

Unit 6

ETHIOPIA: INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS & EXTERNAL INFLUENCES FROM 1941 TO 1991

Introduction: Major Socio-Economic and Political Developments in Ethiopia (1941-1991)

This unit explores key socio-economic and political changes in Ethiopia from 1941 to 1991. It includes:

- Major administrative reforms and socio-economic conditions post-liberation
- External influences (British and American)
- Early opposition movements against imperial rule
- Administrative reforms, the 1955 constitution, and developments in agriculture, land tenure, trade, industry, finance, education, transport, communication, and health
- The Ethiopian Revolution, the fall of the Monarchy, the Ethio-Somalia War, foreign influences, the Eritrean issue, and the fall of the Derg

A. The British Era

Post-Liberation and British Influence After the defeat of the Italians in 1941, Emperor Haile Selassie returned to Addis Ababa. Despite his return, Ethiopia was significantly influenced by British military administration. The British controlled key government sectors including the police, army, and finance. They set up the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) over Ogaden and Eritrea.

Key Agreements with Britain:

- **January 31, 1942:** The first agreement recognized Ethiopia's sovereignty but imposed restrictions:
 - The Ethiopian army was to be trained by British military.
 - British ministers had special privileges.
 - British advisors were appointed to each government ministry.
 - The British controlled former Italian properties and key infrastructure.
 - The British East African Shilling was used as the official currency.

- **December 1944:** The Second Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty:
 - Promised restoration of Ogaden to Ethiopia.
 - Allowed Ethiopia to use the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway.
 - Ended British minister's special privileges.
 - British Military Mission to Ethiopia (BMME) was established to train the Ethiopian army.

Eritrean Issue After WWII, Ethiopia demanded Eritrea's unification based on historical and geographical grounds. Various political groups emerged:

1. **Unionist Party:** Advocated for Eritrean unification with Ethiopia.
2. **Independence Bloc:** Opposed unification, including:
 - **The Muslim League:** Focused on the lowland Muslim regions.
 - **The Liberal Progressive Party:** Campaigned for Eritrean independence.
 - **Pro-Italian Party:** Included Italian settlers and Eritreans who served in the colonial army.

In 1948, the UN resolved the Eritrean issue with UN Resolution 390V, deciding on a federation between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

B. The American Era

Early Relations and the Point Four Agreement Ethiopian-American relations started in 1903, but grew stronger post-WWII. The Point Four Agreement (May 15, 1952) led to American assistance in various sectors:

- Locust management
- Agricultural and public health education
- Public administration training
- Scholarships for Ethiopian students

The Ethiopian-American Treaty of 1953:

- Allowed the US to operate the Kagnew Station in Asmara.
- The US provided military assistance and established the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG).

Decline in Relations: In the 1960s and 70s, relations deteriorated due to:

- Reduced importance of the Kagnew Station with advances in satellite communication.

- Rising opposition to American influence, especially among students.

Questions:

1. **Objectives of the Point Four Agreement:**
 - Assist in locust management, agricultural and public health education, and provide training and scholarships.
2. **Causes of Decline in Relations:**
 - Advances in satellite communication reduced the strategic importance of Kagnew Station.
 - Increased opposition to American imperialism.

Administrative Reforms and the 1955 Constitution

Post-Liberation Reforms: Emperor Haile Selassie centralized power by reorganizing Ethiopia into twelve governorate-generals (teqalaygezats) in 1942, subdivided into sub-provinces, districts, and sub-districts. Heads of teqalaygezats were appointed by the Emperor.

The 1955 Constitution:

- Strengthened the Emperor's absolute power.
- Did not introduce principles like popular sovereignty or good governance.
- Focused on centralization rather than promoting cultural diversity.

Agriculture, Land Tenure, and Tenancy

Agricultural Sector:

- Dominant in Ethiopia, with subsistence farming being prevalent.
- Major exports included coffee, oilseeds, and skins.
- Livestock population was the largest in Africa.

Land Tenure Systems:

- **Gult:** Right to collect tributes granted by the Emperor.
- **Rist:** Land ownership based on lineage.

Land Measurement and Tenancy:

- The qalad system categorized land into lem (fertile), lem-tef (semi-fertile), and tef (unfertile) for taxation.
- Private ownership and land sales grew, leading to increased tenancy and feudal exploitation.

Economic Policies:

- **First Five-Year Plan (1957-61):** Focused on infrastructure and agricultural development.
- **Second Five-Year Plan (1962-67):** Aimed to transform Ethiopia into an agro-industrial economy.
- **Third Five-Year Plan (1968-73):** Emphasized agricultural development and addressed food shortages.

Challenges:

- Lack of administrative and technical capabilities hindered development.
- Projects failed due to shortages of qualified personnel and funds.

Health and Education:

- **Ministry of Public Health:** Founded in 1947, focusing on urban curative care.
- **Education:** Post-liberation improvements included the establishment of schools and a shift from British to American educational systems.

Questions:

1. **Roles of Women in Agriculture:**
 - Women participate in various agricultural activities including planting, weeding, and harvesting. Their economic rights are often limited by traditional practices.

Early Opposition Movements Against the Imperial Rule

1. Peasant Revolts

- **Woyyane Revolt (1943)**
 - **Background:** After Emperor Haile Selassie returned from exile, opposition grew, particularly in Tigray. The revolt was a coalition of semi-pastoralists, highland peasants, and local feudal lords.
 - **Leaders:** Bilata Haile Mariam Reda.

- **Causes:** Desire for greater regional power by feudal lords, resistance to centralization by semi-pastoral communities, and opposition to feudal exploitation by highland cultivators.
 - **Outcome:** Suppressed by imperial forces and the British Royal Air Force.
- **Bale Revolt (1963-1970)**
 - **Background:** Started in Elkere and spread to other districts. Led by Waqo Gutu.
 - **Causes:** Land alienation, high taxation, religious discrimination, ethnic hostility, and corruption.
 - **Outcome:** Suppressed after leaders, including Waqo Gutu, surrendered.
- **Gojjam Uprising (1968)**
 - **Background:** Peasants revolted due to heavy taxation and ill-treatment, particularly in response to the 1967 agricultural income tax.
 - **Outcome:** Crushed by government forces.
- **Other Revolts**
 - **Yejju (North East Wallo) and Gedee (Sidamo):** Revolts primarily due to land alienation; both suppressed by government forces.

2. The Coup of 1960

- **Background:** Led by Mengistu Neway and Geremame Neway, alongside other discontented military and civil figures.
- **Events:** Proclaimed a new government on December 14, 1960, with Asfawosen Haile Selassie as head of state. The coup faced limited support and was quickly suppressed.
- **Outcome:** The coup failed due to a lack of army support and poor organization. Key figures were either executed or committed suicide.

3. The Student Movement

- **Origins:** Grew from the expansion of higher education and dissatisfaction with the monarchy and feudal structures.
- **Demands:** Better education, free press, abolition of feudal land tenure, and Marxist-Leninist ideology.
- **Significant Event:** The assassination of student union president Tilahun Gizaw in 1969 intensified the movement's radicalism.

4. The Rise of the Derg (1974)

- **Context:** By early 1974, widespread dissatisfaction led to protests and strikes from various societal sectors.

- **Derg Formation:** A military committee known as the Derg took control on June 28, 1974, deposing Haile Selassie and establishing a Provisional Military Administration Council (PMAC).
- **Key Figures:** Lt. Gen. Aman Mikael Andom (first chairman), succeeded by Brigadier General Teferi Benti and Major Mengistu Haile Mariam.
- **Reforms:** Radical changes included nationalization of land and businesses, and implementation of socialist policies.

5. The Ethio-Somalia War (1977)

- **Background:** Conflict over the Ogaden region driven by Somalia's irredentist ambitions.
- **Outcome:** Ethiopian forces, supported by the Soviet Union and allies, repelled the Somali invasion. The war exacerbated regional issues and intensified Mengistu's focus on northern opposition forces.

6. The Fall of the Derg (1991)

- **Factors:**
 - **Internal:** Mismanagement of famines, ineffective resettlement programs, and ongoing guerrilla resistance.
 - **External:** Loss of Soviet support and aid.
- **Outcome:** The coalition of the TPLF, EPLF, and other forces defeated the Derg, leading to its collapse in 1991.

Unit Summary

The post-liberation period saw the rise of the Derg, which adopted Marxist-Leninist policies but faced significant internal and external challenges. The decline of the Derg was due to internal mismanagement, ineffective policies, and loss of external support, culminating in its fall in 1991.