought the collaboration of the Swedish government to revamp the Air Force. Swedish trainers were eventually provided to facilitate the establishment of an Air Force academy in Debre Zeit. Similarly, a naval branch was established in 1955 with assistance from the Norwegian government. Ethiopian cadets received their initial training in Norway and later embarked on British ships for further instruction (Markakis, 1974). Following the departure of the British from Ethiopia in 1951, American military advisors resumed their support for the imperial army (Agyeman-Duah, 1986).

The creation of modern military training facilities, widespread military recruitment, the inclusion of accomplishment and seniority standards in the selection process for military candidates have already started to change the makeup of the army officer. The traditional military officers were gradually replaced with new and well-trained military leaders. In 1970, the Holeta

Military School graduated its twenty-seventh batch, and the oldest post-war alums attained general rank. As noted, Holeta first recruited candidates from secondary school graduates and then, over time, started enrolling its students from the graduating class of primary schools and later from non-commissioned officers with little formal education but long service.

In contrast, the first recruits for the Harar military academy came from Addis Ababa University College's first-year class. Later, the academy recruited recent graduates from secondary schools who were offered a three-year course that included academic instruction. It makes the Harar Academy unique compared with Holeta in terms of recruits' educational level, study duration, training intensity, and instructors' quality. In 1960, Harar graduated its first batch of 35 officers. Before the attempted coup in December 1960, the graduates were sent to the army and bodyguard forces, where they later found themselves on opposing sides of the conflict. However, after the aborted coup, their assignment to the Imperial bodyguard was suspended, and they started to join various sections of the army.

The officers who graduated from these two military academies later engaged in a series of quarrels because the graduates of the Harar military academy believed that they were academically superior to and incomparable with cadets who graduated from the Holeta military academy and had only attended primary school. This argument became apparent following the revolution of 1974 when the military took control of the state. The leading *Derg* figures were predominately Holeta cadets, who gradually diminished the importance of Harar cadets in the military and eventually dissolved the military academy itself.

The military elites, who were the product of both military academies, gradually came to control the security and military apparatus of the state and manifested contrasting behavior in civil-military relations. The officers' corps' internal cohesion, therefore, was not high. The senior army officer demonstrated their fullest loyalty to the emperor. The lower-ranking officers show sympathy to the public. The patrimonial factor, which encouraged reliant relationships between lower-ranking officers and individual officers, impacted how army members were promoted. The recruitment standards and instruction at the two military training institutions serve as a proxy for variations in social origin, educational attainment, and professional training that separated the junior ranks, as was already mentioned. The majority of Holeta cadets were from rural backgrounds. The military academy graduates at Harar, a numerically small group, represent a distinctly modern element whose recruitment, training, and professional experience laid the

groundwork for increased solidarity and a social and political orientation they share with the younger Ethiopian intellectuals. These groups also include the Air Force officer contingent, which was educated in a different academy at Debre Zeit, established in 1947, that served as the base of the Air Force.

For the above reasons, the military elite in the army's top posts appeared weak. The caliber and proficiency of army commanders substantially declined with the closing of the Harar Military Academy. According to Erlich (1983), although the military emerged as a crucial force in the 1974 revolution and during the *Derg* regime, the rise of the EPRDF to power signified the end of the military's central role in the nation's politics. The professional army, which had been developed since the 1930s and had been in place for sixty years during the Emperor and *Derg* regimes, was disbanded by the EPRDF. In addition, the two coup attempts in 1960 and 1989 led to the assassination of highly qualified senior officials, greatly diminishing their influence in politics and the economy. According to one of the senior army generals:

> *After 1991, Ethiopia's military high command was constructed by ethnic quota representation, with little or no military experience. The EPRDF shut down all military academies, including those in Hurso and Holeta. Army officers advance to higher positions based on field service rather than formal training. Former TPLF rebel commanders and fighters hold the most important military positions. The remaining positions were divided among officers from different ethnic groups* (Respondent no. 46).

According to the EPRDF supporters, the reorganization and reform of the army were done to configure the ethnic makeup of the army[3]. However, some academics, like Yonas (2022), disagreed with the EPRDF's assertion. They argued that the army was deliberately abolished to guarantee TPLF supremacy in national politics and prevent the creation of a national army.

As noted by Bahru (1998), comparing the military elites of other African countries, the military elites in Ethiopia before 1991 displayed their distinctive character. First, they had a strong sense of nationalism and were less susceptible to influence by outside forces. Second, the military elite in Ethiopia had much less access to resources and privileges than other African nations. The military had little economic influence and had no access to (economic/business) resources. Lastly, the military leadership had poor academic credentials, especially after 1991, and as a result, the military elites became weak and subject to the power elite.

[3] Interview held with one of the ENDF senior officers, no. 13, 2022.

4.2.3 The Educated Elite

The term "educated elite" describes those with extensive formal education-based training in various specializations. Additionally, it implies those with the greatest influence, talent, and abilities in society (Dennis *et al.*, 1977). The nation's educational policy and school system shape the nature and character of the educated elite and the development and expansion of the educated elite in tandem with the growth of modern education. The evolution of the educated elite in Ethiopia has experienced several turning points. The introduction and expansion of modern education in the early 20th century sidelined traditional education's long heritage and hegemony in producing an educated elite. The extent and quantity of modern education rose in Addis Ababa and other provincial towns, gradually diminishing the influence of church and Islam-related traditional schools (Alemayehu & Lasser, 2012). Second, scholarship opportunities abroad, mainly in Egypt, Lebanon, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other European countries, also played a vital role in creating the nuclei of the Ethiopian intellectuals. Third, colonial education, introduced under Italian rule, gave ordinary people access to a rudimentary education in the country. Even after the departure of the Italian forces from Ethiopia in 1941, the Italian legacy continued to stimulate several young Ethiopians into the educational system. Fourth, Halie Selassie University was founded in 1950. Later, it evolved into the focal point of the Ethiopian student movement, contributing to a fundamental transformation of the political and economic system. Finally, yet importantly, the improvement in educational accessibility put rural students in the political spotlight (Pankhurst, 2010; Pankhurst, 1972; Legesse, 1979).

According to Molla *et al.* (2022), traditional schooling has a long history in Ethiopia and is connected to Ethiopian Orthodox church services. Hess (1970) claimed that fundamental reading and writing skills were the focus of pre-modern education in Ethiopia, which was widely provided at provincial and local religious schools. The primary sources of literate culture in northern Ethiopia were the schools run by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The nobility and clergy taught their children to read and write there.

> *One important institution in traditional society, the church, developed an elementary system of education that served not only the church's needs but also the cultural needs of society in general. As the custodian of Ethiopian historical and cultural traditions, the church infused both with a distinctly religious flavor* (Markakis, 1974:143).

According to Bahru (2013), the traditional educational system began to take shape after Christianity arrived in Ethiopia in the fourth century. The arrival of Middle Eastern monks in

Ethiopia in the fifth century led to the spread of Christianity. It also resulted in the development of Ethiopian literature, the establishment of monasteries and churches that served as the basis for religious and intellectual inquiry, and the creation of systems that allowed students to learn using a church approach. Likewise, the more specialized programs of Islamic thought were offered in a small number of Madrassa schools, which were concentrated in Muslim-heavy cities such as Asmara, Dessie, Addis Abeba, Jimma, and Harar. The Islamic educational system was run with the full assistance of Middle Eastern educational institutions. Al-Azhar University in Egypt made a substantial contribution to the growth of the Islamic educational system among Muslim students in Ethiopia, and its appeal to students from Harar and Wollo was particularly noteworthy (Markakis, 1974; Bahru, 2013).

According to Adejumobi (2007), formal education was limited to a religious instruction program run by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church up to the first half of the 20th century. These institutions were also in charge of educating people for positions in the clergy and other religious responsibilities. Children of the nobility and the sons of peasants connected to aristocratic families received religious education in the schools in the major cities of Amhara and Tigray. However, some Muslims had access to education through Islamic institutions.

When Addis Ababa took over as Ethiopia's political Centre at the end of the 19th century, a well-known, educated church elite relocated to gain respect from the Emperor and other members of the governing nobility as well as to maximize the advantages that would come with it, churches at Addis Ababa attracted educated people from Gondar and other northern cities, most churches educated elites congregated into the Raguel and Entoto Mariyam church. In the early 20th century, the intellectual elites of the two faiths played a crucial role as the intellectual life foundation and a source of skilled labor for Ethiopia's bureaucracy. However, the nation's modernization demands could not be met by the ecclesiastical elite alone, and the indigenous knowledge was insufficient to adjust to and match the global circumstances (Bahru, 2002).

The advent of modern education in the turbulent latter years of Emperor Menelik's rule (1889–1913) signals the loss of traditional education's impact on the social and political structure of the nation. The pressure from the European powers, which had surrounded Ethiopia by a ring of colonies, necessitated the development of new talents that could meet the country's growing demand for modernity. This strain was not a passing issue but rather a constant threat. Menelik was put in a completely unheard-of predicament for a monarch of Ethiopia. His new city, Addis

Abeba, quickly grew packed with foreign embassies eager to bargain treaties, draw borders, forge business links, and win concessions (Markakis, 1974). The need for skilled individuals resulted from interactions with foreigners in many activities. Due to a lack of skilled labor, Menelik was forced to enlist the help of numerous foreigners as advisors, who helped him introduce innovations like a national currency, a state bank, a postal, telegraph, and telephone system, the construction of a railway, and the instruction of Ethiopian soldiers in the use of modern weapons.

A few Ethiopians were sent or managed to travel overseas for their education during Menelik's rule, where they received a modern education and learned various languages. Most of them set out under the direction of missionaries, which was the most effective way to achieve their primary goal in that it educated the youth and facilitated baptism. The missionaries, who opened schools, chose the best pupils, and sent them overseas, particularly to Europe, were the key tactic, just like in other nations. Many Ethiopian students could take advantage of the missionaries' scholarship opportunities thanks to the competition between protestant and catholic missionaries. When they eventually returned to Ethiopia, these educated people started working for their country as delegates to other nations, advisors, and translators (Paulos, 2006).

Missionaries have continued to play a vital role in developing Ethiopian education to the point where they now own renowned institutions like the Josef and Nazareth schools in Addis Ababa. The government accepted responsibility for providing modern education to the nation's youth by the missionaries' footprints. Emperor Menelik set out to expand modern education following his Adwa triumph and the demarcation of Ethiopia's borders. He established the first public school in 1908 and named it Menelik II School. Young members from the nobility were chosen to attend, including two future emperors: *Dejazmach* Teferi Mekonnen, who would become Emperor Haile Selassie, and *Lij* Eyasu, who succeeded Menelik. Other graduates from this school rose to the top positions in governmental organizations, including that of Minister. Another school in Harar started operating at the same period. Others opened in Dessie and other big towns (Bahru, 2013).

The royal treasury funded the already mentioned Teferi Mekonnen School and one located in the palace grounds. The tight supervision of the emperor and his wife helped this school become prominent and successful in a short time. Additionally, the school had the backing of the local governors. It was created for the sons of the royal family and the nobles. However, there were also opportunities for common people, whom the provincial governors supported, to enroll in school.

Some six years later (1931), a school for females was founded, named after the emperor's wife, Menen. Regional nobility also established schools in several cities, which were opened to instruct youngsters in the peripheral areas (Markakis, 1974).

Furthermore, according to Spencer (1984), Haile Selassie speeded up the procedures for sending young Ethiopians to study abroad. Before 1936, the local school sent many talented students to Europe. The Emperor showed a keen interest in them and provided money from the throne to defray their expenses. He oversaw their selection, bid them goodbye as they left, and welcomed them when they arrived back. Thus, he forged a strong parental link with the first generation of educated contemporary Ethiopians, which benefitted him in the years following the war.

As Paulos (2006) explained, most of the first generation of educated Ethiopians came from upper and lower sections of society. They credited their later success to their hard work and royal favor. Those who belonged to this group survived the conflict and pledged their unwavering loyalty to the emperor in the following years. Haile Selassie counteracted the traditional elite's dominance by using this emerging educated group as a counterbalance against the rival traditional nobles.

Foreign missionaries were another group that started to get involved in education during the years leading up to World War I. Missionaries from many fields persisted obstinately in their attempts to establish themselves in Ethiopia despite the scornful attitude of Ethiopians in general and the Orthodox Church's aggressive rejection (cf. Böll, Kaplan & Martínez d'Alòs-Moner 2005; Messay, 1999; Fantahun 2017).

Modern education came to a halt due to the war and Italian occupation. Despite the occupation's short lifespan and minimal overall effects on the nation, its impact on education was profound and long-lasting. Foreign teachers left the country or were expelled, the meager collection of educational materials was scattered and destroyed, the nascent state education system was destroyed, students and teachers were dispersed, and the occupying army took over school buildings. Missionary schools also suffered, though not as severely. Losing a chunk of the tiny population of educated Ethiopians was particularly severe (Pankhurst, 1972).

All stories concur that the Italian fascists targeted this group for a particular cruel treatment to support their claim of a civilizing mission by eradicating any evidence in the nation. According to Pankhurst (1972), even though the actual death toll was low, it nonetheless represented a sizable

portion of the small group of educated Ethiopians before the conflict. The fact that education was interrupted for five years and only a few people who happened to be overseas could continue their studies is more noteworthy. This break was prolonged after liberation until the governmental apparatus looked the same and the schools reopened. The generational divide between those educated before and after the conflict became apparent in the ranks of the educated group. The second generation started to advance in the same structure in the 1950s, although the older group had risen quickly after liberation and attained the highest positions. The apparent contrasts in attitude between those two groups' age, status, and power make communication more difficult (Alemayehu & Lasser, 2012).

Some academics have divided the educated elite of Ethiopians into two main categories based on their perspectives on the pre-and post-Italian occupation periods. The pre-war educated elites were seen to be Menelik's and Haile Selassie's most enthusiastic supporters. Emperor Tewodros, a radical modernist who aimed to profoundly restructure society's social, political, and economic systems, inspired the post-war educated elites. On the other hand, historian Bahru (2002) highlighted three key groups/cohorts that shaped the development of the intellectual elite in the 20th century. The first group sought to establish an organized government and justice system that would guarantee equality by applying the law and having a strong constitution. The second group was eager to end poverty in Ethiopia by giving peasants authority over their means of production and ownership of their goods, including an equitable taxation system that advocated giving back land to the tiller. The third group was concerned with ensuring justice and equality between national and religious groups.

In the 1950s, notable growth occurred in the number of Ethiopians with degrees in higher education. The hopes and aspirations of this group often included the benefits of modernity, such as democracy and higher living standards. In spite, some academics had said that Ethiopia's intelligentsia suffered because of the battle with Italian fascists when the fascists and the surviving elites wiped out a substantial number were sidelined as a result of political unrest and social unrest in the post-war period of its limited size, this group was more ethnically varied than their predecessors were (Teshale, 2008).

4.2.4 The Business Elite

The term "business elite" refers to those people capable, wealthy, and influential in business: entrepreneurship and trading. Not all businesspeople were regarded as being among the elite- only those who were the most powerful. Despite being small, the business elites significantly impact society (Feldmann & Morgan, 2022). The formation of the business elite was most often linked to the power elite. The power elite was the one who helped most of the business elite to flourish in their commercial activities because of their interest and benefits. The business elite may have come from the military, the education system, the traditional background, or another source relying on their network skills to establish relationships with the power elites.

The development of Ethiopia's business elite was correlated with the expansion and growth of the private sector. Significant factors affected how quickly the business elite grew in Ethiopia. Several significant factors influenced the emergence of Ethiopia's business elite. First, the first generation of business elites, mostly caravan traders of the 19th century, evolved from a persistent struggle to control the long trade route promoting and facilitating Ethiopia's import and export trade. Access to a country's import and export markets and its economic links with other nations were the key interests of this group. The emergence of the second-generation business elites can be traced back to the growth of commerce and investment during the reign of the 20th-century emperor. This group comprises up-and-coming entrepreneurs and prominent business leaders who enjoy close ties to the emperor. Additionally, the liberalization of the economy during the post-1991 era under the EPRDF gave rise to a thriving business elite that is ethnically affiliated and has established a strong association with the power elite, particularly the ruling party (Bahru, 2002).

The first generation of business elites was in an intense struggle to control the trade routes. After the Battle of Embabo (in 1882), the principal trade route (that covered the west of the country via Gojjam, Gondar, Metemma/Sudan, or Gondar/Messawa) was replaced by the new trade route, which spanned from the Center to the East. The rise of the power elites from Shoa shifted the trade center to Addis Ababa, which extended to Djibouti. The powerful business elite who controlled the country's economy for a more extended period from Gojjam, Gondar, and Tigray gradually demised. In fact, besides the Battle of Embabo, the shift of Ethiopia's sea outlet to Djibouti also played a significant part in the rise of the eastern trade route. Harar and Dire Dawa emerged as critical business and import-export centers after the 20th century. The eastern trade route that linked

Addis Ababa to Djibouti via the railway thus became the import and export hub of the country (Bahru, 2002).

The Adwa victory also immensely influenced Ethiopia's international trade links and the rise of business elites. The colonial forces surrounding Ethiopia were eager to integrate the region through trade and commerce relations. They opened consulates and commerce liaison offices in nearby locations. British consulates were close to British territories such as Gambela, Gore, Metu, Harar, and Dangila to facilitate economic relations with Sudan, Kenya, Somaliland, southwest Ethiopia, and the East. On the other side, with their consulates in Adwa, Gondar, and Dessie, the Italians attempted to link the northern part of Ethiopia with their Eritrean colony. The main commerce route through the railway Addis-Djibouti was already under French control. The Germans and Americans, who lacked colonies in the area, concentrated on controlling trade in the hinterland. All these factors impacted the evolution of business elites in Ethiopia.

In contrast to earlier centuries, the first half of the 20th century saw foreigners in charge of trade in Ethiopia, facilitated by Emperor Menilik. Many foreigners started enterprises in Ethiopia because of the Adwa victory. Until the Italian takeover, businesses from France predominated, starting with the railway joint venture between Ethiopia and Djibouti. Then, Indians took a role as well. Greeks and Armenians dominated all commercial activities in the country's southwest. Local businesspeople needed to be more significant. There were substantial numbers of Arab businessmen, especially Yemenis, involved in small businesses in various big cities (Pankhurst, 2004).

The Ethiopians' involvement in commerce activity was limited to regional trade. On the other hand, the business elites connected to the heart of the governing class were able to exert influence over significant corporations. These individuals gradually became the core of the local business elites. They created cooperative ventures with foreigners. As an illustration, Indians and Emperor Menelik collaborated to construct Addis Ababa's first hotel. The hotel was run by Empress Ṭaytu, who gave it her name. In addition to her involvement in the hotel business, Ṭaytu was also interested in setting up a trade association for agribusiness and agriculture with a well-known aristocracy. *Ras* Teferi Mekonnen created a business with international investors to establish a fruit farm in Yerer and got involved in other companies. *Ras* Hailu Tekle-Haymanot of Gojjam was active in the entertainment transportation industry. Ras Desta Damṭew established successful business firms in water supply, some examples of joint venture business (Bahru, 2002).

Following Italy's defeat at the Battle of Adwa, Europeans became interested in the concessions business at the beginning of the 20th century. They hoped to utilize resources through long-term deals with the Ethiopian government. However, many of these deals were unsuccessful. Only a few contracts were signed, including the French and British railway agreement and the creation of the Habesha Bank. Despite the emergence of numerous cities after the Italian occupation, the rural economy continued predominating, and the country remained agrarian. A large majority of people worked in agriculture, contributing 60% of the nation's wealth, and 90% of the increase in exports came from coffee. Next to this, cereals were the most common product sold in the local market, followed by beans and oil seeds. The importance of agriculture to the national economy has made land tenure and ownership a major political issue in Ethiopia, even today (Bahru, 2002).

The rise of Addis Ababa as the country's capital and market hub encouraged the growth of local trade. The new class of business elites, primarily entrepreneurs, had evolved in local business and gradually replaced foreigners in domestic and global business. One of the turning points in the growth of local business was the establishment of *Merkato*, the large open-air market in Addis Ababa, as the primary market for wholesalers and retailers. Merkato prompted the rise of local entrepreneurs who could compete and gradually displaced foreigners, mainly Yemenis, from retail businesses by the Gurage. However, foreigners continued to own import/export companies and significant businesses.

As Bahru (2002) explained, the Italians may have taught the ruling class members how to build government-affiliated firms and dominate the export market during their occupation. The establishment of the government-affiliated national companies, the trade and transport association, the coffee board, the meat board, and other businesses allowed cereals to be exported to the European market. The government promoted trade to boost revenues, primarily through customs duties. The rise of industries in the 1940s and onwards was attributed mainly to the industries created by the Italians during the occupation and government initiatives to entice investors to invest in the industry. These industries include cement, textile, oil processing, flour mills, and electric power supply for Addis Ababa from the Aba Samuel Dam. The government policy was import substitution, which aimed at replacing products like textiles, beverages, and others with local products. Following the adoption of this policy, Meta Abo Brewery, St. George's Brewery, Pepsi Cola and Coca-Cola factories were built. More significantly, in the 1950s, the HVA, a Dutch

company, established a big sugar production factory in Wonji in the Awash Valley. Some 50% of the existing manufacturing industry was concentrated around Addis Ababa, and the rest were in the major towns of Asmara and Dire Dawa.

> *During this time, foreigners primarily owned the industry, and the economy relied heavily on loans. The slow growth of the economy and its structure had a significant impact on the development of the business elites. However, this period also saw the emergence of successful local business entrepreneurs in various sectors such as hotels, agriculture, and wholesale. Despite the slow growth, the private sector began to play a crucial role in the national economy during imperial rule. Unfortunately, the emerging private sector was hindered when the Derg military regime introduced 'Ethiopian Socialism' in 1974, which was hostile to the private sector and imposed restrictions on business activities. As a result, many business elites were exiled or faced dire consequences under military rule, significantly affecting their role in the country's political economy* (Respondent no. 7, 2022).

The post-1991 period ushered in a new era for private business in Ethiopia. Following the liberalization of the economy, the private sector rebounded, and a new generation of business elite was born with new features. The new business elite groups were affiliated with the ethnicity and political party of the ruling elite. Thus, ethnic-affiliated business elites emerged, flourished, and controlled the business sector. In the regions, the ethnic-affiliated business elite started to control the local economy. The ruling party-affiliated business elites at the Centre controlled the import and export business. The ruling elite encouraged business elites from their ethnic group to get financial resources from banks, win government contracts, and get large tracts of land for their business. Most of these new business elites benefited from the so-called privatization of the key economic sectors. They were allowed to transfer public properties at cheaper prices and amass significant amounts of wealth within a brief period. Sadly, the older, established private entrepreneurs and genuine business elites lost space and gradually faded away. One of the unique aspects of the post-1991 business elite was their absolute loyalty to the power elite and the alliance they created with them. The business elites, therefore, were subordinate and subservient to the power elite.

4.2.5 The ‘Traditional’ Elites

The traditional elites hold positions of authority and enjoy power based on authority and influence derived from customs, religion, traditions, and social position. The traditional elites often built up their influence from their social positions in society, ethnic or tribal connections, and

wealth. Traditional elites are important to society's daily operations. Most traditional elites have significant positions in domains like religion (Bottomore, 2006). Before the 1974 revolution, the traditional, land-based elites comprised the inner circle of the political ruling elite. Paulos (1976) argued that the traditional elites acted as a conduit connecting the state and society and as a source of legitimacy for imperial rule. However, their influence and involvement in the nation's social, political, and economic concerns significantly decreased during the *Derg* dictatorship. They were somewhat revived under the EPRDF era, with restricted significance, but after the 2018 political reforms, they could more fully restore their role and influence. The two most significant traditional elites are leaders of traditional institutions for conflict resolution and the top leaders of the major religions, particularly Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism-Evangelism, and Islam.

The Ethiopian Orthodox church once possessed substantial landed estates, exercised significant influence at the local level, and occasionally made essential decisions regarding Ethiopian politics because of its role as a uniting factor. The church has generally been one of Ethiopian society's conservative forces and continued to have a great deal of respect. However, from the Middle of the 20th century onward, the relationship between the church and the state drastically worsened as the latter was occasionally seen as a barrier to modernization efforts. Even though numerous initiatives to revive the church were attempted, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church no longer serves as the focal point for national unity as it once did. This is especially true in contemporary pluralist Ethiopia.

Religious elites from the three main religions struggled under the *Derg* but regained some influence and adherence after 1991. They assumed significant power and influenced more on a par with the power elite, especially upper-echelon leaders. Additionally, they still hold significant authority and influence at the local level because most of the population is religious. Also, traditional cultural leaders among various ethnic groups were part of the traditional elites. As Ethiopia is a multicultural country, many traditional institutions, notably in the countryside, are still ingrained in the social fabric. Most of these exist alongside regular government officials and organizations and have different functions. They developed and practiced sophisticated systems, regulations, and procedures to control the use and protection of local natural resources and resolve disputes at various levels. Such traditional leaders and institutions are often more widely accepted in the community than the formal local government bodies. While they do not exclude membership of local leaders in one of Ethiopia's three major religious traditions, this duality has occasionally

led to competition and conflict between traditional and state political elites. Examples of traditional institutions include the *Gaada* in Oromia, the *Shimagille*s or *Yeatbia Dagna* in Amhara Region, the *Baito*, *Gereb*, and *Ribke-ka* in Tigray, the *Madda* in Afar, the *Afocha* in Harari, the *Xeer* in Somalia, the *Yejoka* in Gurage, the *Kokota* in Kambata, the *Godan* and *Songo* in Sidama, the *Chimata* in Wolaitta, or the *Wogaa Era* in Gamo (Endalew, 2014). Such traditional institutions and their leaders gained more influence after 1991 under the regime of 'ethnic federalism.'

4.3 The Nature and Character of the Ethiopian Elites

Ethiopia's aristocracy in the 1960s was a hybrid of traditional and modernist liberal rule. The traditional elites in the church and nobility desired to preserve the status quo. On the other hand, the newly rising modernist elites want to use a Western model to modernize Ethiopia. The Ethiopian elite exhibited different behaviors and natures from elites in other African nations. The nature and character of Ethiopian elites were influenced by the following factors (Clapham, 1969a):

(1) *The Victory of Adwa and the Italian Occupation***-** the Adwa victory and the anti-Italian occupation battle produced an elite generation with strong nationalistic and patriotic feelings before the 1974 revolution. This group's traditional aristocrats were primarily credited with having backgrounds in Orthodox Church education. They stood by the emperor and his throne with loyalty. In addition, they were renowned for their profound love of their homeland and respect for God. They were hesitant to implement any political and economic changes. Their devotion to the King and the throne outweighed their concern for their less fortunate peasants. Messay (2011) argued that they vehemently resisted any reform because they believed it would harm the monarch and the monarchy. Some radical elite members, such as Gebrehiwot Baykedagn, Tekle-Hawariat Woldemariam, and others, still supported reform. However, their voices were ignored in the circles of the ruling elites.

(2) Those with a background in modern Western education made up the second category of elites. Many of them completed their educational pursuits in North America and Europe. Despite their continued loyalty to the King, they were open to modernization and reform within the framework of monarchical governance. They considered Ethiopians to be in a humiliating position when compared to people in other African and Asian nations, and they sought to change. They even intend to organize the people in support of their goals. They lacked a structured organization

or a media outlet, so they could not express their social, economic, and political ambitions. Progressive elites' actions were not made possible by any political party or other form of organization. They held that reform should be implemented gradually through discussion, compromise, and negotiation with the ruling class (Messay, 2011).

(3) The elite third group comprised graduates and military officers from Ethiopia's first higher education institutions. Addis Ababa University served as the nucleus of these elite group formations. These groups sought to overthrow the monarchy and brought radical change. They called for equality for all Ethiopian citizens and land for the tiller. Their orientation was left-wing and socialistic. In contrast to earlier traditions, this elite group introduced a new culture and mindset. Even though they believe their goal is worthy, many academics and government officials disagree with how they achieved it. According to a former top official of the *Derg* Military Council:

> *Elites' transplantation of foreign experiences without considering native circumstances has been a significant obstacle to Ethiopia's nation-building efforts. The imposition of ideologies from outside sources that are incompatible with local cultures, values, religious beliefs, and social standards has led to blatant conflicts within Ethiopian society. Despite the Ethiopian revolution's initial leftist ideology and the implementation of revolutionary ideas from other countries, it did not bring about significant socio-political change* (Respondent no. 33, 2022).

This group was tainted by extremism, which shows itself through killing rivals and competitors and a winner-take-all mentality. The name given to them was the ‘1960 generation’.

(4) The fourth group consists of the ethno-elite figures who rose to prominence in 1970 and 1980 as leaders of the ethno-regional liberation movements and who received help from Western states to undermine Ethiopian socialism. These elite groups, in contrast to their predecessors, show less feeling of nationalism and patriotism. They aimed to overthrow the fictitious Ethiopian empire and establish new ethnically based republics. After 1991, this faction took control over the state. They introduced ethnicity and ethnic federalism as the political system of post-1991 Ethiopia. These elite groups first put their loyalty to their respective ethnic groups.