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

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE ELITE AND NATION-BUILDING UNDER THE IMPERIAL REGIME (1960-1974)

5.1 The Modernization Project: Plea for Social Transformation

It is crucial to discuss the idea of modernization in general before discussing the modernization initiative of Emperor Haile Selassie. Modernization is evolving from a traditional, rural, agrarian society to an industrial, secular, urban society. Urbanization and industrialization are intimately related to modernization. As Gilman (2003) outlined, several modernization theorists have various definitions of modernity. The characteristics of modern society include a complicated division of labor, mobility, and control over nature, secularism, and cosmopolitanism. Basically, the term ‘modernization’ refers to a model of a progressive transition from a traditional to a modern society. Modernity implies social patterns resulting from industrialization, while modernization is the process of social change begun by industrialization (Shilliam, 2010).

Modernization theory is a body of thought that gained popularity in the 1950s and 1960s. It discusses the comprehensive challenges of economic and social development and formulates policies to aid in developing countries' economic and social transitions (Baber, 2001). Although the many elements of modernization theory were criticized from the start, their effect on policymaking persisted for a long time. By no means were the theories that attempted to explain the modernization process in the 1950s and 1960s a unified body of thought. Instead, it was made up of a diverse range of theories that came from different social scientific areas, as well as different schools of thought (Bernstein, 1971).

Modernization was a long quest of successive emperors of Ethiopia to consolidate their power via the adoption of arms and technology from Westerners. Historical records showed that Emperor Tewodros had a big ambition of modernization during his reign. However, he was not

successful (Levine, 2007). His modernization endeavors and those of his successors had not materialized due to a century-long internal and external war or fighting. The dream modernization effort, to some extent, had started during Emperor Menilek's rule (1889–1913). After the 1896 Battle of Adwa, the relative period of peace, the opening up of foreign relations following the Italian loss, and the arrival of an increasing number of foreign craftsmen created a conducive environment for modernization. However, this modernization process did not yet mature during his reign (Wolde-Giorgis, 2010). Emperor Haile Selassie was the one who introduced it as official state policy and as a tool in his nation-building strategy during his long reign from 1930 to 1974 (Keller, 1988).

A strong emphasis on modernization and nation-building marked Emperor Haile Selassie's reign. His early trip to Europe served as a source of inspiration for the reforms he later championed. He passionately promoted reforms, advocating for a political structure based on a constitution issued in 1931 and revised in 1955, leading to a more representative government despite its opposition. He oversaw the establishment of the nation's first parliament and the implementation of the Penal Code. The emperor was a staunch supporter of modern education and played a pivotal role in its development in Ethiopia. Under his leadership, he established the country's first universities, founded the first public schools, and enabled the emergence of a free press. Emperor Haile Selassie also oversaw the initiation and growth of Ethiopia's modern industrial sector, including the country's first hydroelectric power schemes, waterworks, and the first oil refinery in Assab. He built nationwide agricultural schools and research facilities to harness Ethiopia's natural resources fully (Vestal, 2011).

The drive for modernization stemmed from the increasing demands of the educated upper class and the influence of Italian occupation. The expansion of government bureaucracy and the establishment of modern political and economic institutions required many educated individuals. At first, the emperor relied on foreign experts who demanded high salaries. However, he eventually recognized the importance of replacing these experts with locally educated individuals, leading him to prioritize the expansion of modern education. Additionally, the Italian invasion significantly impacted the structure of the Ethiopian power elite. Many power elite members perished while resisting the Italian occupation or forged alliances with the Italians against the emperor. The Italians also exploited religious, ethnic, and regional divisions among different ethnic groups, using a divide-and-conquer approach to weaken the internal cohesion of the ruling

elite. Some scholars also argue that external factors, such as the global political economy order, drove modernization (one of the prominent scholars who responded to the researcher's interview) added that:

Ethiopia has been encircled and permanently threatened by the colonial powers that occupied all its neighboring countries. The modernization endeavors implemented in the colonial countries significantly influenced Ethiopia to open its doors to modernity. Ethiopia's entry into the world economy through trade and economic ties necessitated the nation's modernization and competitiveness. This aspect also forced the emperor to welcome modernity besides his ambitions (Interview with respondent no. 31, 2022).

Following the Italo-Ethiopian war, Emperor Haile Selassie worked to strengthen his authority by continuing his centralization efforts that had begun before the war. He was rebuilding the government after the conflict, which was crucial to achieving this goal. Without delay, he initiated the development of a modern civilian and military bureaucracy with the support of Western nations. According to Clapham (1969b), Haile Selassie's modernization efforts focused on two essential components for creating an effective central administration: financial resources and skilled personnel. The primary source of government revenue was customs duties, which the central government could easily collect at the point of entry without the political challenges of extracting resources from the peasantry and their overlords. By establishing a centralized customs administration, he diminished the ability of provincial governors to generate revenue from both foreign and domestic trade.

The Ethiopian government's strategy for modernization emphasized rapid progress, limited interference, and minimal compromise. While centralization is crucial for modernization, authoritarianism can hinder progress, as Messay (1999) argued. He suggests that, since the end of the Italian occupation, appointments to government positions were based mainly on loyalty to the emperor rather than qualifications. As a result, individuals quickly rose through the ranks as the bureaucracy, military, and economy grew. Emperor Haile Selassie prioritized military advancement for his survival, leading to the recruitment of elites from the old nobility who embraced Western education and new ways of life. Despite these changes, traditional values of family loyalty and service over personal gain persisted.

According to Adejumobi (2007), Ethiopia was able to solidify its territory at the start of the 1960s thanks to a mix of governmental and economic centralization, diplomatic statecraft, and military modernization. The emperor also set out to secure his political system through a delicate

balancing act that involved holding on to the traditional elements of a bureaucratic empire while gradually assimilating into the global capitalist system. One of the interviewed oppositional political figures argues:

The emperor created a functioning state bureaucracy that included nobility, modern elites, and traditional elites, particularly from the church circle. Thanks to his efforts to centralize authority and his ability to establish effective political, economic, diplomatic, and security institutions, he could subdue all of his enemies under his control (Interview with respondent no. 09, 2022).

As noted by the opposition figure above, the need for a sizable number of elite members to manage the institutions increased due to the modern institutions' new restructuring and expansion. The Emperor personally spearheaded the construction of modern schools at all levels throughout the nation to fulfill the growing demand for human resources with an education, and he also provided financial support for hundreds of young men to study overseas. Ethiopian towns no longer resemble the garrison towns of fifty years ago due to the steady growth of urbanization and trade. Additionally, post-war Ethiopia had undergone significant changes to become a more modern state than it had been only a few decades earlier (Merera, 2003a).

Messay (1999) has argued that Haile Selassie's modernization efforts, compared to the Europeans' modernization process, were more successful because they had more resources and modern centralization techniques adopted from and supported by the West after its take-off. These techniques allowed Haile Selassie to use a relatively educated group first to tip the scales in his favor and then weaken the nobility. In response to the nobility's reactionary attitude, a perfect autocratic regime was therefore created, one that was even more brazen in its boasting of its modernizing goal. One of the scholars interviewed makes additional notes as follows:

The story of modernization can be summed up by the progressive dominance of the central power over other forms of power, which led to the tight centralization of government and the subsequent decline of the aristocracy and regional power. In some ways, Emperor Haile Selassie's modernization policies were analogous to how Europe changed from feudalism to capitalism. The two contexts are similar in the development of a standing modern army, the foundation of a national market and taxation system, and the maintenance of feudal traits. However, the history of the European feudal class served as the impetus for developing the capitalist production and distribution system, in contrast to the Ethiopian feudal system (Interview with respondent no. 37, 2022).

The Haile Selassie regime can be characterized as autocratic in its approach to modernization. Instead of focusing on empowering a specific class, Haile Selassie's absolutist rule

was more about asserting his dominance. His idea of modernization involved using contemporary tools to solidify his complete control over the aristocracy. However, this approach did not lead to significant or lasting modernization in society, as the focus was on using modern tools for non-modern purposes. Emperor Haile Selassie's main priority throughout his rule was maintaining stability under his political authority. He was the first to recognize the potential of modern means and institutions in furthering his power (Messay, 1999).

According to Robert Hess (1970), to bring stability to Ethiopia, Haile Selassie had to restrain the three traditional conservative forces that had brought the nation dangerously close to civil war, as they did in the nineteenth century. All bowed to the relentless political pressure from the center, including the church, local nobility, and the military. The Emperor paved the road for modernity and a united nation more than any prior Ethiopian monarch. The Emperor exercised state control over the conservative clergy through several tactics. One of the top opposition party leaders stated that:

The monarch recognized the importance of having many educated and skilled professionals modernizing the nation. This drove the emperor's efforts to expand education throughout the country and send as many Ethiopians as possible on scholarships to study in the universities of the industrialized world. This opportunity was available to all Ethiopians, and as a result, many young Ethiopians, regardless of their social status, could study abroad and secure employment upon their return. Merit was the primary factor determining high-ranking government positions (Interview with respondent no. 8, 2022).

As noted by this opposition political leader, the civil service was regarded as prestigious to work in because of the adoption of the merit system and the decent treatment of professionals. Similar circumstances existed in the national army, which utilized distinct, all-encompassing criteria for recruitment. Promotion and placement decisions were made based on merit for everyone, from low-ranking officers to high-ranking officers. Due to the rigid merit-based system, the national army gained respect from the general public, particularly among young people, and was able to develop military institutions staffed by highly competent personnel.

5.2 The Rise of the Educated Elite

In Chapter Four, it has been discussed how the West significantly influenced non-Western nations through modern education. Westerners utilized their curriculum to significantly impact non-Western societies, using the education system as a tool to propagate their culture and values.

This influence sparked various reactions from countries, from direct imitation to strategic adaptation. However, many of these nations eventually distanced themselves from Western influences. For example, traditional Ethiopia had a rich civilization with its advanced written language and body of literature, consisting of religious and historical works, until the spread of modern education in the late 19th century. The introduction of Western-style education had a significant impact on traditional educational systems. It gained momentum in the mid-19th century with the arrival of missionaries in Africa, who saw education as a means to spread their beliefs. Throughout the 20th century, the Ethiopian government gradually took control of the missionary schools, recognizing the importance of modern education for developing skilled individuals and engaging in international business. Additionally, a select group of Ethiopians were sent abroad for advanced training, returning to become influential members of the country's intellectual class.

Andargachew (1993) discussed the emergence of the educated elite, noting that at the start of the 20th century, the nobility recognized that their status was in flux due to modernization. The establishment of a modern civilian and military bureaucracy and its increasing reliance on this new educated class rather than the traditional elite was a significant factor in this shift. The development of this bureaucracy was greatly facilitated by modern education, with graduates of Menelik and mission schools, as well as other institutions, forming the initial cohort of educated elite. This emerging group, particularly those who had studied abroad, became known as "Japanizers" or "the young pioneer intellects of Ethiopia." The Japanizers were precursors to the progressive civilian elite of the 1960s and 1970s who supported Emperor Haile Selassie in his efforts to implement modernizing policies that were opposed by the traditional aristocracy.

A few militant aristocratic elites who survived the Italian occupation seem to have disagreed with the emperor on policy matters, and they fervently opposed the monarch's presence in Britain during the occupation. After the liberation, however, the emperor systematically undermined them by enlarging the size of educated elites. In fact, the education pursued by the emperor was very elitist. One of the well-known opposition leaders in a ministerial position claimed:

The primary sources of knowledge and ideas that influenced countries in the early 1940s were the traditional elites, particularly the clergy. However, following the Italian invasion, the patriotic Ethiopian generation saw the value of modernity and education in safeguarding and advancing the country's interests. Political leaders all agreed that the country was humiliated by the gaps in modernity, which led to thousands of dollars being spent to send the young generation to study in Western colleges. The expansion of

education, including higher learning institutions, in the country was significant; as a result, the number of intellectuals who studied abroad and in the country's colleges and universities increased dramatically. Even educating Ethiopians abroad began during Menilik II, after the country's independence from Italian occupation" (Interview with respondent no. 8, 2022).

Another interviewee, a prominent business elite member, elaborated his view as follows:

Since the 1940s, the empire has aggressively expanded and produced a sizable number of educated elites from both domestic and foreign institutions. The expansion of education to produce skilled workers for the sake of bolstering the monarchy system has unintentionally produced results that represent a threat to the rule. The educated elite occasionally became more numerous and were influenced by socialist ideology in the East and Western revolutions and civilization. This catalyzed organized anti-establishment political movements and was the beginning of the uprising that overthrew the royal regime and elevated the Derg regime to political authority (Interview with respondent no.11, 2022).

In 1970, there were approximately 70,000 students in secondary schools, while in 1974, there were 6,000 students in universities and an additional 2,000 studying abroad. The influence of the emerging educated elites led to the civilian sector, the primary employer for high school and university graduates, beginning to modernize. By 1974, 6,000 university graduates and 20,000 high school graduates worked in government service. Most of the remaining civil servants, who totaled nearly 100,000, were educated in primary schools and churches (Andargachew, 1993). One of the leading opposition leaders elaborated on the role of intellectuals from the 1950s and 1960s as follows:

During the reign of Haile Selassie, educated elites were mainly at ease with the existing system. They were influenced by the historical context of patriotism and national pride connected with Adwa's victory and the victor's spirit of Italian occupation. In addition to fostering national pride, those patriotic intellectuals who received their education abroad were also genuinely influenced by Western modernization to strive for greater justice and freedom, better living conditions, and strong, legitimate governmental institutions worthy of Ethiopia's long history as an independent nation-state. However, as the number of educated youth increased and the variety of the workforce increased, the old system's capacity to accommodate these changes decreased, which led to frustration among the new intellectual groupings that were immersed in conflict with the old ruling elite. While the unemployment issue did not match the sincere aspirations of the newly emerging educated elites, it led to a self-interested mentality among them (Interview with respondent no. 4, 2023).

Haile Selassie's modernization project aimed at developing education for both civilians and military officers. As we saw above, the goal was to create a modern, educated elite to modernize the state. The modernization project contained establishing modern training institutions for

military officers and civilians. Andargachew Tiruneh (1993:10) describes the circumstances as follows:

More important to the decline of the state's dependency on the nobility was the creation of a modern army, which had been begun in the 1920s when Haile Selassie, the most powerful man in the government as regent and heir to the throne, pursued vigorously when he became Emperor (1930-1974). The first to be established was the royal bodyguard in the 1920s, with the help of a Belgian military mission. This was followed by establishing the Genet Military Academy of Holeta in 1934. After the occupation, the British helped organize and finance the army from 1941 to 1951. In the following years, American generosity in supporting the military capacity building was enormous regarding financing, technical training, and military equipment supplies.

As stated, the Imperial Bodyguard was reconstituted with pre-Italian occupation graduates of the Holeta Academy. The Police College, also known as *Abadina*, was established in the 1940s, the Harar Military Academy in 1957, and the Air Force and Navy were greatly expanded after that. Foreign countries' support for the expansion of these training institutions was substantial.

According to Bahru (2008), the educated elite of the 1960s in Ethiopia, whose roots traced back to the intelligentsia that emerged during the reign of Emperors Menelik and Haile Selassie, was heavily influenced by the ideas of pre-Italian invasion intellectuals such as Gebre-Hiwot Baykedagn. He served as a role model for them, as he was deeply inspired by the desire for change initially ignited by Emperor Tewodros. This sentiment then evolved among 20th-century intellectuals, focusing on three main aspects: establishing a more structured government, the empowerment of rural Ethiopians through land ownership and agricultural development, and the promotion of justice and equality. Bahru (2008) argued that the monarchy's inability to suppress the radical student movement led by these intellectuals played a significant role in the eventual overthrow of the old royal system in Ethiopia.

5.3 Elite Recruitment, Placement, and Promotion

Emperor Haile Selassie's modernization efforts were interrupted by the Italian invasion in 1936, but they resumed after his restoration to power in 1941. Seeking to exert greater control over local governance, the emperor implemented a new centralized administration with the support of British and Ethiopian nationalist groups. He also aimed to strengthen the national government by appointing educated elites to key ministry positions with clear job descriptions to modernize and consolidate power (Paulos, 2011). In his influential book, Messay Kebede (1999) highlighted the

dual purpose of recruiting elites during Haile Selassie's reign, which began after the liberation in 1941. The first objective was establishing a loyal technocratic elite with modern education and the ability to manage the central bureaucracy and national army efficiently. The second objective was to weaken the most determined and powerful opponents of Haile Selassie's absolute power within the traditional nobility by employing a strategy of division and rule. Haile Selassie used a single selection-loyalty criterion to form his elite and diminish the influence of the traditional ruling class. This principle served as the basis for determining who would be included in the newly created elite class, allowing him to cleanse the existing traditional elite and strengthen his power base.

On the other hand, one of the former *Derg* government's higher officials argued that:

Recruitment of the elite under the emperor's rule was a highly personalized process focused on individual merit. Recommendations from the emperor, close advisors, nobles, knights, and church leaders played a significant role in selecting elite members. Loyalty to the emperor and the abilities of the individuals were critical factors in the recruitment process. Many elite members were affiliated with Addis Ababa University and the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) during this time. The ESM members from the 1950s and 1960s were particularly influential in all regimes. They shaped the current political landscape by introducing foreign ideologies often clashing with Ethiopian society's social, political, and economic context (Interview with respondent no. 1, 2021).

Another young scholar and diplomat complementing the above argument explicated that:

During the emperor's reign, a merit-based hiring system was implemented, selecting individuals from aristocratic and regular families based on their intellectual capabilities. However, due to limited access to education, especially in rural areas, merit-based opportunities were available for young intellectuals regardless of their social status (Interview with Respondent no. 2, 2022).

In fact, another interviewee (Respondent no. 9, 2022) argued against the above view:

All regimes exhibited similar traits in recruiting, placing, promoting, and demoting elites based on ideological allegiance. The practice of appointing individuals to positions of power based on their political loyalty to the party and, to some extent, their allegiance to the leadership has endured as a prevalent political custom. For example, Emperor Haile Selassie drew from his networks in Harerghe and Shewa to fill key positions around him.

And another well-known business elite member noted that:

The elite's recruitment, replacement, and advancement heavily depended on trust and kinship connections. Personal relationships and ideological allegiances were valued more than knowledge and skills. While this practice is deeply rooted in Ethiopian politics and ideology, it also holds to a certain extent in foreign politics (Respondent no. 5, 2022).

To facilitate nation-building, the existing knowledge, skills, and values must be bridged. However, no established method for identifying and integrating the old and new elites existed, leading to the replacement of the old elites with the newly emerged ones. Some scholars interviewed argued that elite recruitment during the emperor's reign involved a combination of merit and loyalty.

During the emperor's reign, the recruiting and promotion processes were mainly merit-based. Regardless of their background, everyone could reach the top of the administration if they had the necessary skills and were willing to work for the current dictatorship. Although loyalty was a key factor, the system favored professional competence (Respondent no. 6, 2022).

One interviewee noted that:

The elite recruiting process was mostly merit-based and reasonably inclusive during the emperor's reign. Only urban districts and aristocracy families could study abroad and receive a superior education. However, some schools in remote areas provided rural pupils with limited opportunities to compete at the national level so that they would be treated based on their abilities (Respondent no. 10, 2022).

The above respondent further articulated that the three regimes shared a common approach to recruiting, placing, and promoting elites centered on political loyalty to specific leaders rather than the state as a whole. During the emperor's reign, elite recruitment also considered factors such as capability and placing competent intellectuals in high-ranking positions based on merit. This meritocratic approach led to relatively high standards among elites during this period. The former senior military officer, on the other hand, confirmed that the key recruitment and selection criteria were loyalty and personal connection to the throne:

Regardless of the political elite's selection and positioning, the ruling class was inevitably to engage with religious, civic, and non-governmental groups, either directly or indirectly. Consequently, governments aimed to enlist the most talented individuals to enhance their legitimacy through widely respected and trusted figures. However, these recruits primarily intended to serve as a means for the established elites to communicate with the general population rather than to introduce independent ideas (Respondent no. 12, 2022).

As elaborated by another interviewee:

There was a consistent approach to ensuring elites' loyalty across different regimes regarding their recruitment, placement, and promotion. However, there were differences in how this approach was carried out. During Haile Selassie's rule, the number of educated elite individuals was relatively small, with no significant issues at the time. The system was accommodating and respectful towards educated elites, with loyalty to the system being a key criterion for advancement. While the dominant elites typically came from aristocratic

ruling-class families with better access to education abroad, the system also welcomed and supported those from ordinary backgrounds based on their intellectual capacity. The merit system was carefully considered in the recruitment, placement, and promotion process, allowing individuals from ordinary families to reach key ministerial and even prime ministerial positions. Haile Selassie actively sought out capable, educated elites and aimed to integrate traditional and other elites into various government positions to gain legitimacy among the conventional elite community (Respondent no. 14, 2022).

During the monarchy, elite recruitment predominantly focused on the ruling class family. However, as education expanded, ordinary citizens also had the opportunity to enter the system. Students who gained exposure abroad brought back innovative ideas and experiences, leading to the formation of small underground groups. These groups, initially individual efforts, gradually began recruiting like-minded individuals, eventually evolving into underground political parties, primarily leftist, encompassing radical educated elites.

In summary, various strategies for elite recruitment were employed throughout different historical periods in Ethiopia. During Haile Selassie's imperial rule, the elite class comprised individuals from the nobility and ruling class. However, the demand for educated individuals grew following liberation from Italian rule, allowing commoners to ascend the power ladder. This shift opened educational opportunities for all Ethiopians, irrespective of their background. Thus, the elite comprised aristocrats and commoners, with recruitment based on loyalty and meritocracy. While political appointments were influenced by loyalty, regular citizens could attain elite positions based on professional qualifications. They integrated elites from diverse ethnic groups to manage diversity concerns and prevent fragmentation.

However, using personal connections and nepotism alongside loyalty and professional competence vetting resulted in internal conflict within the system. This conflict evolved into a class struggle between those seeking to maintain the status quo and those advocating for radical changes. Ultimately, the elite reformist faction turned against the monarchy due to its exclusionary recruitment policies. Despite some opportunities for ordinary citizens to attain high-ranking political positions, equal competition with ruling-class families for top positions was not provided.

5.3.1 Elite Placement

The elite placement under Emperor Haile Selassie was instituted to achieve his modernization project and consolidate his power. The major requirements for elite placement were

personal allegiance to the Emperor and individual competence. The power elite, who were appointed in the first decade following 1941, were mainly from noble families and had the highest level of trust. According to Hess (1970), describes the process of elite selection and placement as follows:

Since the end of the Italian occupation, sixteen ministries of the government, the army, the judiciary, and the diplomatic corps have been staffed by men chosen for their loyalty to the Emperor and abilities. This new group of men rose rapidly after 1945, and the bureaucracy, the military, and the economy expanded; they grew in numbers. Until 1950, most of them were recruited from the old nobility, whose ranks they abandoned for new offices and a new way of life. This nobility, unchallenged until 1960, was exposed to Western education. At the same time, the old values of family loyalty, distaste for business, and private gain through public office have continued within this new setting (Hess, 1970p. 79).

On the other hand, a senior diplomat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that:

The elite formation post-occupation was related to the country's modernization project. The emperor was eager to massively educate the younger generation at local institutions and in Western universities to modernize the country (Respondent no. 16, 2022).

All those interested in computing were eligible to be placed among the educated elite based on their professional qualifications. No matter the person's political stance or familial background, they might enter the civil service if they meet the requirements. In government institutions, there was a chance to advance to higher positions. There were high-ranking officials whose ancestry was commoner than that of the governing nobility, regardless of their political outlook and relationship to them.

Emperor Haile Selassie's regime took an enigmatic decision regarding elite placement. Members of the core power elites wished to keep the current royal system in place, although most emerging elites came from commoners. Given the sizable number of the elite with aristocratic and noble backgrounds, why was the monarch keen to offer ordinary people large-scale, merit-based educational opportunities? This was one of the perplexing questions in the circle of the traditional elites. Most of them were not happy with the emperor's decisions. Because they knew that the emperor's action ultimately replaced them with new and emerging elites, especially those who ascended from ordinary people.

The rivalry between the traditional conservative elites and the emerging progressive elites has intensified as both parties fight for dominance. This animosity has worsened internal conflicts

and led to disintegration within the power elite circle. The emerging elite have even promoted political and social reform, including calls for abolishing the monarchy.

As previously mentioned, the Emperor strongly emphasized utilizing educated elites to govern the country, prioritizing individual competence when making decisions about placement and promotion. This was achieved through careful relocation and rotation of elites from one position to another. There are differing opinions on Emperor Haile Selassie's approach to elite placement. The argument of one interviewee goes as follows:

The Ethiopian power elite generally disliked Meritocracy. They sought to recruit elites who were ideologically and politically loyal exclusively. The ruling elites preferred opportunistic yes men over competent and confident professionals for crucial posts. The emperor handpicked devoted, close friends from Harerghe and Shewa for key positions. The competent intellectual elite who could take an independent stand was being shunned, harassed occasionally, and subjected to various sorts of humiliation (Respondent No. 9, 2022).

The rivalry between the traditional conservative elites and the emerging progressive elites has escalated, leading to increased internal conflicts and disintegration within the power elite circle. The emerging elite has advocated for political and social reform, including calls for abolishing the monarchy. In line with this, the Emperor emphasized using educated elites to govern the country, prioritizing individual competence in placement and promotion decisions. This was achieved through strategic relocation and rotation of elites from one position to another, sparking differing opinions on Emperor Haile Selassie's approach to elite placement.

5.3.2 Elite Empowerment

Historians have widely agreed on the methods used by the regime to recruit, place, and release the educated elite (Bahru, 2002). Emperor Haile Selassie was particularly interested in empowering qualified professionals to fill government positions at the medium and high levels. These experts were expected to carry out their responsibilities with the emperor's consent and under the guidance of their superiors. While they had the authority to propose policies and implementation plans, they were required to obtain the emperor's approval before taking action. With his approval, individuals could implement their innovative ideas. Most of the politicians, academics, and military elites whose opinions I sought out concurred that the nation-building process was adversely affected by a power structure and elite empowerment based primarily on political loyalty. According to one seasoned diplomat and politician explanation:

First off, because loyalty was the only factor considered during recruiting and placement, the system was susceptible to placing opportunists and inept people in high-level positions. All authority was concentrated in the hands of the emperor, which made the system resistant to change and to fresh concepts that would have assisted in transforming the institution, giving it responsibility and the capacity to meet new societal demands. The power elite in the military or civilian organizations did not want strong young professionals with the potential to provide services. They haven't had the chance to fully realize their potential (Respondent no. 29, 2022).

Instead of prioritizing the nation's long-term goals, the ruling class focused on elite recruiting and short-term political goals to maintain the monarch's authority. The ruling class's short-term interests led to internal conflict between the old, conservative elite and the young, educated elite. The refusal to consider alternative perspectives and progressive ideas only added to the dissatisfaction, ultimately leading to disputes and instability.

5.4 The Nature and Character of Elites during Haile Selassie's Reign

Emperor Haile Selassie's reign divided the elite into two categories. The first category consisted of the traditional elite, which included the head of the Orthodox Church, members of the old aristocracy and nobility, and the most dedicated and well-educated individuals in the civilian and military bureaucracies. They favored maintaining the status quo and believed that supporting the idea of imperial Ethiopia would benefit the general public. The second category comprised the newly educated elite, less loyal to the emperor and more dedicated to the Ethiopian state. They called for reforms to the land tenure system and limitations on the emperor's power through constitutional monarchy reforms. However, they could not create a strong enough platform to carry out their reform agenda, as they were neither united nor flexible in their approach. This lack of organization was also evident in elite members under subsequent regimes, such as the *Derg* since 1974. According to one senior former *Derg* official:

The elites of Ethiopia are known for their dogmatic, unyielding behavior and incapacity to reach a consensus and negotiate a solution to their issues. We Ethiopians prefer to win every time we compete in a regular activity. We constantly strive to be better. We have a long history of strife and war because of this. I had forgotten how happily and amicably we had coexisted in recent history. Unless one side loses and the other wins, there is no reconciliation culture through give-and-take approaches. Therefore, the winner-take-all strategy was used to resolve the conflicts. This long heritage served as the foundation for even our national patriotism. Therefore, the elite's political career reflects these cultural values and norms. A good example is the "land to the tiller" question that occurred during

the Emperor Haile Selassie era. If the emperor had listened to the question and been open to conversation, he could have addressed the issues at their source and prevented the 1974 revolution. Partly due to our culture and partially due to the extreme socialist doctrine, the culture of intolerance among competing elites has grown stronger. It was about "my idea is a winner and better ideas than yours so I can control the power (Respondent no. 1, 2021).

After Ethiopia's liberation from Italian rule, Haile Selassie's government faced challenges due to its transitional nature. The Emperor's attempt to separate the state and church sparked conflict between traditionalists and modern elites within the power structure. Traditionalists sought to maintain the union of church and state, with aristocrats and clergy playing a pivotal role in preserving the established order and promoting patriotism and national pride. On the other hand, modern elites pushed for political reform, seeking greater freedom, justice, improved living conditions, and legitimate governmental institutions. This power struggle ultimately led to the disintegration of the monarchy's rule.

5.5 The Power Structure and Elite Integration/Disintegration

Haile Selassie understood that his modernization and centralization agenda would only be successful with the support of capable and trained personnel in the administrative institutions. As the researcher repeatedly noted, many educated elite members were recruited as staff of these modern institutions to meet the rising demands of governance and power consolidation. The emperor made an enormous effort to integrate the new elite with the old/traditional one.

According to one of the renowned scholars that I interviewed:

The emperor tried to balance the delicate power between the traditional and quickly growing modern elite. He attempted to integrate and unite these two elite groups using patriotism, loyalty to the throne, and religion (Orthodox Christianity) as tools. Furthermore, he proposed and used inter- and intra-marriage among family members of the traditional and new elite groups. He did his best for the power elite to establish strong familial relations (Respondent no. 4, 2022).

Despite the emperor's cautious promotion of elite integration, as noted by the above interviewee, the desired synergy did not materialize. Haile Selassie's efforts to establish a modern elite led to growing conflict and disarray among the power elite. The emerging modern elite, often seen as a symbol of progress, portrayed traditional elites as obstacles to social transformation and symbols of Ethiopia's 'backwardness.' Merera (2003b) argued that the rapidly expanding educated

elite also faced significant internal conflicts and struggles over ideological differences and competing objectives.

Emperor Haile Selassie's modernization and centralization program missed the opportunity to modernize the aristocracy, unlike other nations such as Japan and several European countries. Instead of 'upgrading' the traditional elite to preserve the entire class, the emperor gradually removed the aristocracy from its social foundations in the provinces. He strengthened central power, replacing them with more modern-educated elite members. Feelings threatened by the rise of this new elite, the traditional elites were marginalized and instead of cooperating with the Emperor they hindered the modernization project. This bitter rivalry consumed the conventional elite in endless conflict, ultimately leading to the disintegration of this power elite. The Haile Selassie regime was eventually overthrown by an uncoordinated student movement and a few army garrison uprisings due to the disintegration of the elite and numerous contradictions within the imperial system.

5.6 Elite and Nation-building during the Imperial Regime

Before delving into the imperial administrations' nation-building efforts, the researcher must briefly overview standard terms such as "state-building" and "nation-building" and how they apply to my study. According to Francis Fukuyama (2014), state-building involves establishing functional, physical institutions such as armies, police forces, bureaucracies, ministries, and other agencies. This process requires recruiting and training personnel, assigning them to specific roles, allocating budgets, and establishing laws and regulations. In contrast, nation-building focuses on cultivating a collective national identity that fosters strong allegiance among individuals, transcending their loyalty to local tribes, villages, regions, or ethnic groups. Nation-building promotes a shared sense of identity and unity beyond narrower loyalties, creating a cohesive society. Unlike state building, nation-building involves creating intangible elements such as national symbols, shared historical narratives, and cultural reference points. State policies on language, religion, and education can shape national identities. Still, they can also be influenced from the ground up by poets, philosophers, religious leaders, novelists, musicians, and others who may not hold political power. The success of a state relies on effective nation-building, as the state relies on its citizens to be willing to defend it when necessary. Without a sense of worthiness in

the state, citizens will not be willing to make ultimate sacrifices. As discussed in the literature review in the second chapter of this dissertation, Hippler (2005) argued that the term nation-building encompasses various aspects of socio-political development, including bringing diverse communities together over time to form a cohesive nation-state. This process involves political, economic, social, cultural, and other dynamics to achieve unity and cohesion. Successful nation-building may encompass a range of elements and aspects, including economic and cultural integration, centralized political authority, regulatory oversight, military conquest, the cultivation of shared interests, the democratization of decision-making, and the establishment of unified citizenship. Additionally, nation-building is pursued as a political goal and a means to achieve specific political aims. Consequently, nation-building can function as a developmental or imperial strategy, contingent upon the prevailing political context and the actors involved. As Hippler (2005:7) asserted:

Certain core elements are essential in all nation-building processes, without which the process could hardly proceed successfully over the long term. In most cases, these elements are closely interlinked: a unifying, persuasive ideology, social integration, and a functional state apparatus.

However, according to numerous scholars, the concept of nation-building still needs to be discovered. Wimmer (2018) suggests that there is a general agreement that nation-building involves the development of national identity, where citizens begin to identify with a national community and prioritize loyalty to their fellow citizens over their ethnic, tribal, or religious affiliations. This process also involves political integration, where individuals shift their focus from regional or ethnic identities to primarily identifying as nation members. Wimmer (*ibid.*) further explains that nation-building is a dynamic process that aims to promote political inclusion through mutually beneficial interactions between the government and its citizens, ultimately leading to a sense of national identity and belonging within the imagined community of the nation.

Some ethno-nationalist scholars described the nation-building process during the Emperor's time as assimilationist. Thus, they thought Emperor Haile Selassie and the ruling elite tried to forge a single Ethiopian identity by utilizing the Amharic language, modern education, Orthodox Christianity, open inter-group marriage, and social mobility. This helped to integrate and transform diverse ethnic groups into a single, more common identity, now often referred to as "Ethiopianness." Taking into account major variables such as ideology, capacity to provide public

goods, voluntary associations, linguistic policy/communication, and national symbols, I made attempts to review the nation-building effort under Emperor Haile Selassie below.

5.6.1 Monarchism as Unifying Factor of Nation-Building

Clapham (1969a) asserts that during the mid-twentieth century, Emperor Haile Selassie was the dominant figure in Ethiopia. Despite efforts by subsequent governments to erase his influence, he played a crucial role in shaping modern Ethiopia. He was synonymous with the country in the eyes of the international community. His legacy, though debated, continues to be significant. Emperor Haile Selassie navigated a delicate balance between traditionalism and modernism, stability and change, and direct and indirect control by upholding Ethiopia as a non-party state.

The “elect of God” was the title of the ideological foundation used by the monarchy as an integrative instrument and entailed a reference to the legitimacy of the regime as divinely ordained to unify the country. As stated in the 1955 constitution. “By virtue of His imperial blood, as well as by anointing which he received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity inviolable and his power indisputable” (Teshale, 1995, p. 105).

5.6.2 Education and Language as Integrative Element of Nation-Building

The concept of a nation assumes that its citizens have common interests, goals, and preferences that lead them to want to be part of a political entity. National education has proven to be the most effective tool in nation-building, as it socializes citizens and shapes a nation's socioeconomic, technical, political, and cultural orientation. A nation's educational system significantly influences the development of that nation. There are various ways in which education is supported and/or intentionally used in nation-building. It shapes people's references by shaping or "indoctrinating" them or convincing those who disagree with the current administration that there is a place for them (Alesina, Giuliano, and Reich, 2021). To remain united, citizens must share enough values and preferences and communicate with each other. Homogeneity among people in their national perspective can be achieved through education, such as teaching a common language in schools, creating infrastructure for more accessible travel, promoting social mobility throughout the nation, establishing a fair and nationwide judicial system, and fostering an open

market economy. Democracies and dictatorships have different motivations for determining how much and by what means to homogenize the population (*ibid.*).

The role of the imperial educational system and its impact on nation-building is a topic of debate among Ethiopian academics. Many argue that traditional indigenous education during the imperial era did not evolve to meet modernization needs. As Messay (2006) suggested, the traditional Orthodox Church education, while contributing to a shared identity, was limited by its 'Ethio-centric' nature, which focused on local knowledge at the expense of global perspectives. The traditional education system has long been seen as a drawback of Ethiopia's education system. Mekasha (2005) also explored this theme, noting that many of the country's leading intellectuals had solid religious educational backgrounds and were involved in school administration and community life. However, there needs to be more literature that delves into the connection between traditional and modern education and their mutual impact.

The imperial Ethiopian government, following its independence, held a steadfast belief in the power of education to foster economic prosperity and bring about transformative social progress (Tekeste, 2006). In his public statements, the emperor emphasized that the primary goal of education in that era was to propel civilization forward and accelerate the modernization process. Haile Selassie, who served as a regent until 1930, emerged as a fervent advocate for education. He recognized its potential to modernize the nation and actively challenged the conservative elements within the ruling elite.

Several academics, such as Tekeste (2006), Messay (1999), and respondent no. 8, 2022, have argued that the imperial education system in the country, particularly from the 1940s to the end of the 1950s, was elitist. This was due to its availability only in metropolitan and semi-urban areas. Education was provided free of charge and offered easy access to employment opportunities until the newly established government institutions became fully staffed in the 1960s. Additionally, the subject of 'Ethical studies' was used as a tool for indoctrination and reinforcing the Emperor's hegemony. Many scholars, including Tekeste Negash, criticized the expansion and nature of education during Haile Selassie's reign. Tekeste (2006) further argued that the Emperor and his government may have believed they were laying the foundations for the country's modernization. Still, they needed to pay more attention to the communication gaps between generations that modern schools created. In practice, the Ethiopian government required a coherent strategy, as Messay (1999) has asserted that:

On the severe material and human shortcomings was grafted an educational policy that lacked direction and national objectives. According to many scholars, the main reason for the lack of a national direction is to be found in the decisive role that foreign advisors, administrators, and teachers played in establishing and expanding Ethiopia's education system. The fact that the curriculum tended to reflect courses offered at all levels in Western countries was glaring proof of their harmful influence (Messay, 2006: 11)

Based on a conversation with a political leader (respondent no. 8), the country's increased investment in education has increased unemployment among graduates and intellectuals. Moreover, students who have studied abroad and were influenced by Western society are discontent with their limited job prospects. Consequently, most unemployed young people are susceptible to spreading radical ideologies. Emperor Haile Selassie consistently positioned himself as a proactive champion of modern education, supporting his role through frequent school visits, award presentations, and highlighting the importance of education in development in his speeches. However, he never explicitly linked his educational policy to the goal of national development, possibly assuming that the country's modernization and socioeconomic growth would naturally ensue.

Tekeste explains the core problems of Ethiopian education curriculums during the imperial time in these words:

The current curriculum was incapable of producing citizens who could interpret, enrich, and adapt the country's heritage to new needs and changing conditions. The curriculum might have been irrelevant, but all those who went through the system could still count on finding public employment with good remuneration (Tekeste, 2006, p.13).

In his 2008 work, Messay points out a significant flaw in Ethiopian education policy - the "lack of national ideology." This flaw indicates that Emperor Haile Selassie's efforts to promote education were not effectively integrated into a comprehensive plan for national development. Despite his support and involvement in educational activities, there needed to be a more transparent and cohesive vision that would have aligned education with Ethiopia's broader development objectives. The absence of a national ideology led to fragmentation and inconsistency within the education system, hindered the effective utilization of resources, and created a gap between the skills taught and society's needs. Additionally, it contributed to the lack of a shared national identity among students and educators. A comprehensive plan and national ideology would have provided a guiding framework, fostering unity, pride, and a shared understanding of Ethiopia's goals. One of my interviewees argued that:

Emperor Haile Selassie claimed that the goal of education during his reign was to generate skilled human resources that could manage the state bureaucracy and replace foreign experts in crucial professional positions with young, educated Ethiopians without sacrificing the quality of the services. However, he was building up his power base and consolidating power using the new elite group as his ardent supporters to underplay his rivals (Respondent no. 15, 2022).

Following the country's liberation from Italian forces in the post-1941 period, the emperor faced a significant legitimacy crisis. Many traditional elites and war veterans were disillusioned by the emperor's flight to the UK and questioned his right to rule. In response to this growing crisis, the emperor implemented a modernization agenda that elevated the new elites and diminished the role of the traditional elite. He justified this by emphasizing the capabilities of educated Ethiopians to replace foreigners and effectively manage the bureaucracy.

During Emperor Haile Selassie's reign, Ethiopia's nation-building process mirrored that of other African governments by using language for societal cohesion. English was the primary language of instruction from junior secondary through higher education. At the same time, Amharic was the sole language used for educational purposes at lower levels of schooling and for administrative tasks nationwide. This strategic use of the Amharic language and education was a key component of Emperor Haile Selassie's efforts to unite the nation and cultivate a cohesive, educated national elite from all corners of Ethiopia. These initiatives were designed to strengthen relationships among Ethiopians, instill national pride and patriotism, and promote societal integration. The widespread implementation of Amharic-based education has played a crucial role in establishing Amharic as a language of communal communication across the nation. Additionally, the national anthem, flag, and Amharic language curriculum have all played pivotal roles in fostering student unity and nurturing a generation of patriotic Ethiopians.

In addition to the political and cultural aspects, Hippler (2005) and Fasika (2022) emphasized the importance of implementing practical measures to ensure successful societal integration. They highlighted the necessity of a national infrastructure for nation-building, including transportation and communication systems, economic development, and widespread mass media to foster national political and cultural dialogue.

Throughout history, Ethiopian rulers have grappled with various strategies to govern their diverse empire effectively. According to Hess (1970), one approach involved imposing Amhara culture, which cultivated personal loyalty to the emperor among the elites of different ethnic

groups. As a contemporary embodiment of the ancient African divine king, Haile Selassie embraced this tradition and enjoyed his role as a living myth. He purposefully emphasized the concept of Ethiopian identity, leading to Amharic becoming the predominant language spoken by nearly half of the Ethiopian population. This intentional language policy was part of a broader initiative known as "Ethiopianization" to unify the country.

During Emperor Tewodros's reign, the use of the Amharic language for state affairs began. Emperor Yohannes (r.1872-1889) continued to promote and utilize it to strengthen national unity with the support of the military, the church, and local elites. These emperors primarily used the language as *a lingua franca*, as it was widely understood throughout the empire, rather than as an ideological choice. Emperor Menelik's language policy after 1889 continued this trend and aimed to integrate local elites into the imperial power structure. However, Emperor Haile Selassie sought to expand Ethiopianization to include the general population in a broader cultural sense. Unlike his predecessors, Emperor Haile Selassie designated Amharic as the national language in the 1930 and 1955 constitutions and in directives of 1944 for the administration, the courts, and secondary and higher education. The primary motivation behind this decision was the government's goal of national unification and facilitating communication among diverse ethnic groups. One of the historians interviewed for this study described the emperor's decision to use Amharic as the sole language as follows:

During their brief occupation, the Italians encouraged the use of multiple languages as a means of communication. They also caricatured the Amharic language as a symbol of cultural hegemony and an emblem of the ruling dynasty. To disprove this thought, the Emperor, after the liberation, promoted the Amharic language as the national language and forced even missionaries and other schools to use the language as a medium of instruction (Respondent no. 31, 2022).

As mentioned above, Ethiopia is a multiethnic state, and the empire required a common language to unite the various ethnic groups. The interviewee also noted that the emperor's decision to make Amharic the sole language of the country was part of his nation-building agenda, aimed at creating a unified identity at the expense of multiculturalism. This decision also diminished the Italian legacy and its policy of promoting multiple identities.

5.6.3 Restoring a Functional State after Liberation and Public Goods Provision

Following Ethiopia's liberation from Italian rule in 1941, Emperor Haile Selassie embarked on a mission to reclaim control of the nation's territory, re-establish the state, and implement his socio-economic modernization program. As part of this larger agenda, the ministries underwent reorganization, expansion, and reform, and new laws were enacted to outline the responsibilities and authorities of each minister. The Emperor selected ministers and held them accountable for managing their respective departments. A Council of Ministers was established to advise the Emperor on state affairs, with collective accountability for decisions made within the council. Additionally, the position of prime minister was created to oversee the ministers, coordinate their activities, and convey the monarch's directives. The formal architecture of the ministerial organization delineated the divisions of authority, power, and responsibility between individual ministers, the council of ministers, and the prime minister. All three branches of government-held consultative authority, with each minister also responsible for running their department and implementing laws and directives issued by the Emperor.

According to Fukuyama (2014), modernization cannot be assumed to be an automatic outcome of progress in other areas; instead, it relies on the simultaneous advancement of political institutions, economic expansion, and social change. In order to transform the economy and sustain a growth trajectory, strong political institutions and a judicial system based on the rule of law are essential. These institutions are designed to prevent recurring domestic or regional conflicts and wars. Before a state can be subjected to legal or democratic limitations, it must first be established, which involves the formation of a bureaucracy and a centralized executive. This executive should be led by the dynamic and adaptable elite that can be held responsible for their actions.

Fukuyama (2014) succinctly pointed out that modern state-building requires the institutionalization and bureaucratization of the state. Institutionalization means effectively enforcing state authority over society through specially created political structures and organs, ensuring the state's capability to provide public goods to its citizens. This involves the development of functioning and enduring state and societal institutions that lead to coherence and harmony, as well as the construction and reinforcement of sustainable institutions. It also entails the setting up social, political, and economic institutions such as legislative, executive, and judicial arms. State institutionalization also involves functional accountability, a transparent auditing system for state transactions, and the flourishing of civic associations that serve as the voice of the citizens (*ibid*).

Following the monarchy's restoration, Ethiopia's ruling elite prioritized centralization, modernization, and integration. The centralization of government involved the creation of institutions that were subservient to the authority of the throne, a selective process aimed at promoting centralization and protecting the Emperor's paramount position. In Markakis' view (2012), Emperor Haile Selassie's modernization agenda after liberation aimed to minimize political change and protect the regime from the educated class's power-sharing demands. A significant propaganda campaign was launched to portray the Emperor as the driving force behind progress, aimed at quelling the educated elite's aspirations for power and ensuring the monarchy's survival. Cultural integration was also actively promoted through various institutionalized channels, with the Amharic language playing a pivotal role. The government viewed national integration as a natural result of centralization and modernization.

According to Margery Perham (1947:88-89), since returning to power, Haile Selassie focused on reestablishing and strengthening the institutionalization of the Ethiopian state. He achieved this by modifying the 1931 constitution, which defined the roles and responsibilities of ministers and established guidelines for their interactions within the government. Emperor Haile Selassie created a council of ministers as the highest executive body, led by himself or the prime minister in his absence, to ensure more effective governance. This council served as a platform for collective decision-making and advice on state matters, overseeing government departments and ministries. The prime minister acted as a direct subordinate to the Emperor, while each minister fulfilled specific duties under the prime minister's guidance. These reforms aimed to streamline the government's functioning, promote efficient administration, and foster comprehensive governance through collective expertise. These changes reflected Haile Selassie's commitment to a more structured and organized system of governance, facilitating clear lines of authority, accountability, and informed decision-making.

The role of the prime minister was to oversee the proper administration of ministers, coordinate their duties, and convey the Emperor's orders. Since 1961, the prime minister's power grew more robust due to several factors, including the increasing complexity of government functions, the aging of the Emperor, and the violent attempts to overthrow the monarchy in 1960. In addition to formal ministerial and council structures, there was also an informal Crown Council, comprised of influential ruling elite members next to the Emperor. This Council was an essential decision-making body during Emperor Haile Selassie's reign (Markakis, 1974).

However, the role of the Council of Ministers collectively and that of individual members of this council and other agencies were not empowered for critical decision-making. The throne made all decisions. The Emperor was the absolute decision-maker on nearly all state matters. Gebru Tareke, in his seminal work, explains it as follows:

The modern cabinet, headed by the prime minister, was a pliable instrument for personal rule. The king of kings alone could appoint, promote, demote, transfer, suspend, or dismiss ministers, judges, generals, governors, mayors, directors, and commissioners. State servants, who obeyed him without question and with slavish devotions often crawling on the ground before him, could be dismissed for no cause and could not resign without permission. As a fount of justice, the Emperor alone could grant pardons and amnesties or commute penalties. Unsalaries, he knew no boundaries between the public treasury and his personal confers. Not even religious matters were outside his purview. Faithful in participating in essential festivities and arcane rituals, the emperor approved the decomposition of the patriarch, or the Holy Synod, of the Orthodox Church, the principal weapon of conformity, which became autocephalous in the early 1950s. His unremittingly autocratic reign lasted a little over four decades, with only a brief interruption (1935-1941) following the Italian invasion and subsequent collapse of the imperial state (Gebru T., 2009: 32).

After the restoration of the parliament, the legislative body was formed with elected members chosen through universal adult suffrage. On the other hand, the Senate consisted of members of the nobility who were directly appointed by the Emperor. In addition to reinstating the parliament, the Emperor implemented numerous administrative reforms and decisions to establish an efficient bureaucracy. The government's administrative framework was expanded, and its influence at the local level was notably strengthened. One of the interviewees explained that:

The main characteristics of the government of Haile Selassie were transformational. After the liberation, the emperor separated the church and state functions and set up a modern government bureaucracy. This attempt created tension within the ruling class between conservatives and modern elites. The modern state presupposes creating a secularized, non-personalized, meritocratic system of governance. Modernity brought bureaucratic centralization, whereby the dominant elite, with concentrated power, controls, steers, and exercise power (Respondent no. 4, 2022).

As the interviewee highlighted, the emperor successfully established modern institutions and a large public administration structure. This included the creation of the Ethiopian Airline, Ethiopian Telecommunication, Ethiopian Post Authority, The Ethiopian Road Authority, and other significant public institutions. According to Markakis (1974), the first half of Haile Selassie's reign saw the emergence of several progressive trends of historical importance. These included the 'taming' of the nobility, centralization of the government system, modernization of the bureaucracy

and the army, introduction of modern education, recruitment of educated individuals into administration, and the promotion of a modernistic orientation in a profoundly traditional environment. These contributions are of lasting importance and can largely be attributed to the guidance and courage of the enlightened young ruler, who became the patron of the emerging progressive forces in his domain. It is also true that these forces played a vital role in consolidating the throne's position and, when managed shrewdly, gradually shaping the autocracy.

The attempts to make a political reform and to democratize the politics were minimal. Power was personalized under his centralization and his autocratic rule. One of the respondents in this study spoke in this respect and claimed:

In Ethiopia, there was no attempt to create democratic rule during the emperor's time. In addition to the lack of experience with democratic culture, the formation of Ethiopian political parties happened mainly underground, which affected the transparency of discussions to resolve differences, and this has grown into an antidemocratic political culture (Respondent no. 15, 2022).

5.6.4 Building the Nation through Public Goods and Economic Development Efforts

Haile Selassie established the planning board, initially presiding over it, and the planning commission, which was later led by the Prime Minister, to guide the long-term integrated development of the nation. The Planning Commission, founded in 1956, developed and implemented three consecutive development plans. According to Fasika Sidelil (2022), Ethiopia's first development plan (1957–1961) aimed at creating a robust infrastructure network focusing on transportation, construction, and communications to promote integration between regions and the capital city of Addis Ababa. However, instead of improving the quality of life for the people, the main focus was on large urban centers and resource-rich areas.

Following infrastructural development, priority was given to industrialization, agricultural growth, and expanding social services such as education and healthcare. The plan's first five years saw budgetary allocations totaling birr 541 million, with 46% dedicated to infrastructure, 26% to industry, and 8% to agriculture. Despite achieving an estimated 3.7% GDP growth rate during this period, the plan faced challenges due to a lack of competent labor and government capacity. As a result, the objectives were not fully met. However, for a nation with limited planning and execution systems, the progress was hopeful. Throughout the five years, Ethiopia's GDP registered an average annual growth rate of 3.2%.

The initial five-year development plan laid the groundwork for the subsequent plan (1961-1967), drawing on the expertise gained during its implementation. The goals of the second plan closely mirrored those of the first, prioritizing the development of social and economic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and telecommunications before focusing on industrial and commercial agriculture. Dessalegn Rahmato (2008) notes that the guiding principle of the five-year plans were to prioritize mechanization over smallholder agriculture despite its foundational role in the nation. The social sector also received minimal attention during the plan's first five years.

The infrastructure expansion was successful, with the manufacturing sector experiencing an impressive 16% average annual growth rate over five years. Large-scale commercial agriculture has also developed satisfactorily. However, most of the agriculture sector received little attention in the second five-year plan due to the success in other areas of the economy. Small-scale farming, which accounts for more than 99% of all agricultural land and more than 90% of all jobs in the country, saw an average annual growth rate of 2% to 2.5%. The average yearly growth rate of GDP throughout this planning period was 4.7%, with per capita income increasing by 2% annually. According to Bahru (1994), the imperial government's focus on agriculture was skewed towards large-scale commercial farmers due to the need for foreign cash and the class interests of the ruling elite.

The third five-year Development Plan (1968–1973) was designed to enhance productivity in the agricultural sector, as noted by Dessalegn (2008) and Fasika (2022). Unlike previous plans, this development plan focused on small-scale farmers and prioritized higher education. The goal of increasing small-scale farmer productivity was to provide them with the necessary resources to improve their capacity and the productivity of their land, including better animal and crop varieties, fertilizer, pesticides, and improved farm equipment. The plan also aimed to enhance market access and facilitate access to bank loans. It also sought to improve infrastructure in rural areas, including constructing roads and providing access to clean water.

A specialized initiative was created to improve the efficiency of small-scale farmers in areas with fertile soil and experienced agricultural workers, aiming to overcome the limitations of the previous development plan. In 1967, the Arsi province was given top priority for this initiative, with 400,000 farmers participating in CADU, supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), to improve production on 600,000 hectares of farmland. Similarly,

the WADU program was established in Wolayta in 1970 with the assistance of the World Bank. Subsequently, similar programs were expanded in Shewa (Adda) by USID and in Tigray (Shire) by the World Bank from 1972 to 1974. These pioneering efforts in small-scale agricultural development have produced encouraging results. However, there are opposing viewpoints regarding the emphasis on the suitability and compatibility of Ethiopian small-scale agriculture's future, with some questioning the program's successful outcomes about the amount of funding and time needed to scale up to the majority of farmers in the nation.

The program faced criticism for its high cost and time-consuming nature. Furthermore, these policies incentivized large-scale commercial farming at the expense of small farmers, exacerbating the plight of the peasants and raising concerns about social justice. This event underscored the potential pitfalls of initiatives aimed at boosting agricultural output. The slower-than-expected increase in agricultural productivity presented difficulties for the rapidly growing industrial sector. Unlike the previous two five-year development plans, the third five-year development plan did not experience the same level of rapid growth, mainly due to the sluggish expansion of the agriculture sector.

Over 90% of the country's population is employed in agriculture, which poses challenges in creating a stable market for industrial goods. Furthermore, the agricultural sector needs help producing goods for export, and the land tenure system presents obstacles to small-scale farming. Emperor Haile Selassie played a direct role in establishing manufacturing industries through joint ventures with foreign investors, contributing significantly to the rapid growth of the industrial sector in the past two five-year development plan periods. Fasika (2022) argued that Emperor Haile Selassie implemented numerous groundbreaking initiatives to develop Ethiopia during his reign. Evaluating the development of infrastructure based on verifiable evidence, it is evident that the Italian occupation built approximately 6000 km of roads over five years. However, from 1958 to 1973, the road networks only increased by an average of 2% annually, reaching a total length of around 9,160 km. On the other hand, significant advancements were made in the transportation and communication sectors, with the establishment of companies such as Ethiopian Airlines and Ethiopian Shipping Line. Haile Selassie's reign also established, organized, and strengthened various industries, including banking, insurance, telecommunication, electric power, and water supply. Despite their professionalism and competent personnel, these institutions were not easily accessible to most of the nation's population.

The slow economic growth under Haile Selassie's rule and limited access to modern education led to widespread social unrest. The education system needed to expand more quickly, particularly in rural areas, and the growing number of graduates unable to find employment in cities highlighted the imbalance between the education system and the economy's capacity to absorb new workers. The promise of a better life, used to promote modern education, was contradicted by the reality of disillusioned students turning to revolutionary ideas (Messay, 2006).

The gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate fluctuated during the 1950s to 1970s. The first five years of the development plan saw an average annual growth rate of 3.2%, which is considered a promising performance for the country's first experience, and the second five-year development period performed even better, surpassing the planned target with an average annual growth rate achievement of about 4.7%. However, the last five years of the Haile Selassie I government saw poor performance, with the GDP growth rate declining to 3% during the execution of the third five-year development plan from 1970 to 1974. This period faced political challenges and growing institutional obstacles, hindering the implementation of the development plan.

In summary, the data presented indicates that during Haile Selassie I's rule, Ethiopia experienced minimal economic progress. Despite some positive developments, the overall state of the economy remained sluggish, with the majority of the population relying on subsistence farming. Various sources, including Fasika (2022), Dessalegn (2008), and Pausewang *et al.* (1990), have identified several factors that hindered Ethiopia's progress during this time. These include the lack of financial capital for growth initiatives, a weak domestic savings rate, and widening social and economic disparities. The combination of these factors undermined the feudal-imperial order that characterized this period.

5.6.5 Voluntary Associations and Nation-Building

The "voluntary association" concept encompasses political parties, civic organizations, and self-help groups within society. Exchange relationships are more likely to bridge ethnic divides when they are established within networks of voluntary associations, such as clubs, trade unions, and party youth organizations. This includes forming political parties and coalitions that unite different ethnic groups. The presence of voluntary organizations that connect with patrons across ethnic lines can facilitate the spread of political alliances horizontally. The abundance of voluntary

organizations across ethnic lines in a society makes it easier to connect coordinators from diverse backgrounds (Wimmer, 2018).

Robert Hess (1970) asserted that the initial labor relations decree issued on September 5, 1962, was grounded in a provision of the 1955 Constitution. This decree acknowledged the principle of collective bargaining, prohibited unfair labor practices, and established a labor relations board to mediate disputes. In compliance with the 1962 directive, the Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions (CELU) was formed, creating forty labor unions. Since its establishment, CELU has been actively advocating for the interests of the majority of its members by exerting pressure on the government and employers. The confederation has also sought to enhance its influence domestically and internationally by participating in voluntary social initiatives, such as the campaign against illiteracy. Furthermore, there has been a noticeable trend among reformist educated elite to utilize labor unions to advance their reform agenda through organized political action.

One of the interviewees in this study stated that the role of civic associations in nation building serving as a bridge to link Ethiopian society around its common national interests as follows:

Civic associations in Ethiopia have been unable to break free from the influence of power elites and have not effectively acted as intermediaries between the government and society. Unfortunately, Ethiopians have not had the fortune to experience robust civic associations that actively promote nation-building on a national scale. Additionally, non-governmental organizations in Ethiopia need to engage more with the Ethiopian public. They often rely heavily on external funding sources and serve as vehicles for advancing the interests of foreign donor communities (Respondent no. 3, 2022).

Undoubtedly, the need for robust civil societies significantly impacts the process of nation-building. Organized and influential civil societies serve as the people's voice, advocating for their rights and presenting alternative policies. They play a crucial role in uniting communities and integrating marginalized segments of society into the national agenda. Unfortunately, civic associations during the monarchy period were relatively weak in Ethiopian political culture and had little influence. Furthermore, they were often co-opted to serve the narrow interests of the ruling elite rather than mobilizing the broader society for common goals and a shared future (Respondent no. 32, 2022). As noted by one of the interviewees:

In addition to solid government institutions that effectively deliver public goods, successful nation-building requires non-governmental actors like the media, civic organizations, and

other organized institutions that promote national unity. Understanding their political, economic, and occasionally ideological circumstances is essential for civil societies. In the past, the Ethiopian Teachers Union and the Ethiopian Workers Union played a significant role in bringing about reform in the Ethiopian state (Respondent no. 29, 2022).

Before 1955, political party organizations were forbidden in Imperial Ethiopia, and union formation was not acknowledged. The government was reluctant to grant Ethiopian unions the right to associate, as they were viewed as a force of modernization that could not be wholly controlled and as potential political entities (Hess, 1970).

The elections during Haile Selassie's reign did not result in the elite group gaining power. Instead, individuals from historically privileged classes and those from low socio-economic backgrounds who showed talent and loyalty to the emperor could rise to leadership positions within new or reorganized institutions created due to economic and administrative modernization. The establishment of the Haile Selassie I University in Addis Ababa, the legalization of labor unions in 1962, the formation of a special palace military guard, the growth of the bureaucracy and the judiciary, and the education of army and air force officers all contributed to the emergence of this new generation of leaders (Hess & Loewenberg, 1964).

African political parties have emerged as opposition entities to colonial governments, taking on judicial, administrative, police, educational, and social welfare roles. In contrast to traditional African ideals and the colonial regime, these parties have established new principles and advocated for new interests. They have proven effective in political agitation, education, and communication, giving rise to charismatic leaders, martyr cults, and new political elite. They have played a key role in developing African economies and fostered a renewed unity among Africans while legitimizing new political systems. In Ethiopia, however, the Emperor monopolized these functions, and the elite recruited based on inscriptive criteria.

Ethiopia's economic growth has been uniquely challenged, potentially leading to long-term political instability. The country's absence of political parties presents modernization challenges, shedding light on the vital roles typically played by parties in developing political systems. This difficulty in establishing acceptable structures in their absence has hindered the involvement of Ethiopian elites outside the ruling class and impeded the nation-building process. Furthermore, the lack of political openness during Haile Selassie's rule allowed extremist and polarized political ideologies to grow. One of the politicians interviewed stated it as follows:

The majority of intellectual groups, from university students to high school and elementary students, were influenced by radical Marxist thoughts. This led to a marginalization of moderate voices and a political space filled with aggressive and emotional movements. These spontaneous political movements, lacking well-organized political parties, brought forth two different discourses on the future of Ethiopian nation-building within the revolutionary movements: class struggle and national questions. The dominant discourse argued that the problem of nation-building in Ethiopia stemmed from the class struggle between the ruling aristocracy elite, who controlled the means of production, and the peasant labor forces in rural Ethiopia. A minority group, still in its early stages, believed that ethnic oppression was the major obstacle in the nation-building process. This argument posited that hostile ethnic relations and the domination of one ethnic group over others complicated the nation-building process (Respondent no. 8, 2022).

According to the politician mentioned above, the limited room for political engagement and the absence of voluntary associations have led to a divisive political environment. This has resulted in a lack of diverse viewpoints and has hindered the peaceful transfer of power through democratic processes. Additionally, the absence of political parties has contributed to a leadership crisis.

5.6.6 National Symbols and Nation-Building

Like all human groups, modern nations possess symbolic systems representing their stability and identity. These symbols are deeply ingrained in the national consciousness, distinguishing one nation from another through historical and idealized notions of national characteristics. National symbols such as the national flag, the anthem, heroes, currency, and monuments distill the country's fundamental principles and ideals into a few powerful emblems (cp. Mach, 1992).

National symbols play a crucial role in shaping a country's identity and can vary in importance based on factors such as the nation's history and political climate. These recognizable symbols serve as a means of conveying a nation's history and culture, fostering pride and unity among its citizens. They can take the form of physical entities like monuments or flags and intangible elements such as national anthems.

According to Polish sociologist Mach (*ibid*), understanding how a nation's symbolic system is interpreted and used by different people in various circumstances provides insight into the identities of the individuals and groups that comprise the country and the nation-state. Currency and the National Anthem are tangible symbols in people's daily lives and in externally projecting

the state's image. These symbols should reflect and express the national allegiance of different cultural groups. However, if the dominant culture monopolizes these symbols, it would effectively exclude individuals who do not belong to it, hindering the growth and prosperity of a feeling of national identity. Therefore, all state leaders should engage in symbolic nation-building to foster a sense of national unity among all segments of the country's population (Kolst, 2006).

Emperor Haile Selassie strategically utilized symbols to unite the nation and strengthen its identity. Flags, currency, emblems, and historical artifacts were all employed to showcase Ethiopia's rich history and the emperor's role as a protector of the nation's sovereignty and a beacon of modernity. According to one prominent politician:

The symbols used by the emperor in his nation-building project were primarily meant to glorify his rule and promote his cult. A prime example is the symbolic representation of the Lion of Judah. This emblem conveyed a narrative that countered the prevailing ethnic inequality and injustice in Ethiopian society. The emperor's opponents argued that a small group of aristocratic families exploited the symbol to maintain their authority by claiming divine sanction (Respondent no. 18, 2022).

During Emperor Haile Selassie's reign, the Ethiopian flag gained worldwide recognition due to its symbolic representation of freedom and patriotism, resonating with Ethiopians and many other Africans and beyond. After gaining independence, numerous African nations adopted Ethiopia's flag as a symbol of African solidarity and a tribute to the continent's first independent flag. The tri-colors green, yellow, and red have always played a crucial role in unifying the country and reshaping collective consciousness, symbolizing cooperation among diverse groups and tying together the nation and its people. Some interviewed politicians argue that:

The use of national symbols in Ethiopia's nation-building has faced challenges due to conflicting views on our shared history, a lack of consistent and legitimate long-term ideology, a genuine shared political economy, and institutions that promote peace, stability, inclusive democracy, social justice, and sustainable economic development in the country (Respondent no. 21, 2022).

As the above politicians argued, the national symbols had been a source of contestation in Ethiopia since the emperor Haile Selassie. As to the antagonist of the emperor, the symbols did not represent the people's culture, history, and values. Instead, they glorified the personality of the emperor. Most of the symbols used in the country's nation-building process, including the flags, currency, and national anthem, did not get wider acceptance by the emperor's adversaries.

Summary

Imperial rule ended in 1974, without having established a robust and widely accepted nation-building framework. The monarchy and its symbolic nationalism had been relatively successful since the 13th century in politics, maintaining independence internationally and ensuring a certain level of state cohesion and stability. However, it struggled to address the emerging demands from urban classes, ethno-regional contestation, and broader modernization forces such as calls for representation, democratic decision-making, socioeconomic development, and rights for the wider population. The Ethiopian student movement, based at Haile Selassie I University, played a significant role in radicalizing Ethiopian politics, advocating for socio-political changes and significant economic reforms influenced by global revolutionary ideas. The adoption of Marxist-Leninist ideology further fueled this radicalization. While these movements brought about political change, they also led to polarization, violence, and the rise of ethnic-based liberation movements, shaping Ethiopia's political landscape in the latter half of the 20th century. The dismantling of the nation-building model of the imperial state and its elites was not followed by a readily available alternative model.

The national question, focusing on ethnic identity and regional autonomy, came to have a profound impact on Ethiopian politics. The influence of European missionaries, who promoted local languages and cultures, had already contributed to a fragmentation of Ethiopian unity and to the recognition and rise of ethnic self-awareness. The Italian occupation from 1936 to 1941 had actively fueled ethnic discord and narratives of oppressed and oppressor ethnic groups. Historical events in the country, such as the 1943 *Woyyane* rebellion in the Tigray Region, the activities of the *Mecha-Tulema* Oromo Self-Help Association (founded in 1963), and the Bale uprising (1960-63) in the Oromo area of southern Ethiopia exemplified the rise of ethno-nationalist contestation movements that emerged in response to marginalization and erosion of regional autonomy and showed the inability of the imperial regime to incorporate them in an overarching national narrative. The same inability was apparent when the imperial elite faced urban social protests, agitation, and a military 'revolutionary' uprising in 1974 that culminated in its demise.