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THE REVOLUTIONARY ROOTS OF PERIPHERAL REBELLIONS

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GENTRY KIP JENKINS

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Abstract

When do peripheral populations rebel against revolutionary governments? In this dissertation, I argue that peripheral rebellions are violent responses to the disruption of social and economic relationships wrought by revolutionary policies. Specifically, I contend that revolutionary state policies motivate and facilitate peripheral rebellions through three interconnected processes. First, the penetration of central state authority down to the community level removes insulation from revolutionary directives. Second, revolutionary policies designed to transform social and economic relationships polarize some communities between a minority of beneficiaries and an alienated majority motivated to rebel. Third, policies which pose an acute threat that transcends class and community boundaries enable higher levels of coordination among dissidents. Consequently, peripheral groups subjected to high levels of intrusive, polarizing, and threatening state policies are the most likely to rebel against revolutionary regimes.

To empirically evaluate this theory, I first use multivariate regression analysis to assess the correlation between revolutionary state policies and the onset of peripheral rebellions. Combining existing data on revolutionary policies and internal armed conflicts for all available country-years from 1946 to 2004, I find a strong, positive correlation between the presence and breadth of revolutionary policy changes and the initiation of new peripheral rebellions. I then employ process tracing in comparative, diachronically disaggregated case studies to explore the causal mechanisms connecting revolutionary government to the emergence and expansion of peripheral rebellions. Leveraging the rich diversity of reactions to revolutionary rule within and among peripheral groups in Ethiopia under the Derg regime (1974-1991), I find that peripheral

rebellions tended to occur when and where revolutionary policies disempowered local intermediaries, alienated the bulk of the population, and presented a unifying threat to distinct classes and communities. Specifically, I demonstrate how these factors explain such outcomes as early revolts among the Afar and Tigrayans, delayed rebellion among the Oromo and Anywaa, and peaceful acceptance of Derg rule by the Hor and Nuer.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

At first glance, the Contra War in Nicaragua appears to be a straightforward case of counterrevolution, namely an attempt to “overthrow the political system created by the revolution and restore the main political and social elements of the previous order.”¹ Failing to prevent the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship, the former leadership of the Nicaraguan National Guard and their cadre regrouped beyond Nicaragua’s borders to organize a conservative insurgency aimed at toppling the revolutionary Sandinista regime. Lacking a popular base of their own, these exile rebel organizations turned to foreign sponsors, specifically the United States and Argentina, for funds, arms, training, and logistical support. Only a few hundred in number and dependent on aid from foreign powers, these Contras appeared to be engaged in a futile attempt to reverse the popular revolution of the Sandinistas.

But resistance to revolutionary rule was not confined to these reactionary remnants of the old regime. Armed rebellion also arose among peasants and ethnic minorities in the peripheries of the Nicaraguan state. Indeed, the vast majority of Contra fighters were not former guardsmen but rather peasants from the Segovian highlands and indigenous minorities from the Atlantic Coast.² Far from beneficiaries under the Somoza regime, these groups welcomed the revolutionary overthrow of his dictatorship. In fact, a significant number of highland peasants fought with or actively supported the Sandinistas during their insurgency against the Somoza government. For its part, the principal indigenous group in the Atlantic Coast, ALPROMISU, signaled its support for the new regime by embracing the revolutionaries’ anti-imperialist

¹ Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1999), 208.

² Timothy Charles Brown, *The Real Contra War: Highlander Peasant Resistance in Nicaragua* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

ideology and changing its name to MISURASATA – “Miskitu, Sumu, Rama, and Sandinistas Working Together.”³ Despite this initial enthusiasm, anti-revolutionary rebellion erupted in the Segovian highlands, and then the Atlantic Coast, within the first few years of Sandinista rule.

Other revolutionary states have similarly been plagued by peripheral rebellions. Examples include ethnic insurgencies in Iran, Russia, and Myanmar, as well as peasant uprisings in France, Cuba, and Mexico. Even the recent Euromaidan Revolution of 2014 has been followed by a separatist insurgency in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

These examples raise several important questions: Why do peripheral groups rebel against revolutionary states? What do peasant and ethnic minority groups hope to accomplish through fighting? Why does rebellion arise in some peripheral regions earlier than in others? In short, what explains peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states?

This dissertation seeks to answer these questions. In brief, I contend that the intrusive, polarizing, and cross-cutting policies imposed by some revolutionary regimes motivate and facilitate rebellion among peasant communities and ethnic minorities in peripheral territories. I argue that these peripheral groups resort to rebellion as a means of curtailing the reach of the revolutionary state into their daily lives. I find the location and timing of rebellion to hinge heavily on the implementation of revolutionary policies and their interaction with local socioeconomic conditions. In sum, this dissertation points to the centrality of state policies in explaining peripheral rebellions against revolutionary regimes.

The rest of this introductory chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section, I briefly explain the importance of studying peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states. Section two unpacks and critiques the existing explanations for these anti-revolutionary rebellions. The third

³ Luciano Baracco, *National Integration and Contested Autonomy: The Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua* (Algora Publishing, 2011).

section summarizes my argument (which is fully detailed in chapter two). Finally, section four provides a roadmap for the dissertation.

1.1 Why Study Peripheral Rebellions in Revolutionary States?

The fundamental claim of this dissertation is that specific state policies, as experienced at the community level, are often central to explaining the likelihood of armed rebellion. Where such policies are beneficial, or at least not intrusive, peripheral populations have little incentive to rebel - even if excluded from representation in the central state or given a window of opportunity by state weakness. On the other hand, where state policies fundamentally threaten a community's way of life, resentment and rebellion may emerge even in the face of state suppression. Furthermore, understanding peripheral attitudes towards the central state requires not only exploring the specific state policies pursued, but also the means by which they are implemented and their interaction with local conditions such as systems of land ownership, religious affiliations, and the demographic balance.

Noticeably, none of the above claims are unique to revolutionary states. Why, then, do I focus on peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states in this dissertation? I contend that revolutionary states provide a special window into the role of state policies in producing rebellion for two main reasons. First, revolutions are defined by their pursuit of ambitious, radical policies designed to transform their states and societies, often in a fundamental and comprehensive manner. Consequently, revolutionary states should provide a most likely environment for state policies to perform a central role in shaping the likelihood of peripheral rebellion. In other words, if state policies can't be shown to matter in revolutionary states, they are unlikely to matter anywhere. Even so, it must be noted that there exists a rich diversity both

among and within revolutionary states in terms of the implementation of state policies and the local conditions with which they interact. The focus on revolutionary states as most likely cases should therefore not be confused with selecting on the independent or dependent variables.

Second, revolutions rupture existing center-periphery relations, after which the revolutionary state must reassert its authority or otherwise renegotiate its relationship with peripheral groups. Vivaly, not only does the revolution interrupt the central state's penetration and transformation of its peripheries, it also empowers a new regime that is more or less dissociated with the policies and behavior of its predecessor. While not exactly a clean slate, this creates the possibility of a fresh start for relations between the state and peripheral groups. Indeed, the initial expectations of peripheral populations toward the revolutionary state are generally positive, or at least neutral, even when their previous experiences with the central state have been highly negative. Since the revolution presents a clear break from the past, studying revolutionary states enables me to explore responses to state policies that should, at least initially, be less colored by expectations and biases formed under previous regimes.

On a separate note, there are also important policy reasons for specifically understanding the causes of peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states. Revolutionary states exhibit a high propensity for interstate wars, international interventions, and militarized interstate disputes (MIDs).⁴ Peripheral rebellions often play a central role in these wars and lesser forms of military conflict. Peripheral rebellions can open windows of opportunity for neighboring states to invade

⁴ Jeff D. Colgan, "Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict," *World Politics* 65, no. 04 (October 2013): 656–690, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S004388711300021X>; Jeff D. Colgan and Jessica L. P. Weeks, "Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict," *International Organization* 69, no. 1 (January 2015): 163–94, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818314000307>; Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Cornell University Press, 1996); Zeev Maoz, "Joining the Club of Nations: Political Development and International Conflict, 1816-1976," *International Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (June 1, 1989): 199–231, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600537>.

by weakening the military capacity and territorial control of the revolutionary state, presenting potential allies for invading forces, and providing justification for offensive action. Interstate wars have resulted from such windows of opportunity including the Iran-Iraq War and the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia.⁵ Peripheral rebels can also strain relations between the revolutionary state and its neighbors by taking advantage of porous borders to move supplies and fighters in and out of conflict zones, as occurred in the frontier regions of revolutionary Myanmar and Nicaragua.⁶ Finally, foreign regimes may lend logistical and military assistance to peripheral rebels to undermine the consolidation of the revolutionary state. For instance, the CIA air dropped arms and equipment to anti-revolutionary peasant rebels fighting in the Escambray Mountains of Cuba.⁷ In short, peripheral rebellions often provide the gateway for international conflict between revolutionary states, their neighbors, and other foreign powers. Identifying the causes of these rebellions is thus not only vital for preventing and resolving civil wars in revolutionary states, but also for reducing international conflicts between revolutionary states and others.

⁵ John Foran and Jeff Goodwin, "Revolutionary Outcomes in Iran and Nicaragua: Coalition Fragmentation, War, and the Limits of Social Transformation," *Theory and Society* 22, no. 2 (April 1, 1993): 219; Hooshang Amirahmadi, "The State and Territorial Social Justice in Postrevolutionary Iran*," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 1989): 103, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1989.tb00110.x>; Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa* (Yale University Press, 2014).

⁶ Michael W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 127; Baracco, *National Integration and Contested Autonomy*.

⁷ Jonathan Brown, "'The Bandido Counterrevolution in Cuba, 1959-1965,'" *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos. Nouveaux Mondes Mondes Nouveaux - Novo Mundo Mundos Novos - New World New Worlds*, October 2, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.71412>.

1.2 Existing Explanations

Revolution scholars have long acknowledged the higher susceptibility of revolutionary states to internal conflict.⁸ Yet scholarly efforts to explain rebellions against revolutionary rule have predominantly been studies of single cases.⁹ Little effort has been made to produce a generalizable theory. Even so, three existing explanations of armed rebellion seem particularly applicable to revolutionary states: direct rule, state capacity and political exclusion. In the following subsections, I address these alternative explanations by summarizing their basic logics, outlining their applicability to revolutionary states, and discussing their main shortcomings.

1.2.1 Direct Rule

The first, and primary, alternative explanation is that the central state's imposition of direct rule over peripheral groups motivates ethnonationalist mobilization and rebellion.¹⁰ Historically, central states have employed systems of indirect rule in their peripheries wherein local authorities retain governance over peripheral groups while providing revenue and fulfilling security obligations to the central state.¹¹ Since the governance units of these local authorities were largely congruent with the boundaries of distinct "national" groups, nationalism was inhibited. But modern technological advances in communication and transportation have made it possible for central states to impose direct rule on peripheries previously ruled indirectly. Under

⁸ Ted Robert Gurr, "War, Revolution, and the Growth of the Coercive State," *Comparative Political Studies* 21, no. 1 (April 1, 1988): 45–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414088021001003>; Fred Halliday, "'The Sixth Great Power': On the Study of Revolution and International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 16, no. 3 (July 1, 1990): 207–21; Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3 (July 11, 2013): 5–17, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2013.0043>.

⁹ For example: Charles Tilly, *The Vendée* (Harvard University Press, 1964); Brown, *The Real Contra War*; John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975-1991* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Brown, "'The Bandido Counterrevolution in Cuba, 1959-1965.'"

¹⁰ Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (OUP Oxford, 2000).

¹¹ Hechter, 50.

direct rule, the central state “assumes the rights, resources, and obligations formerly held by local authorities.”¹² These local authorities are either stripped of their autonomy and subjected to central control or wholly replaced by centrally empowered officials. Threatened with the loss of their status and privileges, local authorities turn to peripheral nationalism as a means of restoring their power. Beyond these elites, direct rule can produce grievances among peripheral masses by subjecting them to centralized decision-making and a cultural division of labor.¹³ Where the ethnonationalist demands produced by direct rule cannot be expressed through “legitimate political channels,” peripheral groups turn to armed rebellion.¹⁴

Notably, there are numerous factors – domestic and international, political and economic – that can enhance or mitigate the effect of direct rule in motivating peripheral nationalism and a resort to armed rebellion. As argued by Michael Hechter, these factors include the success of assimilationist policies, barriers to international trade, opportunities for regional defensive alliances, the strength of the state’s economy, the allocation of government-provided goods, and “the responsiveness of the central state to the distinctive values of national groups.”¹⁵ The necessity of overcoming obstacles to collective action in order to mobilize peripheral nationalism is also acknowledged. The opportunity for collective action is largely shaped by “the central state’s tolerance of nationally distinctive cultural and political organizations,” which can then transform into militantly nationalist organizations.¹⁶ However, political openings, such as those created by “transitional political regimes... and states that have weathered significant power shifts,” can also facilitate ethnonationalist mobilization and rebellion.¹⁷ Nonetheless, although

¹² Hechter, 60.

¹³ Hechter, 71.

¹⁴ Hechter, 128–29.

¹⁵ Hechter, 122. For the full discussion, see: Hechter, chap. 7.

¹⁶ Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 127.

¹⁷ Hechter, 93.

these other factors are acknowledged, the imposition of direct rule is still treated as the primary variable for predicting the onset of peripheral rebellion.¹⁸

The conventional wisdom holds that revolutionary states, especially those transformed by social revolutions, are highly centralizing and modernizing. Revolutionary regimes tend to concentrate high levels of power in the central state and seek to extend that authority throughout the whole country via direct rule.¹⁹ In addition, revolutionary governments often engage in ambitious projects of militarization, industrialization, and economic development to modernize and strengthen the state vis-à-vis other states.²⁰ All of this diverges sharply from the types of states that precede and invite successful revolutions which are characterized as being infrastructurally weak and patrimonial.²¹ The revolutionary transformation of the state is thus expected to entail the rapid imposition of direct rule in peripheral regions previously governed by semi-autonomous local authorities. Revolutionary states should thus be a prime setting for ethnonationalist insurgencies.

However, there are a few problems with attributing the onset of peripheral rebellions against revolutionary regimes to the imposition of direct rule. First, studies of some revolutionary states, such as Nicaragua, Iran, and Ethiopia, reveal that the imposition and expansion of direct rule were underway long before the ascent of the revolutionary regime.²²

¹⁸ See, for instance: Hechter, 71, 76, 93.

¹⁹ Jeff Carter, Michael Bernhard, and Glenn Palmer, "Social Revolution, the State, and War: How Revolutions Affect War-Making Capacity and Interstate War Outcomes," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 439–66; Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Levitsky and Way, "The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes."

²⁰ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Gurr, "War, Revolution, and the Growth of the Coercive State."

²¹ Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²² Baracco, *National Integration and Contested Autonomy*; Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad, *Iran After the Revolution: Crisis of an Islamic State* (I.B.Tauris, 1996); Christopher Clapham, "Controlling Space in Ethiopia," in

Where direct rule over peripheral groups preceded the revolution, its imposition alone cannot explain why peripheral rebellions become significantly more likely after the revolution.

Second, the introduction of direct rule is not always met by opposition and resistance by peripheral groups. For one, the co-ethnic rivals of local authorities may embrace direct rule in the hopes of securing governmental posts in the new administration. More broadly, the general population may welcome, or at least tolerate, direct rule as a pathway to new opportunities and resources. As I argue below, local responses to the imposition of central government authority will heavily hinge on the nature of the state policies which accompany or follow it. Recognizing this as well, Hechter argues that other domestic and international factors, including state policies toward the periphery, can modify the incentives for peripheral nationalism and rebellion triggered by direct rule.²³

But this leads to the third issue: Hechter suggests so many independent, intervening factors of unspecified relative importance that it becomes difficult to determine whether or not we should expect militant peripheral nationalism to emerge in situations where groups face countervailing considerations. As a result, even Hechter relies primarily on the introduction of direct rule to explain the empirical outcome of cases. Hechter's assessment of different outcomes among peripheral groups in the Ottoman Empire is illustrative: "All told, the sequence of peripheral nationalism in the Ottoman Empire follows the timing of the imposition of direct rule. Direct rule was first imposed in the western provinces, and last in the eastern ones. Wherever there was sufficient cultural homogeneity to foster territorial solidarity, peripheral nationalism

Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After, ed. Wendy James et al. (Oxford, England : Addis Ababa : Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 9–32.

²³ See: Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 115–23.

often followed suit.”²⁴ Thus, the influence of specific state policies in provoking or inhibiting peripheral rebellion is either undervalued or unspecified in the direct rule argument.

These three issues point to the critical difference between Hechter’s direct rule explanation of peripheral nationalism and my theory of intrusive, polarizing, and threatening revolutionary policies. For Hechter, militant peripheral nationalism is driven by a demand for sovereignty. The primary effect of direct rule in Hechter’s theory is the creation of an incongruence between the nation and the governance unit at the group level, which sovereignty for the peripheral group can rectify. State policies, among other factors, serve as intervening variables that shape the feasibility and desirability of this sovereignty.

In contrast, I argue that peripheral rebellion is driven by the desire of peripheral populations to limit the state’s disruption of their daily lives and livelihoods, with sovereignty providing but one (extreme) avenue to securing non-interference. The primary effect of direct rule in my theory is the loss of insulation from disruptive policies, which local intermediaries could otherwise provide. Critically, I argue that the important intermediaries are often found at the community level where policies directly affect the population. Finally, the impact of revolutionary policies is the key factor in my theory. The loss of insulation via direct rule (at the community level) only matters when accompanying or subsequent revolutionary state policies alienate and polarize the population. This explains why rebellion comes after the revolution, even if direct rule comes before it, as well as why direct rule is sometimes accepted. This focus on the local effects of revolutionary state policies is also easier to interpret than an exhaustive list of potential mitigating and aggravating factors. In summary, I contend that direct rule is a

²⁴ Hechter, 76.

permissive condition, while the alienation of revolutionary policies is what motivates peripheral rebellion.

1.2.2 *State Capacity and Political Exclusion*

The other two explanations - state capacity and political exclusion - come from the central debate in the civil war onset literature over the relative importance of motivation and opportunity. While some minimum threshold of each are required for rebellion to occur, scholars disagree about which of these two factors plays the more determinative role in civil war onset.²⁵ Both of these explanations diverge in important ways from the direct rule argument. In particular, while the direct rule explanation contends that the extension of central state authority into the periphery motivates violent resistance, these arguments instead point to the state's absence in the periphery (state capacity) or exclusion of peripheral groups from central state power (political exclusion) to explain peripheral rebellion.

Proponents of the opportunity-driven logic argue that structural conditions favorable to insurgency are central to explaining whether civil wars occur in a given state.²⁶ While these structural conditions include such factors as rough terrain and population size, the most crucial factors deal with state capacity, namely, "*the government's police and military capabilities and the reach of government institutions into rural areas.*"²⁷ Weak states – those with poor repressive capabilities and limited institutional reach – provide a permissive environment for insurgent

²⁵ For a review of this debate, see: Lars-Erik Cederman and Manuel Vogt, "Dynamics and Logics of Civil War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 9 (October 2017): 1992–2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717721385>.

²⁶ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (February 1, 2003): 75–90, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3118222>; Cullen S Hendrix, "Measuring State Capacity: Theoretical and Empirical Implications for the Study of Civil Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 3 (2010): 273.

²⁷ Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," 80.

groups to form and operate, especially in the peripheries of the state. Under such circumstances, motivations for rebellion need not take the form of broadly-held grievances, since even small insurgent groups – motivated by narrow grievances or outright greed – can organize and survive in weak states.²⁸ In contrast, states with highly developed repressive capabilities leave little room for insurgent groups to develop, even if grievances toward the government are widespread. Consequently, state weakness is the key to explaining where and when peripheral rebellions occur.

The political instability inherent in revolutionary transitions of power should produce a prime environment for opportunistic rebellions. Revolutions typically involve the destruction of the existing state (at least to some extent) and its replacement by a new state.²⁹ To consolidate their power, revolutionaries must create or coopt coercive and administrative institutions, which were more or less eroded by the revolutionary conflict.³⁰ Where old regime institutions are coopted, loyalty to the new regime and its agenda must be secured. During this process, the capacity of the revolutionary state will be in question. Prospective rebels may take advantage of the apparent weakness of the revolutionary state to initiate insurgencies for any of a number of motivations.³¹

Alternatively, those emphasizing the motivation-driven logic tend to highlight how the grievance of political exclusion shapes the likelihood of armed rebellion.³² For these scholars,

²⁸ Fearon and Laitin, 88.

²⁹ Walt, *Revolution and War*; Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*.

³⁰ As Foran and Goodwin write, “The revolutionary reconsolidation of state power, in this view, requires the reformation of state institutions that have typically been shattered with the fall of the old regime, especially the army and civil administration...” Foran and Goodwin, “Revolutionary Outcomes in Iran and Nicaragua,” 210. See also: Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Westview Press, 1998), 13.

³¹ Neighboring states may also seek to take advantage of the apparent weakness of the revolutionary state to wage wars for territory or regime change. See discussion in: Walt, *Revolution and War*.

³² Cederman and Vogt, “Dynamics and Logics of Civil War”; Lars-Erik Cederman, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Halvard Buhaug, *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lars-Erik Cederman,

the state is treated, with the advent of nationalism, as “an institution that is captured to different degrees by representatives of particular ethnic communities...”³³ Ethnic groups desire access to central state power in order to avoid rule by ethnic others – and the inequality and discriminatory policies which such “alien rule” may produce. Political exclusion, especially when representing a recent loss of access to state power, serves as an effective, group-level grievance that can motivate ethnic groups to rebel. Even so, proponents of this grievance-based argument acknowledge that armed rebellion requires both motivation and organizational capacity (i.e. opportunity). However, they argue that nationalism, especially when combined with a relatively large ethnic population, can resolve the collective action problem and make organized rebellion possible.³⁴ Consequently, while the opportunity for rebellion is taken into account, it should be fairly easy to secure for ethnic groups (at least relatively large ones). This leaves the grievance of political exclusion as the key factor driving the probability of peripheral rebellions.

If the state is “not an ethnically neutral institution” but rather an “active agent of political exclusion”, then its overthrow via revolution opens the door for a new configuration of “ethnic power relations” as the revolutionary state is established.³⁵ The revolutionary regime may enhance the power status of previously excluded ethnic groups in an effort at greater inclusion and representation. Then again, the revolutionaries may embrace an ethnic platform, expanding and deepening the exclusion of some ethnic groups to the benefit of others. Either way, the revolutionary transformation of the state is likely to affect ethnic groups’ access to state power.

Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison,” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (August 2011): 478–95, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055411000207>; Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis,” *World Politics* 62, no. 01 (January 2010): 87–119, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109990219>.

³³ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?,” 87.

³⁴ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, 96.

³⁵ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, 89.

Those ethnic groups newly, or more deeply, excluded from state power as a result of the revolution may be motivated to initiate ethnonationalist insurgencies rather than submit to ethnic domination.

Yet two common issues pervade the state capacity and political exclusion arguments and weaken their power to explain peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states. First, like direct rule, the key explanatory variable of each is often present to a significant, if not greater, degree under the regime that preceded the revolution. In fact, state weakness and political exclusion have been identified as key characteristics of those states most susceptible to revolutionary overthrow. As Goodwin notes, “the formation of revolutionary movements in the periphery has been unintentionally facilitated and even encouraged by that subset of violent and exclusionary authoritarian states that are also organizationally incoherent and militarily weak, especially in those outlying areas of the national society...”³⁶ Again, this begs the question of why peripheral rebellions become more likely in the years following the revolution.

Second, each of these arguments provides an incomplete causal explanation. As noted earlier, both motivation and opportunity are required for the collective action of armed rebellion. Yet theories of civil war onset have largely gravitated toward either one or the other, in the process neglecting how motivation and opportunity intertwine.³⁷ The state weakness argument focuses on variation in opportunity, while arguing that the need for motivation is easily satisfied (thereby essentially operating as a constant). Yet not only does the level of motivation vary, but in a way that interacts with state capacity. On the one hand, by limiting state intrusion into the periphery, state weakness may strongly reduce the motivation to rebel among peripheral groups.

³⁶ Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 26.

³⁷ Cederman and Vogt, “Dynamics and Logics of Civil War.”

On the other hand, broader and deeper grievances can produce greater mobilization capacity for prospective rebels, thereby demanding higher levels of state capacity to successfully repress. So, while extremely high state capacity may produce a prohibitive environment for rebellion, anything less than that requires the level of grievance to also be considered when assessing the likelihood of civil war.

For its part, the political exclusion argument favors motivation, while presenting opportunity as a fairly low hurdle, at least for larger ethnic groups, thanks to nationalism. Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min assert, “While neoclassical collective action theory in the Olsonian tradition expects free riding in large groups, nationalists may overcome such dilemmas through intragroup monitoring, by relying on preexisting social networks, and by mobilizing identity-related cooperation norms.”³⁸ Even so, the level of opportunity for rebellion can vary significantly for several reasons. Strong states may be able to effectively obstruct or suppress the development of ethnonationalist organizations. Internal divisions within an ethnic group may inhibit cooperation across sub-groups. Perhaps most importantly, the core grievance of ethnonationalist elites – exclusion from the central state – may fail to resonate with peripheral populations if state intrusion into their daily lives is minimal. Without their support, ethnonationalist elites may struggle to muster the recruits and resources needed for rebellion. In short, the motivation and opportunity for rebellion are not as easy to satisfy and separate as these two explanations would suggest.

³⁸ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?,” 96.

1.3 The Argument

I argue that revolutionary policies are central to explaining the higher rate of peripheral rebellions among revolutionary states compared to non-revolutionary states. Beyond mere dissatisfaction with the practices of the existing regime, revolutionaries are motivated to seize power to radically transform – even remake – society. Once in power, revolutionary regimes may implement a wide range of revolutionary policies, such as agrarian reform, population resettlement, military conscription, and anti-clerical policies. Where these policies “threaten existing societal interests and institutions,” some level of resistance is to be expected.³⁹ Resentment is further compounded by the ideological fervor and authoritarian approach with which these policies are pursued. There is typically little to no room for local input or improvisation. Dissenting voices to particular policies are quickly labelled counterrevolutionary. In such an environment, it is hardly shocking that many such policies are devastating failures with highly deleterious results for the populations on which they are imposed.⁴⁰ Rather than submit to such policies, peripheral groups may resort to armed rebellion.

Certainly, I am not the first to suggest that revolutionary policies can provoke resistance and rebellion. Nevertheless, while this argument seems an intuitive explanation for the heightened risk of peripheral rebellions among revolutionary states, it has surprisingly not been fleshed out in existing scholarship. Instead, the role of revolutionary policies in provoking rebellion has largely been taken for granted by revolution scholars that build such a relationship

³⁹ Levitsky and Way, “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes,” 12.

⁴⁰ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 1998).

into their arguments.⁴¹ This has left critical questions unanswered. For instance, how does the institutional reach of the revolutionary state affect the actual implementation of its policies? Moreover, where implemented, are all revolutionary policies equally harmful and unpopular across different regions and groups? Finally, what determines whether populations resort to violence as opposed to resisting such policies through the “weapons of the weak”?⁴²

In this dissertation, I present a theory of peripheral rebellions against revolutionary regimes that seeks to address these key questions by focusing on three conditions related to revolutionary policies: state intrusion, peripheral polarization, and unifying threats. First, I argue that state intrusion at the local level creates a permissive condition for the development of popular disaffection toward the central regime. That is, for revolutionary policies to reach and disrupt peripheral populations, the central state must first impose its authority at the community level, replacing local authorities with outsiders and regime loyalists. Otherwise, local leaders may insulate their communities from revolutionary policies.

Second, I contend that peripheral polarization, caused by the interaction of revolutionary policies with local socioeconomic conditions, produces the popular disaffection toward the revolutionary regime needed to motivate and fuel peripheral rebellion. This happens when revolutionary policies polarize communities between a small bloc of beneficiaries and a large bloc that is socially and economically alienated by these policies. In such circumstances, both pro- and anti-revolutionary positions can rapidly become entrenched, eliminating space for a

⁴¹ Rosemary H. T. O’Kane, “Post-Revolutionary State Building in Ethiopia, Iran and Nicaragua: Lessons from Terror,” *Political Studies* 48, no. 5 (December 1, 2000): 970–88, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00290>; Levitsky and Way, “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes.”

⁴² James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, 2008).

moderate position on the regime and its policies.⁴³ As a result, dissidents increasingly view rebellion as their only recourse.

Third, I assert that revolutionary policies that pose a common threat can facilitate rebellion by either driving mass support for elite opposition organizations or providing a focal point for bottom-up, decentralized rebellion. Importantly, I concede that the motivation to rebel, produced by polarizing revolutionary policies, must be combined with the opportunity for dissident coordination in order to produce armed rebellion. While resentment towards revolutionary policies may result in acts of everyday resistance or sporadic episodes of violence, some mechanism for coordination is needed for disaffection to coalesce into armed rebellion.⁴⁴ Coordination can be facilitated through either elite-led organization, which can provide leadership, structure, and resources to prospective rebels, or through a temporal focal point for rebellion, permitting collective action across communities even in the absence of a central organization.

Revolutionary state policies at the regional level can inadvertently facilitate such dissident coordination. Where revolutionary policies pose a common threat to both regional elites and the “masses,” elite-led rebel organizations can structure and direct popular disaffection into rebellion. Alternatively, where aggressively and simultaneously implemented across communities, revolutionary policies can provide a focal point for the decentralized coordination of grassroots rebellions.

⁴³ This argument parallels that made by Charles Tilly in his 1964 book. That study focused on a single region in a single case and included several other factors in its analysis. In contrast, I provide a simpler, more generalizable theory of popular disaffection, while also exploring the role of dissident coordination. See: Tilly, *The Vendée*.

⁴⁴ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

In short, the theory I propose recognizes the need for both popular disaffection (motivation) and dissident coordination (opportunity). Without popular disaffection toward the revolutionary regime, elite-led organizations – whether ethnonationalist or counterrevolutionary – will struggle to mount any significant armed rebellion in the periphery, if they fight at all. Conversely, without some mechanism for dissident coordination, resentment toward the regime may be widespread – and even involve incidents of violent resistance – but still fail to produce armed rebellion due to state repression and the collective action problem. Crucially, while direct rule provides a permissive condition for revolutionary disruption in the periphery, it is the revolutionary policies that the state then imposes that create the motivation - and enable the coordination - needed for peripheral rebellion.

1.4 Summary and Roadmap

Peripheral rebellions against revolutionary regimes have serious implications not only for the states in which they occur, but also for the international system. Existing explanations struggle to account for these rebellions due to two common issues. First, they highlight factors that do not sharply distinguish between revolutionary and non-revolutionary states. Second, they provide incomplete causal explanations. In this dissertation, I propose a theory of popular disaffection and dissident coordination that seeks to address these shortcomings. While this theory emphasizes the role of revolutionary policies in producing disaffection, it conditions this effect on state intrusion and political polarization at the local level. I further identify two pathways to dissident coordination and theorize what factors shape their likelihood. I discuss this theory of peripheral rebellion in greater detail in chapter two.

Following the presentation of my theory, I assess the correlation between revolutionary policies and the onset of peripheral rebellions through multivariate analysis in chapter three. Chapter four presents the research design for my qualitative case chapters. In chapters five through eight, I conduct disaggregated-comparative process tracing within and across several peripheral groups in revolutionary Ethiopia from 1974-1991. Chapter nine concludes with the key takeaways of this dissertation and their implications for both theory and policy.

Chapter 2: Theory

From the Vendée uprising of 1793 in France to the 2014 separatist insurgency in Ukraine, armed rebellions have often followed revolutionary changes of government. In fact, between 1946 and 2004, revolutionary states experienced new internal armed conflicts at over twice the rate of non-revolutionary states.¹ Unsurprisingly, some revolutionary regimes have been assailed by urban insurrections or violent coup attempts designed to reverse or redirect the course of the revolution. More puzzling, however, have been the many rebellions against revolutionary rule that have taken root among peripheral groups – peasant communities and ethnic groups – which originally met the overthrow of the old regime with enthusiasm or, at worst, indifference.

Why do revolutions increase the likelihood of peripheral rebellions? Why are some revolutionary regimes plagued by peasant uprisings and ethnic insurgencies, while others face no such armed challenges? Why do some peripheral groups rebel early, others later, and some not at all? In short, when do peripheral groups rebel against revolutionary governments?

The dominant explanations of civil war onset would attribute these peripheral rebellions to either the opportunities afforded by state weakness or the grievances inherent in political exclusion.² However, these arguments share two fundamental limitations. First, they fail to identify what makes revolutionary states distinct from their predecessors and thereby more prone to civil war. State weakness and political exclusion are just as, if not more, prevalent in the

¹ Calculated using Jeff Colgan’s Revolutionary Leader Dataset and UCDP’s Armed Conflict Dataset. See: Colgan, “Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict”; Lotta Harbom, Erik Melander, and Peter Wallensteen, “Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946–2007,” *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 697–710, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343308094331>; Marie Allansson, Erik Melander, and Lotta Themnér, “Organized Violence, 1989–2016,” *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 4 (July 1, 2017): 574–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343317718773>.

² Cederman and Vogt, “Dynamics and Logics of Civil War”; Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?”

regimes that precede revolutions. Second, by strongly privileging either opportunity or motivation, these explanations underappreciate how their interaction shapes the likelihood of the collective action needed for armed rebellion.

In contrast, I argue that peripheral rebellions are violent responses to the disruption of social and economic relationships wrought by intrusive revolutionary policies. Specifically, revolutionary state policies motivate and facilitate peripheral rebellions through three interconnected processes. First, the penetration of central state authority down to the community level removes insulation from revolutionary directives. Second, revolutionary policies designed to transform social and economic relationships polarize some communities between a minority of beneficiaries and an alienated majority. Third, policies that pose an acute threat which cuts across class and/or community boundaries enable higher levels of coordination among dissidents. Consequently, peripheral groups subjected to high levels of state penetration, polarizing policies, and acute, cross-cutting threats are the most likely to rebel against the revolutionary regime.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. I begin by discussing the key concept of revolution, which I define as an irregular transition of leadership over the central government followed by, at minimum, a rapid, radical transformation of the political institutions of the state. In the second section, I unpack what is to be explained: peripheral rebellions against revolutionary regimes. I define peripheral rebellions as armed conflicts against the government that originate among ethnic groups and/or peasant communities outside the urban core of the state. Section three outlines two reasons why these peripheral rebellions are puzzling. In section four, which composes the bulk of this chapter, I present my explanatory theory. The final section concludes with a summary of the methods and cases I employ in the rest of the dissertation.

2.1 The Concept of Revolution

In his 2001 article, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory,” Jack Goldstone observed, “In recent years, scholarship on the causes, processes, and outcomes of revolutions has sprawled across topics and disciplines like an amoeba, stretching in various directions in response to diverse stimuli.”³ Goldstone went on to contend that even definitions of revolution “have changed as new events have come forth on the stage of world history.”⁴ Echoing this sentiment, Fred Halliday remarked, “...just as the real character of revolution – the forms it takes, the forces it mobilises, the outcomes it has – have changed, so too has its meaning, for political theorists and political actors, and above all for the social movements that mobilise in support of this idea.”⁵ Such comments suggest that those definitions of revolution heavily shaped by historical or contemporary events are likely to prove inadequate as the practice and trends of revolution continue to change.

Curiously, at roughly the same time that Halliday and Goldstone were emphasizing revolution’s continued evolution, other scholars were forecasting its approaching obsolescence.⁶ For instance, in his 1999 article, “The End of Revolution?,” Robert Snyder predicted,

Not only should the spread of liberalism make great power war and the dominant paradigm in international politics – realism – a thing of the past, but its diffusion, *along with other factors*, should also make revolution obsolete. Consequently, just as scholars of international politics need to accept that great power war – their central focus since Thucydides – will not likely occur, comparativists need to accept that revolution, a central topic and subfield, will probably not happen in the future.⁷

³ Jack A. Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (2001): 139, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.4.1.139>.

⁴ Goldstone, 140.

⁵ Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 4.

⁶ Robert S. Snyder, “The End of Revolution?,” *The Review of Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 5–28; G. O. Nodia, “The End of Revolution?,” *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 164–71, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2000.0020>.

⁷ Snyder, “The End of Revolution?,” 6.

However, just over a decade later, the wave of revolutions and revolutionary movements that accompanied the Arab Spring, as well as the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine, point to the continued relevance and transformation of revolution.

If the forms and meaning of revolution have and will continue to change, how should one concretely define and study its causes and consequences? One possibility is to focus on a specific subset of revolution. Many studies of revolution present typologies (typically dichotomies) based on the actors involved, the process employed, the target of revolution, the ideology embraced, or the outcome created. In terms of actors, scholars frequently distinguish between top-down, elite revolutions and bottom-up, mass revolutions.⁸ With regard to the process of revolution, Samuel Huntington proposed distinguishing between peripheral revolutions – where revolutionaries incrementally gain control of the countryside through insurgency culminating in the capture of the capital – and central revolutions – where the old regime rapidly collapses in the face of urban unrest.⁹ Revolutions may also be subdivided based on their targets, leading to categories such as anti-colonial and anti-dictatorial. Typologies may also be based on whether the revolutionary ideology is communist, liberal, or religious. Finally, revolutions are distinguished by the degree to which the revolutionary regime transforms only state institutions – political revolutions – or social and economic structures as well – social revolutions.¹⁰

While these typologies of revolution certainly help capture the great diversity of revolutionary change, there are drawbacks to limiting one's analysis to a particular subset. Despite their powerful influence on domestic and international politics, revolutions remain

⁸ Walt, *Revolution and War*.

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale University Press, 2006); Goldstone, "Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory."

¹⁰ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*.

relatively rare events. Consequently, focusing one's analysis on a certain type of revolution further constrains not only the scope of the phenomenon being explained but also the sample size from which cases and data can be drawn.

While such an approach may still be justifiable when the type of revolution is fundamental to the theory being fashioned, it is otherwise advisable to employ a definition of revolution able to encompass the diversity of not only past but potential future revolutions. In fact, both Halliday and Goldstone ultimately settle on definitions of revolution designed to be sufficiently broad to capture a wide range of events, while narrow enough to exclude coups and other lesser outcomes. For example, Goldstone defines revolution as “an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and noninstitutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities.”¹¹

Taking a similar approach, I seek to provide an encompassing definition of revolution based on the common characteristics identified across several of the most prominent definitions in the literature.¹² I define revolution as an irregular transition of leadership over the central government followed by, at minimum, a rapid, radical transformation of the political institutions of the state. By requiring an irregular transition of leadership, this definition excludes leadership changes that occur through legal means. It does not exclude transitions accompanied by little to no violence, so long as they are extralegal. The focus on rapid, radical transformations of

¹¹ Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory,” 142.

¹² Jeff D. Colgan, “Measuring Revolution,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 29, no. 4 (September 1, 2012): 444–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894212449093>; Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory”; Walt, *Revolution and War*; Maoz, “Joining the Club of Nations”; Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.

political institutions excludes leadership changes with little impact on the state itself, as occurs in many military coups.

While this definition also encompasses revolutions that enact changes to social structures, I do not require it definitionally. This allows me to treat the type and level of social change (as a result of revolutionary policies) as a variable operating within and across revolutionary regimes. Since my theory prioritizes the effect of policies employed by the revolutionary regime once in power, my definition doesn't distinguish revolutions based on their participants or by what process they came to power (beyond the basic requirement that it be irregular).

2.2 Peripheral Rebellions in Revolutionary States

In speeches and propaganda, revolutionaries frequently paint their rule as beset by counterrevolutionary challengers intent on restoring the previous political order. For instance, in a pamphlet commemorating the fifth anniversary of the Ethiopian Revolution, the regime claimed:

The ruling class which was forcedly toppled from power never gave in. After masquerading as if they were peaceful, they then began concocting all types of intrigues and sabotages. Then they united their forces and means from all directions to take up arms against the revolution... All reactionaries at the interior and the peripheral areas of the country united their counter-revolutionary activities and boasted that they were about to reverse the revolution.¹³

Of course, such statements must be taken with a grain of salt: revolutionaries have an interest in exaggerating the threat of counterrevolution as a means of courting international assistance, delegitimizing dissenting voices, and justifying violent repression.

¹³“Ethiopian Revolution: Fifth Anniversary” (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Information and Propaganda Committee of the Fifth Anniversary of the Ethiopian Revolution, September 1979), 38, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 135, Hoover Institution Archives.

Nevertheless, while avoiding the ideologically charged rhetoric of revolutionaries, scholars have generally agreed that counterrevolutionary movements pose a critical and extremely common challenge to nascent revolutionary governments. Indeed, Halliday considers counterrevolution to be “a universal accompaniment of all revolutions,”¹⁴ while Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way contend that “revolutions invariably trigger armed counterrevolutionary resistance movements that must be defeated if the new regime is to consolidate power.”¹⁵

But internal resistance to revolutionary regimes is not limited to counterrevolutionary elites seeking to regain control of the state and restore the old order. Rebellions to revolutionary rule can also take root among peasant communities and ethnic groups in the peripheries of the state. Peasant uprisings against revolutionary governments include the Vendée in France, the Bandidos in Cuba, and the Milpistas in Nicaragua. Ethnic insurgencies against revolutionary states have been waged by such groups as the KDPI in Iran, the TPLF in Ethiopia, and MISURASATA in Nicaragua. While these ethnic and peasant rebels sometimes ally with counterrevolutionary elites, it would be erroneous to paint the former as mere instruments of the latter.

Some existing research has acknowledged the increased risk of peasant and ethnic rebellions against revolutionary regimes. Several prominent single-case studies have addressed the origins of peasant uprisings in revolutionary states.¹⁶ With regard to ethnic conflict, Ted Gurr observes, “New revolutionary elites are preoccupied first and foremost with securing their

¹⁴ Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 207.

¹⁵ Levitsky and Way, “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes,” 11.

¹⁶ Tilly, *The Vendée*; Brown, *The Real Contra War*; Jean A. Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State 1926–1929* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Brown, “The Bandido Counterrevolution in Cuba, 1959-1965.”

power against counterrevolutionaries and would-be separatists.”¹⁷ In a similar vein, while discussing ethnic rebellions in revolutionary Ethiopia, Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux assert, “Conflict between a revolutionary central government and ethnic or regional forces is by no means peculiar to Ethiopia: such conflicts are common in modern social upheavals.”¹⁸ Lacking, however, in the existing literature, is an effort to 1) produce a general theory of the relationship between revolutions and rebellions among peripheral groups and 2) systematically assess this theory across multiple cases.

Consequently, this dissertation seeks to explain the specific causes of peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states. I define peripheral rebellions as armed conflicts against the government that originate among ethnic groups and/or peasant communities outside the urban core of the state. By defining these rebellions as armed conflicts, I set a minimum threshold of 25 battle-related deaths as used by the Uppsala Conflict Data Project’s (UCDP’s) Armed Conflict Dataset.¹⁹ This threshold excludes non-violent resistance, one-sided violence, and unconnected episodes of violence with low casualties.²⁰ By focusing on armed conflicts originating outside of the urban core of the state, I exclude urban insurrections and violent coups likely to spring from distinct issues, often related to infighting among present – and former – members of the revolutionary coalition and regime. This definition also excludes counterrevolutionary movements waged by old regime elites without significant participation from ethnic groups and

¹⁷ Gurr, “War, Revolution, and the Growth of the Coercive State,” 53.

¹⁸ Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (Verso, 1981), 39.

¹⁹ Nils Petter Gleditsch et al., “Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dataset,” *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 5 (2002): 618–19.

²⁰ While using ACD’s threshold, I disagree with their coding (and non-coding) of particular cases. Collecting data, especially accurate casualty data, on rebellions is difficult. This difficulty may be further compounded in revolutionary contexts where record keeping and transparency may be especially lacking. Even so, the ACD misses several prominent cases of rebellions against revolutionary rule that almost certainly surpass the casualty threshold, including the Bandido rebellion in Cuba. This issue is discussed further in my quantitative chapter.

peasants in the periphery.²¹ Finally, this definition makes no assumptions regarding the political goals of the rebels, only that such rebellions originate among peasants and/or ethnic groups in the periphery. Peripheral rebellions may be secessionist, center-seeking, or autonomy-seeking.

Rebels may embrace leftist, rightist, or even religious ideologies.

2.3 The Puzzle of Peripheral Rebellion

While counterrevolutionary responses to revolution are unsurprising, the reasons why revolutionary regimes should face an increased risk of peripheral rebellions are not self-evident. Indeed, the positive relationship between revolution and the onset of peripheral rebellions is puzzling for at least two reasons.

First, revolutionary ideologies and policies are often portrayed as empowering and advancing the interests of marginalized ethnic groups and peasants. In challenging domestic and international structures of political authority and exploitation, revolutionaries frequently espouse anti-imperialist, egalitarian, and developmentalist ideologies. Informed by these ideologies, revolutionaries champion such policies as land redistribution, development projects, and literacy campaigns. As peripheral regions tend to be economically underdeveloped, politically underserved, and targets for internal colonization, one would expect these revolutionary policies to be highly appealing to peripheral populations. In addition, some revolutionary movements promise increased self-government for peripheral groups via federation, autonomous regions, or an acknowledged right to self-determination. For instance, during their long civil war against the Nationalist government, the Chinese Communists presented an image of the

²¹ This may include purely urban movements or exile counterrevolutionary groups operating outside the revolutionary country with assistance from foreign powers.

Kuomintang government as an oppressor of ethnic minorities, while depicting themselves as supportive of the rights of minority nationalities to self-determination and even secession.²²

Second, peripheral groups often begin with an optimistic, or at least non-antagonistic, perception of revolutionary change. The aforementioned platform and promises of revolutionary movements partially explain this. Another reason is general disdain for the *ancien régime*, which also serves to drive, or at least justify, the revolutionary overthrow of the government. As argued by Jeff Goodwin, "...people do not tend to join or support revolutionary movements when they believe the central state has little if anything to do with their everyday problems, however severe those problems may be. Not surprisingly, few people – even when they are extremely poor and palpably exploited – seek to overthrow states (perhaps risking their lives in the process) that seem peripheral to their most pressing concerns."²³ On the other hand, where the state is perceived as a central, incorrigible cause of hardship and abuse, populations are likely to welcome revolutionary change. Some peripheral groups may even actively participate in the struggle against the old regime, as did the Kurds in Iran.²⁴ Alternatively, in peripheries where the presence and impact of the central state are minimal, the population may be indifferent to the collapse and replacement of the central regime. Whether exploited or neglected, peasants and ethnic minorities in the periphery are unlikely to be staunch supporters of the old regime. As a result, the periphery is not inherently opposed to a revolutionary change of government.

Why, then, do revolutions significantly increase a state's risk of peripheral rebellions?

²² Chen Jian, "The Chinese Communist 'Liberation' of Tibet, 1949-51," in *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 132.

²³ Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 25–26.

²⁴ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (I.B.Tauris, 2004), 261.

2.4 State Intrusion, Revolutionary Policies and Peripheral Rebellions

Revolutions entail an irregular, often violent, transition of leadership over the central government followed by, at minimum, a rapid, radical transformation of the political institutions of the state. The resulting revolutionary state differs dramatically from its prerevolutionary predecessor. As Goodwin has argued, the types of states that precede and invite successful revolutions are typically characterized by infrastructural weakness, exclusionary politics and patrimonialism.²⁵ Consequently, prerevolutionary regimes are likely to establish relations of indirect rule in their peripheries, if not at the regional level, then at least at the local, community level. Under indirect rule, local authorities are left with “considerable power and discretion” over local affairs, so long as they fulfill their security obligations and provide sufficient revenue to the central state.²⁶ As a result, the presence and impact of the central state in the daily lives of peasants and ethnic groups in the periphery is normally minimal. Local leaders, often traditional authorities, have far greater influence. The deterioration of the prerevolutionary state’s power, as part of its failing struggle against the revolutionary movement, is likely to further limit, if not altogether eliminate, the presence and authority of the central state in its peripheries.

In contrast to their immediate predecessors, revolutionary states, especially those experiencing social revolutions, tend to be highly centralizing, mass-mobilizing and modernizing.²⁷ Revolutionary regimes tend to concentrate high levels of power in the central

²⁵ Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*.

²⁶ Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 50.

²⁷ See: Levitsky and Way, “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes”; Carter, Bernhard, and Palmer, “Social Revolution, the State, and War”; Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory”; Foran and Goodwin, “Revolutionary Outcomes in Iran and Nicaragua”; Theda Skocpol, “Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization,” *World Politics* 40, no. 2 (January 1, 1988): 147–68, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010360>; Gurr, “War, Revolution, and the Growth of the Coercive State”; Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*.

state and seek to extend their authority throughout the whole country via direct rule.²⁸

Revolutionary states – and the revolutionary struggles which precede them – seek to pull “the masses” into participation in the political realm, organizing mass involvement in such activities as resource extraction and mobilization for war.²⁹ Finally, revolutionary governments often engage in ambitious projects of militarization, industrialization, and economic development to modernize and strengthen the state vis-à-vis other states.³⁰

While these revolutionary changes have major implications for the urban centers of the country, their most radical impact is often felt in the periphery, where the central state’s presence and authority were weakest under the prerevolutionary regime. Here, revolutionary state policies are often designed to control and transform peripheral populations as a means of enhancing state capacity, increasing economic productivity, securing national borders, and achieving the revolutionaries’ ideological vision of remaking society. But another potential product of these policies is peripheral rebellion.

I argue that revolutionary state policies can provide both the motivation and opportunity for peripheral rebellion through three interconnected processes. First, the introduction of central state authority at the community level, typically involving the replacement of local authorities with regime loyalists, removes insulation from revolutionary policies and their disruptive effects. Second, the implementation of revolutionary policies aimed at transforming social and economic structures and relationships polarizes some communities into a benefitted minority and an

²⁸ Carter, Bernhard, and Palmer, “Social Revolution, the State, and War”; Skocpol, “Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization”; Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Levitsky and Way, “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes.”

²⁹ Carter, Bernhard, and Palmer, “Social Revolution, the State, and War”; Skocpol, “Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization”; Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*.

³⁰ Gurr, “War, Revolution, and the Growth of the Coercive State.”

alienated majority, fueling resentment toward the revolutionary regime. Third, revolutionary policies that represent an acute threat that transcends class and/or community boundaries allow greater levels of dissident coordination. I theorize that peripheral groups subjected to high levels of state penetration, polarizing policies, and acute, cross-cutting threats are the most likely to rebel against the revolutionary regime. Peripheral groups free from one or more of these conditions are unlikely to rebel.³¹

2.4.1 *State Intrusion into Communities*

Referring to the counterrevolutionary Vendée uprising in response to the French Revolution, Charles Tilly noted,

... the west's counterrevolution grew directly from the efforts of revolutionary officials to install a particular kind of direct rule in the region: a rule that practically eliminated nobles and priests from their positions as partly autonomous intermediaries, that brought the state's demands for taxes, manpower, and deference to the level of individual communities, neighborhoods, and households, that gave the region's bourgeois political power they had never before wielded. In seeking to extend the state's rule to every locality, and to dislodge all enemies of that rule, French revolutionaries started a process that did not cease for twenty-five years.³²

As this example illustrates, the penetration of central state authority down to the community level is a prerequisite for the dramatic escalation of extraction, mobilization, and social transformation envisioned by revolutionary regimes. Established local authorities may undermine this agenda by diluting, reinterpreting, or altogether ignoring state directives, thereby

³¹ This argument shares many parallels with Charles Tilly's explanation of the Vendée uprising. Specifically, Tilly highlighted the role state centralization and polarizing policies played in motivating counterrevolution in France. However, Tilly's explanation included several other factors, such as the patterns of urbanization and agricultural production, that, while further enriching his case study, may be too idiosyncratic for crafting a general theory of peripheral rebellions against revolutionary regimes. Recognizing the similarities between some of the factors identified by Tilly in the case of the Vendée and those prominent in other cases of rebellions to revolutionary rule, I seek to craft a simpler, more generalizable theory and assess it across multiple cases. See: Tilly, *The Vendée*.

³² Charles Tilly, "State and Counterrevolution in France," *Social Research* 56, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 96.

insulating their constituents from revolutionary upheavals. In order to accomplish their revolutionary goals, the central state must disempower, coopt or altogether eliminate existing local authorities.

In this process of state centralization, the revolutionary regime may resort to high levels of violence. Such was the case in Afghanistan in the wake of the Saur Revolution of 1978:

The soldiers' knock on the door in the middle of the night, so common in many Arab and African countries, was little known in Afghanistan, where a central government simply lacked the power to enforce its will outside Kabul. Taraki's coup changed all that. Between April 1978 and the Soviet invasion of December 1979, Afghan Communists executed 27,000 political prisoners... Many of the victims were village *mullahs* and headmen who were obstructing the modernization and secularization of the intensely religious Afghan countryside.³³

In the place of semi-autonomous local authorities, revolutionary governments empower regime loyalists as the state's – and revolution's – representatives in the periphery. Local rivals to traditional leaders are a natural choice, especially when they are also direct beneficiaries of the state's revolutionary policies. In France, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was introduced to undercut the power of the parish priest, while local bourgeois "Patriots," the "most anticlerical part of the population," became the government's administrators and agents in the communes.³⁴ Urban outsiders may also be assigned to the countryside to centralize political control and enact the revolution's will. The Sandinista regime of Nicaragua sent thousands of urban cadre from the Pacific lowlands to the rural Segovian highlands, where they were "appointed as the region's new leadership and security forces."³⁵ In many cases, the state employs both outsiders and local loyalists collaboratively to displace traditional authorities and assert central control. Such was

³³ Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: A with Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Vintage Books, 2001), 115.

³⁴ Tilly, *The Vendée*, 2336.

³⁵ Brown, *The Real Contra War*, 194.

the case in Mexico in the aftermath of the anticlerical Calles Law of 1926: “The priest had originated in the peasantry... while those who drove him out *manu militari* came, precisely, from outside from Mexico City, from Guadalajara, supported by the group which had benefited from the Revolution, called in by the local anticlericals, threatening the position of the priest within the community, and indeed the community itself.”³⁶

Whether local rivals, urban outsiders, or both, these officials hold no claim to traditional authority in the community, instead depending upon and answering to the central state. By installing this “particular kind of direct rule,” the revolutionary regime greatly increases the likelihood that revolutionary directives will be carried out as instructed. Moreover, as these new local officials function more as implementers than intermediaries, there is little to no space for local input on and adaptation of revolutionary state policies. The unwillingness of revolutionary officials to countenance adjustments to state policies based on local conditions is further reinforced by their modernist ideology, as discussed in the next section.

For peripheral populations, rapid state centralization following revolution can be aggravating for several reasons. First, local communities may consider the ouster of their traditional leaders as a symbolic attack on their identity and culture, especially when conducted by outsiders. Indeed, Jean Meyer partially ascribes the Cristero Rebellion in Mexico to this reasoning:

The priest... was the symbol and pride of that peasantry... That was why the peasants took up arms – because the Revolution was trying to take the priest away from them; the measures against the priest affected the whole of the people at the same time, and represented a radical rupture in individual lives and in the history

³⁶ Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 187.

of the community as a whole, which was unacceptable and was, indeed, not accepted.³⁷

Second, the imposition of central state authority may directly contradict the explicit (or implicit) promises of self-government previously made to peripheral groups by the revolutionaries. During their struggle against the old regime or in the initial period of power consolidation, revolutionary leadership may seek to win the support – or neutrality – of peripheral groups by offering to extend self-rule to these groups once in power. Such assurances of decentralization are highly appealing, especially to those peripheral populations already enjoying *de facto* autonomy due to the deterioration of central state capacity that generally precedes revolutionary overthrow. For instance, David McDowall notes the “Kurdish expectation... that it would be possible to regularize the decentralization that had resulted from the power vacuum” resulting from the Iranian Revolution.³⁸ However, once securely in power, the revolutionary regime may renege on its promises to its peripheries. Its fear of setting a state-fracturing precedent, especially after just capturing the state is typically the prime motivation for such a reversal.

To illustrate, in their war against the Kuomintang, the Chinese Communists voiced support for the right of self-determination for minority nationalities. This completely changed upon victory in the civil war. Chen Jian observes, “When the Communist revolution approached nationwide victory in 1949, the notions of ‘China federation’ and ‘national self-determination’ lost their appeal in the party’s design of a new China...”³⁹ An internal CCP communication

³⁷ Meyer, 187–88.

³⁸ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 261.

³⁹ Jian, “The Chinese Communist ‘Liberation’ of Tibet, 1949-51,” 133.

clearly articulated this reversal and reveals the original position to have been a temporary means to an end:

Concerning the question of the ‘self-determination’ of various minority nationalities, we should not emphasize it any more. In the past, in order to win the minority nationalities to the side of our party, and to oppose the Nationalist Party’s reactionary rule (demonstrated as big Han nationalism toward the minority nationalities), it was completely correct that we emphasized this slogan under the circumstances of civil war. But the situation today has changed fundamentally. The reactionary reign of the Nationalist Party has already been overthrown, and the new China led by our party has been established. For the purpose of completing the great cause of unifying our country, and for opposing the plots by the imperialists and their lackeys to divide China’s national unity, we should not emphasize this slogan on domestic nationality issues any more...⁴⁰

Third, the loss of their intermediary with the central regime, exposes peripheral populations to higher levels of state presence in their day-to-day lives than previously experienced. While the trajectory of most states has historically been toward increased centralization, revolutions tend to rapidly accelerate the process. In discussing the Atlantic region of Nicaragua, Luciano Baracco contrasts the “abandonment of the region characteristic of the Somoza era” with the “exponential increase in the presence of the national state after the revolutionary triumph...”⁴¹ While in Ethiopia, Christopher Clapham notes how the Derg regime “sought to intensify the longstanding trajectory of centralized state formation by removing perceived sources of peripheral discontent and espousing an ideal of nation-statehood in which citizens would equally be associated with, and subjected to, an omnipotent state.”⁴² The sharp increase in state presence in the periphery is likely to be jarring for peripheral populations and may result in resentment toward the regime.

⁴⁰ Quoted in: Jian, 134.

⁴¹ Baracco, *National Integration and Contested Autonomy*, 138.

⁴² Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 14.

Importantly, while revolutionary states generally pursue much higher levels of state centralization than their predecessors, wide variation exists among revolutionary states regarding the pace and success of state consolidation and centralization efforts.⁴³ These processes are neither instantaneous nor automatic. In Russia, for instance, “functioning centralized organizations were the exception and not the norm in the Soviet periphery” for over ten years after the revolution.⁴⁴ Some revolutionary regimes initially tolerate – or even encourage – decentralization and grassroots political organization, only to impose central state authority later. In Madagascar, the revolutionary regime of Ratsiraka lauded the local *fokonolona* councils, while simultaneously seeking to centralize control over them.⁴⁵ In other cases, revolutionary regimes attempt to coopt radical grassroots organizations that have developed in the political void created by the collapse of the old regime, as occurred with peasant unions (*sindicatos*) in Bolivia⁴⁶ and self-management committees in Algeria.⁴⁷ These attempts are not always successful. Consequently, the level of state intrusion can differ across both space and time within and between revolutionary states.

Moreover, while state intrusion into peripheral communities may directly produce grievances, this is far from inevitable. The increased presence of the state can also bring benefits such as improved service provision, economic development, and physical security. On the other hand, state centralization can provide a gateway to greater grievances by allowing unfiltered revolutionary policies to disrupt the lives and livelihoods of populations in the periphery. Thus,

⁴³ For more on the variation in and obstacles to (post)revolutionary state-building, see: Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions*; Gerald M. Easter, “Personal Networks and Postrevolutionary State Building: Soviet Russia Reexamined,” *World Politics* 48, no. 4 (July 1996): 551–78, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.1996.0016>; Foran and Goodwin, “Revolutionary Outcomes in Iran and Nicaragua.”

⁴⁴ Easter, “Personal Networks and Postrevolutionary State Building,” 556.

⁴⁵ Philip M. Allen, *Madagascar: Conflicts of Authority in the Great Island* (Westview Press, 1995), 82.

⁴⁶ Waltraud Q. Morales, *A Brief History of Bolivia* (Infobase Publishing, 2014), 153.

⁴⁷ Rachid Tlemcani, *State and Revolution in Algeria* (Westview Press, 1986), 101.

once its authority reaches down into peripheral communities, the specific policies enacted by the revolutionary state – and their interaction with local conditions – play the critical role in stimulating or alleviating grievances toward the regime.

2.4.2 *Polarizing Revolutionary Policies*

In his discussion of the 1956 rebellion of eastern Tibetans against the People's Republic of China, Tom Grunfeld observed:

“... there was a simultaneous decision to introduce ‘democratic reforms’ in the various autonomous *zhou* and *xian* of China. These reforms would bring about basic changes that would alter the socioeconomic structure of the community by ending feudal ownership of land and serfs, carrying out land reform, collectivizing production, and de-emphasizing religious influence. It is not just coincidental that open rebellion broke out against Beijing’s rule precisely where and when these reforms were being introduced.”⁴⁸

Beyond mere dissatisfaction with the practices of the existing regime, revolutionaries are motivated to seize power in order to transform, to a greater or lesser extent, their state and society. The most ambitious revolutionary regimes heavily engage in social engineering to dramatically remake society in the hopes of a utopian future. This aspiration is often represented in a “high-modernist ideology” which, as James Scott explains in *Seeing Like a State*, is “best conceived as a strong... version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural law.”⁴⁹ Put another way, it is the faith that the human

⁴⁸ A. Tom Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet* (M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 124.

⁴⁹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4.

condition can be radically and rapidly improved, if simply ordered by and subjected to scientific principles.

Critically, while high-modernist ideology draws upon the “legitimacy of science and technology,” it does so without the corresponding criticality of actual scientific practice.⁵⁰ The consequences of combining scientific legitimacy with unscientific exercise are alarming: Policy decisions are considered unassailable because they are founded on “science” and implemented by technicians. Local structures and practices are viewed as obstacles to progress and efficiency, which must give way to rational design. Adjustment of policies to distinct social and geographic conditions are deemed unnecessary. Criticism of such policies are interpreted as being reactionary and seditious.

Such reasoning is evident in the inflexible, authoritarian manner in which revolutionary policies designed to transform peripheral societies are centrally imposed. To demonstrate, consider Scott’s description of collectivization in Soviet Russia:

The collectivization of Soviet agriculture was an extreme but diagnostic case of authoritarian high-modernist planning. It represented an unprecedented transformation of agrarian life and production, and it was imposed with all the brute force at the state’s disposal. The officials who directed this massive change, moreover, were operating in relative ignorance of the ecological, social, and economic arrangements that underwrote the rural economy. They were flying blind.⁵¹

By disrupting local institutions, practices, relationships, and identities, revolutionary policies frequently alienate peripheral populations. Such policies can jeopardize the very lives and livelihoods of those subjected to them, especially when coercively implemented without consideration for local circumstances. Lacking the opportunity to safely “voice” disagreement

⁵⁰ Scott, 4.

⁵¹ Scott, 201–2.

with these policies (and with “exit” often restricted), strong motivations to rebel against the regime emerge.⁵²

But what revolutionary policies are most likely to trigger resentment among peripheral populations? Revolutionary states employ a wide variety of policies in their efforts to advance and rationalize social and economic relations in their peripheries. While the specific policies will vary from state to state, I identify five common types which seem to have the greatest potential to aggrieve peripheral communities: (1) agrarian reforms, (2) literacy campaigns, (3) resettlement programs, (4) anti-clerical policies, and (5) military conscriptions. For each policy, I summarize how it endeavors to transform peripheral society and illustrate how it can produce the resentment needed to motivate rebellion.

First, the revolutionary government may centrally impose agrarian reforms, such as land redistribution, collectivization, and state controls over agricultural outputs and inputs. Through land redistribution, revolutionaries seek to rectify the gross disparities in land ownership – in many cases undergirded by feudal institutions – that frequently characterize prerevolutionary peripheries. This redistribution may be accompanied by the nationalization of land, with the state asserting ownership while allocating usage rights to the peasantry. To better direct development and increase productivity, the regime may introduce collectivization or establish state farms to which peasants are encouraged – or compelled – to join. In its strongest form, collectivization strives for the industrialization of agricultural production and “the proletarianization of the

⁵² Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 129; Albert O. Hirschman, “Exit, Voice, and the State,” *World Politics* 31, no. 1 (October 1978): 90–107, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009968>; Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Harvard University Press, 1970).

peasantry.”⁵³ Finally, the state may establish controls over agricultural inputs and outputs, essentially requiring agricultural producers to purchase from and sell to the state.

Naturally, the first opponents of revolutionary agrarian reforms are large landowners threatened with the loss of their vast estates and access to agricultural laborers. But smallholders also tend to be wary of land redistribution, fearing the possibility that the state will confiscate their land as well – or strip them of their formal ownership through nationalization. Collectivization programs confirm these fears for landholders. Finally, state policies designed to appropriate surpluses, such as quota systems or state monopolies on their purchase (usually well below market prices), can sharply limit profits for agricultural producers. As a result, agrarian reforms may trigger strong grievances among landowners and producers by heavily subjecting them to the revolutionary state.

In Nicaragua, both Sandinistas and rebels acknowledged how the regime’s agrarian reforms fueled resentment and resistance among the highlander peasantry, many of whom were smallholders. As Luís Serra, a “top Sandinista agrarian reformer,” noted, “The policies of the Sandinista government, and especially the actual or threatened nationalization of land were seen by the lower classes as frustrating their efforts to survive and as attacks on both their social structure and their culture.”⁵⁴ While Timothy Brown observed that, “The former Milpistas were consistent in their comments on what they believed had led the peasants of the Segovian highlands to rebel... All pointed to revolutionary policies that required the campesinos to sell

⁵³ Lynn Horton, *Peasants in Arms: War and Peace in the Mountains of Nicaragua, 1979-1994* (Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1998), 81.

⁵⁴ Quoted in: Brown, *The Real Contra War*, 197.

their crops at low prices and then buy necessities at high prices from the government” and “to seizures of private property ‘in the name of the Revolution...’”⁵⁵

Second, revolutionaries may conduct literacy campaigns or implement new language policies. State peripheries are often characterized by linguistic diversity, especially prior to state centralization. Illiteracy tends to be pronounced in such areas as well. Both represent significant obstacles to the revolutionary state’s goals of controlling and developing these regions. By increasing literacy in the official language, state-organized literacy campaigns offer a promising solution. Education in a common language can foster a sense of nation and instill loyalty to the state.⁵⁶ Literacy also primes the workforce for industrialization, including industrialized agriculture.⁵⁷ Finally, literacy campaigns can also be used to disseminate revolutionary doctrine to rural populations. Revolutionary regimes may also establish other language policies designed to promote the official language and disincentivize the use of minority languages.

Increasing the percentage of one’s population that can read and write is an admirable goal, but in practice literacy campaigns can also alienate peripheral groups. For one thing, peripheral populations may take issue with the use of campaign materials and instructors as vehicles for ideological indoctrination. For example, literacy workbooks in Cuba prominently featured Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, agrarian reform, and the need to defend the homeland.⁵⁸ Where literacy campaigns strongly privilege the language of the central regime, ethnolinguistic minorities may perceive these campaigns as jeopardizing their identity. The fact that urban

⁵⁵ Brown, 67. See also: Horton, *Peasants in Arms*, 161.

⁵⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006); Ernest Gellner and John Breuilly, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cornell University Press, 2008); Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford University Press, 1976).

⁵⁷ Gellner and Breuilly, *Nations and Nationalism*.

⁵⁸ “Aprendo a Leer y Escribir” (Año de la Liberación, 1959), Cuban Revolution Collection (MS 650), Box 1, Folder 3, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

outsiders, potentially with little regard for the local culture, serve as the primary agents in these campaigns may fuel further resentment. Especially if coupled with policies that restrict instruction in and public use of minority languages, literacy campaigns may be considered a tool for “linguistic imperialism.”⁵⁹

In Laos, for instance, the Pathet Lao regime mounted an ambitious campaign to address the country’s high rate of illiteracy. Martin Stuart-Fox explains, “Students, monks, and anyone who could read and write were sent to teach those who could not. Every village held adult literacy classes, and volunteers went to teach literacy in Lao, the sole official national language, to other ethnic groups.”⁶⁰ However, despite particularly high illiteracy among minority groups, instruction was only provided in the official Lao language.⁶¹ Moreover, national radio broadcasts were only in official Lao. In 1985, when the question of whether the minority Lao Theung language would ever be broadcast was raised to the state magazine, *Vientiane Mai*.⁶² The editors replied, “...we talked with the comrades in national radio broadcasting, and we found that they would like to broadcast in many Lao ethnic languages. However, the present situation is not ready for doing so... It is good to listen to the central dialect so that all Lao will get to know the central dialect well.”⁶³

Third, the revolutionary state may promote or enforce resettlement programs, either from one region to another or from existing residences to state-planned villages. The mass

⁵⁹ Robert Phillipson, “Linguistic Imperialism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* (American Cancer Society, 2018), 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0718.pub2>; Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (OUP Oxford, 1992); Heath Rose and John Bosco Conama, “Linguistic Imperialism: Still a Valid Construct in Relation to Language Policy for Irish Sign Language,” *Language Policy* 17, no. 3 (2018): 385, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-017-9446-2>.

⁶⁰ Martin Stuart-Fox, *A History of Laos* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 173.

⁶¹ Wendy Batson, “After the Revolution: Ethnic Minorities and the New Lao State,” in *Laos: Beyond the Revolution*, ed. Joseph J. Zasloff and Leonard Unger (Springer, 1991), 149.

⁶² Batson, 155.

⁶³ Quoted in: Batson, 155.

resettlement of populations from one part of the country to another can relieve strain from overpopulation or famine, as well as help cultivate, develop, and secure underpopulated territories.⁶⁴ Villagization programs, which move populations from their scattered residences into rationally designed, road-accessible villages, enhance the state's ability to provide services to rural populations. Both types of resettlement also make it easier for the state to control the population and extract resources, including taxes and conscripts. Finally, resettled populations may also be more easily pressured into collectivization and other state projects.

Resettlement programs can aggravate both relocated groups, as well as the previous occupants of those territories in which these populations are resettled. Those pressured or coerced into resettlement or villagization are likely to severely begrudge the state for the loss of their former home and way of life. Bitterness will intensify when relocation involves poor living conditions, an uncomfortable climate, and an increased level of state control and extraction, especially if these are not compensated with improved access to state services. Returning to the case of Laos, Gary Wekkin describes the Pathet Lao's attempted resettlement of highland minorities to lowland areas and the resulting resistance:

A priority effort has been made to resettle the tribesmen from their highland homes to new locations in the lowlands. On the face of it, this seems very fair treatment, since the lowland soil is more productive and previously tribesmen were prevented from farming such areas... it is known that those from higher altitudes – especially the Hmong – dislike the relocation for a number of reasons. Unused to the lowland climate, they complain of difficulties in breathing and of the high incidence of malaria and other diseases... to which they lack resistance... Moreover, in keeping with the LPDR's drive to expand the area of land under the plough and become agriculturally self-sufficient as soon as possible, the accent in the resettlement projects has been on collective farming... Another related Hmong complaint about the resettlement program is that the lowland sites are too accessible to the government, too closely controlled. The Hmong view the

⁶⁴ Resettlement programs are sometimes used as a counterinsurgency strategy, in which case they are a response to rebellion rather than its initial cause. Even so, the use of population resettlement as COIN can produce further resentment towards the state, which may lead more of the peripheral population to rebel.

program as a security system aimed at keeping them in check... as this pressure increased so did tribal opposition...⁶⁵

Grievances can also arise among those peripheral groups whose territory now plays host to resettled populations. For these groups, resettlement programs can entail state confiscation of their land and dramatic shifts in the local demographic balance – potentially making them minorities in their own home regions. For example, consider the results for the Anywaa of the Gambella region in Ethiopia, as detailed by John Markakis:

As part of the Dergue's resettlement programme, more than 60,000 peasants from the highlands were settled in four sites in Gambella region... the proportion of settlers to natives reached 40%, the highest in the country. This massive intrusion affected the Anywaa in several ways, none of them good... The size of the highlander community – settlers and immigrants – expanded dramatically and was soon to outnumber the Anywaa themselves. All four resettlement sites were located in Anywaa territory which, in some instances, the natives were obliged to vacate to make room for the settlers.⁶⁶

Fourth, the revolutionary regime may carry out anti-clerical policies designed to strip church officials of their privileges and property, place the clergy firmly under the authority and control of the state, and, in some cases, disincentivize religious adherence among the population. There are a few reasons why revolutions may pursue anti-clerical policies. Most directly, religious beliefs and systems may be viewed as a tool of oppression anathema to the ideology championed by the revolutionary regime. Religious officials may also be targeted due to their privileged status under the old regime and their role in sustaining it. Last of all, religious authorities may represent local intermediaries that must be disempowered to facilitate state centralization. Anti-clerical policies are a straightforward way to strip these religious leaders of their power, wealth, and status. This can be accomplished through such measures as confiscating

⁶⁵ Gary D. Wekkin, "The Rewards of Revolution: Pathet Lao Policy Towards the Hill Tribes since 1975," in *Contemporary Laos: Studies in the Politics and Society of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, ed. Martin Stuart-Fox (University of Queensland Press, 1982), 191–92.

⁶⁶ John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers* (Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2011), 221.

church lands, restricting clergy from holding public office, and requiring them to register with and swear loyalty to the state.

While religious officials are the direct targets of anti-clerical policies, revolutionaries often underestimate the negative reaction these policies can engender among the general population, especially in the countryside. As noted earlier, where local clergy hold prominent roles as leaders, even symbols, in their communities, an attack on them is readily interpreted as an attack on the community as a whole. Moreover, in localities where religious devotion is high, anti-clerical policies may be perceived as threatening the very souls of the people and, in consequence, fervently resisted. Indeed, Meyer depicts the Cristero rebellion in Mexico in such terms:

One might simply say that the Cristiada was a movement of reaction against ‘the Mexican Revolution’, a revolution which was continuing the undertaking of modernisation commenced by Porfirio Díaz, by bringing up yet again the question of the relationship between Church and state; against a radical, summary, and brutal anticlericalism, there stood the Catholic people of the rural areas, who took up arms to defend their faith.⁶⁷

Fifth, revolutionary regimes may greatly expand military conscription. Revolutionary states, especially those resulting from social revolutions, have been shown to field larger militaries and enjoy higher rates of success in interstate wars than their nonrevolutionary counterparts.⁶⁸ A central reason for this is their willingness and ability to engage in mass conscription throughout their territory. Military conscription not only increases the military capacity of the revolutionary state for international contests, but also for internal security against ongoing – and potential – insurgencies. In addition, mass conscription accelerates nation-

⁶⁷ Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 213.

⁶⁸ Carter, Bernhard, and Palmer, “Social Revolution, the State, and War.”

building by exposing military recruits to people and places throughout the country.⁶⁹ Finally, the military provides an especially effective environment for transmitting nationalist and revolutionary ideology to the population.

Unaccustomed to direct intrusion and extraction from the central state, mass military conscriptions can stoke deep resentment among peripheral communities, especially where nationalist sentiments are relatively absent. By taking (typically) young men from their homes, conscriptions not only cause emotional distress to separated families, but also endanger the productive and security capacities of these local communities. Frustration increases when conscription is carried out coercively and arbitrarily, such as when soldiers surround and sweep towns to press-gang whatever men they find into service, as occurred in parts of Ethiopia.⁷⁰ Perhaps most aggravating, however, are when selection into and exemption from conscription are politically decided, with regime loyalists rewarded with exemption and their rivals targeted for recruitment.

There is arguably no greater example of mass military conscription than the *levée en masse* in revolutionary France. But while this conscription undoubtedly increased the military capabilities of the state, it also served as a further, and indeed final, motivation for rebellion among many in the Vendée. Indeed, the attempted enforcement of the conscription law of 1793 by pro-revolutionary Patriot officials “resulted in their complete loss of authority and in forcible resistance” in this region.⁷¹ It was not simply that the policy was unpopular or that the

⁶⁹ Barry R. Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539098>.

⁷⁰ Alexander Naty, “Memory & the Humiliation of Men: The Revolution in Aari,” in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, ed. Wendy James et al. (Oxford, England : Addis Ababa : Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 70.

⁷¹ Tilly, *The Vendée*, 305.

conscription rate was unprecedented, though both were true. Disaffection peaked in large part because local revolutionary powerholders were shielded from conscription. Tilly explains, “The first point of conflict was the exemptions. The law exempted public officials, ergo Patriots. The National Guard, likewise Patriots, were ‘mobilized in place,’ and so stayed home. Nothing could be more of a goad to the rest of the people.”⁷²

But not all in the periphery are equally offended by the revolutionary regime’s attempts to upset the status quo. Even where revolutionary policies alienate large portions of the peripheral population, there are almost always some locals that benefit from these policies. Potential recipients of redistributed land, especially those previously consigned to tenant farming, are likely to gain from agrarian reform (at least initially). Illiterate individuals, especially those who speak the official state language, are likely to welcome the educational opportunities afforded by literacy campaigns. Resettlement programs may provide an improved livelihood to resettled populations, especially those that relocated voluntarily to escape famine, war, or overpopulation. Anti-clerical policies may be applauded by secular bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Lastly, military conscription may profit those who are systematically exempted from military service.

The local balance between those profited and those disadvantaged by revolutionary policies can vary widely based on the prevalent socioeconomic conditions. For example, whether an area is predominantly smallholders or tenant farmers will heavily shape their perception of land redistribution. The local balance holds important implications for the danger of rebellion.

⁷² Tilly, 309.

Where the number of beneficiaries of revolutionary policies far outweigh the alienated, there should be little risk of rebellion.

On the other hand, where beneficiaries represent a privileged minority, while the bulk of the local population suffers, resentment is likely to be dangerously high – and directed not only at the central state, but also at its local agents and beneficiaries. In Mexico, for instance, the recipients of redistributed land – the *agraristas* – came to be reviled by the rest of the peasantry: “The division among the peasantry provoked by the agrarian reform was all the more exacerbated when those who often came from elsewhere or were drawn from the marginal sectors suddenly became privileged by the grace of the state, and became its clients and its policemen. This favoured minority felt ill at ease in the midst of a peasantry which described them as ‘thieves’ before calling them, after 1926, ‘traitors’.”⁷³ As this example also illustrates, the primary beneficiaries of revolutionary policies often become the state’s agents in the community, at least when they constitute a local minority.⁷⁴ Hostility and, in many cases, violence from the disgruntled local majority help drive this privileged minority further into the revolutionary camp, especially when the regime is willing to arm them in return.

The result is a strong polarization of the local community into two camps: the revolution’s staunch supporters and its determined detractors. Moderate positions towards the revolutionary regime and its policies simply become untenable, as moderates are pressured and persecuted by both pro- and anti-revolutionary camps. The threat of violence and denunciations further deepens the divide among the local community. The result is a population particularly primed for rebellion. As Tilly noted regarding rebellion in revolutionary France,

⁷³ Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 107.

⁷⁴ The inverse also occurs, with the state’s agents being rewarded with redistributed land, exemption from conscription, etc.

“Counterrevolution occurred not where everyone opposed the revolution, but where irreconcilable differences divided well-defined blocs of supporters and opponents.”⁷⁵

In summary, revolutionary policies hold great potential to alienate and polarize peripheral communities. The more the revolutionary state attempts to transform, modernize, and rationalize its peripheries, the greater the likelihood of triggering disaffection, even if these policies produce some beneficiaries. But even bitter, broadly held resentment toward the regime is insufficient to guarantee rebellion. History is rife with examples of people suffering under despots without armed revolts materializing. This is because rebellion requires not only motivation, but also opportunity. It is to this issue that I next turn.

2.4.3 *Acute, Cross-Cutting Threats*

Addressing the causes of the peasant “revolution” in Tigray, which would ultimately play a central role in toppling the Derg regime, John Young asserts,

The authoritarian implementation of the Derg’s reforms, together with its resettlement and villagisation programmes, bred further distrust and disaffection... The Derg was thus in many ways the author of its own destruction. None the less, however necessary, hatred of the regime did not produce revolution, and it is important to appreciate the critical part played by the TPLF in giving expression to that hatred and in creating an environment in which a revolutionary movement could take form and develop.⁷⁶

Although state intrusion and polarizing policies can produce strong disaffection towards the revolutionary state, this resentment alone is not enough to explain the onset of peripheral rebellion. As Timur Kuran observes, “...widespread disapproval of the government is not sufficient to mobilize large numbers for revolutionary action. Anti-government feelings can

⁷⁵ Tilly, “State and Counterrevolution in France,” 86.

⁷⁶ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 193.

certainly bring a revolution within the realm of possibility, but other conditions must come together to set it off.”⁷⁷ While aggrieved individuals and small groups may instigate sporadic incidents of violent resistance, organizing and mounting major rebellions requires coordination among a larger group of dissidents. But dissident coordination is frequently inhibited by the collective action problem.

In *The Logic of Collective Action*, Mancur Olson explains why large groups regularly fail to muster the collective action needed to produce public (or collective) goods.⁷⁸ First, if produced, public goods are available to both participants and non-participants of the collective action. Therefore, the incentive for individual participation does not rest on fear of exclusion from the produced good, but rather belief in one’s importance for producing the good. Second, while collective action is needed to produce the good, the contribution of any single individual will make no noticeable difference on the outcome. Relatedly, where the group of potential participants is sufficiently large, not all need participate to produce the good. As long as enough do their part, many can stay home without changing the outcome. Third, participation in collective action incurs at least some costs on the individual, even if only the opportunity costs of not being able to do something else with that time. Assuming everyone wants to maximize their individual utility, the combination of these three considerations results in the “free rider” problem – individuals choose not to shoulder the costs of participation in the collective action, while hoping to reap the benefits of the contributions made by others. The problem is that everyone should face such an incentive, resulting in the failure of the collective action.

⁷⁷ Timur Kuran, “Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics* 44, no. 1 (October 1991): 21, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010422>.

⁷⁸ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups, Second Printing with a New Preface and Appendix* (Harvard University Press, 1971).

Peripheral rebellions against revolutionary rule are subject to this free rider problem. First, whether peripheral groups desire secession, regional autonomy, or the overthrow of the revolutionary regime, the desired outcome is a collective good. Those that do not fight cannot be excluded from these potential benefits of rebel victory. Second, although successful rebellion requires the participation of many, the decision of any given individual to fight or not is unlikely to be pivotal to rebel success or failure – especially where the pool of potential insurgents is large. Third, rebelling against the state certainly imposes individual costs, typically going far beyond opportunity costs. Considering all this, individuals face strong incentives to free ride rather than rebel. As put by Kuran, “It is generally in a person's self-interest to let others make the sacrifices required to secure the regime's downfall, for a revolution constitutes a ‘collective good’ – a good he can enjoy whether or not he has contributed to its realization. With most of the regime’s opponents choosing to free ride, an upheaval may fail to materialize even if the potential revolutionaries constitute a substantial majority.”⁷⁹

Beyond the standard free rider problem, additional factors make collective action particularly difficult when countenancing armed rebellion against a state. As Mark Lichbach notes in *The Rebel's Dilemma*, “Rebels confront possibly disastrous private costs and uncertain public benefits.”⁸⁰ This is because “a successful outcome to a revolt is a low-probability event,” whereas “participation is often quite costly and dangerous since governments maim or murder their enemies.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Kuran, “Now out of Never,” 14.

⁸⁰ Mark Irving Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma* (University of Michigan Press, 1998), 7.

⁸¹ Lichbach, 7.

In order to preserve their rule, regimes actively attempt to hinder collective action among dissidents, often through the threat and use of violence.⁸² In repressive states, dissenting voices are swiftly silenced and defiant acts promptly punished not only to quash present attempts at resistance, but also to compel citizens to publicly express loyalty to the regime – regardless of their private sentiments – as a means of self-preservation.⁸³ When pervasive, such “preference falsification” can become a substantial obstacle to dissident collective action, instead buttressing state control by obscuring the regime’s actual (often low) level of popular support. Referring to the communist states of Eastern Europe, Kuran writes,

People alienated from the communist regime did not know how widely their alienation was shared... they lacked reliable, current information on how many of their fellow citizens favored a change in regime. The government-controlled press exploited this ignorance by stressing the ‘unity of the socialist society’ and its ‘solidarity in supporting the Party.’ Insofar as such propaganda led potential revolutionaries to underestimate the prevalence of discontent, it weakened their incentives to join the minuscule opposition.⁸⁴

Such sizeable obstacles to dissident collective action lend credence to Lichbach’s claim that “all of the cards seem stacked against large-scale protests and rebellions.”⁸⁵ But rebellions against repressive revolutionary regimes do occur. The question is: how do dissidents overcome the free rider problem and state suppression in order to initiate and sustain major rebellions in revolutionary states? I highlight two solutions.

In the first solution, as illustrated by Young’s example of the TPLF above, elite-led organizations provide the needed leadership, structure, and resources to mobilize the disaffected into a rebel group. In the wake of revolution, peripheral elites frequently form new – or

⁸² Lichbach, 22.

⁸³ Kuran, “Now out of Never.”

⁸⁴ Kuran, 30.

⁸⁵ Lichbach, *The Rebel’s Dilemma*, 7.

repurpose existing – organizations to engage with the new regime. As revolutionary states generally threaten the interests of preexisting elites, these organizations often take an antagonistic position toward the regime and its policies. Once formed, opposition organizations can become the key to overcoming the obstacles of free riders and state suppression that otherwise thwart major rebellion.

Concerning the free rider problem, opposition organizations can provide private benefits to incentivize participation in rebellion. While the primary fruits of rebel victory may be non-excludable, opposition organizations can provide selective rewards to rebel fighters and supporters such as pay, social services, and, to some extent, protection from the abuses of the revolutionary state. Recognizing that nonparticipation (i.e. free riding) may come at the cost of victimization from both the state and the rebels, the benefits of joining an organization need not be large to be persuasive.⁸⁶

The existence of opposition organizations can also help surmount the attempted suppression of dissent by the revolutionary state. For one, rebellions benefited by the wealth and international connections of elite-led organizations can better match the capabilities of their state rivals. In addition, these organizations can undermine the culture of preference falsification fostered by the regime, instead revealing its unpopularity and offering an alternative to the disillusioned. As Kuran writes, “Organized oppositions enhance the external payoff to dissent, both by providing the individual dissenter with a support network and by raising the likelihood

⁸⁶ Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew Adam Kocher, “How ‘Free’ Is Free Riding in Civil Wars?: Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem,” *World Politics* 59, no. 2 (January 2007): 177–216, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2007.0023>.

of a successful revolution. They also help shatter the appearance of the invulnerability of the status quo, and through propaganda, they shift people's private preferences in favor of change."⁸⁷

The second solution is provided by traumatic and unjust events, which can trigger outrage and produce a temporal focal point for the decentralized mobilization of a rebel movement. Revolutionary states aim to transform their peripheries politically, socially and economically. However, the pace and scope of this attempted transformation can greatly vary. In some cases, the implementation of revolutionary policies is "partial and episodic," whereas in others it is sweeping and simultaneous.⁸⁸ In the case of the latter, the policy's implementation may present the kind of prominent, shared event needed to override free riding and overwhelm state suppression.

In her book, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War*, Elisabeth Wood unpacks the essential role that "emotional and moral motives" can play in the "emergence and consolidation of insurgent collective action" – even when material self-interest would dictate free riding.⁸⁹ One of these motives, which Wood labels "defiance," is particularly applicable in the context of traumatic, unjust events.⁹⁰ Describing campesino participation in the FMLN insurgency, Wood explains,

Some activists who suffered at the hands of the authorities or saw the suffering of their families or neighbors supported or joined the insurgents because of feelings of moral outrage at the government's response to what they perceived as their just activities... Continued activism expressed defiance and asserted a claim to dignity

⁸⁷ Kuran, "Now out of Never," 25.

⁸⁸ Tilly, *The Vendée*, 311.

⁸⁹ Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, 1st edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2. Notably, Kuran also discusses the importance of emotional/psychological considerations by including the internal cost of not being true to oneself in the calculation of whether or not to revolt. See: Kuran, "Now out of Never," 18.

⁹⁰ Emotional and moral motives can also lead individuals to join up with opposition organizations discussed in the first solution but seem particularly important here where private material benefits are not also being provided.

and personhood. Its value was not contingent on success or even on one's contributing to the likelihood of success.⁹¹

While Wood emphasizes outrage at the suffering of family and friends, I contend that defiance is also a probable response to regime attempts to rapidly, simultaneously, and fundamentally disrupt the lives and livelihoods of peripheral communities through certain revolutionary policies. This moral outrage should result in numerous individuals independently deciding to rebel as a direct response to the injustice of the imposed policy.

Prominent, unpopular events associated with the regime can also help dissidents deal with the problems posed by state suppression. So long as acts of resistance are sporadic and uncoordinated, they can be swiftly and severely quelled by the security apparatus of the revolutionary state. In order for a viable rebel movement to coalesce, coordination among dissidents is needed, but this is frustrated by the ubiquity of preference falsification. The key is to find a means of tacitly coordinating revolt. As Thomas Schelling explains, this can be accomplished through a focal point: "People *can* often concert their intentions or expectations with others if each knows that the other is trying to do the same. Most situations... provide some clue for coordinating behavior, some focal point for each person's expectation of what the other expects him to expect to be expected to do... A prime characteristic of most of these 'solutions'... is some kind of prominence or conspicuousness."⁹² The simultaneous enactment of an extremely unpopular policy can produce such a (temporal) focal point, wherein individuals rebel not only due to their personal moral outrage but also with the expectation that others will view this as the time to revolt as well. The potential for tacit coordination should be especially strong when the date of implementation is known beforehand – becoming an object of

⁹¹ Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, 233.

⁹² Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Harvard University Press, 1980), 57–58.

apprehension. In short, where unpopular policies are experienced as traumatic events, they can facilitate the decentralized mobilization of rebel movements.

Revolutionary state policies can inadvertently facilitate both of these pathways to dissident coordination by creating acute, cross-cutting threats. Revolutionary policies represent acute threats when they are likely to immediately or rapidly impact a population in a severe manner. Policies are cross-cutting threats when their adverse effects transcend class and/or community boundaries.

First, elite-led opposition organizations are likely to form and enjoy the support of peripheral populations in the wake of acutely threatening policies that cut across class boundaries. This may include revolutionary policies that discriminate against an entire ethnic group in a periphery or simultaneously threaten both patrons and clients. For example, Ethiopia's prohibition on hiring agricultural labor threatened both elite landowners and peasant laborers in Tigray, thereby facilitating the creation of the counterrevolutionary EDU.⁹³ Young explains,

Of even greater concern was the Derg's prohibition against hiring farm labour. Meles Zenawi has argued that the prohibition against hiring labour affected 200,000 Tigrayans and was a major stimulus of peasant discontent in the province... Significantly, the landlords gained considerable support from the peasants who depended on employment as farm labourers... Teranafit/EDU disproportionately drew support from the commercial farming areas... Big farmers from aristocratic families in such areas resented the Derg because it oversaw the demise of the imperial regime to which they were intimately linked, but even more for its Land Proclamation of 1975 which brought about their economic collapse. As a result, they and their largely poor workers joined Teranafit/EDU *en masse*.⁹⁴

Alternatively, the introduction of acute policies that pose a simultaneous threat across peasant communities can serve as a focal point enabling decentralized peasant uprisings to

⁹³ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*.

⁹⁴ Young, 93, 101.

coalesce. Such was the case in Mexico with the enactment of the Calles Law and the subsequent suspension of public worship:

The nightmare of 31 July, the last day of worship, and the traumatic experience suffered that night were the immediate causes of the insurrection; more than one person, on his knees in the dark as the Blessed Sacrament passed by, came to his own decision... When at the end of this period of tension, the suspension of worship took place, that seemingly inexhaustible patience was suddenly broken... In August, there were six insurrections and many riots; all the acts of the Government, whether well- or ill-intentioned were resented as acts of aggression... Thirteen new centres of insurrection appeared in September, and a score of others in October, and the Federal army began to realise that the business would be less easy than it had supposed...⁹⁵

The response to land reform in Cuba was similarly rapid and decentralized. As Jonathan Brown explains, “Following the land reform decree of May 1959, the intrusion of the revolutionary state into the social life of the countryside proceeded rapidly.”⁹⁶ The result: “The first *bandido* uprisings occurred relatively simultaneously in the late summer of 1959 within two to three months following Fidel’s land reform decree.”⁹⁷

But perhaps most revealing is Tilly’s discussion of the response to conscription in the Vendée region of France:

There had been unpopular governmental moves, of course, long before the levy of 300,000 men. In general, they had been applied piecemeal, depending on the vicissitudes of local affairs. Even the internment and deportation of the clergy had only been partial and episodic. As a result, the resistance to these moves had been sporadic. Conscription was the first attempt of the new regime to enforce a radical, unpopular measure in all of southern Anjou simultaneously. The multitude of party fragments were able to coalesce.⁹⁸

In summary, while state intrusion exposes the periphery to revolution and polarizing policies trigger and intensify the motivation to rebel, some mechanism for coordinating rebellion

⁹⁵ Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 48–49.

⁹⁶ Brown, “The Bandido Counterrevolution in Cuba, 1959-1965,” 20.

⁹⁷ Brown, 19.

⁹⁸ Tilly, *The Vendée*, 311.

is needed. Two mechanisms of coordination are available: opposition organizations and traumatic events. Revolutionary policies inadvertently trigger one or both of these mechanisms when they present acute, cross-cutting threats.

2.5 Methods and Cases

The remainder of this dissertation empirically tests my argument that peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states are violent responses to intrusive, polarizing, and cross-cutting revolutionary policies. This argument is weighed against the existing alternatives, specifically the dominant explanations for civil war: state weakness and political exclusion. Recognizing the strengths and limitations of both quantitative and qualitative analyses, I employ a mixed-methods approach.

In chapter three, I use multivariate regression analysis to assess the correlation between revolutionary policies and the onset of peripheral rebellion. I do so by combining existing data on revolutionary states⁹⁹ and internal armed conflicts¹⁰⁰ for all country-years from 1946-2004. The key variables of revolutionary government, revolutionary policies, and peripheral rebellion are operationalized using available data. Control variables are introduced to account for the alternative explanations of state weakness and political exclusion, as well as to account for other potential confounding variables. The analysis shows a strong positive correlation between the magnitude of revolutionary policy change and the onset of peripheral rebellions. Several sensitivity tests are conducted to explore the robustness of these results.

⁹⁹ Colgan, “Measuring Revolution.”

¹⁰⁰ Harbom, Melander, and Wallenstein, “Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946—2007”; Allansson, Melander, and Themnér, “Organized Violence, 1989–2016.”

Acknowledging the limitations of large-n quantitative analysis to establish causation, as well as the inability of cross-national data to capture subnational variation, the bulk of the dissertation employs qualitative methods. In chapter four, I outline my qualitative research design, which involves temporally and spatially disaggregated process tracing in comparative case studies. I conduct this disaggregated-comparative process tracing within and across several peripheral groups in revolutionary Ethiopia under the Derg from 1974-1991 (comprising chapters five through eight). Chapter nine concludes with a summary of this dissertation's findings, and its implications for policy and scholarship.

Chapter 3: Quantitative Analysis

As the first step of empirically testing my theory, this chapter addresses a simple but crucial question: to what extent are revolutionary state policies associated with an increased risk of peripheral rebellions? To answer this question, I turn to large-N quantitative analysis. The primary advantage of large-N quantitative analysis is its ability to evaluate and measure the systematic correlation between independent and dependent variables across a large number of cases, as compared to chance.¹ I conduct a cross-national analysis using a dataset combining data on revolutionary policies² and internal armed conflict onsets³ for all country-years (for which data is available) from 1946 to 2004.

The results of this quantitative analysis lend support to my central claim that revolutionary policies are a primary driver of peripheral rebellions. Across various operationalizations of both the independent and dependent variable, revolutionary policies exhibit a strong, positive correlation to the onset of peripheral rebellions. This relationship holds even when state weakness, ethnic exclusion, and other common drivers of civil war onset are taken into account. This correlation also remains when Myanmar, the most extreme example of peripheral rebellions in a revolutionary state, is excluded through a dummy control variable. These controls and sensitivity analyses increase confidence that the relationship between

¹ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT Press, 2005), 224. See also: Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton University Press, 1994); Karl Pearson, *The Grammar of Science* (A. and C. Black, 1900), chap. 4.

² Colgan, “Measuring Revolution.”

³ Harbom, Melander, and Wallensteen, “Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946—2007”; Allansson, Melander, and Themnér, “Organized Violence, 1989–2016.”

revolutionary policies and peripheral rebellions is not merely the product of a particular model or variable measure, instead representing a true causal effect.

Importantly, however, this statistical analysis comes with several significant limitations. First, there is “the issue of construct validity” concerning “how well the variables in an empirical model represent the theoretical concepts in a causal or associational argument.”⁴ In the analysis below, the variables used often represent only rough approximations of those theorized. Second, this evaluation is limited by the level of granularity in the existing data, most of which is at the country-year level. Most problematically, nearly all measures of revolutionary policies are only coded at the country-regime level, presenting a problem for confidently determining the sequencing of cause and effect. Third, this quantitative analysis is not equipped to identify the causal mechanisms by which revolutionary policies drive the onset of peripheral rebellions. As with most statistical methods, the process by which the purported independent variables shape the value of the independent variable is unobserved, encased within a metaphorical black box.⁵

While I seek to address the issue of construct validity through employing different operationalizations of my key variables, the latter issues of granularity and causal mechanisms are better addressed through qualitative case studies. I unpack and employ such qualitative methods in chapters four through eight. Critically, I reserve my evaluation of the main alternative explanation of direct rule for these qualitative case studies as well. This is because I could not find any measure of direct rule that was both distinguishable from state capacity and applicable to a broad enough set of countries within my dataset. In addition, since my theory also uses

⁴ Cullen S Hendrix, “Measuring State Capacity,” 276. See also: Edward G. Carmines, Richard A. Zeller, and Richard A. Zeller, *Reliability and Validity Assessment* (SAGE Publications, 1979), 23.

⁵ Hedström Hedström and Richard Swedberg, “Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay,” in *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, ed. Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 9–10.

direct rule but expects it to function through a different mechanism and at a different level, this rival explanation is best addressed through qualitative process tracing.

Despite these limitations, large-N statistical analysis still provides the best means of assessing whether a systematic and substantively significant relationship between variables exists in the first place. The remainder of this chapter conducts such an analysis with regard to revolutionary policies and the onset of peripheral rebellion. In the next section, I transform my argument, and the competing explanations, into a set of testable hypotheses. Section two outlines my research design, including how I operationalize peripheral rebellion, revolutionary state policies, state weakness, and political exclusion. In section three, I conduct my quantitative analysis in three parts. First, I use cross-tabulations and basic statistics in an initial analysis of the relationship between revolutionary state policies and peripheral rebellion. Second, I employ multivariate regression in my main analysis to test this relationship with a set of control variables. Third, I perform a series of sensitivity tests to gauge whether the results are highly conditional to a particular specification of the key variables. Section four concludes this chapter with a summary of the findings of this regression analysis and a discussion of its principal limitations.

3.1 Main Hypotheses

Scholars have generally agreed that internal armed conflicts are highly likely within revolutionary states, with most emphasizing the particular risk of counterrevolution.⁶ However, unlike the relationship between revolution and international conflict, the impact of revolutionary

⁶ See: Levitsky and Way, “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes”; Gurr, “War, Revolution, and the Growth of the Coercive State”; Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*.

regimes on the likelihood of rebellion has not been significantly scrutinized by systematic, cross-case analysis.⁷ Consequently, an important prerequisite to my argument is testing whether revolutionary states are actually more prone to internal armed conflict than are non-revolutionary states. Importantly, while the increased risk of rebellion among revolutionary states is consistent with my theory, it could also result from unrelated causes, such as violent coup attempts or elite counterrevolutions without participation by peripheral groups. However, if revolutionary states do not face a higher risk of rebellion than their non-revolutionary counterparts, then the importance of explaining rebellions within the specific context of revolutionary states would be questionable.

H1: All else being equal, revolutionary states face a higher risk of rebellion than other types of states.

3.1.1 My Argument

While the conventional wisdom emphasizes counterrevolution as the foremost challenge faced by (nascent) revolutionary regimes, I argue that revolutionary states also face an increased risk of rebellion among peripheral groups, including peasant communities and ethnic minorities. Specifically, I theorize that the policies imposed by the revolutionary state can both motivate and facilitate peripheral rebellion by 1) removing insulation from revolutionary disruption by disempowering local authorities, 2) stoking resentment and polarizing communities through preferential policies, and 3) facilitating coordinated dissent through posing acute, cross-cutting

⁷ For examples of quantitative studies on revolution and international conflict, see: Colgan and Weeks, “Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict”; Colgan, “Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict”; Maoz, “Joining the Club of Nations.”

threats.⁸ Since revolutionary states tend to pursue these centralizing, polarizing, and threatening policies more aggressively and expansively than their non-revolutionary counterparts, I expect peripheral rebellions to be more likely within revolutionary states.

H2: All else being equal, revolutionary states face a higher risk of peripheral rebellion than other types of states.

I acknowledge the potential for wide variation among revolutionary states in terms of their policy ambitions. Some revolutionary regimes will seek to fundamentally transform their state and society on numerous fronts, while others will seek radical changes in fewer policy areas. I do not expect all these policy changes to be equally intrusive, polarizing, and/or cross-cutting. Some may be quite palatable to peripheral groups, based on the dominant socioeconomic conditions within their regions and/or how the policy is actually implemented. But I do expect that the more ambitious the regime's revolutionary state policies (for instance, the greater the number of revolutionary policies the regime imposes), the greater the likelihood the regime will trigger the motivation and dissident coordination needed for peripheral rebellion.

H3_a: All else being equal, revolutionary states with more ambitious revolutionary state policies face a higher risk of peripheral rebellion than less ambitious revolutionary states.

On the other hand, I do not expect other types of domestic conflict in revolutionary states to be driven by these revolutionary policies. The mere existence of the revolutionary state is

⁸ With its emphasis on the causal mechanisms by which revolutionary state policies trigger peripheral rebellions, this full theory cannot be assessed through quantitative methods. Doing so requires detailed process tracing, which I conduct in the following chapters. Here, the focus is simply on assessing whether a correlation between revolutionary state policies and peripheral rebellions exists at all.

motivation enough for those elites whose status, wealth, and power were swept away by its emergence. In such cases, the vulnerability of the revolutionary state and the availability of external support likely serve as the key determinants of elite counterrevolutionary rebellion.⁹ Similarly, I expect violent coup attempts and infighting to be shaped by leadership vulnerabilities and dissatisfaction with the distribution of power and privilege among coalition members – current and former. Thus, while such other types of rebellion may also be more likely in revolutionary states, I don't expect their likelihood to increase as the policy ambitions of the revolutionary regime increase.

H3_b: All else being equal, revolutionary states with more ambitious revolutionary state policies do not face a higher risk of non-peripheral rebellions (such as violent coup attempts and elite counterrevolutions) than less ambitious revolutionary states.

3.1.2 Alternative Explanations

While I emphasize the role of revolutionary policies in cultivating resentment and facilitating rebellion among ethnic groups and peasant communities in the state's peripheries, this is not the only possible explanation for the increased risk of domestic conflict within revolutionary states (assuming H1 is confirmed). First, the increased risk of rebellion might be driven by elite competitions for control over the central state, including attempted counterrevolutions, coups, coalitional infighting, and efforts to further radicalize the revolution. Rather than originating in the periphery as a means of resisting state invasiveness, these armed conflicts develop in the capital and other urban centers with the aim of capturing the political

⁹ Killian Clarke, "Overthrowing Revolution: The Emergence and Success of Counterrevolution, 1900-2015" (AALIMS-NYUAD Graduate Student Workshop, NYU Abu Dhabi, 2019).

center.¹⁰ As such, peripheral groups tend to play little to no role in these conflicts. If the heightened risk of rebellion among revolutionary states is due predominantly to these elite competitions for central power, then revolutionary states should be 1) more prone to non-peripheral rebellions and 2) not more prone to peripheral rebellions than non-revolutionary states. This is represented in the following hypotheses:

H4_a: All else being equal, revolutionary states face a higher risk of non-peripheral rebellions (such as violent coup attempts and elite counterrevolutions) than other types of states.

H4_b: All else being equal, revolutionary states do not face a higher risk of peripheral rebellions than other types of states.

Notably, H4_a is perfectly compatible with my theory. Revolutionary states may simply be prone to more than one type of rebellion. On the other hand, evidence supporting both H4_a and H4_b would undermine my argument, instead suggesting that revolutionary states are more prone to domestic conflict only because of competitions over central control.

Second, the higher likelihood of internal conflict might be due to opportunistic rebels taking advantage of the initial weakness and political instability of the nascent revolutionary state. This argument could take two forms. In its extreme form, the initial period following the collapse of the old regime might be characterized by “emerging anarchy,” even if a new revolutionary regime claims to have seized power.¹¹ This situation of extreme state weakness

¹⁰ In cases of elite counterrevolution, these may also be organized by exiles outside the borders of the state – but the goal is still to capture the central state, not secure the autonomy of some peripheral region.

¹¹ Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 27–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339308442672>.

could lead to an ethnic security dilemma where rebel groups violently compete with one another and the revolutionary “state” to create defensible, ethnically homogenous territorial bases.¹² In its more moderate form, revolutionary states might simply be weaker domestically than their counterparts in the early years of state consolidation. Under such circumstances, prospective rebels might see rebellion as more feasible (since heavy, successful repression is less likely) and thus pursue it out of any number of motivations.¹³ If correct, then new revolutionary states are simply a subset of weak and politically unstable states and should face the same susceptibility to rebellion onset. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H5: Once state capacity and political instability are taken into account, revolutionary states do not face a higher risk of rebellion than other types of states.

Third, ethnic rebellions might be triggered by the shifting boundaries of political exclusion effected by the revolutionary state. As argued by Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, ethnic groups are motivated to rebel when they are systematically excluded from central state power and decision making.¹⁴ By rapidly and radically changing which groups have access to central state power, revolutions might newly, or more intensively, exclude certain ethnic groups thereby producing powerful motivations for ethnic rebellion. If correct, then revolutionary states are merely a subset of ethnically exclusionary states and should face the same vulnerability to rebellion as similarly exclusionary states. This yields the following hypothesis:

¹² Chaim Kaufmann, “A Security Dilemma,” *Harvard International Review* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 44–49.

¹³ Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (October 1, 2004): 563–95.

¹⁴ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?”

H6: Once the political exclusion of ethnic groups is taken into account, revolutionary states do not face a higher risk of rebellion than other types of states.

3.2 Quantitative Research Design

I assess these hypotheses using multivariate regression analysis of all country-years (for which data is available) from 1946 to 2004 inclusive. In this section, I detail how the independent, dependent, and control variables are operationalized for this multivariate analysis. I then describe the estimation approach used in the following sections.

3.2.1 *Operationalizing Revolutionary State and Revolutionary State Policies*

To operationalize revolutionary state, I first adopt Jeff Colgan's definition of a revolutionary leader from his article, "Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict."¹⁵ Colgan defines a revolutionary leader as "one who transforms the existing social, political, and economic relationships of the state by overthrowing or rejecting the principal existing institutions of the state."¹⁶ More operationally, Colgan requires that a revolutionary leader come to power through an "irregular transition" and must, once in power, implement "radical domestic changes" in at least three of the following seven areas: "the selection and power of the national executive; the structure of property ownership; the relationship between state and religion; the official political ideology; the official state name and symbols; the institutionalized status of ethnicity and gender; and the presence of a governing revolutionary

¹⁵ Colgan, "Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict."

¹⁶ Colgan, 658.

council or committee.”¹⁷ I consider a “revolutionary state” to be any state led by a revolutionary leader (as defined and coded by Colgan).¹⁸ All other states are considered “non-revolutionary states.” Consequently, the dummy variable Revolutionary State carries a value of 1 when the state is led by a revolutionary leader and a value of 0 when it is not.¹⁹

To assess the core argument that revolutionary states that engage in more intrusive and polarizing revolutionary policies should face a higher risk of peripheral rebellion, I create two dummy variables: Major Revolution and Minor Revolution. Major Revolution carries a value of 1 when the revolutionary state has implemented “radical domestic changes” in at least five of the seven areas coded by Colgan, otherwise it is 0. Minor Revolution carries a value of 1 when the revolutionary state has implemented “radical domestic changes” in less than five of the seven areas coded by Colgan, otherwise it is 0.

While these dummy variables measure the breadth of revolutionary policies, rather than specifically their level of intrusion and polarization, I consider them adequate proxies. First, some of the common forms of intrusive, polarizing policies are encompassed by Colgan’s categories. Centrally imposed agrarian reform is captured by changes in the “structure of property ownership.” Language policies and literacy campaigns should be correlated with changes in the category: “institutionalized status of ethnicity and gender.” Anti-clerical policies should register as changes in “the relationship between state and religion.” Second, several of Colgan’s other categories are likely to go hand-in-hand with intrusive and polarizing policies, such as radically altering the “official political ideology.” Contrasting those revolutionary states where radical changes occurred in many of these categories (5 or more) with those where change

¹⁷ Colgan, 669.

¹⁸ Colgan, “Measuring Revolution.”

¹⁹ See Table A.1 in the appendix for a list of all revolutionary states based on this coding.

happened in fewer (3 or 4), should thus correlate well with the distinction between highly ambitious revolutionary states and those employing less ambitious policies.

But why set the cutoff between Major Revolution and Minor Revolution at radical changes in at least 5 policy areas? There are a few reasons I selected this specific threshold. First, setting the threshold at five ensured that some of the most obvious cases of major, social revolutionary states, such as Cuba and Nicaragua, were included in the higher category. Second, using this threshold makes the number of observations in Major Revolution and Minor Revolution roughly equal. Major Revolution encompasses 43 revolutionary governments and 518 country-years, while Minor Revolution encompasses 51 revolutionary governments and 480 country-years. Finally, this threshold appears to represent a natural break in the data. Specifically, above this threshold radical changes in political ideology and property ownership almost always occur, whereas below this threshold there is a fair chance these policies will not be employed (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Frequency of Revolutionary Change by Policy Category

Policy Categories	Number of Categories with Revolutionary Policy Change			
	Three	Four	Five	Six or Seven
Executive Power	99%	97%	100%	100%
Political Ideology	29%	70%	94%	83%
Name of Country	19%	30%	65%	100%
Property Ownership	70%	63%	97%	100%
Women and Ethnic Status	15%	43%	29%	75%
Religion in Government	25%	57%	52%	100%
Revolutionary Committee	75%	57%	68%	100%
Number of Revolutionary Governments	21	30	31	12

3.2.2 Operationalizing Peripheral Rebellion

To operationalize rebellion, I first adopt the definition of armed conflict used by the Uppsala Conflict Data Project's (UCDP's) Armed Conflict Dataset²⁰: “a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one is the government of a state.”²¹ I then look only at internal armed conflicts, defined as an armed conflict “between the government of a state and internal opposition groups.”²² In this dissertation, I treat internal armed conflict and rebellion as synonymous.

I then specifically utilize the UCDP Dyadic Dataset, which provides data on all dyads engaged in an armed conflict (as defined above) from 1946 onward.²³ I code the first year in which every internal opposition group first appeared in the UCDP Dyadic Dataset, that is, the first year in which the opposition group engaged in armed conflict levels of violence with the government of the state. I code the beginning of a new internal armed conflict dyad as the onset of a new rebellion.

²⁰ Admittedly, there are several issues with this dataset that limit the analysis here. First, the dataset seems to overlook peasant rebellions, even ones which should meet their casualty threshold if there isn't clear organizational leadership. An example is the bandido uprising in Castro's Cuba. Second, some rebel organizations/movements seem overly aggregated, such as the Contras/FDN in Nicaragua. This is problematic in this case where the Miskitu rebels seemed to be primarily seeking territorial autonomy while the former national guardsmen were interested in the central government. Finally, in some cases onset dates are much later than historical narratives would suggest, typically due to poor or imprecise data. For example, the Hmong are not coded as rebelling until the 1990s, even though historians note significant resistance there in the 1970s led to Vietnamese armed forces being brought in to help suppress them – suggesting that the casualty threshold was surpassed much earlier. (Though this may also be a case where it was excluded earlier due to the lack of a formal organization.) Despite these issues, this dataset still seems to be the most comprehensive and is therefore used for this analysis.

²¹ Gleditsch et al., “Armed Conflict 1946-2001,” 618–19.

²² Gleditsch et al., 619.

²³ Harbom, Melander, and Wallensteen, “Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946—2007”; Allansson, Melander, and Themnér, “Organized Violence, 1989–2016.”

Importantly, because this analysis focuses on the impact of revolutionary governments and their policies on the likelihood of the onset of rebellion, it is essential that new rebellions be properly attributed to the regime under which they occurred – revolutionary or non-revolutionary. This becomes problematic in years of transition from non-revolutionary to revolutionary governments and vice-versa. This is because Colgan codes every country-year as either revolutionary or non-revolutionary based on whichever leader holds power at the end of the year.²⁴ Consequently, rebellions that bring a leader (revolutionary or counterrevolutionary) to power within a single year will be incorrectly presented as being waged against that leader’s government. To correct this issue, 20 rebellion onsets have been shifted forward or backward one year so that they are coded as being against the government that they were actually waged against (see Table 3.2).

Country	Rebellion	Moved From:	Moved To:
Afghanistan	PDDPA	1978	1977
Afghanistan	Jam'iyat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan	1979	1978
Argentina	Military faction (forces of Eduardo A. Lonardi Doucet)	1955	1954
Argentina	Military faction (forces of Samuel Toranzo Calderón)	1955	1954
Bolivia	MNR	1952	1951
Burkina Faso	Popular Front	1987	1986
Chile	Military faction (forces of Augusto Pinochet, Toribio Merino and Leigh Guzman)	1973	1972
Comoros	Presidential guard	1989	1988
Costa Rica	National Liberation Army	1948	1947
El Salvador	FPL	1979	1978
Ghana	Military faction (forces of Jerry John Rawlings)	1981	1980
Guatemala	Forces of Carlos Castillo Armas	1954	1953
Iraq	Military faction (free Officers Movement)	1958	1957
Liberia	Military faction (forces of Samuel Doe)	1980	1979
Liberia	INPFL	1990	1989

²⁴ Colgan, “Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict”; Colgan, “Measuring Revolution.”

Country	Rebellion	Moved From:	Moved To:
Romania	NSF	1989	1988
Syria	Military faction (forces loyal to Nureddin Atassi and Youssef Zeayen)	1966	1965
Uganda	Military faction (forces of Idi Amin)	1971	1970
Uganda	Fronasa	1979	1978
Uganda	UNLF	1979	1978

With these adjustments made, I now operationalize peripheral and non-peripheral rebellion. The UCDP Dyadic Dataset distinguishes between two types of internal armed conflicts – those over autonomy for a specific territory and those over control of the central government – and codes which is the core incompatibility in each dyad.²⁵ Using their incompatibility coding, I disaggregate new rebellions into those over territorial autonomy and those over control of the central government and then code a dichotomous dependent variable for these specific types of rebellion. For new rebellions over autonomy for a specific territory, I code Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion. For new rebellions over the central government, I code Center-Seeking Rebellion.²⁶ For both dichotomous dependent variables, the variable carries a value of 1 for every country-year in which there is at least one new internal armed conflict dyad within a country of that type. (That is, it is the first year that a specific internal opposition group’s conflict with the government has resulted in at least 25 battle-related deaths.) For all other years, the variable carries a value of 0.

I use Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion and Center-Seeking Rebellion as my primary operationalizations, respectively, of peripheral rebellion and non-peripheral rebellion. These

²⁵ Harbom, Melander, and Wallensteen, “Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946—2007”; Allansson, Melander, and Themnér, “Organized Violence, 1989–2016.”

²⁶ For the full list of revolutionary regimes, the number of policy areas with radical change, and the count of rebellion onsets, see Table A.1 in appendix.

variables serve as suitable proxies for several reasons. First, while Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion is a narrower category than peripheral rebellion, it should almost exclusively consist of peripheral rebellions. That is, rebellions seeking to secure autonomy for a specific territory within a state should 1) originate in peripheral territories and 2) involve significant participation from peripheral groups. Second, I would expect most peripheral rebellions to be autonomy-seeking. I argue that the intrusion and alienation of central state policies in the periphery is the driving motivation for peripheral rebellion. Securing autonomy from the central state is the most straightforward solution to this problem. Third, while there are certainly some center-seeking peripheral rebellions (such as the TPLF in Ethiopia and the SPLA in Sudan), center-seeking rebellions are a far more heterogeneous category that also includes violent coups, elite counterrevolutions, and other non-peripheral conflicts. For instance, among the 65 center-seeking rebellions in revolutionary states, 23% were violent coup attempts and 65% were non-ethnic. In contrast, among the 43 autonomy-seeking rebellions in revolutionary states, none were violent coup attempts (by definition) and only 16% were non-ethnic.²⁷ Consequently, while autonomy-seeking rebellion should almost exclusively consist of peripheral rebellions, center-seeking rebellions are largely non-peripheral.

3.2.3 Operationalizing Alternative Explanations

Having operationalized the independent and dependent variables to assess my argument, I now turn to operationalizing the alternative explanations of state weakness and the political exclusion of ethnic groups.²⁸ The scholarship on domestic conflict has proposed numerous

²⁷ See Table A.2 in appendix.

²⁸ Elite competitions for central control do not need to be operationalized here. The comparison of the impact of revolution on the likelihood of autonomy-seeking and center-seeking rebellions will be used to assess the hypotheses that 1) revolutions increase the likelihood of center-seeking rebellions and 2) whether revolutionary states are no more prone to rebellion once center-seeking rebellions are excluded (i.e. that revolutions do not have a similar effect

different operationalizations of state capacity, ranging from measures of military capacity, such as the number of military personnel per capita, to measures of bureaucratic and administrative capacity, such as total taxes as a percentage of GDP.²⁹ Among the various potential operationalizations, I use Per Capita Income (logged GDP per capita) as my main proxy for state capacity, as used by James Fearon and David Laitin in “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.”³⁰ This variable is measured “as thousands of 1985 U.S. dollars and lagged one year.”³¹

The logic of Per Capita Income as an operationalization of state capacity is straightforward: wealthier states should have greater administrative and military capacity, as well as better infrastructure, thereby making insurgency more difficult. The inverse should be true for poorer states. Moreover, there are good reasons to choose this operationalization over the alternatives. As Cullen Hendrix notes, “As a measure of administrative capacity, *(log) GDP per capita* has distinct advantages. It is widely available for a large number of countries over a long time frame... Furthermore, *(log) GDP per capita* is highly correlated with a variety of measures of bureaucratic/administrative capacity and may be plausibly considered both a cause and effect of bureaucratic quality and strong state institutions.”³² The main drawback of this measure is that it may also shape the likelihood of conflict through its effect on opportunity costs.³³ But this should not be an issue here, as long as it also correlates well with state capacity.

I operationalize the political exclusion of ethnic groups at the country-year level, using two variables: Excluded Ethnic Groups and Excluded Population. Excluded Ethnic Groups is a

on the likelihood of autonomy-seeking rebellion). If both prove to be true, then elite competitions for central control may be sufficient to explain the increase likelihood of rebellions in revolutionary states.

²⁹ Cullen S Hendrix, “Measuring State Capacity.”

³⁰ Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.”

³¹ Fearon and Laitin, 83.

³² Cullen S Hendrix, “Measuring State Capacity,” 277.

³³ Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”; Cullen S Hendrix, “Measuring State Capacity.”

count variable measuring the number of ethnic groups within the country that are excluded from central executive power. The more ethnic groups excluded from participation in the central government, the more likely that government will face ethnic rebellions.³⁴ Excluded Population is measured as the sum of the populations of the excluded ethnic groups as a fraction of the total population of the country. Ethnic rebellions should be easier to organize for larger ethnic groups – and ethnic grievances should be higher as they should expect greater representation. The larger the total excluded population, the more likely there are large ethnic groups being excluded from power. Both variables are drawn from the GROWup RFE, which aggregates data from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Dataset.³⁵

3.2.4 Control Variables

I employ several additional control variables to account for other potential confounding variables. In selecting controls, I primarily drew on those found in Fearon and Laitin’s “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War” and Cederman, Wimmer, and Min’s “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?”, or my best approximation of the same concepts.³⁶ Beyond state capacity, there are other factors, such as political instability and mountainous terrain, which may help produce a permissive environment for rebellion. I include proxy variables for several of these factors.

First, Instability is “a dummy variable indicating whether the country had a three-or-greater change on the Polity IV regime index in any of the three years prior to the country-year in

³⁴ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?”

³⁵ Luc Girardin et al., *GROWup - Geographical Research On War, Unified Platform* (ETH Zurich, 2015), <http://growup.ethz.ch/>; Manuel Vogt et al., “Integrating Data on Ethnicity, Geography, and Conflict: The Ethnic Power Relations Data Set Family,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 7 (October 1, 2015): 1327–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002715591215>.

³⁶ Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?”

question.”³⁷ Recent, dramatic changes in the regime (of which revolution is only one type), might open a window of opportunity for rebellion.³⁸ Second, *New State* is a dummy variable indicating whether a country is in its first two years of independence. Newly independent states may be particularly susceptible to rebels due to their military capabilities being “new and untested.”³⁹ Third, *Mountainous* is measured as the log of the percent of the country that is mountainous terrain. Since difficult terrain can provide refuge for insurgent groups, it should make armed rebellion more feasible and therefore more likely. Fourth, *Population Size* is measured as the log of the population of the country (in thousands) and lagged one year. Larger populations are expected to correlate with a higher risk of civil war since they can be more difficult for the state to control and provide a larger pool of potential recruits for rebels. Fifth, *Oil Exporter* is a dummy variable indicating “country-years in which fuel exports exceeded one-third of export revenues...”⁴⁰ States that rely heavily on oil exportation require less revenue from their populations and thus might be underdeveloped in terms of extraction and social services, thereby affecting their risk of civil war onset.

If revolutionary states are more susceptible to rebellion merely because they create an amenable environment for opportunistic rebellion, then the inclusion of these controls should eliminate or greatly diminish the relationship between having a revolutionary government and rebellion onset. Furthermore, these controls should have a substantive and statistically significant

³⁷ Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” 81.

³⁸ Notably, this variable only captures dramatic changes in the Polity IV regime index. Yet it is possible for a regime to go through dramatic changes, such as revolution, without this being manifested in a significant change in its Polity IV index. This is just one reason why we might expect revolution to have an independent effect on the likelihood of civil war onset, even when political instability is included as a control variable.

³⁹ Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” 81. *New State* and *Revolutionary State* are actually mutually exclusive, as Colgan’s definition of revolution explicitly excludes founding governments.

⁴⁰ Fearon and Laitin, 81.

impact on the likelihood of rebellion, not only generally, but for both center-seeking and autonomy-seeking rebellion, since both should be similarly affected.

Finally, I add two additional controls which one might expect to influence the likelihood of rebellion. Prior Armed Conflict is a dummy variable indicating whether there was an internal armed conflict ongoing in the country in the previous year. This variable was formed by creating a one-year lag of the armed conflict incidence data from GROWup RFE, which was itself drawn from UCDP's Armed Conflict Dataset.⁴¹ Democracy, drawn from Fearon and Laitin 2003, denotes the country's Polity IV score, lagged one year. Lower levels of democracy are expected to increase the likelihood of rebellion onset.

3.2.5 Estimation Approach

I use binomial and multinomial logistic regression models for my multivariate analysis. The binomial logit models use a dichotomous dependent variable of rebellion onset (i.e. Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset and Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset above). Country-years with at least one rebellion onset are coded as 1 and those without are coded as 0. Logit models have been used in many analyses of civil war onset, including both Fearon and Laitin 2003 and Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010, discussed above.⁴² Since the types of rebellion onset represent non-ordinal outcomes, I also use multinomial logistic regression.

⁴¹ Girardin et al., *GROWup - Geographical Research On War, Unified Platform*; Gleditsch et al., "Armed Conflict 1946-2001."

⁴² Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War"; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?"

3.3 Quantitative Analysis

3.3.1 Initial Analysis

Before employing multivariate analysis, I first explore the relative rates of rebellion onset between revolutionary and non-revolutionary states. As one might expect, the rate of rebellion among revolutionary states is much higher than among non-revolutionary states. Whereas new rebellions began in 8% of revolutionary country-years, only 3.7% of country-years in non-revolutionary states included a rebellion onset (see Table 3.3). This puts the relative risk ratio of new rebellion in a given year at 2.16 for revolutionary states compared to non-revolutionary states. This suggests that being led by a revolutionary government significantly enhances a state's risk of experiencing new rebellions.

Table 3.3: Rate of Onset by State Type

	State Type	
	Revolutionary	Non-Revolutionary
% of Country-Years with Rebellion Onset	8% (80/995)	3.7% (239/6487)

Furthermore, this higher risk of new rebellions among revolutionary states holds whether we are looking solely at rebellions over control of the central government or those over territorial autonomy for a specific region or ethnic group. In fact, the rates of center-seeking and autonomy-seeking rebellion onsets are both more than twice as high in states led by

revolutionary governments when compared to their non-revolutionary counterparts. As Table 3.4 shows, center-seeking rebellion onsets occurred in 5.5% of revolutionary country-years compared to 2.6% of non-revolutionary country-years. This makes for a relative risk ratio of 2.12. In terms of autonomy-seeking rebellions, these began in 3% of revolutionary country-years, but only 1.2% of non-revolutionary country-years. This puts the relative risk ratio for autonomy-seeking rebellion onset at 2.5. This suggests that having a revolutionary government has a similar, if not slightly stronger, positive effect on the likelihood of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset as it has for center-seeking rebellion onset.

Table 3.4 Rate of Onset by State Type and Rebellion Type

		State Type	
		Revolutionary	Non-Revolutionary
% of Country-Years with Rebellion Onset	Center-Seeking	5.5% (55/995)	2.6% (166/6487)
	Autonomy-Seeking	3.0% (30/995)	1.2% (75/6487)

However, the relative rates of center-seeking and autonomy-seeking rebellion onset among revolutionary states diverge starkly once we consider variation in the level of radical domestic policy changes imposed by the revolutionary government. As Table 3.5 shows, the rate of center-seeking rebellion onsets is somewhat lower among revolutionary states with major policy changes (4.9% of country-years) than among those with minor policy changes (6.4% of

country-years). This yields a relative risk ratio of 0.77 for major revolutions as compared to minor revolutions. On the other hand, the rate of autonomy-seeking rebellion onsets is drastically higher among major revolutions (5% of country-years) when compared to minor revolutions (0.2% of country-years). With regard to autonomy-seeking rebellion, the relative risk ratio is 25 for major revolutions when compared to minor revolutions. This suggests that the distinction between major and minor revolutions makes little difference for center-seeking rebellions but matters greatly for assessing the risk of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset.

Table 3.5 Rate of Onset by Revolution Type and Rebellion Type

		Revolution Type	
		Major	Minor
% of Country-Years with Rebellion Onset	Center-Seeking	4.9% (28/577)	6.4% (27/421)
	Autonomy-Seeking	5.0% (29/577)	0.2% (1/421)

Although these basic statistics lend support to my argument regarding the relationship between revolutionary policies and types of rebellion onset, it is also possible that this represents a spurious correlation easily accounted for by other factors. For instance, both revolution and rebellion onset may be caused by state weakness. To address such concerns, the following section turns to multivariate analysis, where I can control for potential confounding variables.

3.3.2 *Main Analysis*

I construct seven models to assess the hypotheses proposed above. Models 1 through 4 utilize binomial logistic regression to evaluate the relationship between having a revolutionary government and the risk of rebellion onset. The results of Models 1 through 4 are presented in Table 3.6. Also using binomial logistic regression, Models 5 and 6 assess the relationship between revolutionary state policies and types of rebellion onset. The results of Models 5 and 6 are presented in Table 3.7. Finally, Model 7 employs multinomial logistic regression to explore how revolutionary state policies and other factors shape the risk of autonomy-seeking or center-seeking rebellion onset as discrete outcomes (see Table 3.8).⁴³ This model allows a direct test of whether the impact of revolutionary policy on the two types of rebellion onset is statistically distinct. It also permits a calculation of the predicted probability of the types of rebellion onset under each state type (when all other variables are held at their means).

Model 1, which serves as my base model, presents the results of a logit analysis with Rebellion Onset as the dependent variable and Revolutionary State as the dichotomous, independent variable. This model includes control variables for four potential confounders which one might expect to be strongly correlated with both revolutions and the onset of internal armed conflicts. First, state capacity should heavily shape the prospects for both revolutions and civil wars. The assertion that state weakness creates a permissive environment for rebellion has already been discussed. The expected impact on revolution is analogous. As Jeff Goodwin argues, “revolutionaries may become numerous and well organized if the state’s policing capacities and infrastructural power more generally are chronically weak or geographically

⁴³ For this model, country-years with both autonomy-seeking and center-seeking onsets are included in the center-seeking category.

uneven.”⁴⁴ Alternatively, high levels of state capacity should be prohibitive for both revolution and rebellion. As justified in the previous section, I use Per Capita Income to operationalize state capacity.

Second, political exclusion is expected to be a key driver not only of peripheral rebellions against revolutionary governments, but also in motivating revolutions in the first place. As Goodwin observes, “exclusion of mobilized groups from access to state power is likely to push them toward a specifically revolutionary strategy - that is, militant, extralegal, and even armed struggle aimed at overthrowing the state.”⁴⁵ In contrast, political inclusion should disincentivize both revolution and rebellion since change can be pursued through participation in decision-making in the center. To operationalize political exclusion in this base model, I use Excluded Population, which measures the fraction of the population consisting of politically excluded ethnic groups.

Third, I include Population Size in my base model as a potential confounder for a couple reasons. For one, larger populations should facilitate revolutionary and insurgent movements by providing a larger recruitment pool and compounding the problem of state control. In addition, as observed by Jeff Colgan and Edward Lucas, “large population size has been linked to increased levels of government repression.”⁴⁶ Where the government violently represses more peaceable

⁴⁴ Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 49.

⁴⁵ Goodwin, 47.

⁴⁶ Jeff D. Colgan and Edward R. Lucas, “Revolutionary Pathways: Leaders and the International Impacts of Domestic Revolutions,” *International Interactions* 43, no. 3 (May 4, 2017): 492, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2016.1203788>. In making this assertion, Colgan and Lucas cite the following: Steven C. Poe, C. Neal Tate, and Linda Camp Keith, “Repression of the Human Right to Personal Integrity Revisited: A Global Cross-National Study Covering the Years 1976–1993,” *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (June 1, 1999): 294, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00121>; Dursun Peksen and A. Cooper Drury, “Coercive or Corrosive: The Negative Impact of Economic Sanctions on Democracy,” *International Interactions* 36, no. 3 (August 30, 2010): 252, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2010.502436>.

methods of enacting change, the likelihood of both revolution and rebellion should dramatically increase.⁴⁷

Fourth, neighboring states may play a prominent role in facilitating revolutions and armed rebellions. For instance, these states may allow opposition organizations to operate in their border zones. In some cases, these bordering states may even actively sponsor revolutionary and insurgent movements. To address this possibility, I include a final control variable in my base model. Borders is a count variable measuring the number of other states with which a given country shares an international land and/or maritime border, as coded in Jeff Colgan's Revolutionary Leaders Dataset.⁴⁸ As the number of international borders increases, the potential for meddling neighbors is expected to increase as well.

With these main potential confounders operationalized, does the positive correlation between having a revolutionary government and the onset of internal armed conflict still hold? As the results of Model 1 show, even with these key controls, Revolutionary State is strongly correlated with Rebellion Onset. In fact, when the other factors are held at fixed values, the odds of rebellion onset are 52% greater if a state is ruled by a revolutionary government.⁴⁹ Notably, all but one of the key controls in this base model are also highly significant in the anticipated direction. The exception is Borders which is shown to have a negligible substantive effect and fails to reach anything near statistical significance. In light of this, I do not include Borders in the remaining models.

⁴⁷ Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 48.

⁴⁸ Colgan, "Measuring Revolution."

⁴⁹ Using Odds Ratio.

Table 3.6: Impact of Revolutionary State on Rebellion Onset				
Variables	(1) Rebellion Onset	(2) Rebellion Onset	(3) Center- Seeking Rebellion Onset	(4) Autonomy- Seeking Rebellion Onset
Revolutionary State	0.418*** (0.149)	0.499*** (0.164)	0.427** (0.189)	1.074*** (0.304)
Prior Armed Conflict	-	1.147*** (0.141)	0.886*** (0.171)	1.733*** (0.253)
Per Capita Income	-0.194*** (0.0314)	-0.172*** (0.0351)	-0.178*** (0.0462)	-0.123** (0.0507)
Population Size	0.261*** (0.0504)	0.120** (0.0521)	-0.0450 (0.0662)	0.449*** (0.0866)
Mountainous	-	0.102* (0.0529)	0.180*** (0.0609)	-0.0146 (0.103)
Oil Exporter	-	0.383* (0.197)	0.387 (0.236)	0.481 (0.338)
New State	-	1.093*** (0.420)	0.425 (0.605)	2.494*** (0.538)
Instability	-	0.599*** (0.146)	0.834*** (0.166)	0.0458 (0.284)
Democracy	-	0.0315*** (0.0115)	0.000815 (0.0138)	0.0904*** (0.0218)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-	0.00499 (0.0111)	-0.0216 (0.0218)	0.0149 (0.0138)
Excluded Population	0.938*** (0.230)	0.564** (0.259)	0.588* (0.300)	0.851* (0.467)
Borders	0.0100 (0.0222)	-	-	-
Constant	-5.312*** (0.436)	-4.735*** (0.495)	-3.683*** (0.597)	-9.574*** (0.942)
Observations		6,128	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

In Model 2, I add to the base model a broader assortment of control variables generally expected to influence the probability of civil war onset, while dropping the insignificant Borders variable. Within this second model, Revolutionary State remains both substantively and

statistically significant, lending further support to H1. Indeed, holding all other variables at fixed values, the odds of rebellion onset increase 65% if a state is led by a revolutionary government.⁵⁰

In Model 3, the dependent variable is restricted to Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset to assess whether revolutionary states are particularly likely to experience new rebellions over control of the central government, such as those initiated by counterrevolutionaries (H4_a). Revolutionary State has a positive effect on Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset and is statistically significant, though only at the 0.95 confidence level. Holding all other variables at fixed values, being a revolutionary state (as opposed to a non-revolutionary state) increases the odds of center-seeking rebellion onset by 53%.⁵¹ Model 2 thus provides support for H4_a.

In Model 4, the independent variable remains the dichotomous Revolutionary State, while the dependent variable is instead Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset. If the increased risk of rebellion among revolutionary states is due only to center-seeking competitions for control of the government, then the coefficient for Revolutionary State should be smaller, negative, and/or less statistically significant than in the previous two models (H4_b). Alternatively, I expect revolutionary states to face a higher likelihood of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset than their non-revolutionary counterparts, due to the radical policies imposed by some revolutionary governments (H2). The model provides strong support for H2 and doesn't support H4_b. Revolutionary State is highly significant, both substantively and statistically. Holding all other variables at fixed values, having a revolutionary government increases the odds of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset by 193%.⁵²

⁵⁰ Using Odds Ratio.

⁵¹ Using Odds Ratio.

⁵² Using Odds Ratio.

Overall, these four models support the argument that revolutionary governments increase the risk of rebellion onset for both center-seeking and, especially, autonomy-seeking rebellions. On the other hand, these models provide weak support for H5 and H6. First, across all four models, Revolutionary State holds a positive and statistically significant relationship with rebellion onset (overall and for both types of rebellion in isolation) despite the inclusion of several indicators of factors that facilitate opportunistic rebellion, such as low Per Capita Income (a proxy for state capacity), recent political Instability, and abundant Mountainous terrain, as well as indicators of political exclusion such as Excluded Ethnic Groups and Excluded Population. Second, most of these indicators have an inconsistent impact on rebellion onset across the three models. Instability and Mountainous are significant in Models 2 and 3 but lose substantive and statistical significance in Model 4. In contrast, New State and Population Size are substantively and statistically significant in Models 2 and 4 but not in Model 3. The one exception is Per Capita Income, though even here the strength and significance of the coefficient decrease in Model 4. On the other hand, the measures of political exclusion either fail to achieve statistical significance, or are only weakly significant. Thus, while most of these factors do seem to play a role in shaping the risk of rebellion onset, their influence may be limited to a certain type of rebellion onset.

Model 5 explores the impact of revolution on the likelihood of Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset after disaggregating revolutionary states into those with more expansive domestic policy changes (Major Revolution) and those with more limited domestic policy changes (Minor Revolution). My theory does not expect the level of domestic policy change to play a meaningful role in shaping the likelihood of center-seeking rebellion onset. That is, Major Revolution should not exhibit a stronger impact on the likelihood of center-seeking rebellion onset than does Minor

Revolution (H3_b). The results support this hypothesis. In fact, the coefficient for Major Revolution is smaller than the coefficient for Minor Revolution. Moreover, while Major Revolution is not statistically significant in Model 5, Minor Revolution is statistically significant, albeit barely so. Ironically, then, these results suggest that it may be the relatively less ambitious revolutionary regimes that face a (slightly) higher risk of new rebellions over control of the central government.

In Model 6, the dependent variable is Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset, while the disaggregation between Major Revolution and Minor Revolution is maintained. My theory predicts that the likelihood of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset should be higher among those revolutionary states with the most ambitious domestic policy agendas (H3_a). This is because peripheral groups seek autonomy to shield themselves from the disruptive policies of the revolutionary central state. Though Major Revolution and Minor Revolution are blunt proxies for measuring the disruptiveness of revolutionary state policies, the results suggest strong support for H3_a. Major Revolution is substantively and statistically very significant in this model. Indeed, the odds of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset in a given year are 365% higher when the state is experiencing a Major Revolution than when it is non-revolutionary (all other variables being held at fixed values).⁵³ On the other hand, Minor Revolution is actually shown to have a negative relationship with Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset, though the coefficient is nowhere near statistically significant. Thus, the higher likelihood of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset among revolutionary states is attributable to those revolutionary states with the most expansive changes in domestic policies.

⁵³ Using Odds Ratio.

Table 3.7: Impact of Revolutionary Policy Change on Rebellion Onset

Variables	(5) Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset	(6) Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset
Major Revolution	0.368 (0.238)	1.538*** (0.328)
Minor Revolution	0.501* (0.256)	-1.076 (1.031)
Prior Armed Conflict	0.894*** (0.172)	1.641*** (0.258)
Per Capita Income	-0.178*** (0.0462)	-0.136*** (0.0514)
Population Size	-0.0473 (0.0664)	0.457*** (0.0864)
Mountainous	0.183*** (0.0612)	-0.0659 (0.105)
Oil Exporter	0.395* (0.237)	0.364 (0.341)
New State	0.423 (0.605)	2.463*** (0.536)
Instability	0.828*** (0.167)	0.149 (0.285)
Democracy	0.000417 (0.0139)	0.0953*** (0.0223)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-0.0200 (0.0219)	0.00693 (0.0146)
Excluded Population	0.576* (0.302)	0.973** (0.471)
Constant	-3.675*** (0.597)	-9.455*** (0.936)
Observations	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

While Models 1 through 6 use binomial logistic regression, with a single, dichotomous outcome variable, Model 7 instead employs a multinomial logistic regression, where multiple, discrete outcomes are possible. In this case, country-years with no rebellion onsets are used as the comparison group, while the outcomes of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset years and center-

seeking rebellion onset years are modeled. Importantly, there are seven country-years within the dataset where both autonomy-seeking and center-seeking rebellion onsets occurred. In Model 7, these seven country-years are included in the center-seeking rebellion onset outcome. This model provides a more direct comparison of the coefficients across the different outcomes, as well as permits a direct test of their (lack of) equivalence.

The results in Model 7 also lend strong support to the central hypotheses of my argument, H3_a and H3_b. Major Revolution shows a strong, positive correlation with Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset, while Minor Revolution holds a negative, statistically-insignificant relationship to this same outcome. In contrast, the coefficients for Major Revolution and Minor Revolution have essentially the same substantive and statistical significance towards the outcome of Center-Seeking and Both Rebellion Onset. Similar to Models 5 and 6, this suggests that variation in the extent of radical domestic policy change plays a significant role in explaining autonomy-seeking rebellion onset but does little to explain the messier category of center-seeking rebellion onset.

To further reinforce this finding, I conducted a test of the equivalence of the coefficients for Major Revolution between the models of the two outcomes. The test rejected the null hypothesis that the coefficients were equivalent. Put simply, Major Revolution does not have the same effect on center-seeking rebellion onset as it does on autonomy-seeking rebellion onset, even when country-years with both types of onsets are considered center-seeking.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ I also conducted a test of the null hypothesis that the coefficients of *Minor Revolution* across the two outcomes were equivalent. In this case, the test could not reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3.8: Impact of Revolutionary Policy Change on Type of Rebellion Onset (Model 7)

Variables	Outcomes	
	Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset	Center-Seeking and Both Rebellion Onset
Minor Revolution	-1.021 (1.032)	0.488* (0.256)
Major Revolution	1.373*** (0.347)	0.408* (0.238)
Prior Armed Conflict	1.654*** (0.264)	0.929*** (0.172)
Per Capita Income	-0.158*** (0.0531)	-0.181*** (0.0463)
Population Size	0.450*** (0.0873)	-0.0366 (0.0668)
Mountainous	-0.143 (0.107)	0.180*** (0.0612)
Oil Exporter	0.437 (0.352)	0.401* (0.237)
New State	2.163*** (0.582)	0.496 (0.605)
Instability	0.161 (0.298)	0.827*** (0.167)
Democracy	0.104*** (0.0228)	0.00268 (0.0139)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	0.0125 (0.0146)	-0.0177 (0.0217)
Excluded Population	0.961** (0.485)	0.585* (0.302)
Constant	-9.154*** (0.937)	-3.755*** (0.600)
Observations	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

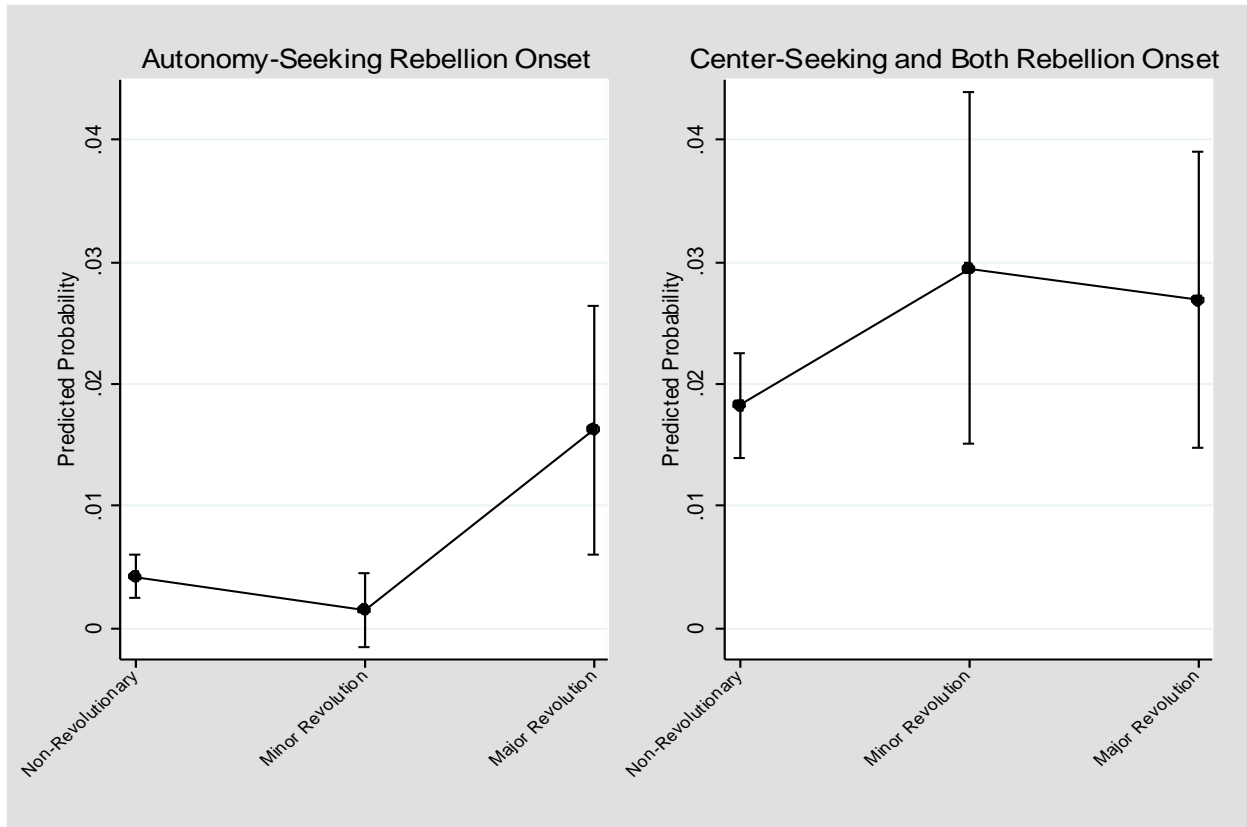
No rebellion onset is the comparison group.

Finally, I use Model 7 to calculate the predicted probabilities of both types of rebellion onset across the different values of the independent variable, when all other variables in the model are held at their means (see Figure 3.1). There are a couple important takeaways. First, in

line with the findings of the models above, the extent of revolutionary policy change has different implications for the likelihood of autonomy-seeking and center-seeking rebellion onsets. For instance, while the predicted probability of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset is lowest for revolutionary states engaged in moderate policy change (Minor Revolution), the predicted probability for center-seeking rebellion onset is highest for these same types of states.⁵⁵ Second, the predicted probability of autonomy-seeking rebellion is always lower than the predicted probability of center-seeking rebellion. It is important to reinforce that the argument being made is not that revolutionary policies make it more likely that a state will experience an autonomy-seeking rebellion rather than a center-seeking rebellion. Rather, the argument is that revolutionary policies have a greater influence on the likelihood of autonomy-seeking rebellion onsets than they do on center-seeking onsets. This is reinforced in Figure 3.1 by the sharp increase in the predicted probability of autonomy-seeking rebellion onset when moving from Minor Revolution to Major Revolution and the absence of such a sharp distinction when looking at center-seeking rebellion onset.

⁵⁵ Though its very large confidence interval makes the actual probability of the latter fairly uncertain.

Figure 3.1: Predicted Probabilities of Onset by State Type and Rebellion Type



3.3.3 Sensitivity Analysis

In this subsection, I define and test several alternative operationalizations of the independent and dependent variables. This is done to address concerns that the strength and significance of the results may be highly sensitive to the specific operationalizations used, especially since these represent only rough approximations of the factors theorized.⁵⁶ I also assess whether the results are driven by a single extreme case. The statistical results of these tests can be found in the appendix.

I begin with four alternative operationalizations of my explanatory variable of revolutionary state policies. First, I create modified versions of Major Revolution and Minor

⁵⁶ The issue of construct validity. See: Carmines, Zeller, and Zeller, *Reliability and Validity Assessment*, 23; Cullen S Hendrix, “Measuring State Capacity,” 276.

Revolution by shifting the cutoff between these categories from five policy areas to six policy areas. By increasing the policy change requirements for a state to be placed in the higher category, this increases our confidence that only the most socially transformative revolutionary states are included. Second, I do away with the threshold entirely, instead introducing a single variable, Revolutionary Magnitude, representing, for revolutionary states, the count of the seven policy areas with radical change. Third, I create an index variable, which considers only those policy areas identified by Colgan which most closely approximate those in my theory and which are likely to have the most direct impact in peripheral areas: 1) property ownership, 2) women and ethnic status, and 3) religion in government.⁵⁷ Peripheral Policy Index sums the changes in these three policy areas in revolutionary states to create a scale from 0 to 3. Fourth, I create a dummy variable, Revolutionary Land Reform, coding whether a revolutionary regime engaged in land reform in a given year, using Michael Albertus's global land reform dataset.⁵⁸ While capturing only one of the policies I theorize is likely to stir resentment in periphery, this variable provides a higher level of granularity (country-year level rather than country-regime level) and an independent policy coding.

The results of replicating Models 5 and 6 using these alternative independent variables strongly support my core hypotheses. Major Revolution holds a strong, positive correlation with autonomy-seeking rebellion onset, but not with center-seeking rebellion onset, even when the cutoff is shifted upward to six policy area changes.⁵⁹ Revolutionary Magnitude is positively correlated with both types of rebellion onset, but the substantive and statistical significance is far

⁵⁷ Colgan, "Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict," 669.

⁵⁸ Michael Albertus, *Autocracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵⁹ For results, see Table A.3 in appendix.

greater for autonomy-seeking rebellion.⁶⁰ In fact, the variable fails to achieve statistical significance at the 0.95 confidence level in the center-seeking rebellion onset model. The results are even more stark for Peripheral Policy Index and Revolutionary Land Reform both of which are strongly correlated with autonomy-seeking rebellion onset, but fail to achieve statistical significance, even at just the 0.1 confidence level, for center-seeking rebellions.⁶¹

I also evaluate two alternative operationalizations of my dependent variables. First, I use GROWup RFE's measures of armed conflict onsets over control of the government and over territory.⁶² While these two variables also divide armed conflicts based on UCDP's core incompatibilities of government and territory, they code as onsets any new episodes of conflict over a given issue (e.g. control over the government or a specific territory) following at least two years of no conflict, regardless of whether these new episodes are initiated by a new rebel organization or an existing one. Accordingly, I label these, respectively, Center-Seeking Rebellion Episode and Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Episode. The emergence of a new rebel organization is not considered an onset by these variables if conflict over the given issue is already underway. One benefit is that splinter groups are not counted. A drawback is that genuinely new rebel groups may be excluded as well. Second, I use GROWup RFE's measures of ethnic and non-ethnic armed conflict onsets.⁶³ I label these: Ethnic Rebellion Episode and Non-Ethnic Rebellion Episode. These variables are also coded based on new episodes of armed conflict onset. For this coding, an armed conflict is considered to be "ethnic" only if the rebel group 1) claims, explicitly or implicitly, to represent an ethnic group and 2) recruits significantly

⁶⁰ For results, see Table A.4 in appendix.

⁶¹ For results, see Table A.5 and Table A.6, respectively, in appendix.

⁶² Respectively, `onset_ko_gov_flag` and `onset_ko_terr_flag` from: Girardin et al., *GROWup - Geographical Research On War, Unified Platform*; Gleditsch et al., "Armed Conflict 1946-2001."

⁶³ Respectively, `onset_ko_eth_flag` and `onset_ko_noneth_flag` from: Girardin et al., *GROWup - Geographical Research On War, Unified Platform*; Gleditsch et al., "Armed Conflict 1946-2001."

from that ethnic group. Ethnic rebellion serves as another way of approximating peripheral rebellion since these rebellions must involve significant participation from peripheral groups (i.e. ethnic groups).⁶⁴

I assess whether these alternative specifications of the dependent variables change the result by replicating Models 5 and 6. The results for the proxies of peripheral rebellion – Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Episode and Ethnic Rebellion Episode – lend solid support to my hypotheses.⁶⁵ For both, the coefficient for Major Revolution is large and positive, while that of Minor Revolution is negligible or negative (and statistically insignificant). However, Major Revolution is also positively, and significantly, correlated with both proxies of non-peripheral rebellion (Center-Seeking Rebellion Episode and Non-Ethnic Rebellion Episode). In these models, though, the substantive difference between the coefficient for Minor Revolution and for Major Revolution is fairly small. This suggests that while episodes of center-seeking and/or non-ethnic rebellion may also be likely in those revolutionary states with more ambitious policies, they are not dramatically more likely in these states than in less ambitious revolutionary states.⁶⁶

Finally, as both revolution and autonomy-seeking rebellion onset are rare, one might be concerned that the results are being driven by a single, extreme case. To address this concern, I replicate Model 6 above, while including a dummy variable for the state of Myanmar. Myanmar had the most Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onsets of any country while coded as a Major Revolution, with 13 onsets over 43 country-years. Yet, even with the dummy variable Myanmar

⁶⁴ Participation can also involve peasant groups from the dominant ethnic group but, as noted earlier, peasant uprisings don't appear to be well captured by the Armed Conflict Dataset.

⁶⁵ For results, see Table A.7 and Table A.8 in appendix.

⁶⁶ I did not adjust conflicts for these dependent variables as I did with my primary operationalization. This means that the results may be driven by the misattribution of one-year revolutions/counterrevolutions. This should only affect the center-seeking results, not the autonomy-seeking results.

included, the coefficient for Major Revolution remains substantively and statistically significant, while the coefficient for Minor Revolution remains negative and statistically insignificant.⁶⁷

3.4 Conclusion

This statistical analysis has provided solid evidence that revolutionary policies are positively correlated with the onset of peripheral rebellions, especially those involving peripheral ethnic groups seeking territorial autonomy. This relationship holds across various operationalizations of the independent and dependent variables, even when many of the common drivers of domestic rebellion are included as control variables. In addition, this quantitative assessment has shown that revolutionary policies are not a powerful predictor of all types of rebellions in revolutionary states. Specifically, the magnitude of revolutionary policy changes does not appear to meaningfully influence the likelihood of center-seeking rebellions – a heterogeneous category largely consisting of non-ethnic rebellions and violent coup attempts. Overall, this cross-national evaluation lends support to a fundamental part of my argument: that revolutionary policies are associated with an increased risk of peripheral rebellion – and that the likelihood of rebellion increases as the scope of revolutionary policies becomes more ambitious.

There are, however, several important caveats regarding the quantitative analysis used in this chapter. These largely result from three common limitations which statistical analyses often face: 1) the issue of construct validity, 2) poor data granularity, and 3) the inability to identify and evaluate causal mechanisms.

⁶⁷ For results, see Table A.9 in appendix.

First, in terms of the issue of construct validity, the variables used in this analysis are rough approximations of the explanatory factors and outcome identified in my theory. Most notably, the revolutionary policies used to construct Major Revolution and Minor Revolution are broader categories than the specific intrusive, polarizing, and cross-cutting policies I theorize provoke peripheral rebellion. For instance, changes in the “structure of property ownership” should capture centrally-imposed agrarian reform, but could also represent the nationalization of foreign businesses, a policy I do not expect to trigger resentment in the periphery.⁶⁸ This leads to the possibility that Major Revolution is including states that did not engage in significant intrusion or trigger peripheral polarization.

Second, with regard to poor data granularity, data on most of the variables included in this model is only available cross-nationally at the country-year level. Even though my theory operates on the peripheral group level, I conduct this analysis at the country-year level in order to include more of these variables. Problematically, Colgan’s data on revolutionary policy changes are coded only once per government leader (i.e. country-regime), rather than yearly.⁶⁹ Consequently, I cannot be certain from this statistical analysis alone that revolutionary policy changes preceded the onset of rebellion. This is less of an issue when Revolutionary Land Reform is instead used, since this variable is coded at the country-year level.

Third, concerning causal mechanisms, even though this quantitative evaluation can establish the correlation between revolutionary policies and peripheral rebellion, it can provide little insight on the causal process connecting the former to the latter. There may be other pathways by which revolutionary policies increase the likelihood of peripheral rebellions besides

⁶⁸ Colgan, “Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict,” 669.

⁶⁹ Colgan, “Measuring Revolution.”

those identified by my theory. For instance, because I code rebellion onsets based on the emergence of new rebel groups, some of these onsets may actually be splinter groups. Thus, it is possible that revolutionary policies trigger new peripheral rebellions by motivating divisions among rebels, rather than by producing new grievances among peripheral populations. While I address this particular possibility by using alternative dependent variables that exclude most splinter groups (as long as conflict is recent in that issue area), the possibility of a different causal process remains.

Although these caveats do not wholly undermine my statistical analysis, they point clearly to the need for additional empirical methods, especially those which can allow for more direct observation of causal mechanisms and sequencing. As a result, the remainder of this dissertation relies upon qualitative methods, specifically an approach I term disaggregated-comparative process tracing. I outline this approach and my qualitative research design in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Qualitative Research Design

The previous chapter employed cross-national regression analysis to demonstrate that revolutionary policy changes are strongly correlated with the onset of peripheral rebellions. However, while this statistical approach is well suited to estimating causal effect, that is, “the expected effect on *Y* of a given change in *X* across a population of cases,”¹ it is poorly equipped to confidently determine whether and why a causal relationship actually exists.² Moreover, the explanatory power of my quantitative analysis is further constrained by the requirements of available, quantifiable data, which results in imperfect proxies for key variables and highly aggregated units of analysis, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Acknowledging these limitations, which are common in statistical studies, the bulk of my empirical evaluation comes in the form of qualitative case studies, where I can more directly observe my key variables at a higher level of granularity across time and space.³ But there are numerous different approaches to case studies, each with their own methodology and requirements for case selection.⁴ Many of these case study methods draw inferences through comparisons across cases or across disaggregated observations within a single “case.” For instance, in controlled comparisons, “a researcher strategically selects cases for analysis that

¹ John Gerring, “The Case Study: What It Is and What It Does,” *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, July 2, 2009, 103, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566020.003.0004>.

² The operationalization of intervening variables does provide a potential solution to this problem, but in turn raises the issues of how effectively and equivalently these variables can be specified and measured across numerous cases. See: Gerring, 104.

³ For an illustration of scholars acknowledging the limits of statistical tests to capture their full theory, and the resort to case studies as the solution, see: Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, *Electing To Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go To War* (Mit Press, 2005), 169.

⁴ For a survey of case selection techniques, see: Jason Seawright and John Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 294–308, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907313077>; Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in *Strategies of Inquiry*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1975).

either exhibit contrasting outcomes despite their many otherwise similar characteristics, or similar outcomes despite their many otherwise contrasting characteristics.”⁵ While in congruence methods, researchers “test whether the prediction about the outcome that should follow from the theory,” based on the observed value of the independent variable, “is congruent with what is found in the case, investigated either temporally or other across aspects of the outcome(s).”⁶ Such comparative case study methods do much to solve the problems of imprecise variables and over-aggregation. Problematically, though, these methods still center on assessing the correlation between the independent and dependent variables, without directly and systematically assessing the process by which one causes the other.⁷

Thus, in order to move beyond “merely establishing systematic covariation,”⁸ I employ a process tracing approach to case studies, wherein I identify and track the causal mechanisms through which my independent variables of state intrusion, polarizing policies, and cross-cutting threats are theorized to produce peripheral rebellions.⁹ Doing so requires not only theorizing the causal mechanisms by which I expect my explanatory variables to create the outcome, but also clearly specifying the expected evidence – or indicators – of these causal mechanisms functioning as theorized. Explaining my use of the process tracing method of tracking causal mechanisms is the core objective of this chapter.

⁵ Dan Slater and Daniel Ziblatt, “The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison,” *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 10 (October 1, 2013): 1302, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012472469>. See also: George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, chap. 8.

⁶ Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (University of Michigan Press, 2013), 4. See also: George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, chap. 9.

⁷ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 4–5.

⁸ Hedström and Swedberg, “Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay,” 7.

⁹ Gerring, “The Case Study,” 102; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 208. For more on defining causal mechanisms, see: Hedström and Swedberg, “Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay.”

In this chapter, I present and explain the research design used in the qualitative case studies that follow. First, I provide a review of the process tracing method, with an emphasis on how this method should be used in practice. Second, I discuss the limitations of its aggregated-isolated form – that is, the use of process tracing to track causal mechanisms in single case studies using a conditional approach. Third, I explain the benefits of disaggregated-comparative process tracing, which takes a dynamic approach in comparative case studies. Fourth, I define the standards by which my variables are measured, as well as the types of evidence which would indicate my theorized causal mechanisms at work. Finally, I address the issue of case selection, explaining my selection of peripheral groups in revolutionary Ethiopia (1974-1991) for disaggregated-comparative process tracing.

4.1 Process Tracing Methodology

John Gerring notes, “Case studies, if well constructed, may allow one to peer into the box of causality to locate the intermediate factors lying between some structural cause and its purported effect. Ideally, they allow one to ‘see’ *X* and *Y* interact...”¹⁰ Process tracing provides the key to doing so and is characterized by its ambition to identify and track the causal mechanisms connecting inputs to outputs.¹¹ Specifically, process tracing may be defined as “an analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence—often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena.”¹² As such, process tracing focuses on making within-case inferences in single case studies by focusing on the process

¹⁰ Gerring, “The Case Study,” 103.

¹¹ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 1; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 176–77, 206.

¹² David Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (October 2011): 824, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001429>.

through which the observed value(s) of the independent variable(s) leads to the observed value of the dependent variable.¹³

Even though frequently treated as a single method, there are arguably several variants of process tracing, largely dependent on whether one is using process tracing to test a theory, develop a new theory, or simply explain an outcome in a particular case.¹⁴ For the purposes of this dissertation, I am only interested in the theory-testing variant of process-tracing. Derek Beach and Rasmus Pedersen describe this method:

In theory-testing process-tracing, a causal mechanism is hypothesized to be present in a population of cases of a phenomenon. The researcher selects a single case where both X and Y are present, and the context allows the mechanism to operate. Here the goal is to evaluate whether evidence shows that the hypothesized causal mechanism linking X and Y was present and that it functioned as theorized. The ambition is to go beyond correlations and associations between X and Y, opening up the black box of causality to study more directly the causal mechanism whereby X contributes to producing Y.¹⁵

The method for testing a theory through process tracing is deceptively simple: inspect the evidence in a case to evaluate whether the process that produced the outcome in that case matches that predicted by the theory. Yet, as David Collier cautions, “Although the idea of process tracing is often invoked by scholars as they examine qualitative data, too often this tool is neither well understood nor rigorously applied.”¹⁶ In a similar vein, Beach and Pedersen observe, “despite the widespread use of process-tracing in empirical research... we still do not possess a clear and coherent framework for how and when valid inferences can be made using process-tracing. We also lack a set of concrete guidelines for using the methods in practice.”¹⁷

¹³ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 2–5.

¹⁴ Beach and Pedersen, 3.

¹⁵ Beach and Pedersen, 11.

¹⁶ Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” 823.

¹⁷ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 2.

In light of the potential pitfalls, these scholars have begun to lay the groundwork for a more systematic and rigorous approach to process tracing.¹⁸ Below, I seek to synthesize their frameworks with additional insights from others on process tracing and causal mechanisms. The result is a brief practical guide for conducting process tracing, as utilized in this dissertation. This guide is structured around three basic steps, as proposed by Beach and Pedersen, 1) hypothesizing the causal process, 2) operationalizing the causal mechanisms, and 3) evaluating the empirical evidence.¹⁹

The first step is to theorize the causal process by which one's independent variables are expected to shape the outcome of the dependent variable.²⁰ That is, through what causal mechanisms does X influence Y? This is what separates an explanatory theory from a simple search for correlates and makes process tracing possible. Alexander George and Andrew Bennett explain, "If a theory is sufficiently developed that it generates or implies predictions about causal processes that lead to outcomes, then process-tracing can assess the predictions of the theory."²¹ A sufficiently specified theory should thus produce testable, and thereby falsifiable, hypotheses regarding the causal pathway, or mechanisms, by which the outcome is produced.²² However, the hypothesized causal mechanisms should also be "mechanisms of some generality," easily transportable to different contexts, rather than case-specific mechanisms – this is what "gives them their explanatory power."²³ In theorizing causal mechanisms it is thus important to remember that theories are models, mere abstractions and simplifications of the real world.²⁴

¹⁸ Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing"; Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*.

¹⁹ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 14–15.

²⁰ Beach and Pedersen, 14. For an illustrative example of these process tracing steps, see: Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing To Fight*, chap. 7.

²¹ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 217.

²² Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," 825.

²³ Hedström and Swedberg, "Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay," 10. See also: Slater and Zibblatt, "The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison," 1311.

²⁴ Hedström and Swedberg, "Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay," 15.

During this first step, one should also specify the context in which this theory is expected to operate.²⁵ Alternative causal processes and their hypotheses should be delineated during this step as well.²⁶ Finally, in cases where theorists expect different values of their independent variables to trigger different causal mechanisms, these distinct causal pathways should be clearly defined.

The second step is to operationalize the theorized causal mechanism by “translating theoretical expectations into case-specific predictions of what observable manifestations each of the parts of the mechanism should have if the mechanism is present in the case.”²⁷ Whereas the previous step involved theorizing the causal process connecting the independent variable to the dependent variable, this step involves transforming this causal process into observable indicators. This is essential because causal mechanisms are frequently “unobserved analytical constructs.”²⁸ For example, although I may theorize the causal mechanism of resentment toward the government, I cannot look into the minds of individuals to “see” this resentment. Instead, I must look for the observable indicators of such resentment such as anti-governmental speeches or protests. During this step, the research defines what those observable indicators will be. If the theorized causal chain involves multiple stages – or “parts of the mechanism” – each stage must be translated into something observable. Process tracing is most effective when it produces an unbroken causal chain from the explanatory variable to the outcome.²⁹ Unobserved gaps cast doubt on the hypothesized causal process. Consequently, it is important to operationalize each part of the causal pathway. The observable indicators identified can be case specific and can draw on different types of evidence.³⁰ However, as with step one, it may still be useful to

²⁵ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 14.

²⁶ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 217.

²⁷ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 14.

²⁸ Hedström and Swedberg, “Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay,” 13.

²⁹ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 222.

³⁰ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 14–15.

embrace some level of generality in terms of defining useful indicators, even if one knows the specific evidence that will be most revelatory in a given case, as a means of making one's theory easier to apply to other cases. Lastly, if different mechanisms were hypothesized for different values of the independent variables, then each of these mechanisms will also need to be operationalized during this step.

The third, and final, step is to collect and test the empirical evidence in the case against one's predictions.³¹ In beginning this evaluation, it is helpful to develop a timeline or case narrative that establishes the sequence of events in the case, especially key moments of change.³² Critically, though, it is not enough to stop at this point. The requirements of process tracing are not satisfied by merely creating a case narrative, even if the narrative is compatible with the theorized causal process.³³ Instead, the researcher must show that “*all* the intervening steps in a case” proceeded as predicted by one's causal theory.³⁴ This is best accomplished by structuring the case study as a “stepwise test of each part of a causal mechanism.”³⁵ Again, different types of evidence may be utilized to assess each of these steps. The point is that each part of the causal chain must be tested. Naturally, doing so demands providing sufficient detail, or data, on each step in the process. As Collier explains:

As a tool of causal inference, process tracing focuses on the unfolding of events or situations *over time*. Yet grasping this unfolding is impossible if one cannot adequately describe an event or situation *at one point in time*. Hence, the *descriptive* component of process tracing begins not with observing change or sequence, but rather with taking good snapshots at a series of specific moments. To characterize a process, we must be able to characterize key steps in the process, which in turn permits good analysis of change and sequence.³⁶

³¹ Beach and Pedersen, 14–15.

³² Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” 828–29.

³³ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 15.

³⁴ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 207.

³⁵ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 5.

³⁶ Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” 824.

This final step thus requires a great deal of information about the case, specifically evidence concerning the observable indicators of one's causal mechanisms and those of the alternative explanations.

In conducting this third step, it is vital to recognize that not all evidence compatible with a hypothesized causal process is equally compelling. Some types of evidence provide more convincing tests of one's explanatory theory than others. Acknowledging this, Collier provides a typology of four process tracing tests based on whether the test provides a necessary and/or sufficient criterion for accepting the explanation.³⁷ First, "straw-in-the-wind" tests evaluate whether evidence is consistent with one's hypothesis, but without providing necessary or sufficient criteria for accepting the hypothesis.³⁸ Second, "hoop" tests evaluate evidence that must be consistent with the hypothesis in order for the hypothesis to remain under consideration, thereby presenting a necessary, but not sufficient, criterion for acceptance.³⁹ Third, "smoking-gun" tests look for evidence that, if found, confirms the hypothesis but, if not found, doesn't disprove the hypothesis.⁴⁰ This test presents sufficient, but not necessary, criterion for accepting the hypothesis. Fourth, "doubly decisive" tests look for evidence that both "confirms one hypothesis and eliminates all others."⁴¹ Passing this test typically involves not one critical piece of evidence, but instead combining the findings of several tests of evidence that collectively "support one explanation and eliminate all others."⁴²

Importantly, Collier's terminology matters less than the basic principle it represents: when conducting process tracing, the researcher should be conscientious of – and clearly

³⁷ Collier, 825. The fifth test, the auxiliary outcome test sits outside this typology as an additional way to assess a theory.

³⁸ Collier, 826.

³⁹ Collier, 826–27.

⁴⁰ Collier, 827.

⁴¹ Collier, 827.

⁴² Collier, 827.

communicate – what can and cannot be inferred by certain types of evidence, or from the combination of different types of evidence.⁴³ This is only possible if the researcher has first clearly theorized the causal process and operationalized its causal mechanisms. Confidence in the results of process tracing thus depends on effectively carrying out all three steps.

Executed properly, there are many advantages to process tracing for causal inference. Most fundamentally, process tracing is “arguably the only method that allows us to study causal mechanisms”⁴⁴ and, consequently, “the only observational means of moving beyond covariation alone as a source of causal inference.”⁴⁵ Other benefits flow from this concentration on causal mechanisms. Process tracing can help identify spurious correlations and false positives that result from methods of covariation.⁴⁶ By investigating the causal chain in individual cases, this method can also be used to address mixed or overdetermined cases where two potential causes are present. Finally, process tracing can be used to examine deviant or anomalous cases as a means of refining one’s theory or identifying equifinality.⁴⁷

4.2 The Limitations of Aggregated-Isolated Process Tracing

Despite its many advantages, process tracing also has several limitations, especially when used in isolation from other methods through single, aggregated case studies. In such aggregated-isolated process tracing, the researcher explores the causal process between one observed value of X and one observed value of Y for each case study. The theorized causal mechanisms are

⁴³ Notably, during this stage one may also find it useful to modify their theory based on the evidence within the case, as long as this revised theory can be tested against new evidence within that case, as well as in other cases. See: George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 219.

⁴⁴ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 1–2.

⁴⁵ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 224.

⁴⁶ Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing To Fight*, 170; Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” 824; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 223–24.

⁴⁷ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 215–16.

operationalized as a set of observable conditions. The researcher then investigates whether all of these conditions were present in the given case and functioned as theorized. While the theory may be tested in multiple case studies, each case is taken on its own terms rather than approached comparatively. The focus is on making within-case, rather than cross-case, inferences.⁴⁸ This aggregated-isolated process tracing has several notable limitations.

First, aggregated-isolated process tracing is ill-suited for assessing the frequency of causal effects. As noted by Gerring, “Tracing causal mechanisms is about cultivating sensitivity to a local context... Yet, the same factors that render case studies useful for micro-level investigation also make them less useful for measuring mean (average) causal effects. It is a classic tradeoff.”⁴⁹ The task of measuring causal effect is better left to large-N quantitative analysis: “Statistical studies are better at measuring the observed probability distribution relating measures of an independent variable to measures of outcomes across a large number of cases...”⁵⁰ Recognizing this, I conducted such a quantitative analysis in the previous chapter.

Second, aggregated-isolated process tracing cannot be used for making causal inferences across cases. Cross-case inferences require process tracing to be nested in other, comparative methods. This is because comparative analysis is needed to guide the researcher toward cases that allow certain inferences to be drawn about the larger population of cases. For instance, process tracing in most likely cases is best for invalidating an explanatory theory, whereas in least likely cases it is better for confirmation.⁵¹ But identifying most and least likely cases can only be accomplished through comparative methods. As Beach and Pedersen observe,

...what enables cross-case inferences to be made is classification of a case as most/least likely based on a larger-*n* comparative analysis... In other words,

⁴⁸ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 4.

⁴⁹ Gerring, “The Case Study,” 105.

⁵⁰ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 224.

⁵¹ Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” 119; Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 152.

cross-case inferences are not made based on the findings of the single process-tracing study but instead are only enabled by nesting the single case into the broader research program by using comparative fuzzy-set methods. On its own merits, a single process-tracing theory test is unable to produce any cross-case inferences but can only update our confidence in the presence/absence of a causal mechanism in a particular case, enabling strong within-case inferences to be made but not cross-case inferences.⁵²

Third, aggregated-isolated process tracing selects on both the independent variable and dependent variable. The logic for doing so is straightforward: “Both X and Y need to be present in the chosen case for the hypothesized causal mechanism to be present, even in theory. It therefore makes no sense to test whether a hypothesized causal mechanism was present in a case when we know a priori that it could not be present, given that either X or Y was not present.”⁵³ A consequence, however, is that aggregated-isolated process tracing can tell us very little about cases where either the purported cause or the outcome to be explained were absent. All the criticisms associated with selecting on the independent and dependent variables are thus applicable to aggregated-isolated process tracing.⁵⁴

Fourth, producing confident findings through aggregated-isolated process tracing requires clear evidence on every link in a single causal chain from the independent variable(s) to the dependent variable in a given case. As George and Bennett explain, “Process-tracing provides a strong basis for causal inference only if it can establish an uninterrupted causal path linking the putative causes to the observed effects, at the appropriate level(s) of analysis as specified by the theory being tested...”⁵⁵ Establishing this uninterrupted causal chain may require a great deal of information, which may not be readily available to the researcher.⁵⁶ Where poor or unavailable

⁵² Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 152.

⁵³ Beach and Pedersen, 147.

⁵⁴ Barbara Geddes, “How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics,” *Political Analysis* 2 (ed 1990): 131–50, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/2.1.131>.

⁵⁵ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 222.

⁵⁶ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Cornell University Press, 1997), 79.

data result in gaps or weak links in the causal chain, the findings are significantly weaker.⁵⁷

While this high data requirement is a fundamental characteristic of process tracing, it is particularly troublesome for the aggregated-isolated approach where the explanation hinges on proving a single causal chain in the case.

Fifth, aggregated-isolated process tracing may not always be able to eliminate rival explanations for the outcome in a case. One reason is because “there may be more than one hypothesized causal mechanism consistent with any given set of process-tracing evidence.”⁵⁸ In other words, the mechanisms at play in the case may overdetermine the outcome and their relative causal power might not be discernible. Another issue is the potential presence of structural factors that, although not easily observed through mechanistic evidence, might play a permissive role in producing the outcome. In either case, the absence of cross-case comparison in aggregated-isolated process tracing inhibits its ability to decisively address rival explanations.

In summary, the limitations of aggregated-isolated process tracing primarily result from the absence of comparison both within and across cases. The solution is to produce disaggregated units for analysis within each case and to select cases for structured, focused comparison, preferably on the basis of most likely and least likely cases.⁵⁹ In other words, nest process tracing within the congruence and controlled comparison case study methods. I outline this disaggregated-comparative approach – and its benefits – in the next section.

⁵⁷ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 223.

⁵⁸ George and Bennett, 222.

⁵⁹ For more on structured, focused comparison, see: George and Bennett, 67, 69–71.

4.3 The Benefits of Disaggregated-Comparative Process Tracing

In disaggregated-comparative process tracing, the researcher investigates the mechanisms connecting observed values of the independent variable(s) and observed values of the dependent variables comparatively both within and across cases. Within-case variation is disaggregated diachronically based on changes in the explanatory variables of a given case over time.⁶⁰ In other words, this approach involves “time-slice analysis” within a case study – essentially a combination of the congruence method and process tracing.⁶¹ This approach also involves addressing at least two cases comparatively. Ideally, for causal inference, these comparative cases will include a most likely and a least likely case.⁶² I argue that such a disaggregated-comparative approach to process tracing mitigates most of the limitations associated with aggregated-isolated process tracing.⁶³

First, disaggregated-comparative process tracing can be used to make cross-case inferences. By conducting process tracing in comparative case studies, especially most- and least-likely cases, one may increase their confidence not only in the existence of the causal mechanism, but also in its presence and explanatory power in the broader population of cases. As Beach and Pedersen explain,

Cross-case inferences are stronger when we engage in multiple parallel theory tests of typical cases... an iterative research strategy of a most-likely followed by a least-likely case study can often be a more productive line of attack, especially when we initially are not very confident in the validity of a theory. If the

⁶⁰ Gerring, “The Case Study,” 95; Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 82.

⁶¹ Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 54; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 182; Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 4–5.

⁶² Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 150–53.

⁶³ Proponents of process tracing frequently point out its ability to strengthen methods based on covariation. For example, see: Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” 824; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 182, 214–15, 221. Here, I am simply suggesting that it goes both ways.

mechanism is found to be present in the most-likely, the least-likely can be used to establish the bounds of its operation.⁶⁴

Assessment of whether a case can be considered most-likely or least-likely rests on the strength of the values of X and Y (though both must be present) and how conducive the other conditions in the case are to the operation of the theorized mechanism (though the conditions must not be prohibitive).⁶⁵

Second, rather than selecting on X and Y, disaggregated-comparative process tracing allows variation in the values of both the independent and dependent variables. It does so diachronically within cases through time-slices. This permits multiple observations within the case. Stephen Van Evera explains the benefit: “Theories make predictions about the impact of variance in the value on the IV, hence variance in the IV’s value generates predictions, hence the more within-case variance in the IV’s value, the more predictions we have to test.”⁶⁶ Indeed, for each observation, the researcher is able to investigate 1) whether the outcome matches that predicted by the theory based on the observed value of the independent variable (i.e. the congruence method) and 2) whether the processes connecting the values of the independent and dependent variables match those predicted by the theory (i.e. process tracing). As a result, such disaggregation facilitates multiple tests of the theory – so long as the values of the key variables change during the period under study. Further variation is provided by exploring multiple cases.

Third, in disaggregated-comparative process tracing, each case study’s findings do not entirely rest on establishing a single, unbroken causal chain. By disaggregating the cases into time-slices, this approach allows for the researcher to inspect multiple causal chains within the

⁶⁴ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 152–53.

⁶⁵ Beach and Pedersen, 150–51.

⁶⁶ Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 82.

same overarching case. In some ways, this makes the data requirements of the cases selected even more demanding. Process tracing in these disaggregated units requires more granular, dynamic data, but this also makes the findings resulting from such process tracing much richer. In another way, this also relieves a single causal chain from providing the full burden of proof in a case by increasing the number of observations from which inferences can be collectively drawn, even if each observation can't provide the same level of evidence on the causal process.⁶⁷

Fourth, disaggregated-comparative process tracing is better equipped to assess the relative explanatory power of rival arguments vis-à-vis one's theory. By leveraging multiple observations within and across cases, this approach provides more opportunities for divergence between the predictions of one's theory and those of the alternative explanations, as well as more chances to examine the causal mechanisms at work. This reduces the risk of indeterminate findings due to overdetermined cases. It also provides for the possibility that in some contexts an alternative may provide a better explanation.

In short, the disaggregated-comparative approach combines the strengths of process tracing, congruence methods, and comparative case studies. Within this approach, the steps for process tracing are still the same. First, the causal mechanisms connecting the explanatory variables to the outcome need to be theorized. Second, these causal mechanisms must be operationalized by identifying observable indicators of their presence and operation. Where different values of the independent variable are expected to trigger different mechanisms (and thereby different values of the dependent variable), each should be theorized and operationalized.

⁶⁷ This is the basic tradeoff of increasing the n .

Third, evidence of these operationalized mechanisms must be collected and evaluated. But it should also be structured around the time-slices identified in each case.

Below, I describe my use of disaggregated-comparative process tracing in this dissertation. Section four operationalizes my theory that state intrusion, polarizing policies, and cross-cutting threats cause peripheral rebellions.⁶⁸ I first provide the standards for measuring different values of the independent and dependent variables. I then describe and operationalize my theorized causal mechanisms. I then briefly outline the expected indicators of the alternative explanations. Section five addresses the issue of case selection. I justify my selection of peripheral groups in revolutionary Ethiopia for disaggregated-comparative process tracing based on three criteria: 1) representative variation, 2) control for rival hypotheses, and 3) data-richness.

4.4 Operationalizing Variables and Causal Mechanisms

In this section, I provide the standards for measuring my independent and dependent variables, as well as the operationalization of the causal mechanisms linking them. I expect the outcome of peripheral rebellion to occur when all three conditions – (1) state intrusion, (2) peripheral polarization, and (3) an acute, cross-cutting threat – are satisfied among a given peripheral group. Below I describe what it means for each of these conditions to be observably satisfied. I then discuss how I measure my dependent variable of peripheral rebellion. The expected indicators of my causal mechanisms are then described. Finally, I briefly present the expected indicators if the alternative explanations of state weakness and political exclusion are most explanatory.

⁶⁸ See chapter two for a more thorough discussion.

In providing measurements of these variables and mechanisms, I seek to follow the recommendation made by Dan Slater and Daniel Ziblatt: “the guiding research puzzle and reported findings should always be expressed in terms of *general variables or mechanisms*, not terms that are completely context specific.”⁶⁹ That is, effective process tracing requires general, but clear, standards for measuring one’s variables, as well as well-specified indicators of the causal process at work. The reasons why are simple. First, clear definitions allow others to independently verify one’s interpretation of a case. Second, these standards of measurement allow one’s theory to be reliably applied to new cases. Third, they allow one to clearly designate distinct periods for time-slice analysis, as defined by categorical shifts in the value of one or more independent variables.

4.4.1 Measuring Independent and Dependent Variables

First, I measure variation in the level of state intrusion among a peripheral group by observing the central state’s relationship to political leadership at the local level. State intrusion is coded as “low” when the central state leaves intact semi-autonomous local intermediaries, including those whose positions predate the revolution. State intrusion is coded as “medium” when the central state attempts to coopt local powerholders without coercion, such as through meddling in elections or buying their loyalty. State intrusion is coded as “high” when the central state empowers outsiders and local regime loyalists through coercive measures, such as through violent purges.

Second, I measure peripheral polarization among a peripheral group by looking for the relative balance between those benefitted by and those disadvantaged by major revolutionary

⁶⁹ Slater and Ziblatt, “The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison,” 1311.

policies. Peripheral polarization is coded as “low” when revolutionary policies produce general benefits for the majority of a local population. Peripheral polarization is “medium” when revolutionary policies produce a rough parity between those benefitted and those disadvantaged. Peripheral polarization is coded as “high” when revolutionary policies provide selective benefits to a privileged minority, especially the regime’s local agents, while disadvantaging most of the local population.

Third, I measure acute, cross-cutting threats by looking at the timeframe and scope of revolutionary policy implementation. I code for three values of acute, cross-cutting threats: “vertical”, “horizontal”, and “absent.” I code a policy as producing a “vertical” threat when its implementation among a peripheral group presents immediate, adverse effects for both elites and the “masses.” I code a policy as producing a “horizontal” threat when its implementation among a peripheral group presents an immediate, adverse effect across all or most communities simultaneously.⁷⁰ An acute, cross-cutting threat is coded as “absent” when policy implementation poses an isolated threat to a particular class and is applied inconsistently or incrementally across communities.

My theory expects peripheral rebellions to occur if both state intrusion and peripheral polarization are “high” and revolutionary policy implementation presents a “vertical” and/or “horizontal” threat. Peripheral rebellions are possible, but less likely, when state intrusion and/or peripheral polarization are “medium” and revolutionary policies pose a “vertical” and/or

⁷⁰ Notably, the implementation of a revolutionary policy may produce both a vertical and horizontal threat – the categories are not mutually exclusive. I distinguish between them because I anticipate that vertical threats are more likely to produce ethnic insurgencies and horizontal threats to produce peasant uprisings.

“horizontal” threat. Peripheral rebellions are not expected to occur when state intrusion and/or peripheral polarization are “low” and/or an acute, cross-cutting threat is “absent.”

In terms of the dependent variable, I define peripheral rebellions as armed conflicts against the government that originate among ethnic groups and/or peasant communities outside the urban core of the state. In measuring this dependent variable, I use the minimum threshold of 25 battle-related deaths employed by the Uppsala Conflict Data Project’s (UCDP’s) Armed Conflict Dataset.⁷¹ However, I do not limit myself to the armed conflicts identified by that dataset, which currently does not capture all rebellions that meet its threshold.⁷² I thus also rely on case histories to correctly identify the starting point of these rebellions and the proper level of disaggregation of these rebel movements.⁷³ Importantly, I do require that rebellions include significant participation from peasants and/or ethnic minorities (or politically excluded ethnic majorities) to count as peripheral rebellions. Finally, in seeking to explain peripheral rebellions, I look not only at the timing of their first year above the casualty threshold, I also explore the factors that influenced their recruitment and ability to conduct operations.

4.4.2 Indicators of Causal Mechanisms

The primary benefit of process tracing is the opportunity to observe the causal mechanisms by which the independent variables shape the outcome of the dependent variable. Testing a theory through process tracing thus requires clearly explicating the expected causal mechanisms and identifying the indicators that would provide evidence of this causal process.

⁷¹ Gleditsch et al., “Armed Conflict 1946-2001,” 618–19.

⁷² For instance, a resistance movement among the Hmong in Laos almost certainly met the casualty threshold in the late 1970s – Vietnamese troops were brought in to help quell the rebellion – but no armed conflict is coded among this group until the late 1980s. See: Stuart-Fox, *A History of Laos*, 176–77.

⁷³ For example, treating the “Contras” as a single rebel group/rebellion ignores the diverse character and origins of the various rebel groups represented in this broad movement.

Put simply, if the nature of revolutionary policies does indeed shape the likelihood of peripheral rebellions, what evidence should we observe?

First, I argue that state intrusion primes peripheries for rebellion by removing their insulation from disruptive revolutionary policies. If correct, we would expect to observe the following in situations of high state intrusion: 1) local actors voicing frustration over their loss of local leadership and/or autonomy and/or 2) revolutionary policies being imposed in a uniform, authoritarian manner with minimal local input. In contrast, we would expect to observe evidence of local leaders blocking, reinterpreting, or otherwise impeding revolutionary state directives in situations characterized by low state intrusion.

Second, I argue that certain revolutionary policies – such as agrarian reform and resettlement programs – polarize peripheral populations, thereby creating strong motivations for peripheral rebellion. If correct, we should observe evidence of the following in situations of high polarization: 1) voiced grievances focus on specific policies, especially their selective benefits and alienation of the general population, 2) protesters and rebels are primarily drawn from groups most disadvantaged by specific revolutionary policies and cite these policies as their reason for rebellion, 3) beneficiaries of revolutionary policies are the regime's most stalwart supporters, and/or 4) moderate positions toward the regime disappear quickly in these areas. On the other hand, in situations of low polarization, we expect to observe: 1) revolutionary policies being met with increased support of the regime, 2) the rapid departure or silencing of the disadvantaged minority, and/or 3) aspiring dissidents unable to amass sufficient recruits for rebellion.

Third, I argue that acute, cross-cutting threats facilitate the collective action needed for rebellion by either driving disaffected masses into elite-led opposition organizations or producing a focal point for spontaneous uprisings to coalesce into rebellion. If correct, in situations of vertical threats, we should observe evidence of: 1) opposition organizations recruiting successfully and heavily from the general population and/or 2) rebel organizations articulating grievances that encompass both peasant and elite interests. Alternatively, in situations of horizontal threats, we should observe evidence of: 1) decentralized uprisings in the immediate wake of policy implementation and/or 2) accounts of individual or small group decisions to rebel citing moral outrage at a specific policy and/or the expectation that others would be similarly outraged. In contrast, where such an acute threat is absent even though general resentment is high, we should see evidence of: 1) episodic protests or violence effectively suppressed by the revolutionary state and/or 2) accounts of preference falsification citing the futility of defiance.

4.4.3 Indicators of Alternative Explanations

The first alternative explanation is that the imposition of direct rule over peripheral groups triggers ethnonationalist mobilization and rebellion. This should especially be the case among ethnic groups that have already organized their own cultural or political organizations, and which are limited in their opportunities to exercise voice or exit.⁷⁴ If correct, then we should expect the replacement of semi-autonomous authorities with central officials and local agents to be consistently met with opposition and violent resistance. The ensuing rebellions should seek sovereignty for their respective ethnic groups and should be most likely, and most strongly

⁷⁴ Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*; Hirschman, "Exit, Voice, and the State"; Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*.

supported, where sovereignty is most feasible and desirable. On the other hand, those groups that either still enjoy indirect rule or have long acclimated to direct rule should be least likely to rebel. Importantly, evidence of peripheral populations generally embracing the imposition of direct rule, especially in the absence of assimilation, would cut against the expectations of this explanation.

The second alternative explanation is that the likelihood of rebellion is primarily shaped by state capacity. If correct, then we should observe rebellions arising in those areas where state presence and control is weakest, especially those territories with minimal military and police presence. Evidence indicating actors recognizing and seeking to capitalize on the weakness of the new revolutionary regime would strongly support this explanation. Those territories heavily penetrated by the central state, and especially its security apparatus, should be the least likely to rebel.

The third alternative explanation is that the political exclusion of ethnic groups from representation in the central regime should provide the driving motivation for rebellion. If correct, those groups that are excluded from representation, most especially those actively discriminated against, should be the most likely to rebel. Evidence indicating actors expressing frustration over minimal representation in the political center would be most supportive of this explanation. Alternatively, those groups whose members enjoy positions of power in the central regime should be least likely to rebel against the revolutionary state.

4.5 Case Selection

Whenever case studies are employed, the method by which cases are selected for study requires justification. This is especially true when seeking to establish external validity – that the

findings are generalizable to cases beyond those directly studied.⁷⁵ While some advocate selecting cases through random sampling, this is not feasible in process tracing – which need cases where both X and Y are present to assess the causal mechanisms – and indeed problematic for any small-n study.⁷⁶

Instead, disaggregated-comparative process tracing is best served by selecting cases for comparison that satisfy three criteria: 1) representative variation, 2) control for rival explanations, and 3) data-richness.⁷⁷ Notably, while cross-national comparative cases are often employed to satisfy these criteria, subnational cases can also be used.⁷⁸ This latter approach is employed in this dissertation. Below, I show why case studies of peripheral groups in revolutionary Ethiopia (1974-1991) meet these criteria and provide a suitable test of my theory through disaggregated-comparative process tracing.

⁷⁵ Slater and Ziblatt, “The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison,” 1305.

⁷⁶ A primary concern when selecting cases is that the sample of cases chosen might differ systematically from the general population of cases, thereby producing selection bias. At its worst, this bias might involve “cherry picking” cases where the theory is known to perform well, while ignoring cases where one’s argument is outstripped by alternative explanations, even when these latter cases are more representative of the total population. To address this issue, some scholars have advocated a random sampling approach to qualitative case selection, effectively taking the ability of the researcher to bias case selection – intentionally or incidentally – off the table. However, while random sampling is effective when samples are sufficiently large, in small-N studies this random selection is unlikely to yield either a representative sample or guarantee that useful variation is captured. Stratification can help lessen some of the problems involving random sampling by ensuring that cases are drawn (randomly) from each of a set of categories, such as different values of the key variable being evaluated. But the general point remains: the smaller the number of cases studied, the less feasible random sampling will be. See discussion in: James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods,” *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, July 7, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.013.0052>; Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research”; David Collier and James Mahoney, “Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research,” *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (October 1996): 56–91, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.1996.0023>.

⁷⁷ While the third criterion is crucial to effective process tracing, the first two criteria are taken from Slater and Ziblatt’s guidelines on making controlled comparisons more externally valid. Notably, these authors include the additional criteria of expressing the argument in general variables and mechanisms, which I addressed earlier in this chapter. See: Slater and Ziblatt, “The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison.”

⁷⁸ Slater and Ziblatt, 1306–8.

4.5.1 Representative Variation

First, comparative cases should be selected that collectively provide the full range of variation on the key variables of interest. As Slater and Ziblatt contend, “Such empirical works are most likely to generate externally valid findings when the *variation in the sample broadly mirrors variation in some broader and explicitly defined population of cases.*”⁷⁹ In particular, it is useful to select cases that represent a complete typology of the possible outcomes, thereby reducing concerns of selection bias and facilitating the identification of sufficient, not merely necessary, conditions.

In addition to the selection of different cases, representative variation can also be attained through the selection of cases characterized by within-case variation across time. For one, this increases the observations available for process tracing and congruence methods. Moreover, when combined with comparisons across cases with convergent outcomes, this allows the researcher to essentially leverage the method of agreement and method of difference in assessing their theory.⁸⁰ Method of agreement through compared cases that both produced the outcome despite their many differences. Method of difference through divergent outcomes within a given case over time despite a common (often unchanging) set of factors that characterized that case. Utilizing both methods through cross- and within-case analysis can thus strongly increase the confidence in a study’s findings.

Crucially, in some instances, the subnational variation within a given country over a discrete period of time can itself provide the representative variation required for external

⁷⁹ Slater and Ziblatt, 1311–12.

⁸⁰ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence, and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1875).

validity. As discussed by Slater and Ziblatt, Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* illustrates this point:

Making Democracy Work is an exemplary work of controlled comparison. The goal of its qualitative components is not to explain Italian government performance as an "individual outcome," but to explain *variation* in government performance across closely matched cases: the provinces of northern and southern Italy... Putnam broadly compares two parts of Italy whose variation in outcomes is so vast that it approximates the full range of variation in industrialized democracies; in other words, northern Italy is nearly as well run as any country or subnational region in the OECD, whereas southern Italy is among the worst managed... his qualitative controlled comparison raises the tantalizing prospect that his explanation for dramatic variation across Italian regions might shed light on the similarly dramatic variation in government performance that we witness around the world.⁸¹

In terms of my central question of responses to revolutionary rule among peripheral groups, Ethiopia under the Derg similarly presents the full range of outcomes, as well as rich variation in my explanatory variables. Indeed, while the Derg regime ultimately espoused an ambitious revolutionary agenda at the national level, the actual implementation of its policies varied both temporally and spatially within the country. These policies interacted with different socioeconomic conditions across the distinct peripheral groups in the state. At the same time, the outcome of peripheral rebellion exhibited the full breadth of variation in this revolutionary state. Some peripheral groups rebelled early, some late, and some not at all. The political goals of the rebels ranged from overthrowing the central government to secession to regional autonomy to simple non-interference in local affairs. Some rebel groups became powerful threats to the revolutionary regime, others struggled to sustain their insurgencies. Among those that did not rebel, some kept the state at arm's length while others openly collaborated with the regime. Thus, while the revolutionary state carries a positive value on the dependent variable of peripheral

⁸¹ Slater and Ziblatt, "The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison," 1308–9.

rebellion when aggregated to the national level, it allows for detailed analysis of both positive and negative outcomes at the subnational level, roughly corresponding to the range of responses evident within revolutionary states generally.

Less abstractly, over the course of its rule, the Derg regime enacted an escalating series of revolutionary policies designed to control and transform Ethiopia's peripheral populations.⁸² In 1975, land was nationalized, usage rights reallocated, and the hiring of farm labor prohibited. Simultaneously, urban students were sent to the countryside to indoctrinate and organize the peasantry, as well as to disempower landlords and traditional elites. In the years following, a series of agrarian policies were implemented to increase state control over agricultural outputs and inputs, such as requiring peasants to sell their surplus to the state at fixed (below-market) prices. In the 1980s, the regime drastically expanded its program of resettling populations from the northern and central highlands of the country to the lowlands of the west and south – altering the ethnic composition of these settled regions in the process. The Derg also enacted villagization on a national scale in the mid-1980s, moving peasants from their homesteads to road-accessible, state-organized villages. Finally, peripheral populations were increasingly subjected to military conscription.

Responses to the Derg's revolutionary policies varied considerably across peripheral groups and even within the same groups over time. I find the location and timing of peripheral rebellions to be heavily shaped by the degree to which policies were intrusive, polarizing, and cross-cutting. Peripheral rebellions were triggered early among the Afar and in Tigray, where the 1975 Land Reform and the student campaign quickly alienated the population while also

⁸² Markakis, *Ethiopia*; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*; Clapham, "Controlling Space in Ethiopia"; Alexander De Waal, *Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (Human Rights Watch, 1991); Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*.

threatening regional elites. In other areas, these initial revolutionary policies were embraced by either the masses, as among the Oromo peasantry, or elites, such as the Anywaa intelligentsia. Insurgency flared up later in these areas, as subsequent revolutionary policies, such as resettlement and villagization, produced polarization and shared threats. Among yet other groups, such as the Nuer and Hor, rebellion failed to materialize as the limited reach of the central state helped insulate these populations from disruptive revolutionary policies.

4.5.2 *Control for Rival Explanations*

Second, comparative cases should be selected in such a way as to help control for rival explanations. While selecting cases that perfectly match (or differ) in all respects but one may be required to create the “functional equivalent of an experiment,”⁸³ it is far from necessary for assessing the external validity of a theory. Rather than pursuing the “chimerical goal of a perfectly paired comparison,” one should instead select cases for comparison that pose problems for existing explanations.⁸⁴ As Slater and Ziblatt expound,

If one believes that controlled comparisons are viable only when selected cases are truly “most similar” or “most different” on every possible dimension, it is no wonder that pessimism has at times dominated discussion of this method. In our view, controlled comparisons need not meet the standard of “natural experiments,” but they do require *intense theoretical engagement* to generate external validity. The reason is not because theory is interesting for its own sake, but because theory serves an essential methodological purpose – namely, guiding case selection... the pursuit of external validity requires that cases be selected precisely *to control for existing rival hypotheses*.⁸⁵

Fotini Christia’s *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* illustrates such an approach to controlled comparison. Seeking to explain “alliance formation and group fractionalization in

⁸³ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 151.

⁸⁴ Slater and Ziblatt, “The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison,” 1313.

⁸⁵ Slater and Ziblatt, 1313.

multiparty civil wars,” Christia selected two cases that “could hardly be more different” in terms of intergroup cleavages – a factor one might expect to heavily shape the dependent variable.⁸⁶ While Afghanistan exhibited “multiple cross-cutting cleavages along racial, linguistic, and religious/sectarian dimensions,” Bosnia and Herzegovina was characterized by only “one notable cleavage dimension (religion).”⁸⁷ Despite this significant difference between the cases, alliance changes and group fractionalization occurred in both at a high level. This result represents a clear puzzle for the existing explanation of intergroup cleavages and thereby provides an appropriate testing ground for Christia’s theory regarding relative power. Importantly, Christia does not (and does not need to) establish that Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina differ on all dimensions except her explanatory variable, only that they diverge on the factor one might have previously expected to shape the outcome.

As with capturing representative variation, selecting cases to control for alternative explanations need not require cases from multiple countries. In fact, one benefit of selecting subnational cases for comparison is the ability to control for national-level factors common to the entire country. That is, if distinct subnational cases within a given state produce divergent outcomes during the same period, then these outcomes cannot be (solely) explained by country-level variables.⁸⁸ Likewise, different outcomes within the same case over distinct time-slices cannot (or are unlikely) to be accounted for by time-invariant (or slow-moving) case-level attributes.

⁸⁶ Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 28.

⁸⁷ Christia, 28.

⁸⁸ Admittedly, this cannot rule out the possibility that a certain factor provides a permissive condition, but it does undermine its sufficiency, i.e. whether it is the active ingredient in causing the outcome.

The use of comparative case studies of peripheral groups in revolutionary Ethiopia provides such benefits. Although ruled by the same revolutionary government and subjected to many of the same structural factors as a result, Ethiopia's various peripheral groups responded in dramatically different ways. This suggests that regional- and local-level factors play a fundamental role in shaping these divergent outcomes. The additional fact that several of these groups drastically shifted their responses during different time periods further suggests that group-level attributes are not explanatory either. Finally, contrasting outcomes in these cases pose specific challenges to the rival explanations earlier identified. For instance, in terms of indirect rule, why did the forced exile of Ali Mirah trigger a general uprising among the Afar, while the similar flight of Ras Mengesha did not among Tigrayans? Regarding state weakness, why did peasants join the rebellion in Tigray after the state's presence rapidly increased, whereas in the southern borderlands of Ethiopia rebellion did not materialize despite the state's weak presence? Finally, concerning ethnic exclusion, where the size of the excluded group should increase its willingness and ability to rebel, why was the weak insurgency among the large, historically-excluded Oromo easily eclipsed by the powerful rebellion of the significantly smaller Tigrayan ethnic group?

In short, conducting comparative case studies among the peripheral groups of Ethiopia provides ample opportunities to address the rival explanations. Ultimately, though, these case studies gauge the strength of my argument vis-à-vis the alternatives by examining the causal process that produced the outcome during a given time-slice. This means that while case selection is used to problematize alternative explanations, their relative explanatory power is primarily gauged through process tracing.

4.5.3 Data-Richness

Finally, disaggregated-comparative process tracing also requires data-rich cases where one may observe the key variables and operationalized causal mechanisms at a sufficient level of granularity. Revolutionary Ethiopia provides such data-rich cases. Archival sources were drawn primarily from the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and Manuscripts and Archives at Yale University. The types of archival documents collected included internal reports, communiques, and correspondence from both governmental and dissident organizations, contemporaneous third-party reports, and revolutionary and rebel publications (i.e. propaganda).⁸⁹ Many of these archival documents are in English, making them highly accessible to this author.⁹⁰ Numerous secondary sources have also been written about these peripheral groups, including a few highly detailed – and geographically disaggregated – histories.

In contrast, a probe of several lesser-known revolutionary states yielded far fewer archival and secondary sources.⁹¹ Of course, there are other revolutionary states far more documented than Ethiopia, most notably revolutionary France and Russia. However, these extremely prominent cases of revolution have arguably been overutilized in the study of revolutionary states.⁹² Accordingly, my selection of peripheral groups in revolutionary Ethiopia

⁸⁹ Of course, the documents available are far from comprehensive, instead reflecting the access, interests, and agenda of those compiling these collections, which were of course then sifted through by the author. The biased and unsystematic nature of these archival sources places limits on their utility for causal inference. Even so, important information can be gleaned from these documents, especially by triangulating between the claims and evidence provided by revolutionaries, rebels, and historians. In this regard, the availability of highly detailed and methodically organized histories of these cases helps immensely.

⁹⁰ While the selection of cases based, in part, on the convenience of research may be criticized, it is often necessary from a practical standpoint – especially for graduate students with less access to research funds. For more on the trade-offs of “convenience samples”, see: Fearon and Laitin, “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods.”

⁹¹ This was conducted by looking for revolutionary and anti-revolutionary materials at Yale University’s Manuscripts and Archives.

⁹² As illustrated by their prioritization in some of the most foundational works in the study of revolutionary states, including: Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Walt, *Revolution and War*.

seeks to strike the balance between sufficiently data-rich cases for process tracing and less prominent cases of revolution and civil war.

The next four chapters constitute my qualitative analysis of Ethiopia under the Derg using disaggregated-comparative process tracing.

Chapter 5: The Ethiopian Revolution

During its rule, the Derg regime was plagued by new peripheral rebellions including among the Afar, Anywaa, Berta, Oromo, Sidama, Somali, and Tigray.¹ In many ways, this explosion of peripheral rebellions in revolutionary Ethiopia was hardly surprising. On the eve of revolution in 1974, Ethiopia was already a state stricken by poverty, famine, and an ongoing separatist conflict in Eritrea, all of which the imperial regime appeared ill-equipped, or unwilling, to manage effectively. It was also a state dominated by the Amhara ethnicity, which had long imposed discriminatory, assimilationist, and, in some areas, semi-feudal policies on the numerous ethnic groups spread throughout its highland and lowland peripheries. The deposal of Emperor Haile Selassie and seizure of power by the Derg brought additional problems. Most fundamentally, this new regime sought to ensure the territorial integrity of the Ethiopian state by expanding central control over its peripheries and responding violently to demands for self-determination. Beyond centralization, the Derg also sought to transform Ethiopia's peripheries through increasingly radical and invasive social and economic policies. Combining state weakness, the political exclusion of ethnic groups, and intrusive revolutionary policies, Ethiopia under the Derg appears to be an overdetermined case for the onset of peripheral rebellions, at least at the national level.

But when disaggregated, this case proves to be rife with empirical puzzles that hold important implications for our understanding of peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states. For instance, why did counterrevolutionary rebellions (at least initially) enjoy mass support in Tigray and among the Afar but not in Oromo areas? How did the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front

¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 182.

(TPLF) secure strong peasant participation in Tigray, but not until the late 1970s? Why did the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) generally receive more local support than the Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF) when both were externally sponsored by Somalia? Why did the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) struggle to mount an insurgency, despite representing Ethiopia's largest ethnic group? Why did rebellion among the Anywaa begin much later than in most other areas? Why were there no armed rebellions among the ethnic groups in South Omo? In short, what factors shaped the timing and viability of armed rebellion among these various peripheral groups?

The impact of revolutionary state policies provides the best explanation for these empirical puzzles. This impact is shaped by the differential reach of the revolutionary state into peripheral areas, the nature and timing of policy implementation, and the interaction of specific policies with local socioeconomic conditions, such as practices of land use and ownership. In general, I find that peripheral rebellions tended to happen when and where revolutionary policies 1) disempowered local intermediaries, 2) alienated the bulk of the population, and 3) presented a unifying threat across different classes and/or communities. This explains why rebellions emerged among some peripheral groups early, others late, and some not at all.

This chapter is structured as follows. Section one provides a brief background on center-periphery relations in imperial Ethiopia and the revolutionary overthrow of Haile Selassie's regime. Section two outlines those revolutionary policies employed by the Derg regime that my theory suggests should have the greatest impact in the peripheries of the state. The following three chapters then detail the processes that shaped whether and when rebellions arose among specific peripheral groups. Each of these disaggregated cases is divided into time slices to evaluate whether changes in the values of the independent variables corresponded with changes

in the observed outcome as predicted by my theory. Each of the subsequent case chapters also explores the strengths and shortcomings of the alternative explanations in accounting for the outcomes in these cases.

Importantly, there are several armed conflicts in this case – and other forms of political violence – that are beyond the scope of my theory and which I do not seek to explain. Most significant among these are the separatist rebellions in Eritrea waged by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF). While these rebellions in Eritrea occupied much of the Derg’s attention and resources, both began years before the revolution in the context of Eritrea’s incorporation into imperial Ethiopia.² Also beyond the purview of this chapter are those violent conflicts centered in Addis Ababa and the other urban centers of Ethiopia, including the conflict with the leftist Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the violent coup attempts and infighting within the Derg regime. The focus of these empirical chapters is instead on those rebellions which both emerged as armed conflicts during the rule of the revolutionary regime and originated among the peripheral territories of the Ethiopian state.

5.1 Background

Ethiopia is a land of stark geographical differences that have played no small role in shaping the societies and livelihoods of the diverse peoples within its borders – and the relationship between the central state and its peripheries.³ The country is characterized by three

² Markakis, 127–29.

³ Christopher Clapham, *The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 7.

distinct zones, which John Markakis has labelled the “highland core”, “lowland periphery”, and “highland periphery”.⁴

The highland core, historically referred to as Abyssinia, encompasses a plateau in northern Ethiopia inhabited by the Amhara and Tigray. This zone was distinguished by its use of ox-plough agriculture, unique in sub-Saharan Africa, which facilitated a higher level of arable farming.⁵ This region was thus able to support a higher population density and developed semi-feudal institutions over land usage and surplus appropriation. This highland core also became the seat of imperial power in Ethiopia.

Importantly, while the term “core” might suggest a non-peripheral region, much of this zone has been politically and economically peripheral to the Ethiopian state. Ahmed Hassan Omer’s discussion of Northern Shewa in the highland core provides an illuminating example: “In spite of its proximity to Addis Ababa, Northern Shewa on the eve of the 1974 revolution remained one of the least developed and most traditional parts of the country. It was sometimes referred to as *ye qirb ruq*, meaning that it was ‘close yet far’ from the political and administrative centre of Ethiopia.”⁶ Indeed, much of Ethiopia’s highland core is predominantly rural and underdeveloped, including Tigray, and can thus be appropriately described as “close yet far.”

In contrast, the lack of sufficient rainfall in the lowland periphery to the north, east and south of the Ethiopian Plateau generally precludes sedentary agriculture, except in the immediate vicinity of rivers where irrigation and flood plain agriculture is possible.⁷ As a result, the zone is

⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, chap. 1. See also: Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, chap. 1.

⁵ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 9–10.

⁶ Ahmed Hassan Omer, “Close yet Far: Northern Shewa under the Derg,” in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, ed. Wendy James et al. (Oxford, England : Addis Ababa : Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 74.

⁷ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 8, 14.

predominantly inhabited by pastoralists. The lowland periphery's inhabitants include the Afar, Somali, Borana Oromo, Anywaa, Nuer, Berta (also referred to as Beni Shangul), and Gumuz. As (semi)nomadic pastoralists living near porous state borders, the Ethiopian state has historically struggled to exert central control over these lowland populations.

Finally, comprising the central, southern and western parts of Ethiopia, the highland periphery is home to the largest ethnic group in the country, the Oromo, as well as the Sidama, Welayta, Kambatta and Gurage.⁸ Similar to the highland core, the climate in this zone is amenable to settled agriculture. In addition to grain production, primarily in Oromo-populated areas, cultivation in the highland periphery includes coffee and a “great variety of indigenous crops.”⁹ Among these is *enset*, an unsavory but drought resistant crop able to sustain a dense local population. During the imperial period, the highland periphery came increasingly under the domination of northern landlords and settlers from the highland core, especially in the Oromo areas where much of the local peasantry was forced into tenant farming.

5.1.1 Center-Periphery Relations in Imperial Ethiopia

Under the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, the peripheries of the Ethiopian state were administered through a system of indirect rule organized around three sets of actors: the *neftegna*, the *gabbar*, and the *balabbatnet*. The *neftegna* were armed immigrants from the highland core that moved into the (highland) periphery “to take advantage of fertile land offered by the imperial state practically for free in order to expand its tax base and to exploit native labour in conditions of quasi-serfdom.”¹⁰ They became the ruling class in those peripheries

⁸ Clapham, 22–26.

⁹ Clapham, 25.

¹⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 6.

where they settled, conducting both administrative and coercive functions for the imperial state. On the other end of this system were the *gabbar*, or peasantry, which were subjected heavily to taxation and required to provide “corvée labour for various purposes and for a hierarchy of privileged ranks.”¹¹ The relationship between the *neftegna* and *gabbar* was akin to feudalism.

Positioned between these two was the *balabbatnet*, local chiefs and elders that acted as intermediaries between the state and the peripheral population. Markakis explains their crucial role for indirect rule,

The administrative structure at the periphery rested on the traditional leadership of local communities... The subordinate elite, known as the *balabbatnet* constituted a hierarchy of its own; its contribution to imperial rule was indispensable... In the periphery the *balabbat* was a person of traditional standing, elder or chief, who was strictly subordinate to the lowest *neftegna* in the area. His role was twofold. He acted as the agent of the state vis-à-vis his people, and as their representatives vis-à-vis the state... The *balabbat* was responsible for maintaining law and order, reporting crimes and apprehending perpetrators, hearing disputes and administering traditional justice, as well as assessing and collecting taxes. He was compensated for his services with rights over land and labour service, and retained a share – usually a tenth – of the state tax they collected from the people... The *balabbatnet* facilitated the extraction and transfer of resources from periphery to centre, and also enriched its members in the process.¹²

In summary, this system of indirect rule greatly benefitted both immigrant landlords from the north and traditional local authorities that acted as intermediaries. In exchange, both sustained imperial authority in the periphery and collected taxes for the state. All of this was at the expense of the peripheral peasantry, which were compelled to provide labor for these peripheral elites, while also shouldering a heavy tax burden.

But there was a major problem with this system. There were so many “layers of beneficiaries interposed between the taxpayer and the state treasury” that very little tax revenue

¹¹ Markakis, 35.

¹² Markakis, 110.

actually reached the central state.¹³ Instead, most of the tax revenue extracted from the peasantry ended up being filtered out by the *neftegna* and *balabbatnet*, as well as by the Church.

Consequently, in the decades before the revolution, the imperial regime sought to reform this system of rule and resource extraction in its peripheries to further centralize control and increase the flow of revenue to the central state. Efforts began with Haile Selassie's restoration to the throne in 1941 following several years of Italian occupation, when he "set about creating an effective, centralised, and modernising state..."¹⁴ To accomplish the goal of centralized control, a "uniform structure of provincial government" was imposed on Ethiopia's peripheries, wherein "the overwhelming majority of regional and provincial governors were central officials, especially from Shewa, many of whom... ruled with notable rapacity."¹⁵ Where traditional leaders were not replaced, the regime sought to bind "indigenous ruling houses" to the imperial family through marriage, as was done in Tigray.¹⁶ Either way, the level of autonomy in Ethiopia's peripheries was greatly reduced.

Increasing tax revenue to the central state was more difficult. Efforts in the 1940s included making taxes payable in cash, abolishing certain types of tribute paid to landlords by the *gabbar*, including labor service, and a simplification of the taxes paid by the peasantry.¹⁷ Even with these reforms, the fundamental problems remained: the *gabbar* were overtaxed, the landlords undertaxed, and the central state received only a small portion of the revenue. As Markakis observes, "The landlords not only escaped taxation on the tribute they collected from the *gabbar*, but also continued to appropriate part of the land tax they collected for the state..."

¹³ Markakis, 111.

¹⁴ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 38.

¹⁵ Clapham, "Controlling Space in Ethiopia," 13.

¹⁶ Clapham, 13.

¹⁷ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 118.

until 1967, the landlord class was not taxed either on its holdings or on the revenue derived from them.”¹⁸ The result: “The regime’s efforts to increase the flow of revenue from land during the postwar period failed miserably. Tax revenue from that source hardly changed between 1944 and 1967...”¹⁹

A final attempt at tax reform was made in 1967, wherein remaining forms of tribute were abolished and both landlords and peasants were required to pay taxes to the state directly.²⁰ Importantly, as noted by Mulatu Wubneh and Yohannis Abate, this reform was “not so much to transfer the burden of tax from the tenant to the landlord as to increase tax revenue from agriculture.”²¹ Even so, it was too little, too late.²² State revenue from land remained meager, while the impact of this semi-feudal system had created a “massive and irremediable alienation of land in the highland periphery” where “tenancy exceeded 50% of holdings in three provinces and 40% in four others.”²³ This contrasted sharply with a different land problem in the highland core, especially Tigray, where the traditional land tenure system had created a “pattern of land fragmentation and dwarf family holdings” with “two-thirds of holdings in three northern provinces measuring less than once hectare in size, and close to one-half less than half a hectare.”²⁴

The imperial state’s efforts to centralize control and increase tax revenues appear to have played a significant role in triggering three major revolts during the thirty-year period prior to the

¹⁸ Markakis, 118.

¹⁹ Markakis, 119.

²⁰ Markakis, 119.

²¹ Mulatu Wubneh and Yohannis Abate, *Ethiopia: Transition and Development in the Horn of Africa* (Westview Press, 1988), 35.

²² Even after this reform, the Church kept its traditional privileges and the *balabbat* continued to retain a portion of the taxes they collected. See: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 119.

²³ Markakis, 119.

²⁴ Markakis, 119.

1974 revolution. First, the Woyane revolt in Tigray in 1943 was a response to “administrative inefficiency and corruption, the appointment of non-Tigray officials in provincial administration, government taxation, and the restitution of services associated with *gult* (fief), which the Italians had abolished.”²⁵ Second, unrest erupted in Gojjam in the 1960s “against land measurement and an attempt to introduce a new agricultural income tax” and only came to an end in 1969 after “Haile Selassie withdrew the new tax, cancelled many years of arrears of taxation, offered amnesty, and replaced some unpopular administrators.”²⁶ Third, the insurgency in Bale in the 1960s was partially a response to an influx of Amhara settlers in the region and “friction... between Oromo peasants and Amhara officials who sought to impose taxes and exact services.”²⁷ However, in the case of Bale, these resentments would probably not have triggered revolt if not for Somalia’s prodding. As Paul B. Henze contends, “...circumstances in Bale did not differ greatly from those elsewhere in southern Ethiopia. The reason similar grievances did not result in rebellions and insurgency in other southern Ethiopian provinces was that it was not in the interest of a neighboring country to organize, finance, and arm insurgents.”²⁸

Despite these three revolts, historians have generally considered this the most peaceful time in Ethiopia’s history. Clapham writes, “Paradoxically, the thirty years preceding 1974 were probably the most peaceful, in the consistently violent history of Ethiopian regional politics, that the country has ever known.”²⁹ Along similar lines, Henze asserts, “Rebellions... notwithstanding, Ethiopia probably enjoyed a greater degree of peace in a greater portion of its

²⁵ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 29. See also: Paul B. Henze, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 248–49.

²⁶ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 29–30. See also: Henze, *Layers of Time*, 265.

²⁷ Henze, *Layers of Time*, 262.

²⁸ Henze, 262.

²⁹ Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 13.

territory in the 1960s than at any previous period in its history.”³⁰ Moreover, while the Ethiopian state did much to strengthen and modernize its military during this period, its military capacity remained relatively small, especially compared to that which would be developed under the revolutionary Derg.³¹

A final important element of center-periphery relations during this period was the imperial regime’s efforts to assimilate peripheral populations to the Amharan language and culture. Markakis explains these nation-building policies and their (unintended) results:

The language of the empire builders became the *lingua franca* of the country, at least as far as the urban sector was and still is concerned. This was reinforced with the banning of all other indigenous languages from being taught, printed, broadcast or spoken on public occasions. Proficiency in the official language was a requirement for state employment and the *sine qua non* for social mobility; thus the process of assimilation promoted by the imperial state came to be known as ‘Amharisation’. As it turned out, modern education proved a double-edged weapon in the context of nation-state building. On the one hand, it brought the younger generation in the periphery within the ambit of the state, because it was trained mainly for state employment. On the other, it produced a politically restless intelligentsia that went on to challenge not only the authority of the imperial regime, but the legitimacy of the state itself.³²

It was this final issue that came to play a critical role in the revolutionary upheavals that unsettled the imperial regime and opened the way for the Derg’s capture of state power.

5.1.2 *Revolutionary Overthrow*

Many factors combined to bring about revolution in Ethiopia. Most fundamentally, as suggested by Clapham, “the political basis of the regime was fatally flawed.”³³ Emperor Haile Selassie’s legitimacy diminished as the imperial regime proved itself to be incompetent, corrupt

³⁰ Henze, *Layers of Time*, 265.

³¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 123; Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 13.

³² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 13.

³³ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 40.

and exclusionary.³⁴ As discussed in the previous section, Ethiopia's peripheries were characterized by the "the volatile conjunction of national and class divisions", wherein the Amhara enjoyed positions as landlords and administrators while peripheral populations suffered from land alienation, shortages, and fragmentation.³⁵ In the center, the educated class proved increasingly unsatisfied with a system that provided greater opportunities to the Amhara and those that assimilated through Amharization – and which, even then, only provided technocratic roles in the imperial state.³⁶ When these deep-seated issues combined with economic and humanitarian crises in the late-1960s and early-1970s, the imperial regime's inability to meaningfully reform led to its revolutionary overthrow. The Derg masterfully navigated and manipulated this period of political upheaval to defame the Emperor and seize power unopposed.

The immediate context of the revolution was one of economic deterioration. In the late 1960s, a decline in the price of coffee and the closing of the Suez Canal adversely affected foreign trade as a source of state revenue.³⁷ The economy also suffered from inflation and urban unemployment, including among the intelligentsia as the number of jobs in the public sector decreased.³⁸ In the early 1970s, the price of petrol was dramatically increased.³⁹ Finally, northern Ethiopia suffered from famine from 1972-1974, while the imperial regime sought to conceal it.⁴⁰

These economic and humanitarian crises, and the apparent indifference of the imperial government, triggered a series of strikes, demonstrations, and mutinies of an increasingly revolutionary nature. Soldiers mutinied demanding improved working conditions and better

³⁴ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 42; Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 40–43.

³⁵ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 170.

³⁶ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 41–42.

³⁷ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 35.

³⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 164.

³⁹ Henze, *Layers of Time*, 283; Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 43; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 164.

⁴⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 164–65.

pay.⁴¹ Taxi drivers went on strike in early 1974, protesting the increase in gasoline prices.⁴² They were soon joined by “virtually every organised group in the capital, students as usual well to the fore.”⁴³ Notably absent in this revolutionary movement, however, was the peasantry. While their plight was highlighted by the urban radicals, these same radicals “made no attempt to agitate and involve the peasantry.”⁴⁴

On February 28, 1974, the Emperor succumbed to the pressure, appointing the progressive Endalkatchew Makonnen, as Prime Minister.⁴⁵ Many of the former cabinet members of the imperial regime resigned and the top of the military hierarchy was purged. However, while initially sparking hope of meaningful reform, the new Prime Minister ultimately failed to satisfactorily address the critical issue of land.

Simultaneously, the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, more commonly known as the Derg (Committee), was formed. Begun by a group of lower level officers in February 1974, the committee invited military units throughout the country to send elected representatives to Addis Ababa.⁴⁶ Once formed, one of the Derg’s first acts was arresting the cabinet members that had resigned in February.⁴⁷

Then, during the summer, the Derg began a campaign to isolate, defame, and vilify the Emperor, thereby clearing their path to power. Markakis explains the process and result:

The last act of the drama was preceded by a cunningly designed campaign to deprive the Emperor of the institutional appendages to the throne... The palaces built for him in several parts of the country were confiscated, and the retainer

⁴¹ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 40, 43; Henze, *Layers of Time*, 283.

⁴² Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 43; Henze, *Layers of Time*, 283.

⁴³ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 43.

⁴⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 167.

⁴⁵ Henze, *Layers of Time*, 283.

⁴⁶ Henze, 284; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 167.

⁴⁷ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 167.

corps that surrounded him was disbanded. A campaign of defamation against his person was waged, exposing the vast accumulation of landed, industrial and commercial properties held by himself and his family; these were nationalised. The night before the final scene, a searing film of the famine was shown on television, followed by scenes of the Emperor feeding choice chunks of meat to his dogs. The following day, 12 September 1974, a delegation of Dergue members read the act of deposal to Haile Selassie in his palace. Afterwards, the man who had ruled the country for 58 years, and owned a fleet of limousines, was bundled into a tiny Volkswagen car and taken to detention.⁴⁸

Upon deposing the Emperor, the Derg assumed power as the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC). The Derg's rule would prove to be anything but provisional. Over the next few years, the Derg would violently consolidate its power by eliminating remnants of the old regime, radical leftists that challenged military rule, and even reformists within its own organization. By 1977, the Derg had shrunk considerably and Major Mengistu Haile Mariam had secured his leadership over the regime.⁴⁹ During its rule, and especially after Mengistu consolidated power, the Derg sought to centralize and transform Ethiopia's peripheries to an unprecedented degree.

5.2 Policies of the Revolutionary State

The Derg's initial aim in seizing control of the state was to secure its territorial integrity, which had been threatened by the delegitimization and decay of the imperial regime. In pursuit of this objective, the Derg sought to reassert the primacy of the Ethiopian nation-state over any ethnic or national divisions within the country. Representative of this agenda were the regime's first mottos, *Andinet* and *Ethiopia Tikdem*, meaning, respectively, "unity" and "Ethiopia First."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Markakis, 168. See also: Henze, *Layers of Time*, 286; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 46.

⁴⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 169.

⁵⁰ Markakis, 169.

Simultaneously, those advocating the right to self-determination for Ethiopia's ethnic groups were labelled secessionists by the Derg and treated with hostility and violence.⁵¹

Most crucially, the Derg radically escalated the project of centralizing state control over Ethiopia's peripheries previously pursued by the imperial regime. The Derg's goal was to create a society wholly subject to the central state. Clapham explains:

Unlike its imperial predecessor, the military government that seized power in 1974 was very much aware of the spatial contradictions of Ethiopian statehood and devised a reasonably coherent policy to deal with them. This policy may plausibly be designated Jacobin, in emulation of the French revolutionaries of 1791 to 1794. It amounted to a project of *encadrement*, or incorporation into structures of control, which was pursued with remarkable speed and ruthlessness. It sought to intensify the longstanding trajectory of centralized state formation by removing the perceived sources of peripheral discontent and espousing an ideal of nation-statehood in which citizens would equally be associated with, and subjected to, an omnipotent state... The Derg, as the regime and all its works came to be known, represented the centre-periphery conceptualization of Ethiopia in its most intense form.⁵²

Beyond the goal of ensuring Ethiopia's territorial integrity through aggressive state- and nation-building, the Derg assumed power with surprisingly little in the way of an ideological or political program. To address this deficiency, the Derg turned to the student-led radicals to act as advisors and fill positions in the revolutionary government.⁵³ This move triggered a split in the radical movement. While one faction, primarily represented by the All Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON), collaborated with the Derg, the other faction, led by the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP), openly opposed the military regime which it viewed as hijacking the people's revolution.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Aregawi Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991)* (Tsehai Publishers & Distributors, 2009), 131.

⁵² Clapham, "Controlling Space in Ethiopia," 14.

⁵³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 168.

⁵⁴ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 44.

Taking cues from the radicals, the Derg espoused an increasingly socialist platform. In fact, the regime's attachment to socialist policies and programs endured far longer than its alliance with MEISON, against which the regime violently turned after consolidating power. However, even with this progressively ambitious ideological agenda, the Derg's foremost concern was asserting and deepening central state control throughout Ethiopian territory.

Many of the revolutionary policies introduced by the Derg were clearly designed to control and transform Ethiopia's peripheral populations. These policies included land reform, the formation of peasant associations, mass military conscription, agrarian policies, resettlement programs and villagization. In the subsections below, I outline the nature and implementation of these revolutionary state policies at the national level. Sections three through nine then unpack the differential impact of these revolutionary policies among Ethiopia's peripheral groups based on their specific implementation and interaction with socioeconomic conditions at the local level.

5.2.1 Land Reform

One of the first and most important policies enacted by the Derg was land reform. As early as 1965, the Ethiopian student movement had called for major land reform under the slogan "Land to the Tiller."⁵⁵ Recognizing the need to placate radicals, undercut old regime elites, and win broad support, the Derg echoed this slogan in its Declaration on Ethiopian Socialism in December 1974, proclaiming: "The right to own land shall be restricted to those who work the land."⁵⁶ However, the policy introduced in 1975 would actually go far beyond – and to some extent contrary to – the land reform envisioned by the student movement.

⁵⁵ Omer, "Close yet Far: Northern Shewa under the Derg," 76.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 170.

On March 4, 1975, the Derg implemented a sweeping land reform by which all rural land was declared state property.⁵⁷ Private land ownership was abolished and replaced with possessory rights over land usage. Land was to be reallocated into holdings of up to a maximum of ten hectares to be cultivated by family labor. The rent and sale of land was prohibited, as was tenancy and the hiring of agricultural wage labor. No compensation was offered for land seized, only for “moveable property and permanent works.”⁵⁸ Large commercial farms were placed under state control. Finally, while “no mention was made of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church... it was taken for granted that it was finally to be deprived of its ancient landholding privileges.”⁵⁹

Center-periphery relations were rapidly and profoundly transformed by this 1975 Land Reform.⁶⁰ The feudal order in the periphery was essentially destroyed as landlords were stripped of their economic and political power. Especially in the highland periphery, the *neftegna* suffered expulsions and violence at the hands of the *gabbar* after the land reform was announced. The allotment of land, even if not ownership, released many peasant farmers from tenancy and the exploitative system of surplus appropriation that existed under the imperial regime. Finally, as discussed further in the next subsection, the regime called upon the peripheral populations to organize peasant associations and actively participate in the implementation of the land reform. As a result of these changes, many peasants in the periphery developed “a genuine stake in the regime.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Henze, *Layers of Time*, 290; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 170; Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 45; Christopher Clapham, “The State and Revolution in Ethiopia,” *Review of African Political Economy* 16, no. 44 (January 1, 1989): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056248908703806>; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 99, 105; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 93.

⁵⁸ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 99.

⁵⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 170.

⁶⁰ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 94; Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 14–15; Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 45; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 170.

⁶¹ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 45.

However, while undeniably an “authentic revolutionary act... symbolising a clear rupture with the past by wiping out the economic foundations of the *ancien régime*,” the 1975 Land Reform was also a major step toward asserting central state control over peripheral areas.⁶² Crucially, rather than granting “land to the tiller,” the state retained ownership. As Clapham observes, “Land reform... involved not the distribution of land among a peasantry which could thus gain control over its own means of production, but rather the ‘capture’ of the peasantry in a way that subjected them increasingly to state control.”⁶³ Subsequent revolutionary policies would escalate the revolutionary state’s attempts to ‘capture’ the peasantry, culminating in the policy of villagization.

The impact of the 1975 Land Reform varied greatly across Ethiopia’s peripheries, yielding a wide range of responses. In the highland periphery, especially among the Oromo peasantry, the land reform “proved wildly and enduringly popular” as it abolished tenancy and “eliminated both the *neftegna* and *ballabat* classes.”⁶⁴ Following the decree, many Oromo peasants seized land by “ousting and in some cases killing the *neftegna* owners.”⁶⁵ The fact that the state retained ownership, while only granting usage rights, doesn’t appear to have raised alarm in this zone since most of the Oromo peasantry did not own land before the revolution.⁶⁶

Land reform was far less popular in those areas of the highland core where either “smallholding was the rule and large estates and tenancy the exception”⁶⁷ or “locally based notables still retained an appreciable following.”⁶⁸ In these northern provinces, despite often

⁶² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 170.

⁶³ Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 15.

⁶⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 170.

⁶⁵ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 105.

⁶⁶ Halliday and Molyneux, 105.

⁶⁷ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 170.

⁶⁸ Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 15.

meager holdings, much of the peasantry were landowners and thus concerned about the potential for state appropriation of their property. As Wubneh and Abate note, “northerners... were suspicious of the intentions of the new government. The reform held no promise of gain for a majority of the northerners; rather it was perceived as an attack on their basic rights on *rist* land, to which the northern peasant was deeply attached.”⁶⁹ In addition, the prohibition on hiring farm labor jeopardized a key source of supplemental income for Tigrayan smallholders in the north.⁷⁰

Finally, in the lowland peripheries, the 1975 Land Reform generally had little impact. Possessory rights were granted over grazing land, but very little changed in the daily lives and practices of Ethiopia’s pastoralists.⁷¹ The major exceptions were those lowland areas near waterways where commercial estates had been established. In these areas, the land reform posed a serious threat and was vehemently opposed.

5.2.2 *Zamatcha and Peasant Associations*

Initially launched in December 1974 to promote the revolutionary message of *Ethiopia Tikdem*, the regime’s Development Through Cooperation Campaign, generally referred to as the *zamatcha* (“campaign”), served as the primary means of implementing land reform and mobilizing the peasantry from 1975 to 1976.⁷² With minimal preparation, approximately 60,000 students and teachers were dispatched to the countryside as part of the *zamatcha* to educate and

⁶⁹ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 94. See also: Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 105.

⁷⁰ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 21–22.

⁷¹ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 94.

⁷² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 171; Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 15.

organize the peasantry.⁷³ High schools, as well as Addis Ababa University, were closed to accommodate this massive campaign, which lasted until the middle of 1976.⁷⁴

A primary objective of the *zamatcha* was to help local populations establish peasant associations as provided for under Articles 8 and 10 of the 1975 Land Reform proclamation.⁷⁵ These peasant associations, or *gabbar kebele*, would become the fundamental unit of revolutionary administration in the state's peripheries with the power "to carry out land redistribution, to administer public property, and to organise cooperative schemes and development projects."⁷⁶ By the end of 1975, 18,000 peasant associations had been formed with a total of 4.5 million members.⁷⁷ As part of their efforts to empower the peasantry, *zamatcha* students also coordinated activities against those perceived as oppressors of peripheral peoples, including former officials, landlords, and traditional leaders. Finally, the campaigners censured local populations for cultural practices which these urban students viewed as backward or opposed to the values of the revolution.

However, the realities that these urban students faced in peripheral regions were often more complex than their ideological training had prepared them to address. Clapham explains,

...students brought... a stereotyped conception of rural class relations as a Marxian contradiction between exploitative landlords and subjugated peasants. However, they had difficulty adapting to situations in which this stereotype failed to work, either because the peasants already controlled their own means of production, or because they maintained solidary relations with their supposed exploiters, or indeed because land simply did not have that centrality to many of

⁷³ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 99; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 93; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 171.

⁷⁴ Henze, *Layers of Time*, 290–91.

⁷⁵ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 95.

⁷⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 171. See also: Clapham, "The State and Revolution in Ethiopia," 7.

⁷⁷ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 96.

the peripheral peoples that it did in the economies and value systems of the arable areas of the country.⁷⁸

The degree of dissonance between the campaigners' perception of socioeconomic structures and the actual relationships within peripheral communities heavily shaped how the *zamatcha* was received among different groups. In the southern highlands, where the *neftegna-gabbar* system generally matched *zamatcha* rhetoric, the student campaigners were well received, and peasant associations were promptly formed. On the other hand, the *zamatcha* had "very little success in organizing the peasants in the north," especially in those areas where "the students tried to introduce changes that were in conflict with local interests."⁷⁹

Even so, wherever a peasant association could be organized, "the student campaigners were determined to turn it into a genuine instrument of local self-government, and set about this task with revolutionary zeal."⁸⁰ Crucial to this goal, peasant association leadership was to be drawn from and elected by the local community, rather than being externally appointed or supplied. The students further pushed the Derg to grant formal legal status to the peasant associations as institutions of local government.⁸¹ More alarmingly, at least for the regime, the *zamatcha* students also encouraged the peasantry to engage in activities "even more radical than those called for by the land reform proclamation."⁸² These included not allowing landlords and former officials to hold local offices, appropriating and redistributing moveable property, including plow oxen, occupying state farms, organizing collective farms, refusing to pay rent arrears, and, most egregiously, arming the peasants.⁸³

⁷⁸ Clapham, "Controlling Space in Ethiopia," 15–16.

⁷⁹ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 94.

⁸⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 171.

⁸¹ Markakis, 172.

⁸² Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 93.

⁸³ Wubneh and Abate, 93; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 172.

The Derg responded to these developments in several steps. First, the regime conceded to *zamatcha* demands by granting the peasant associations legal status through Proclamation No. 71 in December 1975 and “expanded their duties and responsibilities to include security, tax collection, adjudication, and political agitation.”⁸⁴ In hindsight this would represent, as put by Markakis, “the high water mark of the revolutionary tide,” at least in terms of “peasant political emancipation.”⁸⁵ Second, wary of further *zamatcha* agitation among the peasantry, the regime brought the students back home to the cities by mid-1976.⁸⁶ Third, in 1977, the Derg established the All-Ethiopian Peasant Association (AEPA) to strengthen “the link between the central government and the PAs at the local level.”⁸⁷

The final and most severe step, carried out in 1978, was to impose central control over the peasant associations by coercively replacing their popularly elected leadership with individuals deemed loyal to the regime.⁸⁸ This represented the culmination of a series of political purges in the periphery begun at the provincial level shortly after the conclusion of the *zamatcha*. As Markakis recounts:

By mid-1976, the students had returned to the towns, and the staffing of the provincial administration changed once more. All the recently appointed officials were dismissed, transferred or resigned, to be replaced by army officers and members of the emerging corps of political cadres mass-produced by the regime. With their help, the state’s administrative network became denser, wider, and reached deeper into rural society than ever before. A purge in 1978 had removed the freely elected *kebele* leadership and replaced it with another vetted by the regime’s agents. Accompanied by violence, this served as a warning to the peasants, and from then on the *kebele* functioned as adjuncts of the state administration.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 96; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 107.

⁸⁵ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 172.

⁸⁶ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 107.

⁸⁷ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 96.

⁸⁸ Waal, *Evil Days*, 108.

⁸⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 172.

Peasant associations were rapidly transformed from institutions of local self-administration and peasant empowerment into instruments of state penetration and control at the local level. Peasant association leaders were now essentially “government agents under an electoral veneer,”⁹⁰ that, although still members of the local community, were “effectively put in place by higher state or party officials.”⁹¹ Owing their positions to the central regime, and recognizing that their power and privileges could be easily stripped from them by the state, the appointed peasant association leaders “had an interest in supporting the regime that had empowered them.”⁹² As a result, the peasant associations became tools of the Derg regime, which it proceeded to use in executing and enforcing its policies at the local level, including choosing individuals for military conscription, extracting grain quotas, selecting families for resettlement, and functioning as the basic unit for villagization.⁹³

5.2.3 *Military Conscription*

Many revolutionary regimes seek to enhance their military capacity to secure themselves against the danger of counterrevolution from internal and external actors. The Derg was further motivated to do so in response to two challenges inherited from the imperial regime: Eritrean separatism and Somalian irredentism. To counter these threats, the revolutionary regime turned to mass military conscription.

In 1976, the first round of mass conscription was conducted to facilitate the “Peasants’ March” against the Eritrean rebels.⁹⁴ In 1977, the “Call of the Motherland” involved another

⁹⁰ Clapham, “The State and Revolution in Ethiopia,” 8.

⁹¹ Clapham, 12.

⁹² Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 20.

⁹³ Clapham, “The State and Revolution in Ethiopia,” 7.

⁹⁴ Waal, *Evil Days*, 291.

round of conscription “to raise recruits for the ‘peasants’ militia,’ to march on the north and Eritrea.”⁹⁵ Conscription was then employed heavily in the war over the Ogaden region waged against Somalia. Even after these two conflicts were quieted in the late 1970s, the Ethiopian army maintained a large militia force composed of conscripted men. As the number of internal foes multiplied and strengthen in the 1980s, the Derg increasingly relied on military conscription. By June 1990, in its desperation to survive, the regime’s “National Shengo (assembly) called for ‘non-stop recruitment’ to the armed forces to be undertaken urgently,” thereby eliminating the “‘safe’ periods between discrete campaigns” of conscription.⁹⁶

Not only did the rate of conscription change over time, but also the means by which peripheral populations were conscripted. Initially, conscripts were heavily drawn from those areas where the Derg’s revolutionary policies had accrued the most political capital. For instance, in discussing the war with Somalia, Clapham notes, “The forces which (with Soviet arms and Cuban assistance) defeated the Somalis appear to have been recruited very largely from the southern areas of the country, in which land reform had had the greatest impact and in which (initially at least) the Derg could call on the support of a peasantry which had every interest in defending the revolution.”⁹⁷

However, as the toll of these wars increased and other policies soured erstwhile supporters toward the revolution, the regime progressively resorted to more “arbitrary and violent” means of recruitment, in which many conscripts were taken “without warning or the chance of communicating with their families.”⁹⁸ In some cases, individuals were forcibly

⁹⁵ Waal, 291.

⁹⁶ Waal, 294–95.

⁹⁷ Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 17.

⁹⁸ Waal, *Evil Days*, 291.

conscripted while in transit or public spaces. In other cases, entire groups of men and boys would be rounded up through organized sweeps of villages by policemen or party cadre.⁹⁹

Perhaps most frequently, conscription was conducted by providing each peasant association with a set quota to fill, while permitting their leadership control over the method by which recruits were selected. Naturally, such a system provided a great deal of power to the peasant association leadership, which could leverage their control over conscription for personal gain. Alexander De Waal explains the result, “This system was notoriously open to abuse by individuals. PA or *kebele* officials rarely conscripted their relatives or friends, and used the conscript quota as a way of settling grudges, obtaining sexual favours from the wives and sisters of those they chose to detain, or -- most commonly -- soliciting bribes from conscripts’ families.”¹⁰⁰ But the quota system also placed a great deal of pressure on those tasked with recruiting. Failure to fill the quota could bring dire consequences. For example, in situations where local militiamen were tasked with finding conscripts, any deficit in satisfying the quota was likely to be filled with their own conscription.¹⁰¹

5.2.4 Agrarian Policies

The 1975 Land Reform and subsequent *zamatcha* shattered the system of taxation and resource expropriation from peripheral populations established by the imperial state. Consequently, in the first years of revolutionary rule, the peasantry enjoyed control over their own surplus produce and relief from the heavy tax burden they had shouldered under the previous regime. But this would prove to be only a temporary respite.

⁹⁹ Waal, 298.

¹⁰⁰ Waal, 296.

¹⁰¹ Waal, 297.

By 1977, in order to “recreate the structures of surplus expropriation that had been destroyed by land reform,” the Derg established the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC), “which laid down grain quotas to be delivered (at highly disadvantageous prices) by each region, and in turn by each province and district, down to the individual peasant association and farmer.”¹⁰² In short, agricultural producers were now required to sell to the state at prices set by the state, and could be punished with “confiscation of assets or imprisonment” if they failed to meet their quota.¹⁰³ Beyond this purchasing monopoly through the AMC, the regime would go on to establish monopolies over agricultural inputs, such as fertilizer and machinery.¹⁰⁴

Initially, the AMC was “particularly active in major cereal producing regions,”¹⁰⁵ though its operations “gradually extended to all the major crop-producing regions.”¹⁰⁶ As the power and presence of the AMC grew, it proved both exceptionally effective in extracting resources from the population and highly inflexible to differences in output and market value between regions and across time. Alexander De Waal describes the AMC’s insensitivity to economic and agricultural conditions:

Each PA was given a quota of grain which it had to supply — but was not informed how large its quota would be until after the planting season. From the 1980/1 season onwards, the price for each type of grain was fixed centrally and was the same in all parts of the country. In 1980, the prices decided upon by the government were about 20-25% lower than those advised by economists, and stayed at the same level for eight years, despite fast inflation in the prices on the open market. In 1984, the fixed price was only about 20% of the free market price in Addis Ababa. The quotas were also centrally determined, and often bore little relation to the size of the harvest.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 17, 19. See also: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 173; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 100; Waal, *Evil Days*, 159.

¹⁰³ Waal, *Evil Days*, 160.

¹⁰⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 173.

¹⁰⁵ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 100.

¹⁰⁶ Waal, *Evil Days*, 159.

¹⁰⁷ Waal, 159–60.

Perhaps most strikingly, the government continued to extract food quotas even in famine-stricken areas in the mid-1980s.¹⁰⁸

While the revolutionary state successfully expropriated “an increasing proportion of a diminishing surplus,” the AMC’s operations also strongly alienated the peasantry toward the regime.¹⁰⁹ As noted above, failure to meet the quota could result in imprisonment, even in situations where drought or other misfortunes made it impossible for peasants to fill their quotas through their own production. To satisfy their quotas, many were compelled to sell their livestock or other assets in order to purchase grain on the open market, only to “then sell at a considerable loss to the AMC -- which often only made its payments many months later.”¹¹⁰ Others withdrew from the market entirely, turning either to subsistence production or even seeking work on state farms.

As another means of securing agricultural surplus from the countryside, the Derg established - and invested heavily in - state farms. A major element of the 1975 Land Reform decree had been placing large commercial farms under state ownership and control. In the ensuing years, the state created additional state farms and “virgin lands” projects designed for both domestic food production and export crops.¹¹¹

Although accounting for only a small percentage of Ethiopia’s agricultural output, state farms received the lion’s share of state investment. For instance, Markakis notes that “by the early 1980s, state farms occupied about 4% of all cultivated land, and consumed an average 80%

¹⁰⁸ Waal, 160; Clapham, “The State and Revolution in Ethiopia,” 10–11; Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 19.

¹⁰⁹ Clapham, “The State and Revolution in Ethiopia,” 11.

¹¹⁰ Waal, *Evil Days*, 160. See also: Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 19.

¹¹¹ Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 19.

of all the agricultural inputs provided by the state.”¹¹² Similarly, Wubneh and Abate found that “although the state farms in 1984 accounted for less than 10 percent of food production, it was estimated that they received between 70 and 90 percent of agricultural investment.”¹¹³ Additional advantages for state farms included far greater access to fertilizer than was available for peasant cultivators, as well as being paid “as much as 50 percent more for their grain” by the AMC “than is paid to private farmers.”¹¹⁴ Yet despite this governmental support, state farms consistently failed to produce an efficient yield - the cost of production regularly outweighed the value of the produce.¹¹⁵

A final phase of major agrarian reform was announced in June 1979, wherein the Derg encouraged the peasantry to pool their resources into producers’ cooperatives.¹¹⁶ Designed to be implemented in three stages, the creation of producers’ cooperatives would begin with peasants maintaining land for private use while sharing animals and farming implements, then transition to collective ownership of the means of production and smaller private plots, then finally culminate in full communal use of the land in the cooperative.¹¹⁷ To entice peasant communities to form cooperatives, the government offered “preferential treatment to registered producers’ cooperatives in the supply of credits, fertilizers, and other benefits.”¹¹⁸ Even with these proffered benefits, very few producers’ cooperatives were organized, as peasants feared the loss of their private plots. By 1982, only 57 producers’ cooperatives had been registered.¹¹⁹ In some areas, the

¹¹² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 173.

¹¹³ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 101.

¹¹⁴ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Red Sea Press, 1989), 273.

¹¹⁵ Giorgis, 273. See also: Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 101; Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 47.

¹¹⁶ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 96–97; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 109; Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 19.

¹¹⁷ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 109; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 97.

¹¹⁸ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 97.

¹¹⁹ Wubneh and Abate, 97.

promotion of collectivization produced outright opposition, most notably in Sidamo where violent clashes erupted in September 1979.¹²⁰

5.2.5 Resettlement

Resettlement was a familiar policy in Ethiopia, having been employed by the imperial government and continued by the Derg regime after seizing power. In 1976, the Derg created the Settlement Authority, which was later incorporated into the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) in 1979.¹²¹ These institutions gradually transferred populations from the highland core to peripheral regions during the first decade of revolutionary rule. By 1983, approximately 100,000 people had been resettled.

But in 1984, amid major drought and famine in the north, the Derg dramatically escalated its resettlement program calling for a massive campaign wherein it hoped to “move about 1.5 million people from the affected northern regions to the south and southwest where arable land is plentiful.”¹²² Though the revolutionary regime would fail to meet this aspiration, it still resettled an estimated 700,000 people from 1984 to 1985 in what can fairly be described as a “crash programme.”¹²³ The bulk of those resettled came from the northern provinces of Wollo, Shoa, and Tigray, where the famine was most severe, and were relocated “into ‘underpopulated’ regions in the west and south-west (primarily in Gojjam, Wellegga, and the Gambela district).”¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 109.

¹²¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 174.

¹²² Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 101. See also: Waal, *Evil Days*, 211.

¹²³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 174.

¹²⁴ Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 19.

The Derg portrayed participation in this resettlement program as voluntary, but in reality coercion was frequently employed. For instance, each northern district was required to fill a certain quota of resettlers. Waal unpacks the implications: “If volunteers could be had, that was good; if not, other means would be found to recruit settlers. The existence of the quota system was itself fundamentally incompatible with the notion that the recruitment was voluntary.”¹²⁵ So, while government agents sought to obtain volunteers through promises of food and improved livelihood, they were also willing to detain and forcibly recruit individuals for resettlement. In fact, Waal found that “accessibility for government cadres and soldiers was the overriding factor in determining whether people were resettled,” rather than how deeply a district was affected by the famine.¹²⁶ As with conscription, peasant associations often played a key role in designating individuals and families for resettlement. Peasant association leaders used this power to settle scores with local rivals or get rid of those who had fallen behind on their taxes or peasant association dues.¹²⁷

Presented as a straightforward, albeit ambitious, solution to the problems of drought and overpopulation in the north, the resettlement program served additional functions for the Derg. In terms of counterinsurgency, resettlement helped the government drain northern areas of potential supporters of insurgent groups operating in the area, such as the TPLF.¹²⁸ On the other hand, resettlement sites were also designed to fulfill a role in counterinsurgency. Concentrated in the operational zones of the EPRP and OLF, settlers were armed - and in some cases integrated with locals - to provide a localized defense force against the insurgents.¹²⁹ The resettlement program

¹²⁵ Waal, *Evil Days*, 213.

¹²⁶ Waal, 214.

¹²⁷ Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” 19; Waal, *Evil Days*, 214.

¹²⁸ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 101.

¹²⁹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 221.

was also used to support the regime's goals of collectivization and villagization with resettled populations often encouraged, or compelled, into such arrangements.

5.2.6 Villagization

The final major revolutionary policy introduced in the periphery was villagization, wherein peasants were required to dismantle their dispersed homesteads and move to road-accessible, state-planned villages. The government's first forays into villagization were as security measures, first in Bale in 1977 during the Ogaden War, then in Hararghe in 1984 to counter the OLF.¹³⁰ In 1985, the regime decided to implement villagization throughout the country. The National Villagization Coordinating Committee (NVCC) was formed and "by 1988, the government reported that over 12 million people -- about half of the rural population in the areas the government then controlled -- had been villagized."¹³¹

Ostensibly, the purpose of villagization was to enhance the ability of the state to provide services to rural populations including education, health, water, and security, as well as help promote economic development.¹³² However, as observed by a former Derg official, "The main goal was the control and regimentation of society, not development."¹³³ That is, a premium was placed on gathering peripheral populations into legible spaces where state extraction, surveillance, and control could be facilitated. Clapham elucidates:

Villagization was nonetheless the most visible expression of the 'capture' of the peasantry, within residential perimeters accessible to wheeled transport, where they could be taxed, conscripted, and prevented from smuggling their produce to illegal open markets. Since this was achieved at considerable cost in agricultural production, through the loss of efficiency caused by the increased distance

¹³⁰ Clapham, "Controlling Space in Ethiopia," 19; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 174; Waal, *Evil Days*, 231.

¹³¹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 234.

¹³² Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 45–46; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 97; Waal, *Evil Days*, 231.

¹³³ Giorgis, *Red Tears*, 307.

between homestead and fields, as well as the degradation of the area immediately surrounding the village, it could readily be regarded as a deliberate economic cost incurred by the regime in order to enhance its control. This, however, would be to misconstrue the mentalities of the officials concerned, for whom 'development' was virtually coterminous with control.¹³⁴

But the bigger problem was the manner in which the Derg's national villagization program was executed. Centrally planned by ill-informed officials, the villagization scheme largely failed to take advantage of local knowledge and input or provide for flexibility to different circumstances. As Markakis notes, "Detailed but flawed guidelines were issued for every aspect of the programme - from village size that proved too large, to house dimensions that proved too small - making no concession to the immense diversity of Ethiopia's countryside."¹³⁵ Moreover, villagization was often rushed causing avoidable privations on peasant populations:

Government officials and cadres surveyed sites and insisted on house construction in the middle of growing crops. Labor was diverted from essential household and agricultural tasks. Houses of reluctant farmers were arbitrarily demolished. Levies were exacted from the peasants in order to finance the program. The villagers were moved before essential ancillary buildings had been constructed, such as latrines, kitchens and stables. Inadequate space for housing animals and long distances to pastures led to enforced sale of livestock.¹³⁶

As one might expect, villagization was "deeply unpopular throughout Ethiopia" with peasant responses ranging from "unobtrusive sabotage" to "violent resistance."¹³⁷ Some cadre were killed by locals when they attempted to enforce villagization, others were only successful thanks to the backing of the armed forces. Further proof of the policy's lack of support was revealed when the policy was terminated in March 1990: "Almost overnight, the existing cooperative farms were physically stripped of their assets. Villagers -- for so long sullen and

¹³⁴ Clapham, "Controlling Space in Ethiopia," 20.

¹³⁵ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 174.

¹³⁶ Waal, *Evil Days*, 235.

¹³⁷ Waal, 236.

cowed -- suddenly displayed great energy and initiative in redividing their farmland and returning to their original homesteads..."¹³⁸

5.3 Conclusion

With these revolutionary policies now described at the national level, the subsequent chapters discuss their impact on several peripheral groups in Ethiopia, as well as other factors that played a part in the emergence, or absence, of armed conflict. For each group, I first provide a synopsis of the case, as well as a table identifying the time slices and values of the independent and dependent variables. I then provide some necessary background on the group and its relation to the Ethiopian state before the revolution. This is followed by sections process tracing each of the time slices identified by shifts in my independent variables. A final subsection for each group summarizes their relationship with the revolutionary state following these time slices through to the end of revolutionary rule. Each of the case chapters then concludes with an assessment of the explanatory power of alternative explanations as compared to my theory.

¹³⁸ Waal, 236.

Chapter 6: Afar and Tigray

Peripheral rebellions against the Derg first emerged in the north among the Afar and Tigrayans. Distinguished by their ability to maintain some political autonomy during the imperial period, both groups had their ethnic leaders driven into exile by the Derg less than a year into its rule. When these forced flights were combined with the threat posed by the 1975 Land Reform, Afar and Tigrayan traditional elites were able to secure mass support for counterrevolutionary rebellion. But the trajectories of their peripheral rebellions diverged starkly. While the Afar rebellion was quickly divided and subverted by promises of autonomy, an ethnonationalist rebellion in Tigray expanded as revolutionary policies further alienated the peasant population. Ultimately, the Tigray rebellion evolved into a coalition that overthrew the Derg regime in 1991.

6.1 Afar

The Afar inhabit the northeastern lowlands of the country. Although the Afar are primarily pastoralists, some of their chiefs became wealthy landowners as a result of the agricultural commercialization of the region under the imperial regime. Most prominent among these chiefs was Sultan Ali Mirah of Aussa, who served as the primary intermediary between the Ethiopian regime and the Afar. Under Ali Mirah, the Afar enjoyed significant autonomy in imperial Ethiopia.

When the Derg seized power, Ali Mirah rapidly voiced his allegiance to the revolutionary regime. Among the Afar, the 1975 Land Reform posed a sizeable threat to the landowning chiefs

and promised little benefit to the pastoralists. However, while foreign landholdings in the region were promptly confiscated, the Derg delayed implementation of the land reform among the traditional leaders of the Afar.

This delay became untenable with the introduction of *zamatcha* students into Aussa, which sought to agitate class conflict against the landowners in the region. In this context, the Derg invited Ali Mirah to Addis Ababa to discuss the land reform. Ali Mirah, fearing this to be a ploy to have him arrested, instead invited Derg officials to come to Aussa. Shortly after their arrival, the *zamatcha* students were attacked by the Sultan’s supporters and Ali Mirah fled the country. His flight triggered rebellion against the regime in June 1975 under the leadership of the Afar Liberation Front (ALF), an organization headed by one of Ali Mirah’s sons.

Backed by not only landed elites, but also an emerging generation of ethnonationalist students, the ALF inflicted significant harm on the revolutionary regime in its initial operations. Ideological divisions within the organization, combined with the regime's promises of regional autonomy, quickly undercut its efficacy. Major rebellion among the Afar was consequently short-lived.

Table 6.1: Variable Values and Predictions in Afar Case

Time	State Intrusion	Peripheral Polarization	Cross-Cutting Threat	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
1974 – April 1975	Low	NA	NA	No Rebellion	No Rebellion
May 1975 – Mar. 1976	High	Medium or High	Vertical and Horizontal	Rebellion	Rebellion (ALF)

6.1.1 Before the Revolution

Dwelling in the barren lowlands of northeastern Ethiopia, the Afar are predominantly semi-nomadic pastoralists, most of whom are cattle herders.¹ The exception is in the lower Awash river valley, where settled agriculture is possible.² Similar to other pastoralist societies in the region, the Afar are clan-based and organized around a traditional authority system of chiefs and community elders. However, the level of power and authority concentrated in the Sultan of Aussa was unique among the pastoralist groups of Ethiopia. Clapham explains, “Among all the pastoralist peoples of the Horn, only the Afar have historically possessed a political system with some affinity to statehood, the Aussa sultanate, which derived from its control of the lower Awash river and Lake Assaita, which provided a permanent source of water and thus of power, and contrasted dramatically with the aridity of the rest of their territory.”³

Before Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s, the Afar enjoyed a high level of non-interference with “no sign of the imperial state in Ethiopia’s share of Afar territory.”⁴ This changed shortly after Emperor Haile Selassie’s reinstatement, when he deployed the Ethiopian army in 1944 to depose the current Sultan of Aussa, Dada Mohammed Yayo, who had welcomed the Italian occupation. The emperor was then directly involved in choosing Ali Mirah, the nephew of Dada, as the new Sultan of Aussa.⁵

¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 47–49.

² John W. Harbeson, “Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa: The Afar of the Awash Valley,” *African Affairs* 77, no. 309 (1978): 480.

³ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 15.

⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 136.

⁵ Yasin Mohammed Yasin, “Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea,” *Africa Spectrum* 43, no. 1 (2008): 45; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 136–37.

Through Sultan Ali Mirah, the Ethiopian state was able to establish an effective system of indirect rule among its Afar population. As a “model subordinate of imperial rule,”⁶ Ali Mirah served Addis Ababa by securing the highway which gave it access to the port of Assab, paying an annual tribute of 2,000 liters of ghee (in the place of taxes), and blocking Eritrean operations on the territory under his authority.⁷ In exchange for these services, Emperor Haile Selassie bestowed the honorary title of *Betwoded* (‘beloved’) on the Sultan of Aussa and Ali Mirah was accorded a high level of deference over the affairs of the Afar. John Harbeson observes, “The Sultan’s only formal power was that of *balabat* in his area, acting under the authority of the district and sub-province governors. Yet his informal influence went much further than that of the Ethiopian government’s own administrators. They were in fact obliged to work with him and obtain his cooperation in order to exercise their own authority in the area.”⁸

While reaping personal benefits from his good relations with Haile Selassie, Ali Mirah also used his access to the Emperor to act as the “principal advocate” for the Afar and “on many occasions the Sultan led Afar spokesmen to the Emperor’s court to voice their grievances.”⁹ As a result, Ali Mirah also enjoyed significant popularity and regard among the Afar. His ability to balance acting as an intermediary for the state and for the Afar helps explain why he was “the longest surviving traditional ruler in the entire lowland periphery” at the end of the imperial period.¹⁰

⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 137.

⁷ Kassim Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities: The Case of the Afar,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (June 1985): 342, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00000203>; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 137.

⁸ Harbeson, “Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa,” 484.

⁹ Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 337.

¹⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 137.

Another important Afar figure during imperial rule was Sheikh Yasin Mohamoda, the leader of a movement calling for the administrative unification of Ethiopia's Afar. In 1961, a conference was held at Tio, "in which 55 tribal chieftains... reached a general consensus regarding the urgency... of the formation of an Afar autonomous governorate-general inside Ethiopia comprising those in Hararge, Shoa, Wallo, Tigray and Eritrea."¹¹ This was followed by a conference in Assab in 1963, where participants decided to petition Emperor Haile Selassie for this unification. As the "author and activist of the idea," Yasin Mohamoda was tasked with "the co-ordination of obtaining all the Afar tribal chiefs' signatures on the petition and forwarding it to the court of the Emperor."¹² Finally, in 1964 a delegation of Afar leaders and dignitaries came to Addis Ababa to directly plead their case. Despite all these efforts, the imperial regime proved unwilling to countenance unifying the Afar within a single, autonomous administrative unit. Although traditional authorities were rebuffed, their political aspiration would find new life in the Afar student movement of the 1970s (discussed further below).

It was also during the early 1960s that the imperial government sought to transform the Afar region through the commercial agricultural development of the Awash River Valley. In 1962, the Awash Valley Authority (AVA) was created to manage the area's development and grant leases to foreign investors.¹³ One of the largest of these projects, the Tendaho Plantation Share Company, was planned by the British firm Mitchell Cotts for land located within the Sultanate of Aussa.¹⁴ When demanded by imperial representatives to welcome the British developers, Ali Mirah's response was brash: "I will not give Afar land to the *ferengi*

¹¹ Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 45.

¹² Yasin, 45.

¹³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 138; Lars Bondestam, "People and Capitalism in the North-Eastern Lowlands of Ethiopia," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 12, no. 3 (1974): 427.

¹⁴ Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 336.

(‘foreigners’). You’ll have to take it by force.”¹⁵ Only after a clear warning from an imperial agent the following day did Ali Mirah relent. In addition to foreign companies, the imperial family also acquired agricultural land traditionally controlled by the Afar during this period.¹⁶

The introduction of commercial agriculture in the Awash River Valley was highly detrimental to Afar pastoralists as prime grazing lands were transformed into cotton plantations.¹⁷ As a result of this displacement, Afar herdsmen were forced to either overload remaining grazing areas or encroach on the land of neighboring groups. Access to safe water for their livestock was also limited as these development projects blocked access to the Awash river and contaminated the area’s water with herbicides. Dams further reduced the availability of water and vegetation in the area. Moreover, the Afar pastoralists received no compensation for their losses and were almost entirely excluded from the benefits of commercial agriculture.¹⁸

Kassim Shehim explains,

The major shortcoming of these agricultural concessions, however, was their failure to contribute either to the overall development of the Awash valley or to the social and economic betterment of the pastoralists who lived there. The indigenous people were neither consulted about projects on their land, nor were they educated enough to know how to challenge their lack of participation in decision-making. The very few Afar who were employed by the plantations worked mostly as night watchmen or labourers.¹⁹

In contrast to their herdsmen kin, the agro-pastoralist Afar in the Lower Awash River Valley, “keenly aware of the land’s value and the danger of losing it,” began establishing their own plantations under the leadership of Ali Mirah.²⁰ By 1972, 22% of the land cultivated in the

¹⁵ Quoted in: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 138.

¹⁶ Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 336.

¹⁷ Waal, *Evil Days*, 59; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 138–39; Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 336.

¹⁸ Harbeson, “Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa,” 491; Bondestam, “People and Capitalism in the North-Eastern Lowlands of Ethiopia,” 427.

¹⁹ Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 336.

²⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 138.

Lower Valley was controlled by Afar with Ali Mirah's personal holdings "estimated at nearly 20,000 hectares."²¹ These Afar plantations were often strategically located to block the expansion of the foreign projects.²² For instance, Shehim claims that "Ali Mirah limited the further expansion of the Tendaho Plantation by farming lands around its existing boundaries, and by tacitly encouraging Afar herdsmen to unleash their cattle onto this 'alien' concession."²³ Such actions against foreign encroachers certainly increased Ali Mirah's popularity among the Afar. Ali Mirah's entry into commercial agriculture also made him - and those relatives and Afar chiefs that followed his example - exceedingly rich when, in the early 1970s, the price of cotton doubled.²⁴

But just as the Sultanate of Aussa began enjoying its wealth from the cotton boom, the bulk of Afarland began suffering the devastating effects of the drought and famine of 1973-1974. Of all the populations in Ethiopia, the Afar pastoralists were the hardest hit.²⁵ Some estimate that as much as 30 percent of the Afar population died during the famine.²⁶ Moreover, the bulk of their cattle - the centerpiece of their economy - was lost. While the World Bank funded livestock development programs among the Afar to help revitalize their pastoralist economy, its lack of local knowledge and participation made these programs largely ineffective.²⁷

A final critical development before the revolution was the creation of a loose, tactical alliance between the Afar student movement and traditional authorities. As noted above, the political aspiration of uniting the Afar within Ethiopia, championed in the 1960s by Yasin

²¹ Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 337. See also: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 139.

²² Harbeson, "Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa," 481.

²³ Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 337.

²⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 139.

²⁵ Waal, *Evil Days*, 59.

²⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 140-41.

²⁷ Markakis, 203-5.

Mohamoda, found support among Afar student organizations. On November 2, 1972, the Afar Koborih Angoyya (AKA; ‘Afar Rallying Movement’) was founded by a group of Afar students in Cairo.²⁸ The AKA’s objectives included raising awareness of Afar issues and pursuing autonomy within the Ethiopian state.

While the AKA’s early efforts to garner the support of Afar’s traditional leaders were rejected, perhaps unsurprisingly given AKA’s ideological opposition to traditional authority and landed elites, Ali Mirah warmed to the prospect in early 1974 as the uncertainty of the revolutionary situation increased.²⁹ In a conference held in Berlin from August 13-16, 1974, representatives from the AKA and Afar’s traditional authorities jointly formed the Afar Liberation Front (ALF). Ali Mirah’s sons were prominently featured in the ALF’s leadership: Hanfare Ali Mirah was named chairman, while Ahmed Ali Mirah headed the organization’s military wing.³⁰ For their part, the AKA student leaders were given responsibility over the ALF’s political program and quickly articulated a radical leftist platform “that clearly condemned the Afar nomadic aristocracies, landed tribal chiefs and national bourgeois” which “further widened the resentment between the young AKA members and traditional authorities.”³¹ Nevertheless, the ALF was successfully formed and began sending fighters to Somalia and the ELF for training. Importantly, while the ALF prepared for the possibility - even probability - of rebellion against Ethiopia, it did not yet begin its insurgency. That decision would not be made until months after the Derg seized power.

²⁸ Yasin, “Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea,” 46; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 207.

²⁹ Yasin, “Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea,” 46.

³⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 207.

³¹ Yasin, “Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea,” 47.

6.1.2 *Revolution and Derg Hesitation (1974-April 1975)*

In 1974, the Derg regime progressively consolidated its power by arresting (and executing) imperial officials and other major beneficiaries of the old regime. As a wealthy landowner and *Betwoded* under Haile Selassie's rule, Sultan Ali Mirah should have been a prime target for the Derg's hardline strategy. Indeed, in September 1974, the same month in which the Emperor was deposed, the Derg appears to have attempted to move against Ali Mirah. As communicated to a U.S. embassy official by Kadhafo Ali Mirah, a nephew of the Sultan, the revolutionary regime requested Ali Mirah's presence in Addis Ababa, while simultaneously freezing Afar bank accounts throughout the country.³² In response, Ali Mirah went into hiding, which was corroborated by the French ambassador to Ethiopia who claimed on September 20 that the regime had "badly mishandled" the Sultan, thereby driving him "into dissidence in his area."³³ Meanwhile, Kadhafo and several Afar elders met with representatives of the Derg regime. In this meeting, the Afar representatives threatened violence if the regime sought to take Ali Mirah by force and emphasized that the Sultan was answerable to the Afar people rather than merely an imperial appointee.³⁴ Seemingly concerned about provoking an Afar uprising, the regime officials, at least according to Kadhafo's account, claimed the request for Ali Mirah to present himself before the Derg was an administrative mistake and Afar assets were shortly thereafter released. Conflict between the nascent revolutionary regime and the Afar was thus averted.

³² "Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 11449," September 23, 1974, 1974ADDIS11449, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.

³³ "Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 11366," September 20, 1974, 1974ADDIS11366, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.

³⁴ "Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 11449."

Relations remained tense, however, as evidenced by rumors circulated on October 21 that Ali Mirah and a group of armed supporters had again fled from Asayita, the capital of Aussa, with the Ethiopian army in pursuit.³⁵ But then, only two days later on October 23, 1974, the Ethiopian Herald reported that Ali Mirah had expressed “unconditional support” for the revolutionary Derg in a speech given before regime officials including Major Teferra, the chief administrator of Wollo province, and “thousands of local inhabitants.”³⁶ For their part, the Derg officials speaking at this event praised Ali Mirah as “one of those local leaders who did all he could for the good of his countrymen” and provided reassurance that they had found all negative reports regarding the Sultan to be unfounded.³⁷ The Derg and Ali Mirah, as the recognized representative of the Afar, had thus reached a rapprochement less than two months after the Derg formally seized power.

But Ali Mirah’s support of the revolutionary regime was soon tested as the Derg’s plans for radical land reform became apparent. In general, the 1975 Land Reform had scant effect on Afar pastoralists for good or ill, as it simply recognized their possessory rights to their grazing lands.³⁸ Little changed in their daily practices. However, among the sedentary Afar of the Lower Awash Valley, especially those chiefs that had recently accrued significant wealth from large cotton plantations, land reform represented a serious threat. The landowning Afar tribal chiefs were thus among the most vocal opponents to land reform, with Ali Mirah in particular

³⁵ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 12591,” October 21, 1974, 1974ADDIS12591, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.

³⁶ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 12698,” October 23, 1974, 1974ADDIS12698, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives. See also: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 205.

³⁷ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 12698.”

³⁸ Harbeson, “Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa,” 486, 489; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 94.

“agitat[ing] the Afar against the new land reform.”³⁹ The Sultan of Aussa’s wariness of the Derg also increased as the regime accelerated its purge of leaders with ties to the imperial regime. As a result, Ali Mirah deepened his ties with the AKA: “The execution of 61 imperial ministers and high ranking military officials in November 1974 forced the shocked Sultan to cooperate with the reformist Afar youth.”⁴⁰

Critically, though, while the 1975 Land Reform and the Derg’s violent campaign against old elites brought the regime to the cusp of conflict with the Afar, they were insufficient to trigger armed rebellion during this period. This was because of how these policies were actually implemented among the Afar. For instance, following the Land Reform proclamation on March 4, 1975, the Derg “did not hesitate to confiscate the plantations owned by foreign investors” but did appear “reluctant to alienate the Afar traditional leaders who had grown rich in the cotton boom.”⁴¹ The power and popularity of Ali Mirah among the Afar played a key role in the Derg’s hesitation. As the regime’s initial maneuvers in September 1974 had suggested, a move against the Sultan of Aussa was likely to trigger outrage and rebellion among the Afar generally. Thus while the Derg was “divided over how to treat the Sultan”⁴² given his status as a landed elite that openly opposed land reform, it “declined... to provoke a premature clash with this influential Sultan, and so waited... to explain to him the land reform programmes and their implications for the Afar.”⁴³

While certainly tense, this first period of revolutionary rule was marked by low state intrusion among the Afar. Initial efforts to remove Ali Mirah, let alone other traditional leaders

³⁹ Yasin, “Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea,” 47. See also: Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 94.

⁴⁰ Yasin, “Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea,” 47.

⁴¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 205.

⁴² Harbeson, “Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa,” 485.

⁴³ Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 343.

among the Afar, were quickly aborted and replaced by a tenuous mutual understanding. Ali Mirah voiced his support for the revolutionary regime, even while preparing for the contingency of armed rebellion. Left intact, Ali Mirah and the other Afar chiefs fulfilled the role expected by my theory by providing insulation against the full implementation of the 1975 Land Reform among the Afar. In this case, the implementation of the land reform policy, which would alienate the sedentary Afar - and possibly the pastoral Afar that regarded the Sultan - was not feasible without first moving against Ali Mirah. This the Derg was unwilling to do, at least at this stage, for fear of provoking outrage among the Afar population in a strategically important region. Consequently, the Derg postponed introducing the land reform among the Afar and the Afar-controlled plantations were shielded from confiscation.

6.1.3 Land Reform Implemented and Sultan Threatened (May 1975-March 1976)

But concerns over Ali Mirah's likely response to the enforcement of the 1975 Land Reform would only keep the Derg at bay for a short time, especially once the *zamatcha* reached the Afar. As Markakis notes, the regime's "hand was forced by the *zamatcha* students who were sent to Asayita, the Aussa capital. They brazenly agitated against the Sultan in his own capital, hoping to spark a 'class struggle' among the Afar."⁴⁴

On May 2, 1975, in the hope of selling the Afar on the land reform, the regime in Addis Ababa hosted a delegation of 60 Afar tribal chiefs and notables, including from Aussa.⁴⁵ After a week of discussions with Derg representatives and a tour of the Chilalo agricultural project, the Afar delegates returned home. Reports among the Afar on the results of this delegation to the Derg were mixed. Some claimed that the Derg had actually "agreed to postpone or even abandon

⁴⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 205.

⁴⁵ Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 47.

implementation of land reform measures in the Afar region of Aoussa.”⁴⁶ However, one Afar attendee reported that the Derg was resolute on the issue of land reform and would require the Afar to form peasant associations.⁴⁷

A simultaneous, and broadly reported, belief during May 1975 was that the Derg were determined to replace Ali Mirah with “an Afar puppet relatively loyal to the PMAC.”⁴⁸ Similar to the previous October, rumor spread of an Ethiopian army operation to capture or kill Ali Mirah being aborted at the last moment in late April. Notably, not only did Afar sources expect an attempt to depose Ali Mirah, they also predicted that his replacement would come from the family of the former Sultan Dada Mohammed Yayo, who had been deposed by Emperor Haile Selassie.⁴⁹

It was in this context of *zamatcha* agitation, land reform discussions, and rumors of a move against Ali Mirah, that the Derg issued another invitation for the Sultan to come to Addis Ababa. According to at least one source, the pretext was to ratify an accord wherein Ali Mirah would “have been granted a grace period to enable the Afar to accommodate themselves to the new rural land reform programme and he himself would be given time to convert his landholdings into settlement projects.”⁵⁰ Regardless of the stated reason for the visit, Ali Mirah suspected the true intention was to have him arrested. He declined, by some accounts right

⁴⁶ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 05990,” May 21, 1975, 1975ADDIS05990, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.

⁴⁷ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 05990.”

⁴⁸ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 05990.”

⁴⁹ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 05990.”

⁵⁰ Harbeson, “Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa,” 485.

before boarding an airplane sent by the Derg on May 27.⁵¹ The Sultan then issued an invitation for the regime's representatives to instead come to Asayita for negotiations.⁵²

On May 31, 1975, a group of Derg officials arrived in Asayita and "in the presence of Sultan Ail Mirah... addressed the people about the new land reform bill and the philosophy of 'Ethiopia First'."⁵³ The delegation was not well-received.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the revolutionary government had also dispatched military reinforcements to the area, possibly with the objective of arresting Ali Mirah.⁵⁵ Fearing capture, Ali Mirah fled to Djibouti on the night of June 2.⁵⁶

It is unclear whether Afar attacks on the Derg promptly preceded or followed Ali Mirah's withdrawal. Many accounts detail the onset of rebellion in the immediate wake of the Sultan's flight.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Markakis describes an attack on the *zamatcha* students in Asayita by the Sultan's supporters shortly after Derg officials sought to address a mass meeting - and seemingly prior to Ali Mirah's departure to Djibouti.⁵⁸ Moreover, Markakis argues this attack was the cause of a rapid withdrawal of students and Derg officials from the area.

Either way, the central point remains: the regime's actions triggered an "outpouring of Afar anger at the forced exile of Ali Mirah" with this anger clearly directed at the Ethiopian government and those considered their agents in the community.⁵⁹ This outrage extended beyond

⁵¹ "Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 06459," June 2, 1975, 1975ADDIS06459, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives. See also: Harbeson, "Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa," 485.

⁵² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 205.

⁵³ Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 47.

⁵⁴ By Markakis' account, at some point, the Derg representatives were "prevented by the Sultan's armed guards from addressing a mass meeting." See: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 205.

⁵⁵ Waal, *Evil Days*, 63. See also: Dial Torgerson, "Afar Describe Ethiopia Uprising," *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 1975, 1, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 120, Hoover Institution Archives.

⁵⁶ Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 47.

⁵⁷ For examples, see: Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 343; Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 47; Waal, *Evil Days*, 63.

⁵⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 205.

⁵⁹ Harbeson, "Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa," 490.

those Afar who would be directly disadvantaged by the soon-to-be-implemented land reform. Harbeson argues that the move against the Sultan also “at least partially neutralized Afar support for the PMG that the land reform proclamation by itself might have generated.”⁶⁰

The initial rebellion by the Afar appears to have been a mixture of organized rebel attacks by the Afar Liberation Front (ALF) and a general uprising among the Afar. Around 1am on June 3, the ALF mounted a set of coordinated attacks on Ethiopian troops and militia in several towns and villages in the area.⁶¹ Describing these attacks, Hanfare Ali Mirah, chairman of the ALF, said, “We set 1 a.m. June 3 as zero hour all over the Afar country... They did not know there was an ALF until the shooting started.”⁶² These attacks killed not only Ethiopian troops but also student campaigners staying in their camps. That same day, the ALF also destroyed a bridge on the Assab road.⁶³ During this early period of the armed conflict, Afar rebels also attacked the state-controlled cotton plantations (confiscated earlier from foreign investors). Most notably at Tendaho, Afar rebels burned the plantation and massacred non-Afar civilian laborers, especially Amhara.⁶⁴ Finally, Afar fighters launched attacks on the highway that connected the highlands to the port of Assab, effectively closing it in the short term. Their operations along this highway remained sufficiently disruptive that the government had to implement petrol rationing.⁶⁵

The revolutionary government responded to the Afar rebellion in several ways. First, it engaged in a violent campaign to suppress the revolt. With “the opposition... sustained by local

⁶⁰ Harbeson, 490.

⁶¹ Torgerson, “Afars Describe Ethiopia Uprising,” 1. See also: Waal, *Evil Days*, 63.

⁶² Quoted in Torgerson, “Afars Describe Ethiopia Uprising,” 1.

⁶³ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 06554,” June 3, 1975, 1975ADDIS06554, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.

⁶⁴ Waal, *Evil Days*, 63; Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 343.

⁶⁵ Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 343.

petty chiefs and the Afar people of the area in general,” the Derg was “forced to use heavy artillery, armoured cars and tanks” in order to establish control over the region.⁶⁶ Ethiopian troops suffered relatively heavy casualties, but were able to assert the central government’s authority over the Lower Awash Valley and the highway to Assab, though passage still required armed escort.⁶⁷ Beginning in the Aussa capital of Asayita on June 3, the Derg also carried out violent reprisals against Afar civilians.⁶⁸ Over the next six weeks, the indiscriminate killing of Afar civilians spread to the towns, villages, plantations, and encampments throughout the region. It is estimated that there were more than 1,000 - and possibly up to 4,000 - civilian casualties during this period.⁶⁹ Highlighting the Derg’s desperation to suppress the revolt, Ahmed Hassan Omer reports that “the Derg officials in the region considered poisoning water wells in the region, but were stopped by the central government itself.”⁷⁰

Second, the Derg sought to delegitimize Ali Mirah while empowering an Afar client that would be loyal to - and dependent upon - the revolutionary state. For instance, when announcing the Sultan’s flight, the Radio Ethiopia broadcast on June 5 emphasized Ali Mirah’s close ties with Emperor Haile Selassie, as well as his status as a wealthy, large landowner. It further presented the fighting as “between Ali Mirah’s supporters and the Afar masses” in the context of the Sultan’s lands being redistributed.⁷¹ While attempting to cast a poor light on Ali Mirah and his close supporters, the revolutionary government simultaneously “enlisted the help of the

⁶⁶ Omer, “Close yet Far: Northern Shewa under the Derg,” 82.

⁶⁷ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 07025,” June 13, 1975, 1975ADDIS07025, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.

⁶⁸ Waal, *Evil Days*, 11, 63–64; Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 343.

⁶⁹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 63–64.

⁷⁰ Omer, “Close yet Far: Northern Shewa under the Derg,” 82.

⁷¹ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 06725,” June 6, 1975, 1975ADDIS06725, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.

children of the Sultan whom Ali Mirah had replaced, and who were living in exile in Addis Ababa, to go to Awsa and calm the situation there.”⁷² In particular, Habib Mohammed Yayo, the son of the former Sultan Dada Mohammed Yayo, eagerly collaborated with the Derg by heading a local militia, which was provided arms by the government to fight against the ALF.⁷³

Third, the Derg began to implement its revolutionary policies among the Afar, especially in the Awash River Valley. In accordance with the 1975 Land Reform proclamation, the commercial cotton plantations of foreign investors were seized by the government and turned into state farms. In contrast, the landholdings of Ali Mirah and the other Afar chiefs were “parcelled among their clansmen in plots of 2.5ha per family.”⁷⁴ This reallocation of land was part of a larger settlement program to transform Afar pastoralists into sedentary farmers. However, despite heavy state investment and subsidies, these settlement farms largely failed. The top-down implementation of the project seems to have been a major reason. As Markakis finds, “The settlement farms were run by appointed managers with minimal settler participation. Many settlers worked only part time in their farms and others hired highlanders to work for them.”⁷⁵

Notwithstanding the Derg’s efforts to violently suppress the revolt, empower alternative Afar leadership, and integrate the population into revolutionary programs, the rebellion waged by the Afar Liberation Front persisted, albeit in the form of guerrilla warfare. Indeed, insurgent attacks on the Assab road were frequent and damaging enough that 3,000 Ethiopian troops were

⁷² Shehim, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities,” 343.

⁷³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 207; Waal, *Evil Days*, 64.

⁷⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 206.

⁷⁵ Markakis, 206.

needed to secure it.⁷⁶ Moreover, members of the ALF and AKA that had been trained in Somalia began infiltrating into Afarland in the ensuing months, adding strength to the insurgency.⁷⁷

This period thus witnessed the rapid deterioration of relations between the revolutionary Derg and the Afar leading to a major peripheral rebellion. Certainly, the triggering event of this rebellion was the regime's long-feared attempt to arrest Sultan Ali Mirah and his subsequent flight to Djibouti. That is, the level of state intrusion shifted to high in this period as the arrival of Derg officials in Aussa with military troops was clearly interpreted as a move against Ali Mirah. As expected, the regime then turned to a local rival, Habib Mohammed Yayo, the son of the previous Sultan, as its new agent. As a beneficiary of the regime, which provided him with arms and a position of power, Habib Yayo proved loyal to the Derg. Moreover, with Ali Mirah no longer able to insulate the Afar from revolutionary change, the Derg's land reform and settlement programs were promptly implemented - with little reward for the Afar.

In terms of peripheral polarization, the measurement sits somewhere between medium and high. On the one hand, taken in isolation the 1975 Land Reform split the Afar population between pastoralists, that benefitted from government recognition of their possessory rights to grazing lands, and agriculturalists, that were disadvantaged by the risk of confiscation of their lands - especially those controlling large holdings in the Lower Awash River Valley. This would suggest a medium level of polarization. On the other hand, when this is combined with Ali Mirah's forced departure and the expansion of state farms with a large Amhara workforce, the level of alienation among the Afar appears to be much higher. The Derg's ensuing actions only

⁷⁶ David Hamilton, "Ethiopia's Embattled Revolutionaries," *Conflict Studies* (Institute for the Study of Conflict, April 1977), 16, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 120, Hoover Institution Archives; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 74.

⁷⁷ Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 47-48; Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 343.

deepen the level of polarization. Habib Mohammed Yayo and other members of the previous Sultan's families become the main local beneficiaries of regime in exchange for their collaboration. Meanwhile, the settlement program produces a general malaise among Afar pastoralists pressured into cultivation with minimum input over decision-making.⁷⁸

Importantly, then, although Sultan Ali Mirah's flight from Aussa sparked the conflict, the alienation of the Afar toward the regime was not simply reducible to it. The policies the revolutionary regime had and was anticipated to introduce among the Afar were also crucial. This is illustrated, in part, by the fact that the Afar revolt was also directed against the *zamatcha* students seeking to facilitate land reform and Amhara laborers on state farms in the area. Harbeson's discussion is particularly illuminating on this point:

But the combination of the rural land reform proclamation's provision for semi-nomadic possessory rights and the PMG's subsequent forcing of the Sultan into exile drove a wedge between the pastoral and the sedentary Afar... The outpouring of Afar anger at the forced exile of Ali Mira may not unambiguously reflect his political strength on the lower plains. The rampage against the highland cultivators and the Tendaho Plantation may have reflected anger at the Ethiopian government more than support for Ali Mira. But it is certain that the action at least partially neutralized Afar support for the PMG that the land reform proclamation by itself might have generated... The case of the Afar thus presented another example of the Ethiopian revolution's primary political paradox: the alienation of those groups that in principle should be most in support of the PMG's declared objectives.⁷⁹

Finally, the manner in which the Derg implemented their policies produced an acute, unifying threat that enabled coordination both horizontally and vertically. Most obviously, the forced exile of Ali Mirah was an abrupt outrage-inducing event that rapidly provoked an uprising among the Afar. Interestingly enough, the warnings of Afar representatives to the Derg, made as early as September 1974, that an attempt to arrest the Sultan would result in an Afar uprising

⁷⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 206.

⁷⁹ Harbeson, "Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa," 489–90.

were borne out. While the rebellion included an organized rebel core, the ALF, the immediate wave of violence appears to have been a more general Afar revolt. Additionally, in the short run the ALF enjoyed popular support among the Afar population. The threat embodied by the Derg's policies also cut across class boundaries. Specifically, concerns over the further loss of Afar autonomy as the Derg's official and military presence in the area increased and the Afar's semi-autonomous intermediary was driven out helped stabilize an alliance between the traditionalists and the reformist students, but only temporarily.

6.1.4 Offering Autonomy to Undercut Rebellion (April 1976-1991)

Less than a year after beginning their rebellion against the Derg, the coalition between the Afar students and the traditional leaders began to deteriorate due to disagreements over leadership and tactics.⁸⁰ The Derg became aware of this factionalism within the ALF in 1976 when, during an operation led by Habib Mohammed Yayo, documents were found identifying a radical AKA segment of the Afar rebels.⁸¹ Shortly thereafter, the regime made contact with this AKA group and began negotiations with their leaders. Through discussions in Addis Ababa, as well as the government's announcement of the National Democratic Revolution in April 1976, this faction was convinced that the Derg was sincere in its promises of regional autonomy for the Afar.⁸² Accordingly, this group formed the Afar National Liberation Movement (ANLM), "the only ethnically based political organisation tolerated at the time," and came out in support of the Derg regime.⁸³

⁸⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 207.

⁸¹ Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 48.

⁸² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 207–8; Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 344–45.

⁸³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 208.

The Derg took some steps toward administrative unification and autonomy for the Afar, even if short of the aspirations held by the ANLM and the general population. In April 1977, the Derg held a conference at Gewane with the ANLM and other Afar representatives.⁸⁴ Similar to the petitions made under the leadership of Yasin Mohamoda to the imperial regime, the Afar attendees called for the creation of an autonomous region incorporating all Afar areas within Ethiopia.⁸⁵ The government provided their reassurances. In May 1978, as a partial fulfillment of its promises, the Derg created an autonomous Assab region - encompassing most of the Afar population - and a separate Aussa district.⁸⁶ The ANLM were divided over the acceptability of this administrative arrangement and, in 1979, a splinter group went into dissidence, though it seems to have quickly descended into banditry.⁸⁷

Even so, most of the ANLM remained loyal to the government and became the Derg's local agents among the Afar. Kassim Shehim outlines their role in the administration and the result:

Since the Gewane congress, the administrators of Afarland at the district level have been mainly young members of the A.N.L.M. So also is the newly promoted governor of Assab, Muhammed Ahmed Shehim, while Habib Yayo, the son of a former Sultan, is in charge of Awsa. The installation of the Afar in such important positions has helped the Government to maintain peace and order, and has secured, to some extent, the safety of the road from Assab to Addis Ababa, along which moves most of Ethiopia's import/export trade. Because of the collaboration of the A.N.L.M. with the *Dergue*, the A.L.F.'s military activity became ineffective, and the Front as a whole has become increasingly weak.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 345; Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 49.

⁸⁵ Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 345; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 74.

⁸⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 208.

⁸⁷ Yasin, "Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 52.

⁸⁸ Shehim, "Ethiopia, Revolution, and the Question of Nationalities," 346.

Thus, in this case, the revolutionary government was able to undercut the rebellion through promises of regional autonomy and the effective use of local collaborators.

6.2 Tigray

Tigray is located in the northern highlands of Ethiopia. Prior to the revolution, the Tigrayans were predominantly smallholders, many of whom also hired out as farm laborers as a means of supplementing their income. There were some large landowners in the western part of the region. These large estates were an important source of employment for farm laborers. Tigray enjoyed a measure of political autonomy and was governed by Ras Mengesha, an ethnic Tigrayan.

When the Derg began imprisoning and executing old regime leaders, Ras Mengesha fled to Sudan. In Tigray, the 1975 Land Reform primarily sparked suspicion among smallholders wary of losing ownership of their land. The exception was among the large landowners of the west, where the land reform represented an outright threat. Critical for stoking broad resentment towards the regime was the Derg's prohibition on hiring farm labor, which eliminated a major source of income for Tigrayan peasants. The domination of peasant associations by Derg supporters and the regime's agrarian policies, especially its monopoly on purchasing agricultural surpluses, further deepened localized disaffection.

Peasant disaffection was channeled into elite-led organizations. Teranafit, which later transformed into the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), formed under the leadership of the former nobility whose large estates were threatened by land reform. Initially, thousands of peasants in western Tigray, aggrieved by the Derg's prohibition of hiring farm labor, joined Teranafit. The student-led Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) also drew on peasant

grievances but combined these with an ethnonationalist platform and social policies. The TPLF presented the Derg regime as a continuation of Amhara domination of the Tigray and other ethnic groups in Ethiopia and demanded self-determination. As peasant disaffection grew, so did the TPLF, which ultimately organized and led the EPRDF in overthrowing the Derg and seizing control of the country.

Table 6.2: Variable Values and Predictions in Tigray Case

Time	State Intrusion	Peripheral Polarization	Cross-Cutting Threat	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
1974 – Feb. 1975	Medium or High	Medium	Absent	No Rebellion	No Rebellion (though TLF and TPLF form in this period)
Mar. 1975 – 1977	Medium or High	Medium or High	Vertical	Rebellion Possible	Rebellion (Teranafit/EDU; TPLF but small peasant support)
1978 – 1983	High	High	Vertical and Horizontal	Rebellion	Rebellion (TPLF with heavy peasant support)

6.2.1 Before the Revolution

Occupying the northern section of the highland core, Tigray - the province in which the ethnic group of the same name primarily resides - is largely a land of subsistence agriculture. As John Young notes, “With approximately 3.1 million people, Tigray possesses about 5 per cent of Ethiopia’s population, has no industrial base or valuable exports, and its overwhelming population of peasants had the highest percentage of landholders in imperial Ethiopia.”⁸⁹ In fact,

⁸⁹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 16.

private landholdings constituted over three-quarters of the total landholdings in the province.⁹⁰ However, these peasant landholdings tended to be meager: “close to one-half were less than half a hectare and two-thirds less than one hectare.”⁹¹ On average, households in Tigray cultivated only 1.02 hectares.⁹² With such small plot sizes, Tigrayan peasants focused on subsistence crops such as sorghum, maize, lentils, and *teff*.⁹³

Thus, while land alienation and surplus appropriation were major peasant issues in the highland periphery during the imperial era, the main problem in Tigray was miniscule holdings because of land subdivision and fragmentation. Tigray’s traditional *risti* land tenure system was a primary cause. Aregawi Berhe explains why:

...every Tigraian was entitled to a piece of land by virtue of his/her descent from a common ancestor. *Risti* landholders had the right to pass on their land to their offspring. This land-holding system led to endless fragmentation of the land in northern Ethiopia, and the subsequent division and redistribution of land among heirs led to complex land disputes (cf. Bauer 1985). Parcels of land became smaller and more spread out and land became fragmented to the point that it decreased in productivity because of its size and scattered position.⁹⁴

In consequence, Tigrayan households held, on average, 3.5 distinct, often dispersed, parcels of land.⁹⁵

While land consolidation or resettlement presented potential solutions to this landholding system that was “barely sufficient to maintain the population at subsistence level,”⁹⁶ the majority of Tigrayan peasants were found to be opposed to such measures.⁹⁷ For one, the cultivation of

⁹⁰ Young, 67.

⁹¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 188.

⁹² Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 67.

⁹³ Young, 67.

⁹⁴ Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 231.

⁹⁵ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 69.

⁹⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 188.

⁹⁷ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 69.

multiple holdings, especially with different crops, was used as a way to mitigate the risk of crop failure or destruction. At least as importantly, peasants tended to feel strong attachment to their inherited lands and a commitment to this traditional system of landholding.⁹⁸ There was also very little external pressure to introduce commercial agriculture in Tigray's highlands, due not only to the *risti* system, but also to the poor soil quality which "precluded the production of plantation cash crops."⁹⁹

Instead of resettling or consolidating their land, Tigray's peasantry increasingly resorted to working as seasonal agricultural laborers on commercial farms to survive.¹⁰⁰ Thousands found employment in the lowlands of western Tigray, where members of the nobility had established large estates to grow cash crops and surplus food for export.¹⁰¹ Crucially, even though engaged in seasonal wage labor, most of these peasants maintained ownership over their *risti* lands. Tigrayan peasants also rented out parcels of land as a survival strategy. Curiously, in this case, the relative power of landlords was quite different from that of the semi-feudal highland periphery. Young explains, "...those who assumed the role of landlords were often poor peasants who did not have the necessary oxen to plough their land and were forced to rent it to rich peasants who had oxen. As a result, wealth was normally defined in terms of possession of capital, largely in the form of oxen and other animals, and not land."¹⁰² In short, the relationship of the Tigrayan peasantry to land was far different from other parts of Ethiopia.

⁹⁸ Young, 69.

⁹⁹ Young, 22. See also: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 188.

¹⁰⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 188; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 21–22.

¹⁰¹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 68.

¹⁰² Young, 20.

There is no denying, however, that Tigray was “desperately poor” under Emperor Haile Selassie’s rule.¹⁰³ Tigrayans viewed their province’s poverty as more than the product of land fractionalization, overpopulation, and ecological degradation.¹⁰⁴ Rather, the willful neglect and outright discrimination of the Amhara-dominated imperial state were considered the main culprits. Jenny Hammond writes, “Tigrayans... have seen themselves as resisting a determined and deliberate discriminatory process which left them in the last years of Haile Selassie the poorest and least developed province in Ethiopia.”¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Markakis notes, “Tigray was, by any measure, the most neglected and poverty stricken province in the Abyssinian homeland... there was scarcely any investment for economic development in the north under the imperial regime, and none at all in Tigray...”¹⁰⁶ Unsurprisingly, then, the Tigrayan population harbors an “historic sense of grievance against Amhara rule.”¹⁰⁷

In fact, tensions between Tigray and the imperial state escalated into the Woyene rebellion not long after Haile Selassie’s return following Italian occupation.¹⁰⁸ During the occupation, some of the Tigrayan nobles had supported the Italians. Even the general population in Tigray was fairly quiescent as the Italians reduced their tax burden and improved their infrastructure.¹⁰⁹ Once back in power, Haile Selassie moved quickly to reestablish his authority and placed the administration of Tigray predominantly in the hands of Shoan Amhara

¹⁰³ Young, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Tigray was one of the provinces worst effected by famine, including the 1972-1974 famine that preceded the revolution. See: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 188; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 56, 72.

¹⁰⁵ Jenny Hammond, “Garrison Towns & the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray,” in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, ed. Wendy James et al. (Oxford, England : Addis Ababa : Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 90.

¹⁰⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 188.

¹⁰⁷ Markakis, 188.

¹⁰⁸ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 50–53; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 113–15; Kjetil Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia: Making Enemies & Allies in the Horn of Africa* (James Currey, 2009), 45–46.

¹⁰⁹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 50.

governors.¹¹⁰ The imperial government further “insisted that taxes be paid in cash and not in kind,” which, as Young points out, was “a severe imposition given the subsistence character of most Tigrayan agriculture.”¹¹¹ The new administrators and tax collectors quickly proved themselves corrupt.

In response, peasants in eastern Tigray, as well as several Tigrayan nobles, rose up in rebellion in May 1943. Though the rebels were initially successful in seizing control of Mekelle, the provincial capital, and the bulk of eastern Tigray, they were ultimately overwhelmed by the Ethiopian ground forces and air power.¹¹² By October, the Ethiopian government declared victory. In its wake, the government conducted a severe pacification campaign with a lasting impact on the Tigrayan population. As argued by Kjetil Tronvoll, “The punishments in extra taxation, confiscation of land, and general acts of violence were so severe and barbaric that they left a residue of bitterness and hostility towards the central authorities among the Tigrayan peasants.”¹¹³

In the decades following the defeat of the Woyene rebellion, Tigray was subjected to Amhara domination, including the imperial regime’s policy of assimilation. Amharization took hold first in the towns, where Amharigna became “the language of government, the courts, church officialdom and, crucially, the schools, institutions which were predominantly located in the towns.”¹¹⁴ Essential for advancement in education and employment outside Tigray, Amharigna became the first language for many educated Tigrayans. Even then, Tigrayan students were at a distinct disadvantage to their Shoan Amhara counterparts. For instance, in

¹¹⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 115.

¹¹¹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 50–51.

¹¹² Young, 52.

¹¹³ Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, 46.

¹¹⁴ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 75.

speaking of Tigray, Markakis finds that “only 2% of those who qualified for entry to the University in 1963-8 came from that province, while 65% came from Shoa (including Addis Ababa). Those who reached the top of the education ladder were pessimistic about their future prospects in the service of a state where three-quarters of the senior officials were Shoa...”¹¹⁵

While the peasantry did not face the same direct competition with the Amhara as experienced by Tigrayan students, they were still exposed to “Amhara supremacy... through contact with police, court officials, tax collectors, church dignitaries, and governors, few of whom were Amhara, but most of whom spoke the official language of the state, Amharigna, in their dealings with them.”¹¹⁶ This linguistic domination accordingly became a central source of resentment common among the population in Tigray and a motivating factor for Tigrayan ethnonationalism.¹¹⁷

It must be acknowledged, however, that Amhara domination was not absolute. In fact, Tigray was “the only province able to maintain a measure of political autonomy and be ruled by members of its own nobility prior to the revolution of 1974.”¹¹⁸ For instance, Ras Mengesha Seyoum, a nobleman and ethnic Tigrayan, became governor-general in 1961.¹¹⁹ In terms of political autonomy, one of the greatest concessions was the replacement of the land tax with a tribute system wherein “Tigrayans themselves decided who paid and how much they paid as long as they met the overall demands of the central government.”¹²⁰ While this autonomy was far

¹¹⁵ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 188.

¹¹⁶ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 31.

¹¹⁷ Aregawi Berhe, “The Origins of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front,” *African Affairs* 103, no. 413 (October 1, 2004): 573, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adh024>.

¹¹⁸ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 30.

¹¹⁹ Young, 71.

¹²⁰ Young, 52.

from their aspirations, it was better than nothing. Its loss could only strengthen resentment toward the central state.

6.2.2 *Revolution and Fear of Amhara Domination (1974-February 1975)*

Imperial rule in Tigray had left a “legacy of national self-consciousness built on the widely held perception of Tigray’s destitution and under-development within an Ethiopia dominated by Shoan Amharas.”¹²¹ The collapse of Haile Selassie’s regime in 1974 brought with it the hope that a new government would prove sensitive to Tigrayan issues and end the era of Amhara domination. However, the consolidation of power by the military regime and ensuing events would instead produce confusion, apprehension, and disappointment among the population of Tigray.¹²² In this initial period, two Derg policies produced great concern within Tigray: 1) the targeting of Tigray’s traditional authorities and 2) the promotion of *Ethiopia Tikdem*.

Even before formally seizing control on September 12, 1974, the Derg had already begun a campaign of arresting high-ranking government officials and traditional leaders considered representative of the feudal order as a means of shoring up its revolutionary credibility and undermining alternative structures of authority.¹²³ In Tigray, however, the Derg’s efforts to destroy the old order were met with fear and opposition not only from traditional elites, but also from the petit bourgeoisie and peasantry.¹²⁴ The common concern was that the loss of Tigrayan authorities would remove the group’s last defense against even greater Amhara domination. As

¹²¹ Young, 90–91.

¹²² Berhe, “The Origins of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front,” 575, 583.

¹²³ Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 103; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 28–29.

¹²⁴ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 36–37.

Young notes, “With their traditional leadership eliminated, Tigrayan peasants feared they would have no one to protect them from the new Amhara elite which they were convinced had taken over the government.”¹²⁵

The Derg was not ignorant of this concern and for a time hesitated to move against Ras Mengesha Seyoum, the ethnically Tigrayan governor of the province. As with Sultan Ali Mirah among the Afar, the regime’s initial moves against this traditional leader were quickly aborted for fear of triggering a popular uprising.¹²⁶ For instance, there were reports in July 1974 that army representatives had come to arrest Ras Mengesha at this estate only to be turned away by armed peasants warning that his arrest would trigger active Tigrayan dissidence.¹²⁷ During this same period, a delegation of Tigrayan notables is reported to have issued a similar warning to the central government.¹²⁸ That the Derg regime took such warnings seriously is made apparent in the writings of the former Derg official, Dawit Wolde Giorgis: “The sensitive situation in Tigray was evident in the early period of the Revolution when the Military Council hesitated to arrest Ras Mengesha Seyoum... Everyone advised against it, saying that all of Tigray would revolt if he were jailed. Though most of his family and other aristocrats were arrested, he remained Governor up to the time he began his resistance movement.”¹²⁹

But the trepidation of the revolutionary regime did not last long. After deposing the emperor in September, the Derg set its sights again on the governor of Tigray. In early October,

¹²⁵ Young, 29.

¹²⁶ Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 103.

¹²⁷ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 08351,” July 17, 1974, 1974ADDIS08351, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.

¹²⁸ “Embassy Addis Ababa to Department of State, Telegram 08351.”

¹²⁹ Giorgis, *Red Tears*, 115–16.

the PMAC broadcast an ultimatum to Ras Mengesha via Radio Ethiopia.¹³⁰ Accused of corruption and abandoning his post, Ras Mengsha was ordered to surrender himself to the government by October 11 or risk arrest and the nationalization of his property. In the same broadcast, a replacement administrator was also named. When the deadline passed, the Derg followed through on its threat by confiscating his property, but Ras Mengesha was already long gone.¹³¹

Having slipped away to neighboring Sudan, Ras Mengesha sought to organize a conservative ethnic insurgency in the form of the Tigray Liberation Front (TLF) in late 1974.¹³² However, while the Tigrayan peasantry were “shocked at the brutality of the Derg’s murder of leading members of the old regime and... generally sympathetic to the plight of Ras Mengesha who fled to Sudan,” this did not lead to a Tigrayan uprising as threatened by the governor’s supporters and feared by Derg officials.¹³³ Ras Mengesha’s TLF only acquired a small following largely confined to western Tigray where there was greater support for Tigray’s traditional nobility.¹³⁴ When the TLF announced itself in early December 1974, it claimed a force of around 600.¹³⁵ Yet already by late December, one journalists observed that, besides some unconfirmed reports of ambushes on army trucks, “there had been little other sign of life from the so-called

¹³⁰ “MILITARY ORDERS TIGRE EX-GOVERNOR TO SURRENDER,” *Addis Ababa Domestic Service*, October 9, 1974, Volume: FBIS-SSA-74-136, DAILY REPORT. Sub-Saharan Africa, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 131, Hoover Institution Archives.

¹³¹ “MILITARY ISSUES ULTIMATUM TO STUDENTS, TEACHERS,” *Paris AFP*, October 28, 1974, Volume: FBIS-SSA-74-148, DAILY REPORT. Sub-Saharan Africa, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 131, Hoover Institution Archives; Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 103.

¹³² Colin Legum, “The Neighbors Want No Part Of Ethiopia’s Revolution,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1974, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 120, Hoover Institution Archives; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 205.

¹³³ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 93.

¹³⁴ Young, 65.

¹³⁵ “FORMER PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR FORMS GUERRILLA MOVEMENT,” *London REUTERS*, December 3, 1974, Volume: FBIS-SSA-74-173, DAILY REPORT. Sub-Saharan Africa, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 131, Hoover Institution Archives.

Tigrean Liberation Front...”¹³⁶ Indeed, the TLF failed to ever reach the threshold of armed conflict with the Ethiopian government.

The other Derg policy that triggered concern among the Tigrayans during this period was the ambiguous, but uncompromising, motto of *Ethiopia Tikdem* (“Ethiopia First”). Viewing their economic and social issues primarily as products of Amharization and other elements of Amhara domination, Tigrayans generally considered a higher degree of self-determination as the solution to their problems. For example, Aregawi Berhe argues, “Almost every Tigrayan, even the feudal lords and the clergy, who might have to lose some of their privileges after the revolutionary struggle, seemed to approve of the call for self-determination...”¹³⁷ Along similar lines, Young quotes one peasant as asserting, “only Tigrayans could solve Tigrayan problems.”¹³⁸

The Derg, on the other hand, treated calls for self-determination as endangering the territorial integrity of the Ethiopian state. The notion of putting the Ethiopian nation above ethnic and regional divisions, encapsulated in *Ethiopia Tikdem*, was therefore not only championed but enforced.¹³⁹ As had its imperial predecessor, the revolutionary government “offered brutality in response to manifestations of national opposition” and calls for self-determination, and thus, “from the Tigrayan perspective,... did not represent a meaningful evolution from the Showan-Amhara ruling group that had dominated Ethiopian politics for so long.”¹⁴⁰ Importantly, though,

¹³⁶ David B. Ottaway, “Eritrean Towns Attacked,” *Washington Post*, December 24, 1974, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 120, Hoover Institution Archives.

¹³⁷ Berhe, “The Origins of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front,” 584.

¹³⁸ Quoted in: Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 117.

¹³⁹ Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 92–93.

¹⁴⁰ Ian S. Spears, *Civil War in African States: The Search for Security* (FirstForumPress, 2010), 63. See also: Berhe, “The Origins of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front,” 574.

the regime's intolerance of demands for self-determination, while cause for discontent in Tigray, was insufficient to motivate rebellion among the Tigrayan peasantry.

The final development during this first period, which in hindsight would prove the most important, was the formation of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) by a small group of Tigrayan university students. The sting of Amharization under the imperial regime had been keenly felt by Tigray's petit bourgeoisie that had struggled to secure opportunities for education and employment in a system that privileged Amhara, especially those from the province of Shoa.¹⁴¹ So, while the Ethiopian student movement in general called for class struggle to address their dissatisfaction with the Ethiopian state and their role within it, Tigrayan students considered ethnonational liberation from Amhara domination a critical prerequisite.¹⁴² A first step toward ethnonational mobilization was the creation of the Tigrayan University Students' Association (TUSA) in 1971 and the subsequent articulation of Tigrayan issues in pamphlets such as "Grievances of the Tigray People" and "*E tek*" ("To Arms").¹⁴³

Only days after the Derg formally assumed power, a group of seven TUSA members took the next step toward mobilization by forming the Tigrayan National Organization (TNO) on September 14, 1974.¹⁴⁴ In this meeting, the TNO's founders resolved that the self-determination of Tigray would have to be achieved through armed struggle against the Derg and that the TNO's purpose was to prepare for such an armed struggle. The TNO wasted no time doing just that. After only a few months of recruiting and organizing cells in Tigrayan towns, the TNO sent one squad of members to the EPLF for training and another to the Dedebit in western Tigray to begin

¹⁴¹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 74–75.

¹⁴² Young, 83; Spears, *Civil War in African States*, 64.

¹⁴³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 189; Berhe, "The Origins of the Tigray People's Liberation Front," 577; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 83.

¹⁴⁴ Berhe, "The Origins of the Tigray People's Liberation Front," 578–79.

the armed struggle.¹⁴⁵ On February 18, 1975, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is officially established as a rebel group.¹⁴⁶

There are a few likely reasons for the political TNO's rapid - and arguably rushed - transformation into the militant TPLF. First, the revolutionary regime's malign intentions towards Tigray were almost immediately apparent due to its intolerance of ethnonationalist movements¹⁴⁷ and, specifically, its "execution of Tigrayan student leader Meles Teckle in late 1974."¹⁴⁸ Second, the mobilization for rebellion was expedited in order to preempt rival groups with whom the TPLF might have to compete for support as well as political and physical space.¹⁴⁹ A final consideration was the perceived weakness and preoccupation of the Derg regime before its consolidation.¹⁵⁰ Critically, though, while all of these factors helped motivate this small group of Tigrayan students to mobilize for rebellion, they did not similarly trigger rebellion among the Tigrayans generally - nor were Tigrayan peasants attracted to the TPLF upon its declaration to any significant degree.

Instead, the TPLF's beginnings as a rebel group have been accurately described as "inauspicious and largely ignored."¹⁵¹ Indeed, Dedebit was chosen as the starting point for the insurgency in large part due to its isolation from the state. Even then, the student rebels struggled to be treated seriously by the local Tigrayan elders who would take to "mocking them with

¹⁴⁵ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 85–86; Berhe, "The Origins of the Tigray People's Liberation Front," 586.

¹⁴⁶ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 87.

¹⁴⁷ Berhe, "The Origins of the Tigray People's Liberation Front," 588. See also: "Tigray: Document to the 39th Session of the United Nations General Assembly" (The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), September 1984), 2, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 116, Hoover Institution Archives.

¹⁴⁸ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 86.

¹⁴⁹ Berhe, "The Origins of the Tigray People's Liberation Front," 587; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 86–87.

¹⁵⁰ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 87.

¹⁵¹ Young, 16.

remarks like... ‘they will go back to their mothers tomorrow.’”¹⁵² Reminiscing on this period, one of the TPLF’s founding members, Aregawi Berhe, admits that the organization would have struggled to survive and grow in the area without the support of the revered - and much older - Tigrayan nationalist, Ayele Gessesse, more popularly known as Sihule: “Dedebit, in the remote hills of western Tigray, was selected as the place to start the armed struggle because Sihule had prior knowledge of the area and, more importantly, he had the respect of the people living in the villages adjacent to this terrain... From the start, Sihule gave the TPLF the legitimacy and popularity that none of its other members could provide.”¹⁵³

But the TPLF leaders recognized that a successful insurgency would require not only Sihule’s backing, but also the active support and participation of the Tigrayan peasantry. Turning the “strategic importance of the rural people” into a “political reality” would prove to be a long process only achieved after the Derg had sown seeds of resentment through its own policies.¹⁵⁴ During this first period, though, the TPLF neither reached the threshold of an armed conflict, nor could it boast any meaningful level of popular participation.

In summary, the first several months of Derg rule led to the emergence of Tigrayan opposition movements in the form of the TLF and the TPLF. However, both organizations enjoyed only a modest following and neither met the threshold of armed conflict during this period. Why did major peripheral rebellion fail to materialize during this period?

The degree of state intrusion during this first period certainly brings peripheral rebellion into the realm of possibility. Most notably, the revolutionary government sought to arrest Ras

¹⁵² Berhe, “The Origins of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front,” 589.

¹⁵³ Berhe, 590–91.

¹⁵⁴ Hammond, “Garrison Towns & the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray,” 93.

Mengesha Seyoum, an ethnic Tigrayan that acted as an intermediary for the Ethiopian state in his position as the governor of the province of Tigray. During imperial rule, Ras Mengesha had enjoyed a measure of autonomy in this position, so his forced exile represented a coercive shift to direct rule - at least at the provincial level - and thus a high level of state intrusion. As expected by my theorized mechanism, Ras Mengesha's departure sparked fears of a loss of insulation from central government policies, specifically an increase in Amhara domination. Importantly, though, during this stage the regime primarily targeted high-level authorities. It can safely be assumed that many local authorities were left intact, especially since state presence in the province was uneven. Even so, I characterize the level of state intrusion as between medium and high due to the general importance among Tigrayans of having a governor of their own ethnicity.

The level of polarization also made peripheral rebellion possible but far from certain during this period. While the targeting of feudal lords during this period benefitted some during this period, most of Tigray was unaffected by this policy because feudalism was negligible in a region where most of the rural population were small landowners. The regime's platform of *Ethiopia Tikdem*, on the other hand, had the potential to generally alienate the Tigrayan population. However, while it did produce apprehension, it was poorly defined during the period and its actual impact on the daily lives of Tigrayans unclear. Consequently, while disoriented and concerned, the bulk of the Tigrayan population was not deeply alienated by the regime during this period.

Finally, and most crucially for explaining the absence of rebellion, there was no acute, unifying threat during these first several months of Derg rule. The forced exile of Ras Mengesha did not produce general outrage among the Tigrayans like Ali Mirah's flight did among the Afar.

Ras Mengesha was nowhere near as popular and it was not yet clear what specific policies his absence would allow the Derg to unleash. In terms of opposition movements, there was no threatening policy to unite the peasantry with the elite-led TLF and TPLF. It simply was not yet clear what revolutionary rule would entail for Tigray and to what extent the Derg's policies would actually endanger the lives and livelihoods of Tigray's peasant population. So, while opposition movements formed, they did not yet yield peripheral rebellions.

6.2.3 Land Reform and Prohibition on Wage Labor (March 1975-1977)

Introduced on March 4, the 1975 Land Reform incited, at best, a mixed response among the peasantry of Tigray. Certainly, there were elements of the land reform that were well received by Tigrayan peasants. For example, those peasants residing on church lands were pleased with the abolition of church *gulti* rights and, as soon as they received the proclamation, promptly ceased delivering the previously obligatory portion of their produce.¹⁵⁵ The confiscation of the lands of the nobility was also met with little complaint. Overall, however, the positive impacts of the land reform, which was fundamentally designed to destroy the semi-feudal system of the highland periphery, were largely inapplicable in Tigray. Young explains, "...unlike southern Ethiopia where land reform was welcomed by the indigenous population who saw it as a means of acquiring land lost to outside interlopers, in Tigray landlordism was limited, there were virtually no non-indigenous landholders, and in the highlands there were few large concentrations of land."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 233; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 93, 181–82.

¹⁵⁶ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 29.

Taken in this context, the land reform was instead “treated with suspicion by peasants who feared that the elimination of their traditional system of land tenure would allow the government to gain control over their land,” possibly leading to outright confiscation.¹⁵⁷ An additional cause for discontent was the hasty, arbitrary, even haphazard, manner in which land redistributions were carried out in Tigray, often “completed without soil studies, censuses, or popular involvement.”¹⁵⁸ In some cases, land redistribution was accompanied by violence. It was also preferential, with friends and supporters of Derg officials receiving the better parcels of land.¹⁵⁹ In a similar vein, a central committee member of the TPLF accused the Derg regime of prioritizing land distributions to wealthy peasants at the expense of most Tigrayans:

This so-called land reform of the junta benefits the rich peasants... There have been a series of secret circulars issued by the regime instructing the local authorities to give land to those who have the means to plough it and the significant majority of Tigrayans do not have the necessary means of ploughing their land. This practically and clearly shows who benefits from the Dergue’s land reform.¹⁶⁰

But the impact of the Derg’s land redistributions, whether harmful or beneficial, were also seriously limited thanks not only to the peasantry’s general disinterest, but also the state’s weak presence in the area and the low importance it placed on Tigray during this period. In fact, Young finds that most of the Derg’s land redistributions in Tigray were enacted near garrisoned towns, while most of the province remained untouched.¹⁶¹ (Curiously enough, many Tigrayan peasants would instead experience an apparently far more popular land reform at the hands of the TPLF after it grew in power.) In sum, the land redistribution element of the 1975 Land Reform

¹⁵⁷ Young, 29. See also: Young, 193; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 105.

¹⁵⁸ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 93.

¹⁵⁹ Young, 182–83.

¹⁶⁰ “The People Are Not Divided: STORM Interviews A.H., Central Committee Member of the Tigray Peoples’ Liberation Front,” *Somali, Tigray and Oromo Resistance Monitor (STORM)*, December 1981, 4, David D. Laitin papers, Box 21, Hoover Institution Archives.

¹⁶¹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 93, 181–82.

did not yield the political capital the Derg hoped, nor did it become a major source of grievance for the (largely unaffected) peasantry.

Two other intertwined elements of the 1975 Land Reform were far more important for stoking disaffection among Tigrayan peasants - and driving them to make common cause with the conservative nobility and large landholders.¹⁶² The first was the prohibition on hiring agricultural labor. The second was the threat to dispossess absentee landlords.¹⁶³ As discussed earlier, many Tigrayan peasants would leave their small landholdings for part of the year to work as seasonal agricultural laborers on large commercial farms. This was increasingly employed as a survival strategy that simultaneously allowed peasants to keep their inherited *risti* lands. In addition, some peasants, especially those without oxen or equipment to plough their own lands, would rent them out to richer peasants as landlords. This was also a survival strategy. By prohibiting employment as agricultural labor and “threatening their rights to land if they left for extended periods,” the Derg regime effectively eliminated both of these peasant survival strategies.¹⁶⁴

Representing a direct threat “to the livelihoods of many thousands of peasants dependent on seasonal employment from commercial farming,” the 1975 Land Reform provoked deep resentment toward the revolutionary regime for many Tigrayan peasants.¹⁶⁵ In fact, Meles Zenawi, a prominent leader of the TPLF, claimed that 200,000 Tigrayans were negatively impacted by the prohibition on agricultural labor, asserting that “there was no part of Ethiopia

¹⁶² Young, 29, 193.

¹⁶³ Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 233. See also: Max Peberdy, *Tigray: Ethiopia's Untold Story* (Relief Society of Tigray UK Support Committee, 1985), 48.

¹⁶⁴ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 93.

¹⁶⁵ Young, 116. See also: Spears, *Civil War in African States*, 63.

where money earned in this way was more important to the people.”¹⁶⁶ The Derg’s insensitivity to the livelihood of Tigray’s peasantry may be chalked up to a combination of ignorance of local practices and unbending ideological commitment.¹⁶⁷ Whatever the cause, the 1975 Land Reform backfired on the regime by motivating peasants to lend their support to opposition movements. Returning to Meles Zenawi’s discussion of the prohibition on hired farm labor, he contends, “The Derg was stupid to forbid this, for it forced our people into poverty and hopelessness and it gave our movement important support from the very beginning.”¹⁶⁸

However, while the prohibition on hiring agricultural labor did inspire some peasants to join the TPLF, the greatest influx of peasant recruitment was enjoyed by Teranafit - a conservative movement organized in western Tigray by an alliance of Tigrayan nobility and local *shifita* (bandits).¹⁶⁹ Unlike the rest of the province, western Tigray included areas of commercial farming, specifically Humera and Wolkait, where aristocratic families employed large numbers of peasant laborers.¹⁷⁰ Already disgruntled by the Derg’s dismantling of the imperial order, these large landowners were driven into dissidence by the state’s claim to ownership of their estates via the 1975 Land Reform.

Teranafit appealed to Tigrayan peasants by promising to protect their right to agricultural employment and to preserve the *risti* land tenure system.¹⁷¹ To further attract peasant recruits, Teranafit also offered food, security, and the possibility of loot.¹⁷² These additional incentives led critics, specifically the TPLF, to view Teranafit as “a collection of ‘feudal elements and

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in: Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 93.

¹⁶⁷ Young, 182. See also: Peberdy, *Tigray*, 48.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in: Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 93.

¹⁶⁹ Young, 100–101.

¹⁷⁰ Young, 101.

¹⁷¹ Young, 116.

¹⁷² Young, 100–101.

bandits' who rallied poor peasants with false and opportunistic promises."¹⁷³ Nevertheless, in the short term, Teranafit was highly successful and thousands of Tigrayan peasants joined its ranks. Peasant recruits came disproportionately from the commercial farming areas of western Tigray, where Teranafit "mobilized thousands of demobilized farm labourers from the districts of Wolkait and Armacheho, particularly from the Humera agricultural belt, and supplied them with modern arms..."¹⁷⁴ Consequently, Teranafit quickly became dramatically larger than the TPLF during this period.

Then, in 1976, Teranafit was absorbed into a new organization, the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU). Founded in exile by Ras Mengesha and other former aristocrats, the EDU espoused a liberal platform designed to attract broad support across class and ethnic boundaries.¹⁷⁵ However, its efforts at multi-ethnic appeal actually decreased the EDU's attraction in Tigray compared to Teranafit which was viewed as distinctly Tigrayan. More damaging to peasant support, however, was the undisciplined and abusive practices of both Teranafit and EDU fighters.¹⁷⁶ In consequence, Teranafit's popularity among the Tigrayan peasantry, won by leveraging the shared threat of the 1975 Land Reform, soon waned.

By comparison, the development of the TPLF in the wake of the land reform proclamation was far more gradual. As described earlier, the TPLF's humble beginnings in the remote area of Dedebeit were facilitated by the state's limited reach and the local connections of Sihule. The relative absence of the revolutionary state in most of the Tigrayan countryside

¹⁷³ Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 105.

¹⁷⁴ Berhe, 107. See also: Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 101.

¹⁷⁵ Paul B. Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," *Product Page*, 1985, 45, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R3347.html>; Kiflu Tadesse, *The Generation - Part II: Ethiopia Transformation and Conflict: The History of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party* (Silver Spring, MD : Trenton, N.J. : Lanham: UPA, 1998), 116; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 101–2.

¹⁷⁶ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 102–3.

continued during this period, as the Derg allocated few resources to the province. Indeed, from 1976 until 1978, Colonel Kalechristos Abbay, the appointed governor of Tigray, “could only rely on a single artillery battalion and a police force in the province and therefore was largely restricted to confronting the rebel groups politically.”¹⁷⁷ This provided space for the TPLF and other opposition movements to organize politically and militarily.

This de facto grace period from state suppression was critical to the desperately small and poorly-equipped TPLF, most of whom had little experience surviving in a rural environment, let alone fighting an insurgency. Asgede Gebreselassie’s account of this early period, as a founding member of the TPLF, is particularly illustrative:

The first year of the struggle almost all the fighters were from a purely urban background, let alone all the problems of the jungle, shortage of water, wild animals. They had never even heard the roar. Also we had only five guns ... These were our entire arms! There were not only hardly any guns, but no ammunition either. But they had big sacks of books, Marxist books!¹⁷⁸

To conceal its meager size and lack of armaments, the TPLF was frequently moved around and had its unarmed members carry “sticks covered in plastic sheeting.”¹⁷⁹ Although it certainly grew during this period, it was dwarfed by rival organizations such as Teranafit. For example, on February 18, 1976, the TPLF’s “Fighters Congress” was “attended by its entire membership of about 170 people.”¹⁸⁰

Remarkably, at a time when thousands were joining the ranks of Teranafit, peasants continued to constitute only a minority of the TPLF’s members. Young observes, “Although this period also witnessed the growing disenchantment of Tigray’s peasants with the military regime,

¹⁷⁷ Young, 116.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in: Hammond, “Garrison Towns & the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray,” 93.

¹⁷⁹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 97.

¹⁸⁰ Young, 97.

by 1978 the majority of the TPLF fighters were still drawn from the province's petit bourgeoisie, notably teachers and students."¹⁸¹ Not until the late 1970s, when the Derg had caused broader and deeper alienation among the Tigrayan peasantry, and the field of competing opposition movements had been largely cleared, would the TPLF enjoy heavy peasant support.

Nonetheless, the TPLF's rebellion did reach the threshold of an armed conflict during this period as it carried out short military operations, including an attack on a prison to free one of their leading members.¹⁸² But most of its military operations from 1975 to early 1978 were directed at rival militant groups, such as the TLF, EDU, and EPRP.¹⁸³ Its aim was to "establish 'movement hegemony' in Tigray"¹⁸⁴ and thereby "be recognized as the sole representative of the Tigrayan people."¹⁸⁵ The ebb and flow of these inter-rebel conflicts need not concern us here, only the main results. First, the TPLF ultimately defeated and expelled its main rivals.¹⁸⁶ Second, it gained valuable battle experience and credibility in the process. Third, its number of fighters remained relatively small due to battle fatalities and defections.¹⁸⁷ In fact, Colonel Kalechristos Abbay estimated that "the number of TPLF fighters fell from 1,200 to 450" between 1976 and 1978.¹⁸⁸ This diminution of the TPLF fighting force, and the practical elimination of the other opposition movements in Tigray, provided a window of opportunity for the Derg regime to address Tigrayan grievances and thereby win over the peasantry. Instead, the

¹⁸¹ Young, 28.

¹⁸² Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 77, 133.

¹⁸³ Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, 50.

¹⁸⁴ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 51.

¹⁸⁵ Spears, *Civil War in African States*, 68.

¹⁸⁶ Though its useful to note that the TPLF was greatly helped by a previous government offensive against the EDU.

¹⁸⁷ Spears, *Civil War in African States*, 65–66.

¹⁸⁸ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 115.

Derg soon introduced even more polarizing and repressive policies, thereby fueling the rebel movement that would ultimately unseat it.

This period witnessed the onset of peripheral rebellion among Tigrayans in the form of Teranafit and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. These two rebel groups differed immensely. Teranafit was led by large landowning aristocrats and experienced massive, but temporary, peasant participation. The TPLF was led by a small group of disillusioned university students, did not enjoy a strong peasant following during this period, but did manage to defeat its rivals and build a small battle-hardened force. How well does the onset of peripheral rebellions in Tigray during this period match up with my theory?

The level of state intrusion did not change from the previous period. The revolutionary state continued to exert direct authority at the provincial level through its appointed governor. Its presence at the local level throughout the province was more uneven. It exercised significant control over Tigray's towns along the two main roads but was relatively absent from the countryside. This is evidenced by its ability to implement land redistributions only near garrisoned towns, but not throughout most of the province. The lands held by Tigrayan nobility were also promptly confiscated after the land reform proclamation.¹⁸⁹ I therefore consider the level of state intrusion to continue to be somewhere between medium and high.

Polarization increased during this period with the implementation of the 1975 Land Reform. The beneficiaries of this reform appear to have been in the minority. They included those freed from *gulti* obligations on church lands and friends of the Derg that received superior plots of land through redistribution. Most of the population was instead alienated by the land

¹⁸⁹ Young, 181.

reform, fearing that the abolishment of their traditional land tenure system could lead to state confiscation of their land. However, the fact that the Derg's land reform was not implemented in most of the province seems to have precluded the development of deep disaffection among most of the peasantry during this period, suggesting a medium level of polarization. The exception was among those peasants that relied on seasonal wage labor for survival. The Derg's prohibition on this type of employment (combined with the threat against absentee landholders) produced strong resentment among agricultural laborers, especially in the commercial farming areas of western Tigray. Here, polarization was high.

In western Tigray, the 1975 Land Reform not only alienated the peasantry engaged in seasonal agricultural labor but also facilitated rebellion by posing an acute, unifying threat across class boundaries. This was because this land reform also threatened the commercial landholdings of the area's aristocracy. Teranafit took advantage of this shared threat by using promises of protection against the land reform's negative effects to recruit thousands of peasants to fight in a movement led by the former nobility. In contrast, the TPLF mobilized against the more general (and less acute) threat of Amhara domination. Accordingly, while it enjoyed a following among the petit bourgeoisie of the towns, the TPLF could not boast a high level of peasant participation.

6.2.4 Derg Engagement: Red Terror, PAs, and Agrarian Policies (1978-1983)

Tigray was a low priority during the early years of Derg rule, especially as the regime was preoccupied with the threats of Eritrean separatism in the north and Somalian irredentism in the east. It was therefore content to maintain control over the main roads and towns that provided

the Ethiopian army access to Eritrea, while letting the various opposition movements in Tigray fight among themselves.¹⁹⁰

But this complacency disappeared in 1978 when the Derg decided to aggressively engage and revolutionize Tigray. There are two basic reasons for this shift. First, by 1978, the Derg had regained the upper hand in both Eritrea and the Ogaden.¹⁹¹ This freed up resources and attention that the regime used toward “establishing a far more effective, centralised, and militarised state than existed (or could have existed) under the old regime.”¹⁹² Second, by early 1978, the TPLF had effectively destroyed, dispelled, or absorbed all rival groups. No longer able to rely on internecine war to distract its detractors, the Derg decided to directly engage the TPLF and set out to eradicate its networks in the Tigrayan towns. The increased military presence in the province provided clear evidence of its increased priority for the revolutionary state: “The TPLF reported that there were 30,000 Derg troops in Tigray by the end of May 1978, three times the number of two months previously.”¹⁹³

In order to eliminate the TPLF’s support among the province’s petit bourgeoisie, the Derg brought the Red Terror to Tigray. Originally employed against the urban intelligentsia of Addis Ababa to decimate the EPRP, the Red Terror was an exceptionally violent counterinsurgency campaign founded on intimidation, denunciations, and summary executions. Outside of Addis Ababa, no region was more affected by the Red Terror than Tigray.¹⁹⁴ Young describes its enactment in Tigray beginning in 1977:

¹⁹⁰ Young, 116.

¹⁹¹ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 157, 207.

¹⁹² Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 115.

¹⁹³ Young, 118.

¹⁹⁴ Waal, *Evil Days*, 108.

Under the Derg's regional representative, Sileshi Mengesha, any expression of regional identity or dissent was interpreted as being counter-revolutionary. The politically suspect, usually teachers and students, were arrested and pressed to become double agents; if they refused, they would be imprisoned or shot, their bodies left outside their schools to intimidate others. Mere possession of an opposition pamphlet led to arrest and possible torture and death.¹⁹⁵

In 1978, the Red Terror was in full force in the five main towns of the province.¹⁹⁶ By the end of that decade, the TPLF's cells in the towns had been effectively eliminated.¹⁹⁷ In the process, though, hundreds of youth from the town fled to the countryside and many joined the TPLF.¹⁹⁸

Significantly, the Red Terror did not spread to the small towns or countryside of Tigray.¹⁹⁹ This shielded much of the rural population from the potent effects of this campaign. The exception were those "peasants who went to the towns to participate in markets, meet officials, or visit their children who attended schools" that thereby "could not escape the impact of the violence, which was widely interpreted as an attack on the entire Tigrayan community."²⁰⁰ Even so, Tigray's peasantry were more directly and consistently influenced by two other Derg policies introduced around this time. The first was the coercive cooptation of peasant associations. The second was the introduction of extractive agrarian reforms.

Established as part of the 1975 Land Reform, peasant associations were initially a form of grassroots self-administration with locally-elected leadership. But in 1978, the Derg instituted a purge of peasant association leadership throughout much of the country, including in Tigray. Peasants throughout Tigray remarked that the new peasant association officials "were invariably

¹⁹⁵ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 95.

¹⁹⁶ Hammond, "Garrison Towns & the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray," 98.

¹⁹⁷ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 95.

¹⁹⁸ Hammond, "Garrison Towns & the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray," 104; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 118.

¹⁹⁹ Hammond, "Garrison Towns & the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray," 98.

²⁰⁰ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 118.

friends or cohorts of the Derg and these same people became the prime beneficiaries of land distributions.”²⁰¹ Led by the regime’s supporters and beneficiaries, which owed their position to the Derg, the peasant associations effectively became instruments for implementing and enforcing state policies. The loss of local input and democratic participation in the peasant associations was bitterly resented by the Tigrayan population.

In a 1986 issue of its pamphlet, *People’s Voice*, the TPLF similarly criticized the peasant associations (*kebeles*) as a coercive extension of the Derg at the local level:

...the basic administrative organ of the fascist Derg, the Kebeles, have become notorious instruments of intimidation and coercion. They give free reign to murder squads and thugs in the urban areas and to speculators and grasping merchants in the countryside. The Kebeles in the cities and towns are organs by which the government suppresses free speech and expression... In the rural areas, these same structures are used to conscript soldiers for the many wars that the regime wages against its own people. Kebeles are also used as sources of cheap labour for the huge state farms that have proved to be economically disastrous... As the people’s demand for democratic rights threatened the very existence of the military regime, they used the Kebeles to smash all types of opposition and dissent.²⁰²

It was also in the late 1970s that the Derg introduced the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) in Tigray, as well as sought to expand state farms in the region. As with other agricultural produces in the country, Tigray’s peasants begrudged the state’s requirement that they sell a quota of their produce to the AMC at fixed prices that were often far less than market value. Indeed, many peasants equated this system with a “feudal levy” - something the revolution was supposed to abolish.²⁰³ This form of surplus appropriation provided further impetus for peasants to join the TPLF. In addition, although state farms were not prevalent in

²⁰¹ Young, 119. See also: Young, 29.

²⁰² “Ethiopia After 11 Years of Derg’s Rule,” *People’s Voice*, September 1986, 9, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 136, Hoover Institution Archives.

²⁰³ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 119.

Tigray, both peasants and the TPLF took issue with their privileges in terms of state investment, especially when it came at the detriment of family cultivation. For instance, one TPLF pamphlet bemoaned, “The state farms which receive huge resources have proved to be extremely expensive and ill-equipped to solve even a fraction of the country’s economic problems. Neglect of the peasant economy and the squandering of money and other resources on the state farms has resulted in a decrease in agricultural output at the rate of 0.8% per head, per year. Food production is decreasing by 4% per head.”²⁰⁴ In sum, Tigrayans were angry that the Derg extracted heavily from the peasantry, while investing little toward their productivity.

While the Derg had already done much to alienate Tigray’s peasants, the repressive and exploitative policies it introduced in the late-1970s had a particularly profound impact on this peripheral group. Aregawi Berhe explains:

... the harsh policies of agricultural collectivization and the regimentation of society in *qebele* associations, followed by a lack of economic success, infuriated vast sectors of the population. Also, unpopular and mistaken government policies in reaction to legitimate, collective demands of the people, accompanied by repressive measures the severity of which was new in the history of the country, pushed the people towards accepting the TPLF as a saviour from the policies of the *Dergue*.²⁰⁵

In this case, peasant support for rebellion was not only about the push of alienating Derg policies, it was also about the pull of TPLF programs and reforms. Tronvoll explains, “First, the actual repression and authoritarian policies exhibited by the central government created a reaction from the grassroots – a call for change... the TPLF managed to present itself to the Tigrayan peasantry as an organisation which could change these historical injustices and provide for a better and desirable future.”²⁰⁶ The TPLF accomplished this by seeking peasant

²⁰⁴ “Ethiopia After 11 Years of Derg’s Rule,” 8.

²⁰⁵ Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 93.

²⁰⁶ Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, 48.

consultation and participation in the enactment and adjustment of its social and economic policies, even when this entailed compromises to its Marxist ideology. For example, as Young reports, “The TPLF..., after initially pursuing restrictive economic policies in the areas under its administration, responded to peasant opposition and allowed the employment of labour, encouraged markets, did not interfere with trade, and at no time threatened the possession of agricultural capital.”²⁰⁷ By demonstrating such sensitivity to peasant interests and facilitating their participation in decision making and implementation, the TPLF was able to successfully introduce policies that paralleled those of the revolutionary state, including land reform,²⁰⁸ resettlement,²⁰⁹ and even their own version of peasant associations, known as *baitos*.²¹⁰

The TPLF recognized that heavy peasant support was essential for the movement to stand any chance at military victory.²¹¹ So, in exchange for these beneficial and participatory policies, the TPLF demanded peasant support in their war against the Ethiopian state. Those unwilling to back the rebellion were excluded from its rewarding programs. Consider, for instance, Aregawi Berhe’s discussion of the TPLF’s land reform:

...land was used to reward those who supported and contributed to the armed struggle... The TPLF imposed political criteria to exclude those who were believed not to support the struggle... Almost everyone in the liberated area had a claim to a plot of land... But to actually receive it and retain it depended on the consent of the TPLF. It used land as a positive and negative incentive in mobilizing people for the war project.²¹²

Yet even with some level of exclusivity, the TPLF’s policies tended to produce popular support especially compared to the Derg’s policies, which bred resentment.

²⁰⁷ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 23.

²⁰⁸ Young, 182.

²⁰⁹ Peberdy, *Tigray*, 54.

²¹⁰ Hammond, “Garrison Towns & the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray,” 95.

²¹¹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 33–34.

²¹² Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 234, 236.

Consequently, it was during this period that the majority of the TPLF's supporters and fighters shifted from the petit bourgeoisie of the towns to the peasants in the countryside. This peasant support massively increased the strength of the TPLF. Young reports that "in the period 1980-82 recruitment increased by a TPLF-estimated factor of four or five, with most new recruits coming from the peasantry."²¹³ It also increased its military activities and territorial presence in Tigray, which the Derg's forces were unable to permanently reverse.²¹⁴ Instead, by the end of this period, Derg control was essentially limited to the towns and main roads. Indeed, in a 1981 interview, one TPLF central committee member claimed, "Over 85% of Tigray is under the control of the T.P.L.F. The military regime's troops are relegated to the few towns along the main roads and they only control these towns and areas within a vicinity of approximately 5 kms. The rest of Tigray is under the control or influence of the T.P.L.F."²¹⁵

In summary, while the onset of the TPLF's armed conflict with the Ethiopian government preceded this period, it was during these years that the insurgency turned into a major rebellion with massive peasant support. The increased state presence and revolutionary policies introduced during this period played a critical role in motivating Tigray's peasantry to fully back and actively join the TPLF's insurgency.

The level of state presence and intrusion into Tigray reached new heights in the early years of this period. This included a larger commitment of troops to the province as well as a campaign to assert full control over the five main towns. More importantly for my theory, the Derg replaced the locally-elected peasant association leadership with state-appointed officials.

²¹³ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 124.

²¹⁴ Waal, *Evil Days*, 139.

²¹⁵ "The People Are Not Divided: STORM Interviews A.H., Central Committee Member of the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front," 2. See also: Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 124–25, 129.

With this change, the peasant associations became instruments of the state for enforcing its revolutionary policies without local input or modification. Indeed, both peasants and the TPLF highlighted the heavy-handedness with which the peasant associations carried out the will of the central regime. State intrusion was thus unambiguously high during this period.

Moreover, while Derg policies in the previous periods had caused apprehension among Tigray's peasantry, or strongly alienated a subset of this population, such as agricultural laborers, the introduction of the AMC and the abuses of the peasant associations were causes for deep resentment across all peasant communities. Meanwhile, the Tigrayan beneficiaries of Derg policies were exceptionally few - primarily their local agents in the peasant associations which received redistributed land. The level of polarization was therefore high. Both the TPLF and scholars point to the alienation of Derg policies as motivating mass support for - and recruitment into - the TPLF. The Derg's policies also contrast sharply with those of the TPLF, which were generally beneficial to the population, even though conditional on support for the rebellion.

Finally, the Derg's policies during this period represented an acute, unifying threat that transcended class and community boundaries. For instance, the Red Terror was perceived as a general assault on the entire Tigrayan community - and brought those petit bourgeoisie fleeing from the towns into greater contact with the peasantry. Additionally, the imposition of quotas by the AMC was a threat that simultaneously affected all Tigrayan peasants. The TPLF provided refuge from these threats to those who fled to liberated areas and joined the rebel movement.

6.2.5 Failed Counterinsurgency and Derg Defeat (1984-1991)

By the early 1980s, the TPLF enjoyed broad support and claimed to control the vast majority of the Tigrayan countryside. All of this was jeopardized in 1984 when the region was

struck by drought and famine. Not only did this famine drive many of the TPLF's peasant supporters to depart for relief camps, it also provided justification for the Ethiopian state to embark on an ambitious resettlement campaign. Using the promise of food, as well as outright coercion, the Derg gathered and trucked Tigrayan peasants to resettlement camps in the western and southern parts of the country.²¹⁶ While the government presented this policy as a solution to drought and overpopulation in the north, the TPLF argued its true purpose was to drain the area of TPLF supporters, while creating a buffer zone for the regime in the areas where the peasants were resettled.²¹⁷ Accounts of Tigrayan farmers unaffected by the famine still being arrested and forcibly resettled lend credence to this claim.²¹⁸ Suffering hunger and the dispersion of much of their support base, the TPLF faced, in the words of Meles Zenawi, "the darkest time of our armed struggle."²¹⁹

On top of famine and resettlement, the Derg also expanded compulsory conscription and increased taxes in Tigray during the mid-1980s.²²⁰ However, the province was largely preserved from villagization. With the TPLF maintaining a significant presence in the Tigrayan countryside, the revolutionary state simply did not have the means to enforce it.²²¹

²¹⁶ Waal, *Evil Days*, 14; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 146. See also: Peter Niggli, "Ethiopian Resettlement: Vomit and Death," *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 1986, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 116, Hoover Institution Archives; Colin Legum, "Ethiopia Said to Be Forcing Famine-Struck Families to Resettle," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 12, 1984, 18, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 121, Hoover Institution Archives.

²¹⁷ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 146. See also: Peberdy, *Tigray*, 54.

²¹⁸ Alex Lyon et al., "Torture and the Violation of Human Rights in Tigray, Ethiopia" (Paris and London: International Federation of Human Rights, April 15, 1986), 12, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 116, Hoover Institution Archives; Legum, "Ethiopia Said to Be Forcing Famine-Struck Families to Resettle," 18.

²¹⁹ "Interview with Meles Zenawi," *Hwyet*, May 1997, 5, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 114, Hoover Institution Archives.

²²⁰ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 29. See also: Rebecca Moore, "Ethiopia's Widening Cracks," *The Middle East*, September 1980, 32, Paul B. Henze papers, Box 121, Hoover Institution Archives.

²²¹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 4; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 146, 169.

But the famine proved to be only a temporary reversal. The Derg's policies of forcible resettlement, compulsory conscription, and heightened taxation despite drought, all stoked greater anger against the central regime and motivated Tigrayans to join the ranks of the TPLF. As Aregawi Berhe, a founding member of the TPLF, writes, "These policies... further aroused bitterness among Tigrayans against the government, and the nationalist movement gained impetus. The policies of the *Dergue* thus came to serve as ammunition for the TPLF... More young peasants and students began to flock to the front..."²²² A former Derg official came to a similar conclusion: "All of us could see the TPLF grow. Every measure that Mengistu took pushed the people of Tigray further away from the government and toward the TPLF."²²³

As the TPLF recovered, the Derg's forces were increasingly confined to the five main towns in the province, which were now surrounded by mines and guard posts.²²⁴ To survive Derg occupation, those Tigrayans that remained in the towns employed strategies involving "concealment, evasion and the adoption of false identity to accommodate to the occupying culture."²²⁵ That is, state repression was sufficiently effective in the main towns to compel preference falsification.

In early 1989, the TPLF's relative strength was sufficiently high to drive the Derg out of Tigray entirely. After a debate over whether to content themselves with liberating Tigray or press on the Addis Ababa, the TPLF decided on the latter.²²⁶ However, thousands of the TPLF's peasant fighters disagreed, disbanded, and returned home.²²⁷ To make their advance into non-

²²² Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991)*, 134.

²²³ Giorgis, *Red Tears*, 116.

²²⁴ Hammond, "Garrison Towns & the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray," 95–96, 99.

²²⁵ Hammond, 101.

²²⁶ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 52; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 192.

²²⁷ Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, 55.

Tigray areas, the TPLF formed a multi-ethnic umbrella organization, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), as well as allied organizations representing other Ethiopian ethnic groups.²²⁸ Not long after Mengistu fled the country in May 1991, the EPRDF assumed power in Addis Ababa.²²⁹

6.3 Alternative Explanations and Conclusion

To what extent do the alternative explanations of direct rule, state weakness and ethnic exclusion explain the timing of peripheral rebellions in Afarland and Tigray? First, the direct rule argument would suggest that peripheral rebellions erupted early among Tigrayans and the Afar because the Derg forcibly ousted Ras Mengesha Seyoum and Sultan Ali Mirah, their respective, semi-autonomous ethnic leaders. Some of the evidence in these cases is compatible with this rationale. The Derg initially hesitated to arrest these leaders for fear of sparking revolt among their ethnic constituencies. The forced flight of Ali Mirah triggered outrage and rebellion among the Afar. From exile, both authorities, along with other traditional elites, endorsed ethnonationalist opposition movements, such as the ALF, TLF, and Teranafit.

But there are also several problems with attributing the timing of these rebellions to the deposal of traditional authorities and the imposition of direct rule. Most obviously, whereas the departure of Sultan Ali Mirah provoked revolt among the Afar, the exile of Ras Mengesha Seyoum did not spark rebellion in Tigray. Although Mengesha did form the TLF shortly thereafter, it did not enjoy broad support, nor did it meet the threshold of a peripheral rebellion.

²²⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 192–93.

²²⁹ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 52–53.

Instead, rebellion erupted in Tigray only after the 1975 Land Reform produced shared resentment among Tigrayan nobles and agricultural laborers.

As for the onset of the Afar rebellion in June 1975, it is important to recognize that Ali Mirah's ouster happened in the context of looming land reform and growing Amhara presence on the state farms in the area. That is, the move against Ali Mirah was coupled with the implementation of revolutionary policies that would alienate many Afar. This played an important part in shaping the response of the Afar population. As Harbeson asserts, "The outpouring of Afar anger at the forced exile of Ali Mira may not unambiguously reflect his political strength on the lower plains. The rampage against the highland cultivators and the Tendaho Plantation may have reflected anger at the Ethiopian government more than support for Ali Mira."²³⁰

Comparisons to analogous events in Tigray and Afarland during the imperial period further point to the critical role of alienating policies. In the 1940s, both Tigrayan nobles and Dada Mohammed Yayo, the Afar Sultan of Aussa, were disempowered by the imperial state for their previous support of the Italian occupiers. Yet the reactions of the Tigrayans and Afar to the imperial state's assertion of authority were the inverse of those during the early revolutionary period. While Tigray responded with the Woyene rebellion, no revolt was reported among the Afar. The key difference was whether the central state's intrusion was accompanied with polarizing policies for the general population. In Tigray, the imperial state imposed the difficult requirement (for subsistence farmers) that taxes be paid in cash. Among the Afar, very little policy disruption occurred, and a system of indirect rule was soon reestablished under Sultan Ali

²³⁰ Harbeson, "Territorial and Development Politics in the Horn of Africa," 490.

Mirah. This suggests that alienating policies are an important factor for shaping the likelihood of peripheral rebellion, even outside of the revolutionary context.

Second, proponents of the state weakness explanation would ascribe the rebellions of the ALF, TPLF, and Teranafit to the initial weakness and preoccupation of the revolutionary state. Some characteristics of the cases support this argument. Afar dissidents certainly took advantage of the porous nature of Ethiopia's borders with Djibouti and Somalia. The political TNO's hasty transition to the militant TPLF was partially justified by the Derg's perceived weakness and internal divisions. The TPLF began its insurgency in Dedebit where the state's authority was practically absent. Finally, a major reason the TPLF was able to survive its first years was because of the minimal commitment of state security forces in Tigray. Before 1978, the provincial governor "could only rely on a single artillery battalion and a police force in the province and therefore was largely restricted to confronting the rebel groups politically."²³¹ Thus state weakness does seem to help explain the origins and early operations of these rebel organizations.

However, the onset of major peripheral rebellion, especially the timing of broad participation, is insufficiently explained by the opportunity-driven logic of state weakness. For instance, the outbreak of rebellion among the Afar began after Derg officials and military reinforcements entered the area, rather than before when state presence was weaker. More strikingly, Tigrayan peasants did not heavily participate in the TPLF's rebellion until after the Ethiopian government had tripled its military presence in Tigray. On the other hand, during the earlier period of state weakness, the TPLF struggled to secure peasant support even while

²³¹ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 116.

Teranafit successfully recruited thousands. These differences are more effectively accounted for by the nature of alienating policies. Early on, Teranafit was able to appeal to disaffected landlords and agricultural laborers alike, thereby securing support in the commercial agriculture areas of the west.²³² Alternatively, peasant participation in the TPLF grew dramatically as the revolutionary policies of the late 1970s and early 1980s stirred broad resentment and the TPLF was able to demonstrate a satisfactory alternative.

Third, the ethnic exclusion argument would contend that rebellions among the Afar and Tigrayans were responses to their underrepresentation in the institutions of the political center of the revolutionary state and the resultant ethnic discrimination. Certainly, the Tigrayans and Afar were excluded ethnic groups in both the late imperial state and the early revolutionary state. In addition, the Tigrayans still held a sense of entitlement to central state power as the Tigrayan Emperor Yohannis had ruled the state before the Shoan Amhara emperors. As Young states, “The loss of power by the descendants of Yohannis to the Amhara nobility served to heighten the people’s sense of national grievance.”²³³ Most importantly, Tigrayan and Afar students resorted to radical opposition principally out of frustration over the lack of opportunities for employment in state positions and the unfair advantages enjoyed by Amhara in terms of both education and state employment.

Nevertheless, while this may have been a major grievance and cause for mobilization among educated elites, there is little evidence that it explains the timing of the popular participation needed for major peripheral rebellion. Indeed, radical students were articulating these grievances even before the revolution occurred. Instead, these student movements only

²³² It then lost this peasant support through poor discipline, civilian victimization, and battle losses to other rebel groups and the state.

²³³ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 49.

acquired broad support when the policies of the state began adversely affecting peripheral populations in their daily lives. An additional puzzle for this explanation, discussed further in the next chapter, is the fact that the relatively small Afar and Tigrayan ethnic groups were able to mount rebellions earlier and, in the case of Tigray, more successfully than the much larger Oromo ethnic group. This requires further explanation, since the ethnic exclusion argument contends that larger ethnic groups should have an easier time mobilizing rebellion than smaller ones.

In conclusion, although each of the rival explanations matches some of the characteristics of these two cases, none satisfactorily account for the timing of the various peripheral rebellions in this case. Rather, the alienation and polarization caused by revolutionary policies best account for the early rebellions of the ALF and Teranafit and the later emergence of the TPLF as a powerful insurgency.

Chapter 7: Somali and Oromo

The Somali and Oromo in the eastern and central regions of Ethiopia were the next peripheral groups to rebel. Both groups had suffered greatly under imperial rule and each had revolted against the Ethiopian state in the 1960s - with at least some support from Somalia. Yet their early experiences with the revolutionary state differed dramatically. While little changed for the Somalis, who continued to be subjected to (quasi-)military rule, the Oromos were initially the revolution's greatest beneficiaries. But when the internationalized Somali rebellion morphed into an interstate war, the Oromo - caught in the contested territory - found their loyalty questioned. Suffering abuses and exploitation from the revolutionary state and its policies, popular support for rebellion grew among the Oromo. The Derg introduced aggressive counterinsurgency strategies, including villagization, to extinguish the Somali and Oromo rebellions. While these COIN strategies were successful against the Somalis, the Oromo rebellion found new life in the west as revolutionary policies began to stoke strong resentments among the Oromo there.

7.1 Somali

Somali pastoralists inhabit the eastern lowlands of Ethiopia in a region known as the Ogaden. Efforts by the imperial regime to tax this population in the early 1960s triggered insurgency. After suppressing this insurgency, the imperial regime imposed military administration on the Ogaden. Watering holes came under government control, livestock were confiscated, and Amhara settlers were brought in. These state practices endangered the survival of Somali pastoralists. The Derg perpetuated these policies. Moreover, in the context of

establishing famine relief shelters, the regime was able to exert greater control over the Somali population and further undermine its traditional way of life.

In this case, popular disaffection toward the revolutionary regime represents a continuation of resentment from the imperial period. But unlike rebellions among the other peripheral groups in Ethiopia, insurgency among the Somali was largely organized and controlled by an external state: Somalia. Perceiving a window of opportunity, the regime in Somalia sought to achieve its irredentist ambition of annexing the Ogaden. The regime organized the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and the Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF) in pursuit of this goal. Both organizations sought recruits and support from the alienated populations of the Ogaden, though the WSLF was more successful in this regard. While the WSLF and SALF were able to gain control of most of the countryside, their inability to overpower garrisoned towns led Somalia to commit regular troops into the Ogaden, sparking an interstate war with Ethiopia.

Table 7.1: Variable Values and Predictions in Somali Case

Time	State Intrusion	Peripheral Polarization	Cross-Cutting Threat	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
1974- June 1977	High	High	Vertical and Horizontal	Rebellion	Rebellion (WSLF and SALF, but both sponsored by Somalia)

7.1.1 *Before the Revolution*

Ethiopia's Somali population dwells primarily in the Ogaden, a lowland region in the eastern part of the country bordering Somalia. Most of the Ogaden is flat and dry with pastoralism sustained by wells, thorn vegetation, and "some scattered areas of rich grazing land."¹ Settled agriculture is only possible in a few fertile areas along the river basin, most specifically the Jijiga plain.² Overall, the region has seen very little economic or infrastructural development. While various Somali clans live in the Ogaden, the dominant one is the Ogaden clan from which the region gets its name. In addition to the Ogaden, Somalis also inhabit the lowland areas in Hararghe and Bale.

As the 20th century began, interaction between the Somalis of the Ogaden and the Ethiopian state was primarily in the form of imperial raiding parties.³ As Tobias Hagmann describes:

State violence originated in the conquest of the Ogaden between 1891 and 1906 when imperial armies began regular campaigns... to extort tribute from Somali pastoralists. These military expeditions consisted of thousands of soldiers. They usually lasted several months and led to the confiscation of hundreds to thousands of livestock as well as the brutalization of local communities. Somalis were coerced into paying tribute to the emperor, and those who refused were punished accordingly.⁴

¹ Adam Lockyer, "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars: The Case of the Ethiopian-Ogaden Civil War, 1976-1980," *African Security* 11, no. 2 (April 2018): 185, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2018.1480141>.

² Gebru Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, no. 3 (2000): 636–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3097438>.

³ Waal, *Evil Days*, 71.

⁴ Tobias Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery: Legacies of State Repression in the Ethiopian Ogaden," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, no. 4 (November 2014): 725–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2014.946238>.

After this initial period wherein it essentially behaved as a “roving bandit,”⁵ the Ethiopian state established a system of indirect rule in the Ogaden with Somali elders recognized as *balabbat*.⁶ Besides the settlement of Jijiga, which the imperial regime sought to develop and integrate into the country’s economy as a center for trading, the presence of the imperial state remained minimal with only 50-60 soldiers garrisoned in the Ogaden lowlands in the late 1920s.⁷

When an Italian invasion loomed in the early 1930s, Emperor Haile Selassie met personally in Harar with Somali leaders to seek their support in the coming war. The responses of the Somali elders revealed how little political capital the imperial state had accumulated among the Somali. As related by Markakis, “Why should they fight the Italians, one asked, when it was the Ethiopians who called them dogs, abused their women and killed their animals? Another derided the Abyssinian titles bestowed on them since, as he said, everyone knew that the lowest Abyssinian official had more authority than the highest ranking Somali.”⁸ Imperial Ethiopia could not expect a stalwart defense from their Somali subjects.

Compared to imperial rule, the Italian occupation brought benefits to the Somali population including the abolition of taxes, the return of agricultural land in Jijiga previously taken by highlander settlers, and even the construction of a road to Somalia.⁹ Some Somalis took advantage of this period to settle in the Jijiga plain and cultivate grain free from taxation. The Somali continued to enjoy a reprieve from Ethiopian rule in the 1940s as the region came under British military administration wherein “all the Somali lands remained administratively united,

⁵ Mancur Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (September 1993): 567–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938736>.

⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 141.

⁷ Markakis, 141.

⁸ Markakis, 142.

⁹ Markakis, 142–43.

as they had been under the Italians, and the people were free to move and trade without border restrictions.”¹⁰ Under the British, the Somali continued to experience little to no taxation.

Ethiopian authority over the Ogaden was restored in the autumn of 1948.¹¹ The imperial regime quickly reintroduced taxation, but this primarily impacted grain cultivation around Jijiga. Somali pastoralists, on the other hand, were generally unaffected. This was because, during the early postwar period, the imperial state did not attempt to collect a livestock tax and “a market tax to which the herders were liable was easily evaded by carrying out transactions in the bush.”¹² Though some Somalis fled to Somalia, the overall reaction to the resumption of imperial Ethiopian rule was acquiescence not resistance. Adam Lockyer suggests why: “It appears that while Addis Ababa allowed the traditional Ogaden Somali social and political structures to remain in place, and it did not collect taxes, the wider population was generally willing to accept the shift in political regime.”¹³ But two developments in the early 1960s would disrupt this *modus vivendi*: 1) the emergence of pan-Somali nationalism in the wake of the Somali Republic’s formation and 2) the Ethiopian state’s efforts to control and tax Somali pastoralists.

Established in 1960, the Somali Republic was born with the aspiration of gathering all Somali-populated lands under its rule as represented in the term *Soomaliyen* (Somali unification). As evidence of this irredentist aspirations, “its flag was graced with a five-pointed star representing all five Somali inhabited regions, its constitution extended full citizenship to all people of Somali blood, and it joined the OAU while refusing to sign the article endorsing the

¹⁰ Markakis, 143.

¹¹ Lockyer, “Opposing Foreign Intervention’s Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars,” 185; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 143–44.

¹² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 145.

¹³ Lockyer, “Opposing Foreign Intervention’s Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars,” 185.

colonial borders.”¹⁴ In terms of unredeemed Somali lands within the borders of Ethiopia, the irredentists defined “Western Somalia” generously, claiming it “extended almost as far as the Awash River, embracing the whole of Hararghe where two of Ethiopia’s largest cities, Harar and Dire Dawa, are located as well as large portions of Bale and Sidamo provinces.”¹⁵ These boundaries stretched much farther than Somali majority areas to include some of Ethiopia’s prime agricultural regions.¹⁶

Within Ethiopia’s borders, two Somali nationalist organizations were created in the late 1950s and early 1960s to covertly prepare the Ogaden population for future conflict with the Ethiopian state: Nasrallah and the Ogaden Company for Trade and Industry (OCTI).¹⁷ These organizations were used to recruit potential rebels and stockpile weapons in the region. Importantly, these preparations for conflict “were long-range plans and did not anticipate an imminent clash.”¹⁸

In addition to pan-Somali nationalism, the other factor that set Ethiopia’s Somalis on a collision course with the imperial state in the 1960s was the increased political and economic intrusion of the central state.¹⁹ Arguably, this process was partially triggered by the demands made on the state by Somali elders in the late 1950s, when they petitioned Haile Selassie to develop the region’s infrastructure and appoint Somalis to local administrative posts.²⁰ Hoping to secure their loyalty and coopt Somali leaders, the imperial regime obliged them in the early

¹⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 144.

¹⁵ Tareke, “The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited,” 637.

¹⁶ Tareke, 638.

¹⁷ Hagmann, “Punishing the Periphery,” 729; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 145.

¹⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 145.

¹⁹ Lockyer, “Opposing Foreign Intervention’s Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars,” 185.

²⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 144.

1960s by establishing schools, beginning to invest in infrastructural development, and placing Somalis in positions of authority over many of the region's *awraja* and *woreda*.²¹

But the imperial state's concessions and service provision to the Somali population came at a price: the pastoralists were now to be systematically taxed. In February 1963, the Ethiopian government imposed a livestock tax and required the Somali elders to collect it.²² Rather than collect the tax, Somali officials abandoned their posts and went into dissidence. In June, a group of three hundred met in Hodayo to organize the rebellion and Makhtal Garad Dahir was chosen as the overall commander.²³ Other leaders included "former members of *Nasrallah*, the OCTI, local chiefs, and state appointees... who had deserted their government posts."²⁴ By September, there were around 3,000 insurgents active primarily in the lowlands of Hararghe and Bale.²⁵ In addition to support from the local population, the rebels also relied heavily on arms from the Somali Republic.²⁶ Even so, the insurgency failed to coalesce into a well-organized rebellion and their engagement against Ethiopian forces was often sporadic.²⁷ It therefore posed little real threat to the Ethiopian state, though enough to trigger a brutal, indiscriminate counterinsurgency wherein many Somali civilians were victimized.²⁸

The Ethiopian government's greater fear was the rebellion would turn into an interstate conflict at a time advantageous to Somalia. This concern stemmed from an agreement Somalia made with the Soviet Union in November 1963, wherein the Soviets would equip 20,000 Somali

²¹ Markakis, 144; Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 726.

²² Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 729; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 145; Waal, *Evil Days*, 71.

²³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 146.

²⁴ Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 729.

²⁵ Waal, *Evil Days*, 71; Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 729.

²⁶ Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 727.

²⁷ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 147.

²⁸ Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 729–30.

troops.²⁹ This would shift the military balance in Somalia's favor. Rather than wait for this to happen, Ethiopia moved forces to its border with Somalia and began attacking border posts and nearby towns in the early months of 1964. Somalia's army was "badly mauled" in this short interstate conflict.³⁰ On March 6, 1964 in Khartoum, Somalia signed a cease-fire agreement with Ethiopia.³¹

Following the truce, the Somalian government not only ended its support to the Somali guerrillas in Ethiopia but also took measures to convince them to abandon the struggle. Markakis explains:

This task was entrusted to the commander of the police, General Mohammed Abshir, who instructed the Ogaden elders in Mogadisho not to return to their homeland. They asked to talk to the Prime Minister, who told them bluntly that the security of the Somali Republic was at stake, and that they could expect no more help. To sweeten the pill, the Ogaden notables were offered pensions and houses, and younger men were offered state employment, or a chance for education.³²

With their external backer having backed out, while also preventing many of their leaders from returning to the warfront, the rebellion staggered on until being driven out of the region by government forces in 1965.³³

In the aftermath of the rebellion, the imperial regime enacted military rule over the Somali areas of Ethiopia. Those few Somalis actually given government posts during this period were locally perceived as collaborators.³⁴ The military administration placed over the Ogaden imposed a number of measures designed to pacify the Somali population.³⁵ Beyond the

²⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 147; Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 730.

³⁰ Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 638.

³¹ Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 730; Waal, *Evil Days*, 71.

³² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 148.

³³ Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 730.

³⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 148.

³⁵ See detailed discussion in: Waal, *Evil Days*, 71–72.

introduction of curfews in the major towns, most of the government's actions were aimed against the pastoralists of the region. First, reminiscent of the raids of the early 1900s, was the "government's policy of mounting punitive expeditions, which killed or confiscated large numbers of animals, depriving the pastoral communities of the basis for their survival."³⁶ Several such expeditions were reported in the summer of 1964. Second, the government encouraged Amhara settlers to move into the Jijiga plain thereby displacing Somalis and removing valuable grazing areas for their herds. Third, the government sought to regulate livestock trade, which involved confiscating animals that had been "smuggled" through unofficial trade routes. Finally, in providing access to water, the administration privileged the towns and settlers to the detriment of the Somali pastoralists. There were even reports of Ogaden wells being poisoned.³⁷ When these measures were combined with the impact of the famine of 1973-1974, many Somali pastoralists were driven to relief shelters in Ethiopia or into refugee status in Somalia. This was the situation in the Ogaden at the time of the revolution.

7.1.2 Somali Resentment and Window of Opportunity (1974-June 1977)

Any hope that the revolutionary Derg regime would improve relations with the Somali population of the Ogaden, if such hope existed at all, was swiftly dashed by the state's management of the famine relief program. The government's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) certainly served a humanitarian function by establishing relief centers where large amounts of food were distributed.³⁸ But there were also political and social components of

³⁶ Waal, 71.

³⁷ Waal, 72.

³⁸ Waal, 73.

the relief program that posed a genuine threat to the culture and livelihood of the Somali pastoralists, as illustrated by Alexander De Waal's description of the camps:

By early 1975, more than 80,000 Ogadenis were living in 18 relief shelters. The shelters were run on military lines, with strict curfews enforced at 8.00 p.m. Movement in and out was severely restricted — making it impossible for each family to keep more than a handful of small animals. Traditional festivities were reportedly banned in some camps. The government had the explicit intention of turning the camp populations into settled farmers, rather than allowing them to return to a pastoral way of life. Another intention was to relocate camps well away from the Somali border.³⁹

By using the relief camps to increase state control and undermine Somali pastoralism, the Derg perpetuated and intensified the alienation of the population toward the Ethiopian state. The perception of the relief program as an assault on their interests and identities had two effects on Somali men in the region. First, the majority of them steered clear of the camps in order to maintain possession of their animals, even when this involved separation from their families in the camps. Second, as mentioned by De Waal, “Fear that the Ethiopian government was intent on undermining their traditional way of life was one factor that spurred many Ogadeni men into armed opposition to the government.”⁴⁰

While the actions of both the imperial regime and its revolutionary successor produced ample motivation for revolt among the Somali of the Ogaden, the organization of the rebellion was, in this case, heavily shaped by the government of neighboring Somalia. Three factors drove President Siad Barre's decision to sponsor an organized insurgency in the Ogaden. First, refugees from the Ogaden region agitated in Mogadishu, pressuring the government for its assistance and/or the freedom to pursue armed struggle.⁴¹ Rather than allow an independent force

³⁹ Waal, 73.

⁴⁰ Waal, 73–74.

⁴¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 210.

to form within the borders of his country, Siad Barre decided to form one he could control. Second, Siad Barre sought to consolidate his hold on power by securing the support of the Ogaden clan, of which Somalia's army was largely constituted. Accordingly, he "turned to the elders of the Ogaden clan for a political alliance, and concluded a deal whereby the government would provide support for the cause of the 'liberation' of the Ogaden from Ethiopia, including military assistance, in return for political loyalty to the regime."⁴² Third, the early years of the Derg regime, when its security forces were preoccupied with challenges in Addis Ababa, Eritrea, and other peripheral regions, seemed to present a window of opportunity for Somalia's irredentist aspiration of annexing the Ogaden.⁴³ Sponsoring an insurgency in the region would provide the Somalian regime an opportunity to, so to speak, test the water and prepare the ground for such an attempt.

In January 1976, the Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF) was organized to fulfill these purposes. President Siad Barre not only attended the founding meeting of the WSLF, where the central committee was selected, but essentially dominated it.⁴⁴ The government's intention to control the insurgent group was made clear by the designation of an official from the Somali Ministry of Education as the first secretary general of the WSLF.⁴⁵ Indeed, the WSLF was essentially designed to function as an "auxiliary" or "accessory" force of the Somalian military.⁴⁶ Gebru Tareke explains the WSLF's purpose for the Somalian government:

The Mogadishu regime probably was under no illusion that the guerrillas by themselves would defeat the Ethiopian army and "liberate Western Somalia."

⁴² Waal, *Evil Days*, 74.

⁴³ Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 635, 638–39; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 210.

⁴⁴ Michael Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa: Rebellion and Its Discontents* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 200.

⁴⁵ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 210.

⁴⁶ Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 200; Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 639.

Rather, the use of guerrillas appears to have had a dual purpose: to pressure Ethiopia into negotiation while wearing down its troops, who would then be attacked by Somali regulars at a suitable time if and when the talks failed.⁴⁷

Although the Somalian government obviously meant for the WSLF to serve as its proxy, the WSLF still exercised agency and possessed its own (internally debated) political agenda, which sometimes diverged from its government sponsor.⁴⁸ Specifically, the WSLF was divided over whether the struggle should be for the annexation of the Ogaden to Somalia or creation of an independent state. While the Somalian government actively sought to repress the latter position, the pursuit of Ogaden independence continued to be embraced by a powerful - and resilient - faction within the WSLF, led by Mohammed Diriye Abdi Urdoh.⁴⁹

Several months after the founding of the WSLF, another rebel group was organized in Somalia: the Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF). Referencing the Oromo greeting, “Abo”, used by bilingual Somalis in parts of Southeastern Ethiopia, SALF was designed to appeal to the Oromo and “Oromo-speaking Somali”, which were defined broadly to include not only ethnic Somalis but other Oromo-speaking groups (some of which self-identified as ethnic Oromos).⁵⁰ Beyond its appeal to Oromo-speakers dissatisfied with Ethiopian rule, SALF’s political goals and territorial claims were poorly defined. As Markakis observes, “SALF had the haziest notion of the territory it claimed. Its sketchily drawn maps included the provinces of Arsi, Bale and Sidamo. Among other problems, this created a *prima facie* conflict with the WSLF, which also claimed most of Bale and southern Sidamo.”⁵¹ Despite this, the SALF still attracted several

⁴⁷ Tareke, “The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited,” 639.

⁴⁸ Lockyer, “Opposing Foreign Intervention’s Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars,” 186; Hagmann, “Punishing the Periphery,” 727.

⁴⁹ Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 200–201; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 210; Tareke, “The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited,” 639.

⁵⁰ F. Adugna, “Overlapping Nationalist Projects and Contested Spaces: The Oromo-Somali Borderlands in Southern Ethiopia,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5, no. 4 (01 2011): 775, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2011.642540>; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 210–11.

⁵¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 211.

“prominent Oromo nationalists,” to its leadership including Waqo Gutu Usu who had previously fought in the Oromo rebellion in Bale in the 1960s.⁵²

Returning to the WSLF, it began its insurgency in southeastern Ethiopia during the early months of 1976, with an estimated force of 3,000 to 5,000 guerrillas under the command of Somali army officers.⁵³ Although “substantially aided and abetted by Somalia,” the WSLF also enjoyed a great deal of local support among the Somali population of Ethiopia.⁵⁴ For instance, Gebru Tareke claims, “The pastoral/nomadic Somali population of the lowlands universally and enthusiastically embraced the fighters.”⁵⁵ While this population’s support for the WSLF was partially attributable to its ethnic and economic ties to Somalia, another contributing factor was their alienation from the Ethiopian state under both the imperial and revolutionary regimes.⁵⁶

Local resentment of the Ethiopian regime created a friendly sea throughout the eastern lowlands in which the WSLF freely swam.⁵⁷ In addition, the WSLF was able to grow its numbers dramatically in the first few months with “recruits from the frustrated and alienated pastoralists.”⁵⁸ These recruits came not only from the Ogaden countryside, but also from the refugee camps in Somalia, where many Ogaden Somali had resorted to escape famine and the policies of the Ethiopian state.⁵⁹ Indeed, many WSLF recruits were drawn from Somalia’s relief camps - and would be trained and armed in Somalia before being sent across the border into Ethiopia.

⁵² Waal, *Evil Days*, 70.

⁵³ Lockyer, “Opposing Foreign Intervention’s Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars,” 188; Tareke, “The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited,” 640–41; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 211.

⁵⁴ Robert F. Gorman, *Political Conflict on the Horn of Africa* (New York, N.Y: Praeger, 1981), 63.

⁵⁵ Tareke, “The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited,” 641.

⁵⁶ Tareke, 641.

⁵⁷ Lockyer, “Opposing Foreign Intervention’s Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars,” 188.

⁵⁸ Waal, *Evil Days*, 74. See also: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 211.

⁵⁹ Lockyer, “Opposing Foreign Intervention’s Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars,” 188–89.

By the end of 1976, the WSLF could boast great success in terms of both recruitment and territorial control. At that point, the Ethiopian government estimated there were 30,000 WSLF guerrillas operating in the Ogaden with the assistance of 6,000 Somali observers.⁶⁰ Rebels were operating not only throughout Hararghe, but also in parts of Bale and Sidamo. Moreover, by year's end, the WSLF had driven most of the Derg government's officials and forces out of the countryside and into the few garrison towns in the region.⁶¹ The WSLF had also made progress toward its goal of clearing Amhara settlers from the region - executing brutal, indiscriminate attacks to this end.

While the SALF began its insurgency only a few months after the WSLF, it did not experience nearly the same level of success. The main difference was the SALF's inability to secure popular support. Gebru Tareke explains this failure:

But as the guerrillas penetrated into the non-Somali inhabited uplands, popular support began to diminish... Whereas the WSLF was warmly welcomed by the Ogadenis and the Hawiya of Bale, the SALF's appeal to ethnic and religious sentiments mostly fell on deaf ears. It failed to rally Oromo peasants, who saw little reason to take up arms against a government that had just abolished the tenancy relations that had oppressed them for nearly a century. Lacking the incentives and means to mobilize the peasantry and its resources, the SALF resorted to the use of terror, including press-gangs, torture, and wanton destruction of property. Through its brutal actions, the front thus alienated the very people it sought to liberate.⁶²

In short, the SALF didn't find support and recruits among the Oromo because this population had not been alienated by the Derg regime as had their Somali counterparts. Quite the opposite, the Derg's initial policies brought them favor among the Oromo peasantry. In this case, it was the SALF that triggered alienation, which was directed against the rebellion due to its coercive

⁶⁰ Lockyer, 189.

⁶¹ Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 640-41; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 211.

⁶² Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 641.

and destructive behavior toward civilians. As a result, the Oromo generally rallied behind the Ethiopian state against the SALF and especially against Somalia's invasion in 1977.⁶³

As for the WSLF, it continued to make gains during the first half of 1977. Highly mobile, the WSLF used hit-and-run tactics, to demoralize the Ethiopian army, which was increasingly confined to the garrison towns.⁶⁴ The WSLF also engaged in economic sabotage by strategically destroying bridges and sections of railway lines crucial to Ethiopia's commercial imports and exports.⁶⁵ Finally, in the early summer, the WSLF even began attacks and sieges on some of the garrison towns.

From early 1976 to mid-1977, "the WSLF developed into one of the largest and most capable insurgent movements in Africa."⁶⁶ Though much of this success was thanks to the logistical and organizational support provided by Somalia, it was not reducible to it. For one, the relative failings of the simultaneously sponsored SALF demonstrated that external sponsorship could not completely compensate for a lack of local support. For another, Somalia's support was conditional on the WSLF's results and "grew in proportion with the insurgency's successes."⁶⁷ But Somalia's increased support of the WSLF also came at the cost of increased government control. Its management of the WSLF would only deepen as the government increased its commitment to the conflict.

⁶³ Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," 54–55.

⁶⁴ Lockyer, "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars," 189; Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 642; Gorman, *Political Conflict on the Horn of Africa*, 62.

⁶⁵ Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 201; Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 642; Gorman, *Political Conflict on the Horn of Africa*, 62.

⁶⁶ Lockyer, "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars," 187.

⁶⁷ Lockyer, 188. See also: Gorman, *Political Conflict on the Horn of Africa*, 61–62.

Somalia's decision to commit regular troops to the war in the Ogaden came when the WSLF guerrillas proved unable to capture the main garrison towns.⁶⁸ It began in June when small numbers of regular Somali National Army (SNA) units - with their insignias removed - were sent across the border into the Ogaden. Combining with these SNA units, the WSLF began employing more conventional tactics against the garrison towns.⁶⁹ Even then, the garrison towns held out against assault. Within the next several weeks, Somalia transitioned to a full-scale invasion including mechanized units and air support.⁷⁰ By the end of the summer of 1977, the WSLF's insurgency had transformed into a conventional interstate war between Somalia and Ethiopia.

Unlike the other rebellions against the Derg, the WSLF and SALF insurgencies were, in large part, organized by an external power. The government of Somalia not only trained and equipped many of the rebels but was directly involved in their founding and leadership. President Siad Barre even personally attended the inaugural meeting of the WSLF in January 1976. While partially pressured to organize the insurgency by refugee groups alienated by Ethiopian policies, Siad Barre's regime was also motivated by the window of opportunity created by revolutionary Ethiopia's apparent weakness and the Derg's preoccupation with other threats, as well as the need for a political alliance with the Ogaden clan. There are therefore additional factors in this case that, even in the absence of grievances from Ethiopian policies, would have still led to the formation of the WSLF and the SALF and the beginning of armed rebellion.

⁶⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 211.

⁶⁹ Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 642-43; Lockyer, "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars," 191.

⁷⁰ Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 644; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 211; Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 201.t

Conceding that, what Somalia's sponsorship of the WSLF and the SALF cannot adequately explain is why the WSLF, but not the SALF, became a major peripheral rebellion with broad support. Here, the differential impact of early revolutionary policies on the Somali and Oromo appears to have played a prominent, if not the deciding, role. First, the level of state intrusion on the Somali was high during this period. As with the imperial regime immediately prior to the revolution, the Derg continued to administer Ethiopia's Somali areas through military rule with little to no Somali in positions of authority. This was most apparent in the RRC's relief camps, where Somalis were subjected to such restrictions as curfews and limits on movement in and out of the camps.

Polarization was also high among the Somali during this period of Derg rule. Again, this constituted a continuation of the alienation of the Somali population under the imperial regime. However, it was particularly under the Derg that the famine and the subsequent relief program were used as a means of undermining Somali pastoralism and culture in favor of settled agriculture. These negative aspects of the program were sufficiently repugnant to Somali men that they stayed away from the camps to keep control of their herds. All of this differed dramatically from the impact of initial revolutionary policies in Oromo areas (where the SALF sought to get a foothold). Among Oromos, the 1975 land reform represented liberation from conditions of serfdom and produced strong support for the Derg.

Consequently, while the Somali faced a common threat to their way of life from Ethiopia's policies, both imperial and revolutionary, the Oromo perceived no such threat under the Derg's early reforms. The threat to the Somali attracted the pastoralists and refugees to join the ranks of the WSLF, even though its founding was largely influenced by the Somalia regime's

own interests. The lack of a unifying threat kept the Oromo from joining the SALF even though several of its leaders were bona fide Oromo nationalists.

7.1.3 War, Counterinsurgency and Abandonment of Rebellion (July 1977-1991)

Once Somalia committed regular forces through invasion, which steadily advanced for the first few months, the WSLF's preparatory purpose was fulfilled. With victory presumably near, Siad Barre's regime took several steps to assert its authority over the WSLF so that it could not make a bid for independence or autonomy.⁷¹ First, the WSLF's central committee was moved to Mogadishu and forbidden from going to Ethiopia. Those committee members who protested were purged from the committee and Urdoh, the deputy general secretary, was placed under arrest. Second, leaders of WSLF guerrilla units were called back to Somalia where several of them were arrested for attempting to set up local administrations in conquered areas. Third, any local WSLF administrations in existence were replaced by government-appointed administrations headed by army officers. Finally, rather than remaining in their liberated home territories, WSLF fighters were sent to the front lines "where they served alongside regular army units, but without pay."⁷² That Somalia felt the need to engage in these actions demonstrates that the WSLF was not a mere proxy or auxiliary force, but indeed an organization with its own political aspirations that included some degree of autonomy for the Ogaden.

Now marginalized, the WSLF played no pivotal role during the interstate Ogaden War, which did not last long. After its rapid advance during the summer of 1977, Somalia's forces were slowed to a stalemate by Ethiopia's forces, which rallied behind the Derg regime either out

⁷¹ For a detailed discussion, see: Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 201–2; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 211–12.

⁷² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 212.

of patriotic duty or, especially in the case of the Oromo, a genuine stake in the revolution.⁷³ The stalemate was then broken in early 1978 when Soviet and Cuban assistance provided Ethiopia with the means to drive Somalia's forces out of the country. As occurred in 1964, Somalia again sued for peace with Ethiopia in 1978.

After Somalia's army was driven out and the Ethiopian army withdrew from the Ogaden, the WSLF quickly reestablished its presence in most of the lowland Somali areas.⁷⁴ The WSLF continued to receive some support from the Somalian government, but this was now "scaled back to only include indirect military and economic assistance," whereas most of the WSLF's "logistics had to be obtained from the sympathetic, or intimidated, civilian population or captured from the Ethiopian forces."⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the WSLF conducted guerrilla operations "for the next two years, at times reaching a high level of intensity."⁷⁶ Although SALF also committed to fight on, its "operations proved more illusory and were confined primarily to hit-and-run episodes."⁷⁷ The SALF was also plagued by defections, including the defection of much of its leadership to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in August 1980.⁷⁸

The resurgence of the WSLF in the Ogaden during the late 1970s prompted a major counterinsurgency campaign from the Ethiopian government. Beginning in 1980, the Derg's counterinsurgency involved two main strategies. First, the Derg aimed to drain the WSLF's sea of supporters through the forcible displacement of Ethiopia's Somali population.⁷⁹ While some

⁷³ Tareke, "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited," 663; Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," 55–56; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 212.

⁷⁴ Waal, *Evil Days*, 82.

⁷⁵ Lockyer, "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars," 193–94.

⁷⁶ Henze, *Layers of Time*, 303.

⁷⁷ Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," 57.

⁷⁸ Waal, *Evil Days*, 82.

⁷⁹ Lockyer, "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars," 194; Waal, *Evil Days*, 83–84.

Somalis were compelled to flee across the border into Somalia, most were subjected to the Derg's first villagization program. Unlike the later national program which was justified as a means of greater service provision, the villagization of the Somali population was unambiguously about isolating the WSLF from its civilian supporters. Second, the Derg deployed 60,000 troops in Operation Lash to clear the Ogaden of WSLF guerrillas.⁸⁰ Far from selective, the military's offensives "attacked all people and economic assets remaining outside the shelters and protected villages."⁸¹

In this case, the revolutionary state's repression worked, and the Somali rebels were effectively driven from the country. Afterward, the Derg again imposed a military administration to maintain its hold over the region: "The Somali region in Ethiopia remained under emergency military rule until 1991, administered by the commanding general in Harar through his deputy in Kebridahar, and Cuban soldiers were stationed there for several years. Few Somali were appointed to local office in the region, and their tenure was short."⁸²

Facing eradication in Ethiopia, the WSLF attempted to regroup in Somalia. In February 1981, WSLF leadership held a congress in which it declared its political objective to be self-determination for the Ogaden and named Abdi Urdoh as the new general secretary.⁸³ It was a short-lived moment of autonomy from Siad Barre's control.⁸⁴ The government of Somalia soon

⁸⁰ Lockyer, "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars," 194–95; Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 202.

⁸¹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 84.

⁸² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 214.

⁸³ Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 202–3; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 213. See also: "Third Congress of WSLF," *Somali, Tigray and Oromo Resistance Monitor (STORM)*, March 1981, 9, David D. Laitin papers, Box 21, Hoover Institution Archives.

⁸⁴ This autonomy is evident in the interviews which Urdoh and other WSLF leaders conducted during this period. See: Anthony J. Hughes, "Mohamed Diriye Urdoh Secretary-General of the Western Somali Liberation Front," *Africa Report; New York* 26, no. 3 (May 1, 1981): 15–16; "Interview with W.S.L.F.," *Somali, Tigray and Oromo Resistance Monitor (STORM)*, June 1981, David D. Laitin papers, Box 21, Hoover Institution Archives.

reasserted its authority by purging the WSLF's leadership and, in May 1982, incorporating the WSLF into the Somali Defense Force on the border.⁸⁵ As a result, the WSLF effectively became a "phantom organisation."⁸⁶ While a disgruntled faction broke off in 1984 to create the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) to fight for self-determination, it did not begin executing attacks until after the Derg was overthrown.⁸⁷ The final nail in the coffin for the WSLF was the signing of a peace accord in April 1988 wherein Somalia renounced its claim over Western Somalia and both it and Ethiopia agreed not to sponsor insurgent groups in the counterpart's country.⁸⁸

7.2 Oromo

The Oromo are the largest ethnic group in the country. Under the imperial state, the Oromo peasantry provided labor to Amhara landlords "in conditions of quasi-serfdom."⁸⁹ Threatened by Amharization, Oromo intelligentsia sought to cultivate an Oromo national consciousness. The Mecha-Tulema Self-Help Association, founded in the early 1960s, was developed for such a purpose. Fearing Oromo mobilization, the imperial regime banned this organization and arrested most of its leadership. Efforts were made by some Oromo to organize an ethnonationalist insurgency against the regime, but these failed to take shape prior to the revolution.

⁸⁵ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 215–16; Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 202–3.

⁸⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 213.

⁸⁷ Hagmann, "Punishing the Periphery," 727–31.

⁸⁸ Lockyer, "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Warfare in Civil Wars," 195; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 213–14.

⁸⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 6.

Initial Derg policies were highly beneficial to the Oromo. The 1975 Land Reform abolished the feudal system in which the Oromo peasantry were exploited. The *zamatcha* helped redistribute land and organize peasant associations in which local Oromo were elected to positions of leadership. Previous policies designed to suppress Oromo language and culture were abandoned. Oromo elites held offices at all levels of the regime and Oromo-led organizations, such as MEISON, found favor with the Derg. As a result, disaffection toward the Derg was quite low among the Oromo during the first years of the new regime.

Some Oromo nationalists remained committed to fighting for self-determination and formed the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in June 1976. However, in the absence of a population alienated by the regime, the OLF struggled to organize an armed rebellion. Despite representing the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, the OLF was eclipsed by the insurgency being waged in the Ogaden and the Derg paid little attention to it.

It was not until later Derg policies triggered resentment among the Oromo, that the OLF found itself able to wage a viable armed insurgency. The Derg's agrarian policies impoverished the Oromo peasantry. The regime purged the peasant associations, replacing their elected leaders with appointed regime loyalists. Villagization uprooted peasants from their homes and decreased their productivity. The result: "Oromo peasant youth... began to drift to the OLF."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Markakis, 198.

Table 7.2: Variable Values and Predictions in Oromo Case

Time	State Intrusion	Peripheral Polarization	Cross-Cutting Threat	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
1974-1976	Medium	Low	Absent	No Rebellion	No Rebellion (though OLF forms in this period)
1977-1979	High	High (in eastern Ethiopia)	Vertical and Horizontal	Rebellion	Rebellion (OLF but small peasant support)
1980-1991	High	High (in western Ethiopia)	Vertical and Horizontal	Rebellion	Rebellion (OLF with stronger peasant support)

7.2.1 Before the Revolution

The largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, the Oromo constituted 40% of the country's population on the eve of the 1974 revolution, at least according to a language survey conducted in 1970.⁹¹ The territory inhabited by the Oromo "stretches north from the Kenya border to central Ethiopia, almost as far east as Harer, and then westwards through the Addis Ababa region nearly to the frontier with Sudan and South Sudan, as well as up the escarpment to eastern Welo and southern Tigray."⁹² The vast majority of the Oromo dwell in the highland periphery where they practice settled agriculture, though there are also some Oromo pastoralists in the lowland zones.⁹³ In different parts of Ethiopia, the Oromo tend to embrace different religious belief systems. In general, the Oromo in the east are Muslim, those in the west are protestant Christian, and those in Shoa are Orthodox Christian.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 128.

⁹² Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 22.

⁹³ Waal, *Evil Days*, 65; Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," 11.

⁹⁴ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 23–24.

Despite its relative size and central position in the agriculturally rich areas of Ethiopia, the Oromo have historically been dominated by the “Shewan Amhara state” of the northern highlands.⁹⁵ Importantly, this domination has been more cultural than ethnic, especially in Shoa where ethnic Amhara and Oromo heavily intermarried. As Alexander De Waal notes, “In terms of descent, the group that became politically dominant in Shewa (and subsequently in Ethiopia) was a mixture of Amhara and Oromo; in terms of language, religion and cultural practices, it was Amhara.”⁹⁶ In order to “become Ethiopian” and achieve upward mobility Oromo had to assimilate to Amhara culture.⁹⁷ John Young outlines this process of Amharization:

Assimilation... was furthered by the practice of non-Amharas (primarily Oromos) taking Amhara personal names which for the next generation became their last names. Amharisation was virtually complete if the individual in question also spoke Amharigna, accepted the Orthodox Church, and assumed Amhara manners. On this basis and through political marriages and alliances Oromo nobles started becoming important political leaders and generals in Shoa, and in time many commoners were also assimilated. The result is that there are few Amharas, particularly among those from Shoa who lived on the border lands of the Oromos, that do not have some Oromo blood in them...⁹⁸

Oddly enough, this meant that many of the Amhara landlords that exploited the Oromo peasantry in the south were actually part-Oromo themselves.

As discussed in chapter five, much of the highland periphery was subjected to the *neftegna-gabbar* system during imperial rule. Under this system, Amhara settlers (*neftegna*) from the north would be “given grants of land, with accompanying rights to extract produce from the local population.”⁹⁹ The group most adversely affected by this system were the Oromo peasants (*gabbar*), who were obligated to provide labor and pay taxes to the *neftegna*. Similar to

⁹⁵ Waal, *Evil Days*, 66.

⁹⁶ Waal, 55. See also: Clapham, “The State and Revolution in Ethiopia,” 12.

⁹⁷ Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 24–25; Henze, “Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia,” 11.

⁹⁸ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 46–47.

⁹⁹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 66.

other peripheral groups, Italy's occupation in the 1930s provided a brief respite from Amhara domination for the Oromo. "The Italians attempted to win the Oromo to their side by abolishing slavery and the *nafxanya-gabbar* system, restoring some rights to their lands, and introducing the wage system and an Oromo-language radio station," Asafa Jalata writes before concluding, "but all these were eliminated when Ethiopian colonialism was restored."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, following the restoration of Emperor Haile Selassie, the *neftegna-gabbar* system was not only reinstated, it was expanded. Especially during the first half of the 1960s, the imperial regime provided many land grants to northern settlers, thereby increasing the eviction and exploitation of Oromo peasants and pastoralists.¹⁰¹

Frustration over the inflow of Amhara settlers, the penetration of central government authority which they represented, and the increased taxation by both, provoked an Oromo rebellion in Bale in 1963.¹⁰² Beginning as "spontaneous and scattered resistance," the rebellion in Bale evolved into a "loosely organized guerrilla struggle" under the leadership of Waqo Gutu Usu, a minor Oromo chief.¹⁰³ Throughout the 1960s, the fighting in Bale intensified with the rebels receiving critical support from Somalia.¹⁰⁴ As the rebellion wore on, the Ethiopian government increasingly engaged in heavy-handed strategies in order to destroy the rebels and undercut their popular support. When these strategies failed to end the rebellion, "the government declared amnesty and remitted the taxes for that area for the period 1952-1966."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict 1868-1992*, First Edition edition (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, US, 1993), 154.

¹⁰¹ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 32; Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," 30.

¹⁰² Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," 30; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 76; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 32.

¹⁰³ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 158.

¹⁰⁴ Waal, *Evil Days*, 67; Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," 30; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 76.

¹⁰⁵ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 32.

These concessions were sufficient for many Oromo peasants, and the conflict was resolved in 1970.

However, in the early 1970s, another rebel group was formed in the highlands of Haraghe and Bale. Organized by Sheik Hussein Sura and including some of Waqo Gutu's rebel fighters, the Ethiopian National Liberation Front (ENLF) "aimed to unite all the oppressed nationalities in Ethiopia in a common movement based on a revolutionary socialist programme."¹⁰⁶ But the ENLF struggled to get a foothold in the area and had only a minimal presence before the revolution in 1974.¹⁰⁷

While some Oromos were fighting against the Ethiopian army, others were filling its ranks, with Oromos accounting for 40% of enlisted men in the early 1970s.¹⁰⁸ Oromo representation among the officers in the military was markedly less, especially when compared to the Amhara. Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux report, "Oromos made up 21 per cent of officers of the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and above... with Amhara representing 65 per cent of the top officers."¹⁰⁹ Discrimination against Oromos was also evident in the education system where Oromos accounted for somewhere between 10% and 20% of the university student population between the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹¹⁰ Similar to the TPLF, the OLF's leadership would come from these university students, which were both radicalized by the student movement and drawn to ethnonationalism as a response to their clear underrepresentation in the educated class. Emblematic of the Oromo students' awareness of the discriminatory system in

¹⁰⁶ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 76. See also: Waal, *Evil Days*, 69; Henze, "Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia," 33.

¹⁰⁷ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 195.

¹⁰⁸ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 72; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 43.

¹⁰⁹ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 72.

¹¹⁰ Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 58; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 194.

which they struggle to thrive was the pamphlet, “The Oromo: Voice Against Tyranny,” which asserted, “No Oromo can rely on his ability, qualifications, or even hypocrisy to attain material wealth or self-aggrandizement because the racist regime considers him as its dangerous enemy.”¹¹¹

But Oromo national consciousness did not solely develop among the university student associations, it also grew through the establishment of Oromo self-help associations. In the early 1960s, the imperial government permitted the Oromo to establish community associations to organize and sponsor local development projects.¹¹² In 1962, several of these smaller self-help associations merged to form the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association.¹¹³ Asafa Jalata details the aspirations of this association:

There were two levels of objectives of the association: first, the establishment of schools and health clinics and the construction of roads wherever they were needed in Oromia; second, the construction of churches and mosques for Christian and Muslim believers who did not have them and the provision of financial and legal assistance for disabled and unemployed persons. The first set of objectives was aimed at improving the welfare of the Oromo nation; the second aimed to mobilize the Oromo nation toward a common goal by undermining the colonial policy of divide and rule on the bases of religion, class, and region.¹¹⁴

While the goals and actions made the Macha-Tulama Association popular among the Oromo, according to one source it had over 2 million registered members, its attempt to develop a pan-Oromo consciousness and its criticism of government policies soon drew the ire of the imperial regime.¹¹⁵ In 1966, the government used “the pretext of a bomb explosion in a cinema in Addis Ababa” to accuse the leadership of the Macha-Tulama Association of sedition.¹¹⁶ Most

¹¹¹ Quoted in: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 194.

¹¹² Markakis, 194; Waal, *Evil Days*, 66.

¹¹³ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 155–57; Waal, *Evil Days*, 69; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 32.

¹¹⁴ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 155.

¹¹⁵ Jalata, 156.

¹¹⁶ Waal, *Evil Days*, 69. See also: Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 156–57.

of the leadership was imprisoned and two leaders sentenced to death. The association itself was thereafter banned. Discussing the government's extreme response, Markakis opines, "The ruthless suppression of the Matcha Tulama Association in the second half of the 1960s revealed the centre's dread of anything that might help the Oromo overcome their politically crippling divisions."¹¹⁷ In summary, in the years before the revolution, the Oromo had demonstrated a dangerous potential for ethnonationalist mobilization thus far kept at bay by the discriminatory and suppressive policies of the imperial state.

7.2.2 Land Reform and Oromo Empowerment (1974-1976)

There was arguably no ethnic group that benefitted more from the revolution, at least in the short term, than the Oromo.¹¹⁸ First, the Oromo were well represented in the Derg, as well as in organizations affiliated with the regime. Initially, Derg leadership included many Oromo officers. Most visibly, Tafari Bante served as Chairman of the Derg from November 1974 to February 1977.¹¹⁹ Oromos also increasingly filled the ranks of the security forces more generally. By 1977, Halliday and Molyneux estimate that around 60% of the Ethiopian army and 80% of the country's militia were Oromo.¹²⁰ Moreover, Oromo intellectuals also held prominent positions in the radical organizations that allied themselves with the revolutionary government, including the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON) and the Revolutionary Struggle of the Oppressed Masses of Ethiopia (ECHAAT).¹²¹ Finally, Oromo were also "well represented among those appointed to office at all levels under the new regime, and the cadre ranks in the

¹¹⁷ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 194.

¹¹⁸ In fact, Halliday and Molyneux suggest that some of the Shoan Amhara regarded the Derg's policies as being "too conciliatory" towards the Oromo. See: Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 165.

¹¹⁹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 69; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 195; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 93.

¹²⁰ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 196.

¹²¹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 70; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 195; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 127.

periphery were filled with Oromo who were prepared to take up the role of a subordinate elite.”¹²²

Second, the Derg lifted several governmental policies and practices that discriminated against the Oromo language and culture. To begin with, the regime changed the ethnic group’s “official designation from the derogatory ‘Galla’ to the more acceptable ‘Oromo.’”¹²³ Where the Oromo language had previously been banned from public, official use, it was now legally permitted in speeches and publications. Relatedly, Dawit Wolde Giorgis recalls, “In December 1974 the Military Council decided to devote a timeslot to programing in the Oromo language on national radio. The three dominant languages, Tigrinya, Amhara, and Oromo, now all had programs at the national level.”¹²⁴ Additionally, Muslim and Christian holidays were now recognized equally.¹²⁵ Lastly, celebrations of Oromo culture were tolerated, thereby triggering what Markakis terms a “cultural renaissance... in the making.”¹²⁶ During this period, the Derg permitted these expressions of Oromo identity so long as they did not articulate any demands for self-determination.

Third, and most crucially, the 1975 Land Reform, including the creation of peasant associations, liberated and empowered the Oromo peasantry, which had been previously suffered exploitation under the *neftegna-gabbar* system. Indeed, the Oromo peasants are accurately portrayed as the main beneficiaries of the land reform. Upon hearing the decree, many Oromo peasants took it upon themselves to evict (and, in some cases, kill) the *neftegna* and seize their

¹²² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 195.

¹²³ Waal, *Evil Days*, 69.

¹²⁴ Giorgis, *Red Tears*, 88.

¹²⁵ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 196.

¹²⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 195.

land for redistribution.¹²⁷ When the *zamatcha* students arrived in the south to organize peasant associations, the Oromo peasants flocked to join them.¹²⁸ During this period, the peasant associations fulfilled many functions and generally served as a genuine form of local self-administration. As Alexander De Waal finds, “In the south, most of the PA leadership originally consisted of local people elected with much popular support.”¹²⁹ Consequently, the Derg accrued “great political capital in the Oromo areas,” especially among the peasantry, due to the 1975 Land Reform.¹³⁰

This is not to say that the land reform was without detractors among the Oromo. Some took issue with the fact that the Ethiopian state now asserted ownership while only allocating usage rights to the peasantry. For instance, one official from the Oromo Liberation Front complained: “individual Amhara landlordism has been replaced by collective Amhara landlordism. The state, which is the collective property of the Amhara colonialists, is the landlord and our peasants are its tenants.”¹³¹ Overall, though, the Oromo peasantry recognized the change as a great improvement over their previous situation. As Halliday and Molyneux argue, “Since the Oromo peasantry had not perceived themselves prior to the revolution as owning the land they were not threatened by the new system.”¹³²

In summary, the early policies, actions, and even composition of the Derg quickly turned the Oromo into stakeholders of the revolutionary government and made them “optimistic about the establishment of fundamentally different relations between the Amharas and other oppressed

¹²⁷ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 105.

¹²⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 195.

¹²⁹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 70.

¹³⁰ Waal, 70.

¹³¹ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 120.

¹³² Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 105.

national groups.”¹³³ The benefits of these policies for the Derg were two-fold. In addition to securing the regime “widespread support in the highland periphery,” these policies also “took the wind out of the sails of incipient Oromo nationalism.”¹³⁴ Accordingly, while the Oromo Liberation Front still formed during this period, it struggled to attract recruits and supporters. It is to this opposition organization’s founding that I now turn.

The organizational origins of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) roughly parallel those of the TPLF discussed earlier. In the years prior to the revolution, Oromo students were involved in the radical Ethiopian student movement in Addis Ababa. Some of these students formed “clandestine Oromo study circles,” which then “developed into political groups... and began to produce and distribute political pamphlets agitating for revolution and decolonization of Oromia.”¹³⁵ Following the revolutionary collapse of Haile Selassie’s regime, and especially after it became clear that the Derg did not intend for their rule to be transitional, these Oromo student radicals decided to prepare for armed struggle.¹³⁶ The most important of these Oromo groups was Bakalcha, which “became the intellectual core of the Oromo Liberation Front.”¹³⁷ Considering Derg rule as but another iteration of Amhara domination, the Bakalcha group made contact with Oromo guerrillas, remnants of the ENLF, which had established a small presence in the Charchar mountains in 1973 under the leadership of Elemo Qilixxu.¹³⁸ Following a series of secret discussions, this alliance of Oromo intellectuals and guerrillas developed a political

¹³³ Kumssa Asfaw, “Ethiopia, Revolution, and the National Question: The Case of the Oromos,” *Journal of African Studies; Washington, D.C., Etc.* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 20.

¹³⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 195.

¹³⁵ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 122.

¹³⁶ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 73; Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 164.

¹³⁷ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 122.

¹³⁸ Jalata, 164–65; Waal, *Evil Days*, 70.

program in October 1974.¹³⁹ Later, in June 1976, a group of thirty of these Oromo dissidents met in Addis Ababa to officially establish the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and its political program (revised from the October 1974 version).¹⁴⁰ It was also at this point that the OLF officially launched its armed struggle against the Ethiopian government.¹⁴¹

The political program of the OLF was fairly simple. It presented Ethiopian rule over the Oromo as that of a colonial power. The solution was self-determination for the Oromo to be achieved through armed struggle. The OLF's objective was to establish an independent People's Democratic Republic of Oromia, "a state whose boundaries were drawn to include all of central and southern Ethiopia, save the Ogaden and South Omo regions; an expanse inhabited by many groups other than Oromo."¹⁴² Beyond that, the OLF expressed ambitious aspirations for a democratic revolution in Oromia, but provided little in terms of a concrete plan or clear ideology.¹⁴³

Although the OLF established its political program and announced its armed struggle during this initial period of the revolution, it struggled to secure support and recruits and failed to reach the threshold of an armed conflict. As Mulatu Wubneh and Yohannis Abate observed, "in spite of the large number Oromo that it claims to represent, the OLF has failed to arouse much interest in Oromo separatism, and its sporadic guerrilla activities are confined mostly to small locales in the Harerge and Arsi regions."¹⁴⁴ Along similar lines, Paul B. Henze claimed that the

¹³⁹ Some mark this as the founding of the OLF. See: Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 198; Waal, *Evil Days*, 70.

¹⁴⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 195–96.

¹⁴¹ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 198.

¹⁴² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 196. See also: Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 194, 198; Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 165.

¹⁴³ See discussion in: Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 166.

¹⁴⁴ Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 73.

OLF had “little on-the-ground strength in Ethiopia,”¹⁴⁵ while Christopher Clapham stated, “attempts by Oromo... to mobilise ethnic identities against the central government have achieved nothing remotely approaching the success of the opposition movements in the north.”¹⁴⁶

Several factors seem to account for the inability of the OLF to develop an effective rebel movement, especially in these early years. First, the structural conditions of the Oromo were obstacles to the development of a national identity and effective political organization, specifically that the ethnic group is spread across several parts of Ethiopia and characterized by regional, religious, and linguistic divisions.¹⁴⁷ Second, the OLF struggled with poor organizational leadership and infighting, which kept it from consolidating and focusing on its fight with the Derg.¹⁴⁸ Finally, and most importantly, the Derg’s early policies generally benefitted the Oromo population, especially the peasantry who were liberated by the land reform and empowered by the peasant associations.¹⁴⁹ That this final factor had the largest (albeit not absolute) impact on popular participation in the OLF’s insurgency is made evident by its growth in the ensuing periods (discussed below) when revolutionary policies instead alienated the Oromo peasantry.

The absence of peripheral rebellion during this period, despite the OLF’s attempts to mobilize one, is explained well by my theory. First, while the state’s policies did disempower the *neftegna* and *balabbat*, they were replaced at the community level by local, popularly support peasant association leaders. Rather than mere extensions of the central state, the peasant

¹⁴⁵ Henze, “Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia,” vi.

¹⁴⁶ Clapham, “The State and Revolution in Ethiopia,” 13.

¹⁴⁷ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 167; Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 197; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 73–74; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 197.

¹⁴⁸ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 167.

¹⁴⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 197.

associations established among the Oromo during this period were ceded significant authority to carry out self-administration. The level of state intrusion during this period is therefore coded as medium.

Second, the level of peripheral polarization among the Oromo during the first few years of Derg rule was unambiguously low. The Oromo peasantry were the main beneficiaries of early revolutionary policies, especially the 1975 Land Reform. Moreover, even Oromo elites generally profited from early Derg policies which gave them greater access to government positions. As a result, there was scant interest in rebellion. Quite the contrary, the Oromo quickly demonstrated their willingness to defend the revolution by joining the army and militia forces.

Third, while an alliance of radical intellectuals and a small rebel holdover from the imperial period forged the OLF during this period, there was no unifying threat to impel the peasantry into its ranks. The Oromo masses simply did not perceive the Derg as a continuation of Amhara domination in the way the OLF did. This would begin to change during the Ogaden War of 1977-1978.

7.2.3 War, Leadership Purges, and Extractive State Policies (1977-1979)

The OLF's efforts to build an insurgency in the highlands of southeastern Ethiopia were quickly complicated by the activities of the WSLF and SALF. Admittedly, the war over the Ogaden brought the OLF some benefits early on. For instance, the withdrawal of government administrators and troops from rural areas provided the OLF greater freedom of movement, which eased efforts at recruitment.¹⁵⁰ In addition, the influx of modern weapons into the region,

¹⁵⁰ Markakis, 196–97.

from both the Ethiopian government and the Somali infiltrators, provided the OLF with greater access to arms.

However, the WSLF and SALF also presented the OLF with direct competition. Not only did the operations and territorial claims of these Somali rebels overlap with the areas where the OLF was working to establish a foothold but also, in the case of the SALF, they sought to appeal to the same constituency. With the backing of Somalia, the Somali insurgents were also better equipped and trained than their OLF counterparts. The troubles for the OLF only became worse when Somalia decided to commit regular troops to the region in the summer of 1977.

Caught between the opposing government forces of Ethiopia and Somalia, the OLF suffered “attacks from all sides”¹⁵¹ and, in the process, “lost some leaders, fighters, supporters, and sympathizers.”¹⁵² Arguably just as damaging, the war “blurred the image the Oromo nationalists were striving to project by confusing it with pan-Somalism.”¹⁵³ Naturally, the OLF’s mobilization against the Ethiopian government at the same time, and in the same place, as Somalia’s annexationist war suggested a shared objective, even if the OLF had not also expressed solidarity with the WSLF.¹⁵⁴ The OLF’s poor timing hurt it in the short run as the Oromo population generally rallied behind the Ethiopian government to defend their country and the revolution that had empowered them.¹⁵⁵

But the loyalty of the Oromo majority to the Ethiopian government was not reciprocated. During the first phase of the war, Ethiopia experienced a humiliating wave of defeats at the

¹⁵¹ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 168.

¹⁵² Jalata, 167.

¹⁵³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 196.

¹⁵⁴ Gorman, *Political Conflict on the Horn of Africa*, 64.

¹⁵⁵ Henze, “Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia,” 57.

hands of the Somali forces. To account for these failings, the Derg accused the Oromo population of subversion. Mohammed Hassen elucidates:

During the Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977... Ethiopian administration collapsed everywhere in Harerge province. The demoralized, disgraced, frustrated, and defeated Ethiopian army, police, and bureaucracy blamed their defeat on Oromo farmers who allegedly acted as a Trojan horse for the invading Somali forces. Oromo farmers were made the convenient scapegoat for the army and the Amhara administration, in an effort to repair their damaged morale and pride.¹⁵⁶

These accusations were not mere rhetoric. In their wake, thousands of Oromo peasants in the contested regions of Hararghe, Bale, Sidamo, and Arsi suffered victimization, including imprisonment and death, at the hands of the Ethiopian government.¹⁵⁷ In another devastating reversal for the Oromo, the Amhara *neftegna* of the area were rearmed and became (again) the central regime's local agents and enforcers.¹⁵⁸ The former landlords were swift in their reprisals against the local Oromo population. Through these actions, the revolutionary regime began to sow resentment among the Oromo of southeastern Ethiopia.

In 1977 and 1978, the Derg also conducted a campaign of leadership purges to centralize its authority and remove any who might impede its revolutionary agenda. This frequently entailed the removal of Oromo representatives. In discussing the purges in the political center, Halliday and Molyneux affirm, "The successive leadership purges of the regime followed a constant pattern as one supposed representative of the Oromo after another was removed: Teferi

¹⁵⁶ Mohammed Hassen, "Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo: A Historical Assessment of Human Rights Conditions in Ethiopia, ca. 1880s–2002," *Northeast African Studies* 9, no. 3 (2002): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nas.2007.0013>.

¹⁵⁷ Hassen, 24.

¹⁵⁸ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 196; Hassen, "Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo," 24.

Benti in February 1977, ME'ISON in August 1977, ECHA'AT in the summer of 1978, and two PMAC members who were tried in July 1980.”¹⁵⁹

The revolutionary regime then shifted its attention to the peasant associations in the state's peripheries. As explained earlier, peasant associations had been enthusiastically established by the Oromo throughout southern Ethiopia, where they were headed by locally elected leaders. In 1978, the Derg coercively replaced these popular peasant association leaders with individuals appointed by - and answerable to - the central government.¹⁶⁰ Asafa Jalata describes this change among the Oromo, and its intent:

The formation of farmer associations facilitated the implementation of... colonial policies... The organized farmers became a passive instrument of Colonel Mengistu's regime, and his administrators reorganized their leadership whenever and as much as they wanted. Colonial administrators determined who should be farmer leaders and who should not—those farmers who were manipulable were picked to be leaders—by creating pressure groups among the farmers.¹⁶¹

Consequently, while peasant associations still existed at the local level, the Oromo peasants were now “denied a role in making key political and economic decisions that affected their lives and so were reduced to passive instruments implementing others' policies.”¹⁶²

Now firmly under the control of the central government, the Derg used the peasant associations to implement and enforce the extraction of agricultural surplus and conscripts from the Oromo peasantry. Oromo farmers were now required to sell their produce to the state's Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) at below-market prices.¹⁶³ The peasant associations ensured that farming households met their quotas. This surplus extraction came with little to no

¹⁵⁹ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 197.

¹⁶⁰ Waal, *Evil Days*, 70.

¹⁶¹ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 140.

¹⁶² Jalata, 138.

¹⁶³ Jalata, 137–39.

government support for agricultural development. Henze summarizes the response to these agrarian policies among the Oromo:

Grievances are mounting in the south and southwest. Though the region has not been seriously affected by famine and though agricultural productivity in many parts of it remains relatively high, there is growing dissatisfaction with regime land and procurement policies. Resistance to them takes the form of passive resistance to “socialism,” i.e., avoidance of government economic controls, resort to semilegal or illegal channels for selling agricultural produce, especially coffee, the country’s main foreign exchange earner.¹⁶⁴

The Derg also heavily extracted conscripts from the Oromo population to fill the ranks of the army and militia. In the early years of the revolution, many Oromos had willingly joined the security forces to defend the revolution that had benefitted them. Over time, however, this enthusiasm soured for at least two reasons. First, battle casualties mounted rapidly among Oromo conscripts, since they were given minimal training before being deployed to combat. Second, the wars they were asked to fight became less about securing the nation from foreign threats and more about quashing internal dissidence. Accordingly, as Oromo conscripts did - and did not - return home, the eagerness of the population to fight for the revolutionary state diminished, while its disillusionment grew. The fact that the Derg increasingly resorted to coercive means of conscription, which were enabled and manipulated by its peasant association agents, stirred even greater resentment among the Oromo.¹⁶⁵

In summary, beginning in 1977, the Derg’s policies began to deeply alienate the Oromo - the very ethnic group that had preliminarily been the revolutionary government’s greatest beneficiaries and most willing allies. As a corollary, the Oromo Liberation Front, despite its

¹⁶⁴ Henze, “Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia,” 66. See also: Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 197.

¹⁶⁵ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 197; Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 138–40.

rough start, began to amass supporters and recruits in the late-1970s, as affirmed by Alexander De Waal:

In Ethiopia, a series of events in 1977-8 conspired to increase popular support for the OLF. These included the purge of MEISON, which brought an end to hopes of a negotiated compromise with the government, the purge of the Peasant Association (PA) leadership, government declarations of intent to collectivize agriculture, the resettlement of Amhara farmers in Oromo areas, the enforced use of the Amharic alphabet in the literacy campaign, and the brutality of the 1978 counter-offensive by the army.¹⁶⁶

Similarly, Asafa Jalata writes that “the expansion of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)” in the provinces of Hararghe, Bale, and Arsi, was “prompted by the unpopularity of colonial government policies (such as conscription, increased produce extraction, and the subordination of farmer associations to the regime).”¹⁶⁷

It was during this period that the OLF reached the battlefield casualty threshold of an armed conflict. More than that, by 1980 the OLF insurgency had become a real concern for the Derg, with reports of heavy fighting between the OLF rebels and the Ethiopian army.¹⁶⁸ The regime responded to the OLF’s increased strength in the southeast with an aggressive counterinsurgency involving villagization and military operations.

It is important to recognize, however, that the OLF remained much smaller and less effective than its Tigrayan and Somali counterparts during this period. Although the OLF sought to establish a centralized organization, first by forming a central committee in September 1977 and then by holding a congress in April 1978, it was plagued by “an unending series of splits”

¹⁶⁶ Waal, *Evil Days*, 81–82. Halliday and Molyneux also cite the Derg’s literacy campaign among the Oromo as a cause for resentment. See: Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 197.

¹⁶⁷ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 140.

¹⁶⁸ For example, see: “The Oromo Liberation Front Engages the Dergue,” *Somali, Tigray and Oromo Resistance Monitor (STORM)*, March 1981, 10, David D. Laitin papers, Box 21, Hoover Institution Archives.

which diminished its ability to “establish a credible armed presence within the country.”¹⁶⁹ In the absence of these internal divisions, it is likely that the OLF would have seen even greater gains from the disaffection produced by Derg policies.

Nonetheless, my theory is well-equipped to explain the onset of peripheral rebellion during this period as the Oromo peasantry began to actively support the OLF. First, the Derg’s purge of the peasant association leadership shifted the level of state intrusion to high. Whereas the peasant associations were previously institutions of self-administrations, they were now mere instruments for the implementation of the revolutionary regime’s policies.

Second, the level of polarization among the Oromo was likewise high. The arming of the *neftegna*, extraction of surplus through the AMC, coercive conscription, and outright violence against Oromo peasants all deeply alienated the population against the revolutionary state. This resentment was all the more keenly felt since the early years of the revolution had done so much to improve the condition of the Oromo. The beneficiaries during this second period were essentially limited to those appointed as peasant association leaders and the Amhara *neftegna* that were reinstated as the regime’s local enforcers. As expected by my theory, this resentment not only produced passive resistance, but also a motivation to rebel.

Third, the threat of Amhara domination under the Derg was now accepted by the Oromo peasantry as well as the intellectual-led OLF. Indeed, the Derg’s policies had threatened the Oromo at all levels, especially as the effects of leadership purges extended from within the Derg itself to small, rural communities. The OLF provided the disaffected an organization to support and join in order to rebel against Derg rule.

¹⁶⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 196.

7.2.4 Villagization, Anti-Clerical Policies, and Expansion in the West (1980-1991)

To combat the growing OLF insurgency in southeastern Ethiopia, the Derg began to implement villagization among the highland Oromo of the region.¹⁷⁰ Similar to its use among the Somali to curtail the WSLF, this villagization program was designed to deny the rebels access to recruits, supplies, intelligence, and other forms of support by concentrating the local population in state-controlled villages. The pattern of where and when villagization was enforced among the Oromo was primarily determined by the level of OLF activity and tended to coincide with military operations against the rebels. For instance, villagization was first implemented in Bale and Sidamo from 1979-1982 when these were “the locus of SALF and OLF activity.”¹⁷¹ Later, in October 1984, the nationwide program of villagization was initiated in Hararghe, where the OLF had become more active.¹⁷²

Enacted by the military in these insurgent areas, the villagization program was unambiguously coercive. Alexander De Waal describes the program’s forcible implementation in Hararghe: “Village leaders and Moslem religious teachers were detained (and sometimes executed) while army units instructed the villagers to relocate to a new site. Exemplary punishments were meted out to objectors, including mass public executions. Existing villages were burned, crops were often burned too, and cattle were stolen or killed.”¹⁷³ The personal account given by an Oromo refugee further illustrates the authoritarian manner in which villagization was employed:

The army came and started burning everything... they took us to a place far from our homes and told us to make houses... We worked five kilometers from our

¹⁷⁰ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 140.

¹⁷¹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 89.

¹⁷² Waal, 231.

¹⁷³ Waal, 232.

homes, but if we complained, they beat us. Also we didn't have any doctors and only dirty water, but we couldn't say anything... Every time we harvested our crops, we had to give them to the government, and they gave us our rations.¹⁷⁴

In response to this villagization program some Oromo fled from the region, seeking refuge in either a neighboring country or in those areas that had been "liberated" by insurgent groups.¹⁷⁵

With most of the Oromo population in the east confined to security villages, and others leaving the area altogether, the OLF's support system in the region was greatly diminished by the mid-1980s.¹⁷⁶ The OLF also suffered direct attacks on their eastern strongholds, as the Derg committed thousands of troops to the region in the early 1980s.¹⁷⁷ This combination of military operations and aggressive villagization effectively suppressed the OLF's insurgency, with one report in 1986 claiming, "Militarily the OLF hardly exists in the east now."¹⁷⁸

Meanwhile, however, the OLF had established a new, firmer foothold in western Ethiopia. This was initially facilitated by friendly relations with bordering Sudan, which allowed the OLF to open an office in Khartoum in 1978.¹⁷⁹ But it was not until 1981-1982 that the OLF began conducting activities in the region, beginning in western Wallega.¹⁸⁰ Once it began, its presence quickly grew. By 1986, the OLF claimed that it had successfully "strengthened its hold in many provinces" in the western region.¹⁸¹ Both the OLF's delayed start in the west and its

¹⁷⁴ Waal, 90.

¹⁷⁵ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 169. According to one report, the OLF not only advised Oromos to escape the area, but even used some of its own guerrillas to lead these refugees to Somalia. See: "Ethiopia: Opposition Disintegration?," *Africa Confidential* 27, no. 16 (July 30, 1986): 6.

¹⁷⁶ "Ethiopia: Opposition Disintegration?," 6.

¹⁷⁷ Waal, *Evil Days*, 82. See also: "The Oromo Liberation Front Engages the Dergue," 10.

¹⁷⁸ "Ethiopia: Opposition Disintegration?," 6. See also: Waal, *Evil Days*, 353.

¹⁷⁹ Tadesse, *The Generation - Part II*, 472; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 197.

¹⁸⁰ Waal, *Evil Days*, 321; Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 168-69. See also: "Military Communique" (Oromo Liberation Front (O.L.F.), September 1, 1986), Ethiopian subject collection, Box 2, Hoover Institution Archives.

¹⁸¹ "Military Communique," September 1, 1986.

rapid growth there in the 1980s are largely explained by the Derg's implementation of revolutionary policies in the region.

Preoccupied with the civil and interstate wars it was waging in the north and east, the Derg's attention only turned to the west once these conflicts had subsided in 1978. It was at this point that the Derg engaged in an anti-clerical campaign designed to eliminate the influence of the Mekane Yesus Church (and other protestant churches) in Wallega.¹⁸² Notably, while the Derg began this campaign at the behest of MEISON, which viewed Mekane Yesus as a "rival for local popularity," the revolutionary regime perpetuated and intensified this "anti-religious crusade" even after cracking down on MEISON itself.¹⁸³ The effects of the Derg's anti-clerical policies on the protestant Oromo of western Ethiopia were progressively alienating. First, beginning in 1978, church property began to be confiscated. Second, in June 1979, Gudinaa Tumsa, a well-known pastor and general secretary of the Radio Voice of the Gospel, was arrested, and later murdered by the regime.¹⁸⁴ Third, in February 1980, 400 Oromo women, including Gudinaa Tumsa's wife, Tsehai Tolessa, were imprisoned. Fourth, from May to December 1981, "300 Mekane Yesus churches were closed, and 600 pastors and other church workers arrested."¹⁸⁵ Finally, in the place of religious activities, the population was pressured into participating in literacy classes and other government-organized meetings.

These anti-clerical policies were successful in shutting down almost all of the congregations of Mekane Yesus by 1984.¹⁸⁶ However, they also stoked deep disaffection toward the Derg among the Oromo of western Ethiopia. Consequently, although the OLF had only a

¹⁸² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 187; Waal, *Evil Days*, 321; Tadesse, *The Generation - Part II*, 472.

¹⁸³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 187.

¹⁸⁴ Markakis, 187; Waal, *Evil Days*, 321.

¹⁸⁵ Waal, *Evil Days*, 321. See also: Tadesse, *The Generation - Part II*, 472.

¹⁸⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 187.

small presence in Wallega when it began operating there in 1981, “the conditions were right... for resistance to grow.”¹⁸⁷ The OLF took advantage of the population’s resentment of the Derg to rapidly expand its numbers and presence in the area.

With the OLF insurgency expanding in western Ethiopia during the 1980s, the Derg introduced two revolutionary policies designed to curtail the rebellion. First, the Derg resettled peasants from northern and central Ethiopia to the west and southwest. In the north, as discussed earlier, this resettlement program was used to remove potential TPLF supporters from Tigray. In the south it also served a counterinsurgency function, as resettlement sites were strategically placed - and settlers armed and equipped - to provide the regime a bulwark against the OLF.¹⁸⁸

Robert D. Kaplan explains further,

Many of the new sites in fact had been successfully farmed for years before the indigenous inhabitants had their land expropriated by the state to make way for the new arrivals. The rationale for this seemingly irrational act was military and political: most of the sites were located along access routes used by the Oromo Liberation Front in its war against the government. Thus, not only would the Tigrean rebels in the north be deprived of their base of peasant support, but so would the Oromo rebels in the south. Moving people around became another way to prosecute a war.¹⁸⁹

The use of resettlement as a counterinsurgency strategy was not lost on the OLF. In a military communique on September 1, 1986, the Oromo Liberation Front criticized the program, stating, “It is to check the OLF progress there that the colonial regime in Addis Ababa targeted Wallaga for huge resettlement of famine victims in Northern Ethiopia, who once there are duely integrated into the government security forces. In addition, a constellation of military outposts

¹⁸⁷ Waal, *Evil Days*, 321.

¹⁸⁸ Waal, 211–12; Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 139.

¹⁸⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, *Surrender or Starve: Travels in Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008), 129.

are created in recent years to counter the expanding OLF military and political influence in the region.”¹⁹⁰

Second, the Derg now carried out villagization in the western and southern parts of the country. As it had done in the east, the Derg first introduced villagization in those areas where the insurgency was most active. Alexander De Waal outlines its implementation in the west:

Villagization began in Wollega in late 1985, and was implemented in the adjoining provinces starting the following year. The program was linked to the construction of roads, and relocation near army garrisons. The program in western Wollega was implemented with thoroughness and coercion... Western Wollega was unusual in that villagization was also accompanied by enforced collectivization... Outside the insurgent zones... the villagization campaign in southwest Ethiopia was... implemented with an implicit threat of violence, but with little actual force used.¹⁹¹

Importantly, then, the villagization program not only affected Oromo areas where the OLF was already prevalent. It was also used outside of conflict zones as a means of improving the state’s ability to control - and extract from - the peasantry in its peripheries.

As with resettlement, the OLF openly disparaged the Derg’s villagization program. In a military communique on November 15, 1987, the OLF decried, “The Oromo people face the brunt of the regime’s fascist policies. Millions of our people are being dislocated and herded into camps like cattle, under the so-called villagization scheme... Our people are being robbed more and more to quench the ever increasing and expanding needs of the fascist bureaucracy.”¹⁹²

Although the OLF certainly had an interest in painting these revolutionary policies in a negative light, it is clear that villagization were generally resented by the Oromo peasantry.

¹⁹⁰ “Military Communique,” September 1, 1986.

¹⁹¹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 325.

¹⁹² “Military Communique” (Oromo Liberation Front, November 15, 1987), 2, Ethiopian subject collection, Box 2, Hoover Institution Archives.

While some Oromo communities still submitted to villagization, others used various methods to resist its implementation. Tadesse Berisso's discussion of the response among the Guji Oromo of southern Ethiopia is illustrative:

Guji farmers were totally against villagization because of the nature of the programme in general and the way it was planned and implemented in particular. They started opposing it from the very day they were told about it. When they were later forced to implement it, they resorted to various kinds of violent and non-violent methods of resistance. Some individuals and families fled their peasant associations in order to evade the programme. Others made the implementation difficult by refusing (or delaying) the clearing of bushes from the sites where the villages were supposed to be built, by cultivating and sowing crops on the sites selected for villages and by displacing the marks made by designers on the sites. In some peasant associations, farmers contributed money and bribed officials not to select their area for villagization. There were also individuals who went to the extent of threatening designers and implementation authorities with armed force... Because of such resistance, authorities in *Jam Jam awraja* themselves resorted to force to villagize peasant farmers and to make them stay in the villages.¹⁹³

Unlike its previous use in eastern Ethiopia during the early 1980s, the Derg's national program of villagization, including in western and southern Ethiopia, failed to suppress the rebellion. Instead, it drove many Oromo peasants to join the ranks of the OLF.¹⁹⁴ By the late 1980s, the OLF had not only expanded its operations in the west, but even reestablished an active presence in eastern Ethiopia. Recalling this period, Wolde Dawit Georgis, a former Derg official, writes, "The eastern highlands of Harar were infested by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) which had on several occasions opened fire on villages and looted our supplies. Western Wollega was also unsafe because of OLF activity. The OLF operated especially in the border areas, but was also known to attack towns and military barracks in the hinterlands of the

¹⁹³ Tadesse Berisso, "Modernist Dreams & Human Suffering: Villagization among the Guji Oromo," in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, ed. Wendy James et al. (Oxford, England : Addis Ababa : Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 122.

¹⁹⁴ "Ethiopia: Opposition Disintegration?," 7.

province.”¹⁹⁵ By 1990, the OLF was capturing territory in the west and expanding it liberated zones in the southeast.¹⁹⁶ However, when the Derg regime fell to the EPRDF the following year, the OLF remained outside the winning coalition, which had instead created its own group to represent Oromo interests: the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO).¹⁹⁷

During this final period, the OLF’s insurgency against the Derg went through a dramatic change. In the early 1980s, while the OLF was effectively suppressed in the east, it established a new stronghold in the west. The government’s efforts to similarly suppress the OLF in this region through resettlement and villagization in the mid-1980s failed. By the late-1980s the OLF was as popularly supported and strong as it had ever been. The resilience and growth of the OLF are best explained by the intrusive and polarizing policies employed by the Derg during this period.

First, the level of state intrusion remained high. Peasant associations continued to serve as instruments for implementing top-down policies. In addition, the Derg’s assault on the pastors of Mekane Yesus removed a potential rival for local authority in Wallega.

Second, the polarization of revolutionary policies among the Oromo reached a high level first in the west with the anti-clerical campaign, and then throughout Oromia with resettlement and the extremely unpopular villagization program. There were little to no beneficiaries of Derg policies, which now fundamentally threatened the lives and livelihoods of the Oromo. By the end of the 1980s, the level of alienation was critically high. Markakis asserts:

By this time also the regime’s policies had squandered its credit with a peasantry, whose sons it had used as cannon fodder for years; whose produce it had

¹⁹⁵ Giorgis, *Red Tears*, 309–10.

¹⁹⁶ Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, 180.

¹⁹⁷ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 199; Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 113–14.

commandeered at starvation prices; whose patience it had exhausted with disastrous scheme, such as collective farming, villagisation and resettlement, and whom it had harassed for long with demands for contributions to the war effort. *Kebele* officials could no longer meet conscription quotas, and Oromo peasant youth in the west began to drift to the OLF.¹⁹⁸

Third, though the OLF continued to struggle with internal divisions, it provided sufficient organization to lead and arm Oromo dissidents. Its surge in recruitment from the mid- to late 1980s is attributable not only to peasant disaffection building over years of deleterious policies, but especially by the simultaneous threat posed by villagization which threatened to upend the lives of Oromo peasants throughout Ethiopia. Thus, as the Derg engaged in the highest level of threatening disruption, the OLF insurgency dramatically increased in size and strength.

7.3 Alternative Explanations and Conclusion

In this section, I address the applicability of the three main rival explanations in explaining the cases of the Somali and Oromo. First, the transition to direct rule provides very little explanatory leverage in these two cases. This is because direct rule at the group level had already essentially been established during the imperial period. By the time of the revolution, the Somali of the Ogaden were already being subjected to military administration. This military rule continued after the revolution. As for the Oromo, although they had their own *balabbat*, these were all subordinate to the Amhara *neftegna* officials in the region. There were no Oromo leaders analogous to the Afar's Ali Mirah or Tigray's Mengesha Seyoum. Though Oromo representation increased dramatically at all levels immediately after the revolution, there was no return to indirect rule at the group level. In short, direct rule significantly preceded the revolution

¹⁹⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 198.

among these two groups and therefore can do little to explain the rebellions that broke out in the years after the Derg seized power.

Second, the state weakness argument does much to account for the WSLF and SALF insurgencies, but is more mixed in explaining the OLF rebellion. Somalia's decision to help organize and sponsor the WSLF and SALF was heavily driven by its belief that the weakness of revolutionary Ethiopia provided a window of opportunity for Somalia to annex the Ogaden. The Somali rebels were used as preliminary and preparatory forces with that end in mind. Notably, this was not Siad Barre's only consideration - there was also pressure from refugee groups and the opportunity for a political alliance with the powerful Ogaden clan - but Ethiopia's relative weakness was still a main determinant. However, while opportunism explains Somalia's involvement, it does less to account for the participation of Ethiopian Somalis in the rebellion and, by extension, the divergent levels of success of the WSLF and SALF. In terms of the participation of the peripheral population, the Ethiopian state's alienating policies were critical. While the Somali continued to suffer under Derg policies and thus readily lent their support to the WSLF, the Oromo were greatly benefitted by the Derg's early policies and consequently did not similarly welcome the SALF that was designed to appeal to them.

Turning to the Oromo, the state weakness argument is compatible with the OLF's decision to establish itself first in the Charchar mountains where the state's presence was particularly weak. This was akin to the TPLF's choice of Dedebeit as its starting point. The withdrawal of Derg administration from Oromo areas where the Somali rebels were operating also facilitated the OLF's early movements and recruitment. However, as with the TPLF, operating in areas of state weakness did not guarantee local support. As many Oromo were pleased with the 1975 Land Reform, the OLF initially struggled to secure support among the

rural peasantry. It wasn't until Oromo peasants had suffered from the Derg's extractive policies that they began to provide significant support to the OLF. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the OLF's reestablishment and growth in western Ethiopia in the 1980s occurred after the Derg had begun aggressively asserting its authority there. Thus, while state suppression did succeed in quieting the OLF in the east (for a time), disillusionment with Derg policies in the west gave the OLF rebellion new life.

Third, ethnic exclusion is compatible with some elements of these cases, but not others. Both Somalis and Oromos were excluded from central representation and suffered from discriminatory policies under imperial rule. With the revolution, this exclusion continued for Somalis but was greatly reduced for the Oromo. In fact, the Oromo were so well represented in the Derg regime and prospered by its policies that some Shoan Amhara complained.¹⁹⁹ That the Somali population supported rebellion more promptly than the Oromo would seem to sustain the ethnic exclusion logic. In addition, the growth of Oromo support for rebellion after Oromo representation had been mostly purged from the center lends credence to this explanation.

But there are also aspects of these cases that undercut the ethnic exclusion argument. In terms of the pastoralist Somali, it appears their objectives always centered on either annexation to Somalia, independence, or noninterference, rather than gaining political representation in the central Ethiopian government. As for the Oromo, it is notable that increased representation in the government did not satiate the student radicals that organized and developed the OLF. In addition, while the OLF rebellion grew after Oromo representation in the center was lost, it still failed to become as strong as the TPLF. This poses a puzzle for proponents of the ethnic

¹⁹⁹ Halliday and Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 165.

exclusion logic that claim larger ethnic groups should find it easier to mobilize the population in rebellion. Finally, it is important to recognize that leadership purges in the center were quickly followed by purges and extractive policies among rural Oromo at the local level.

In summary, although state weakness and ethnic exclusion do help explain the Somali and Oromo rebellions respectively, the critical importance of polarizing revolutionary policies remains. The distinct effects of revolutionary policies on the Somali and Oromo primarily account for the rapid success of the WSLF and the struggles of the SALF. As for the OLF, its slow growth and especially its late development in the west are also largely attributable to the Derg's policies.

Chapter 8: Gambella and South Omo

Situated in the far peripheries of the west and south, most of the smaller ethnic groups residing in Gambella and South Omo did not openly rebel against the revolutionary state. In these areas, the presence of the imperial state was generally far weaker and later to arrive than in the other parts of Ethiopia. As transitional zones of agricultural cultivation and pastoralism with varying levels of exposure to the *neftegna-gabbar* system, in some cases even within a single ethnic group, these regions provide a special opportunity to explore how local socioeconomic conditions can affect the reception of revolutionary policies. Whereas the Derg's policies heavily impacted some groups, such as the Anywaa and Aari, others experienced little disruption, such as the Nuer and Hor. The Maale, on the other hand, were essentially split due to a territorially-driven socioeconomic divide. While the Derg's assault on local authorities and customs provoked small, short traditionalist uprisings among some of these groups, it was only among the Anywaa - severely and broadly threatened by resettlement and villagization - that peripheral rebellion emerged in the 1980s. The other groups in these regions either successfully insulated themselves from revolutionary change or failed to unify against the revolutionary regime in the face of state suppression and internal rivalries.

8.1 Gambella: Anywaa and Nuer

The Anywaa (or Anuak) and Nuer inhabit the Gambella region of southwestern Ethiopia. The Nuer are pastoralists, while the Anywaa are sedentary farmers. These two groups have often come into conflict with one another. The imperial regime struggled to exert its authority in

Gambella due to its remoteness and the resistance of the Anywaa to external control. State penetration into Gambella dramatically increased under the revolutionary regime.

Hundreds of *zamatcha* students arrived in Gambella to educate and organize the Anywaa population. Local, traditional authorities were treated as feudal oppressors and replaced with new peasant association leadership. Cultural practices considered backward were banned. These changes were generally welcomed by the young and educated Anywaa, some of whom received offices in the local administration. However, these policies were unpopular among traditionalists, which sought to reinstate their local leaders and chafed under the intrusion of the revolutionary state into their communities. This resentment sparked some violent resistance, but organized rebellion would come later.

The Derg's resettlement and villagization policies heavily impacted the Anywaa. Tens of thousands of highland peasants were resettled in Gambella, fundamentally altering the demographics of the region. The resettlement sites appropriated Anywaa territory and, in some cases, the native population was evicted. The settlers were supported with subsidies and armed by the government, while the Anywaa received little to no benefit. The introduction of villagization among the Anywaa in 1986 inflicted further harm.

Near the end of the 1970s, the Gambella People's Liberation Movement (GPLM) was formed under the leadership of the very Anywaa intelligentsia that had initially welcomed the revolution and collaborated with the regime. The threat posed by the Derg's aggressive program of resettling highlanders in Gambella appears to have been the primary grievance of the GPLM. As resettlement increased and villagization began, the GPLM grew more active.

In sharp contrast to the Anywaa, the Nuer were scantily impacted by revolutionary policies and formed friendly relations with the Derg regime. As pastoralists, the Nuer were not concentrated in the villages the *zamatcha* reached. Their traditional leaders were not targeted by the regime and their livelihood not threatened by its policies. The result was peaceful, even collaborative, relations with the revolutionary state.

Table 8.1: Variable Values and Predictions in Gambella Case

Time	State Intrusion	Peripheral Polarization	Cross-Cutting Threat	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
Anywaa: 1974-1978	High	Medium	Absent	No Rebellion	No Rebellion (but small traditionalist uprising)
Anywaa: 1979-1991	High	High	Vertical and Horizontal	Rebellion	Rebellion (GPLM)
Nuer: 1974-1991	Low	NA	NA	No Rebellion	No Rebellion

8.1.1 Before the Revolution

The lowlands of Gambella in the southwestern borderlands of Ethiopia are predominantly peopled by the Anywaa (or Anuak) and Nuer.¹ The livelihoods of these two ethnic groups differ greatly. The Anywaa are primarily cultivators engaged in subsistence agriculture.² They keep very few domesticated animals, but supplement their farming with hunting, gathering, and

¹ Admittedly, this case study focuses primarily on the Anywaa, whom have had more interaction with the Ethiopian state, both imperial and revolutionary, and for whom more information was available.

² Dereje Feyissa, "Power and Its Discontents: Anywaa's Reactions to the Expansion of the Ethiopian State, 1950-1991," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2015): 32.

fishing.³ In contrast, the Nuer are agro-pastoralists whose social and economic relationships revolve around the ownership of cattle.⁴

However, both the Anywaa and Nuer are Nilotic-speaking ethnic groups, which differentiates them from most of Ethiopia's other ethnic groups. Reinforcing this distinction, the lowlanders of Gambella tend to categorize all other Ethiopians, and even the Ethiopian state, as highlanders. Dereje Feyissa explains, “‘Highlanders’ represent not only diverse ‘outsiders’ but also and especially the Ethiopian state itself. The Anywaa accordingly use one word—*gala*—to refer to both highlanders and the Ethiopian state: both have the same cultural identity.”⁵ This conceptualization of the state and outsiders as highlanders, with no distinction between such groups as the Amhara and the Oromo, would play an important role in the responses of the Anywaa to the revolutionary state and its policies.

In order to grasp the impact of the revolution in Gambella, it is also important to understand the traditional authority system of the Anywaa. Political power in this system was concentrated at the community level by nobles (*nyieye*) and headmen (*kwaari*), with each village essentially functioning as an autonomous political unit. While these traditional leaders were accorded “great respect and attention,” their authority within the village was dependent on securing the “voluntary compliance” of the villagers through generosity.⁶ As Eisie Kurimoto observes, “In practice people supported their leaders, paying tribute and offering labour, but only as long as their material needs were met. Therefore, a leader had to continually redistribute his

³ Temesgen Gebeyehu, “Ethnic Conflict, Interaction and Cohabitation in Africa: The Case of Nuer and Anuak,” *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review* 29, no. 2 (June 2013): 99, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eas.2013.0008>; Wubneh and Abate, *Ethiopia*, 133.

⁴ Gebeyehu, “Ethnic Conflict, Interaction and Cohabitation in Africa,” 98; Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 32.

⁵ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 32.

⁶ Gebeyehu, “Ethnic Conflict, Interaction and Cohabitation in Africa,” 99.

wealth (partly collected from supporters and partly looted from outside) in order to maintain his power.”⁷

The primary resource that *nyiye* and *kwaari* used to secure supporters was their access to the limited supply of *dimui*, blue glass beads used to pay bridewealth. Dereje Feyissa details how this worked:

The nobles and headmen’s *dimui* was considered to be public property, insofar as these offices served as redistributive centers for *dimui*-poor families. In return for their crucial support in helping poor people marry, the *nyiye* and the *kwaari* could build a constituency based on their networks of clients. Men without sisters were able to gain access to *dimui*, if only indirectly, by placing themselves in the service of a noble or a headman. When the client had reached the age that entitled him to marry, the patron would assume responsibility for paying the client’s bride wealth. The nobles and headmen were still able to accumulate *dimui* by means of imbalanced reciprocity, to modify Marshal Sahlins’s famous term. While the *nyiye* and the *kwaari* received *dimui* for their daughters’ marriages, they were not required to pay *dimui* for their sons’ marriages; rather, it was the sons’ maternal uncles who assumed responsibility for these payments. This created a one-way flow of the resource on which power was based, filling the treasury of the *nyiye* and the *kwaari*.⁸

Thus, while cattle were central to power among the Nuer, “Anywaa political order centered on the *dimui*.”⁹

While *dimui* was arguably the most important valuable within their society, the Anywaa had access to another resource that was extremely valuable for trade with the Ethiopian highlanders: ivory. In exchange for ivory, the Anywaa acquired large quantities of rifles.¹⁰ By one estimate, the Anywaa had obtained 25,000 weapons by the 1910s.¹¹ The Anywaa first used

⁷ Eisei Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, ed. Wendy James et al. (Oxford, England : Addis Ababa : Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 224.

⁸ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 33.

⁹ Feyissa, 33.

¹⁰ Gebeyehu, “Ethnic Conflict, Interaction and Cohabitation in Africa,” 102; Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 34.

¹¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 156.

this arsenal to stem the threatening migration of Nuer coming from Sudan into Gambella. While this aggravated the British colonial administration in Sudan, which pushed for the disarmament of the Anywaa, the Ethiopian state was initially content with the status quo. As Markakis writes, “Mainly interested in the profits of the ivory trade, the Ethiopian government was inclined to tolerate the assertion of Anywaa power, even their unwillingness to pay tribute regularly, until they went too far.”¹² It did not take long.

In 1913, the Anywaa crossed the line by killing an Ethiopian official assigned to Gambella.¹³ Deciding it was time to forcibly impose its authority, the imperial regime deployed a punitive force of 5,000 to subdue the Anywaa.¹⁴ Instead, the intruding force was driven out. In 1916, another attempt was made, this time when Majid Abud led Ethiopian forces in a major military offensive.¹⁵ Though mounting a stiff resistance, the Anywaa were defeated. Even so, by the 1930s, the Anywaa would again draw the ire of the Ethiopian state by conducting raids on the Nuer. In response, the Ethiopian government again conducted punitive campaigns. Thus, in the years prior to the Italian occupation, the Anywaa had engaged in repeated confrontations with the Ethiopian state and put up a strong defense against external authority. In stark contrast, while the Nuer also amassed arms and repeatedly fought the British in Sudan, those that migrated to Gambella “found Ethiopian rule more flexible and, unlike the Anywaa, never challenged it directly.”¹⁶

In the 1940s, with the restoration of Emperor Haile Selassie’s regime in Addis Ababa, the government resumed its effort to secure control over Gambella. New police stations were

¹² Markakis, 156.

¹³ Markakis, 156.

¹⁴ Markakis, 157.

¹⁵ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 34.

¹⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 157.

established in the region, as well as finance offices to collect taxes.¹⁷ Tax payments now had to be made with money, rather than tribute in kind. Both sets of institutions were run by highlanders. Throughout the 1950s, the Anywaa resisted the increased presence of the imperial state. In particular, the police stations were targeted with violent raids led by local *nyieye* and *kwaari*.¹⁸ The village of Pukumu, under the leadership of *kwaaro* Atong Abula, became the epicenter of this revolt. In 1960, the Anywaa rebellion was finally crushed when a security force dispatched from Gore “burned Pukumu village to the ground and renamed it in Amharic Birhaneslam (‘light of peace’).”¹⁹

Afterward, the remaining *kwaari* and *nyieye* were integrated into Ethiopian rule as subordinate *balabbat* and stripped of their village-level autonomy.²⁰ In some regions of Ethiopia, the *balabbat* found their arrangement with the imperial state mutually beneficial. In exchange for their services to the state, they were provided a salary from the government, as well as the opportunity to keep a portion of the taxes that they collected. But this quid pro quo failed among the Anywaa *balabbat*. As one local *balabbat* protested,

We are not paid our salaries for the last three years. There are also no marketing facilities in our areas. As such, our people are forced to sell their produce in the Sudan at unfavorable price. As we use Sudanese pounds we find it difficult to pay tax to the Ethiopian authorities... The Sudan *balabats* mock us —“why are you so poor while the Ethiopian government is rich and powerful.” They ask us how much we earn. When we told them we are not paid yet they wonder why on earth we still wear the *kaba* [Ethiopian cloth worn by government officials]. We feel we are humiliated. We have repeatedly petitioned the government to improve the situation but no result to date. Unlike us who get nothing from the Ethiopian government, even a dog gets a bone when it stands by the gate of his owner without asking for it!²¹

¹⁷ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 34; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 157.

¹⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 157; Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 34.

¹⁹ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 34.

²⁰ Feyissa, 35.

²¹ Quoted in: Feyissa, 37.

Deeply dissatisfied with their positions, the local leaders of the Anywaa again organized for resistance against the Ethiopian government in the early 1960s. They began by allowing Anyanya fighters from southern Sudan to set up bases in Gambella. The Anywaa *balabbat* then mobilized their own fighting force, known as the *bura*, out of local youth from the villages.²² The *bura* and their Anyanya allies quickly became a serious concern for the imperial regime, which established the Gambella Security Group to assess what should be done about the threat. Reporting in 1963, the group provided a series of recommendations:

Before a second Ogaden is created in Western Ethiopia, we should nip the political developments in the Gambella region in the bud. This entails various mechanisms. For one, the armed force in the region needs to be strengthened (from the current 404 to 797 people); a development package needs to be carried out, such as health facilities, schools, roads, motor boats, occasional flights (to Tiergol). In order to ensure the loyalty of the *balabbat*, they need to be salaried, like their fellow officials in the Sudan; occasional visits should be organised to bring them to Addis Ababa and show them some big factories in order to impress them by the grandeurs of imperial power. Besides, to make them similar with the Ethiopian people, evangelists and teachers from the Orthodox Church should be sent, and the activities of the missionaries (the American Presbyterians who sympathise with the rebels) should be regulated.²³

In summary, the Gambella Security Group recommended a mixture of increasing security forces, addressing some of the main grievances expressed by the Anywaa *balabbat*, and assimilating the local population to “Ethiopian” culture - primarily to be accomplished by teachers from the Orthodox Church. Increasing access to a state education in Gambella was certainly part of the solution, especially since existing opportunities were primarily provided by the American Presbyterian Mission and in the refugee camps resulting from the civil war in

²² Feyissa, 35.

²³ Quoted in: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 158. For a slightly different version, see: Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 39.

Sudan.²⁴ Even so, Gambella would not get a secondary school until 1972. Consequently, when the revolution came the Anywaa intelligentsia was still in its early stages of development.

Finally, returning to the Nuer, their relationship with the imperial regime after its reinstatement in the 1940s continued to be vastly different than that of the Anywaa. Markakis notes, “By contrast, the Nuer avoided confrontation with the Ethiopian state, whose local officials were still concerned with winning Nuer loyalty in competition with the British, and bestowed imperial titles to Nuer *balabbat* in the 1950s and 1960s.”²⁵ This was despite the fact that the Nuer also had ties to, and received arms from, the Anyanya rebellion. As this rebellion in southern Sudan intensified, thousands of Nuer refugees fled across the border. In the process, the Nuer “changed the demographic balance in Gambella in their favour,” thereby producing another cause for discontent among the Anywaa.²⁶

8.1.2 Zamatcha and Assault on Traditional Authorities and Practices (1974-1978)

The Derg’s revolutionary policies began to impact Gambella with the Development Through Cooperation Campaign (*zamatcha*), which brought around 500 students to the region.²⁷ For several reasons, the *zamatcha* primarily affected the Anywaa while leaving the Nuer practically untouched. First, and most importantly, the Anywaa were more proximate to the administrative centers where the student campaigners were concentrated, specifically the towns of Gambella and Itang.²⁸ Second, the 1975 Land Reform was more applicable to the Anywaa because they were sedentary cultivators. Third, the Anywaa’s political system of nobles and

²⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 158–59.

²⁵ Markakis, 158.

²⁶ Markakis, 158.

²⁷ Markakis, 220.

²⁸ Markakis, 220; Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 42.

village headmen was more legible and appeared a prime target for class struggle. As a result, “the Anywaa shouldered the brunt of the project in Gambella.”²⁹

On other hand, the Nuer were well insulated from revolutionary change. As Markakis finds, “The initial impact of the Revolution on the Nuer was less evident. The pastoralists lived dispersed in the remote districts of Gambella where the student *zamatcha* did not reach. Their livestock economy was not affected by the reforms enacted in Addis Ababa, nor was their highly diffused system of traditional authority disturbed.”³⁰

Among the Anywaa, the *zamatcha* students set about dismantling the ethnic group’s traditional institutions and practices. Their first targets were the *kwaari* and *nyieye*, including those that had served as *balabbat* under the imperial regime. Branded by the revolutionary students as feudal oppressors, reactionaries and anti-revolutionaries, these local authorities were coercively deposed and replaced by peasant associations.³¹ Cynically referring to the new authority system as “*kwec gel*, leadership legitimated by acquisition of money,” the ousted *kwaari* and *nyieye* warned that the peasant association chairmen would be accountable to the Derg, which had appointed them and paid their salary, rather than to the local people.³² This assertion was presented in contradistinction to their own legitimation by “tradition and patrimony.”³³

Stripped of their political offices, the power of the *kwaari* and *nyieye* was further eroded by the *zamatcha*’s forcible monetization of the local Anywaa economy. While the imperial

²⁹ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 42.

³⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 223.

³¹ Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 225–26; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 220; Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 41.

³² Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 42.

³³ Feyissa, 42.

government had begun this process by requiring that taxes be paid in cash, the Derg's agents now completed the transformation by abolishing the use of *dimui* within Anywaa society.³⁴ To communicate the finality of this change, the revolutionaries dumped the beads into the Baro River. By doing so, the *zamatcha* severed a critical source of influence for traditional authorities that had previously used their unequal access to the finite supply of *dimui* to secure clients in exchange for paying their bridewealth. With bridewealth now payable only in Ethiopian *birr*, and at a price fixed by the revolutionary authorities, Anywaa youth were now free to marry whenever they personally had the means, rather than having to acquire the sponsorship of traditional leaders or elders with access to *dimui*.

These two interrelated revolutionary actions - the replacement of traditional leaders with peasant associations and the abolition of *dimui* - are prominent in the accounts of Anywaa villagers regarding the early days of Derg rule.³⁵ The interpretation of these policies, however, differed widely. Some villagers, such as Abagaala Ulok from Cwobo, pointed to their liberating benefits:

When the change came, this new government came, the revolution (*agem*) took place. ... As this government thought that all people should become one, *nyieye* and *kwaari* were deposed. When they were deposed, the second thing (to be abolished) was *dimui*. ... Now a poor man may get money (and marry), but at that time a poor man could not get *dimui*. People started to marry by money.³⁶

Others, such as Uceri Akwer, the son of a *nyieya*, derided the confrontational, heavy-handed assertion of central authority:

Now, after that this government [the Derg] came and said, 'You stand up from here. Your names are not here at all.' We said, 'Is it like that? Is this a new

³⁴ Feyissa, 41–42; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 220; Kurimoto, "Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa," 225–26.

³⁵ Kurimoto, "Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa," 226.

³⁶ Quoted in: Kurimoto, 226.

government? All right. We are also tired. Here are the things.’ Beads, drums and spears, all the things [royal emblems]... were destroyed, destroyed by commoners. They said, ‘You are thieves. You are those who do things by force. You have spoilt the land. There is no *nyieya* at all. There is no *kwaaro* at all. There is no daughter of *nyieya*. Now the land belongs to us.’³⁷

Further dividing the Anywaa population was the condemnation of Anywaa cultural practices judged as backward by the Derg regime, including initiation scarification and the belief in witchcraft.³⁸ As a long term solution, the revolutionaries promoted assimilation to highlander culture through education as the gateway to local development and progress.³⁹ But in the short run, the forceful prohibition of these practices was considered essential. As one Derg official stated bluntly,

The only way of improving this embarrassing culture... is through education. But until the new generation is educated with the new culture, they would still remain immersed with the old one as long as their parents continue to practice it. We told them how embarrassing and horrible their culture is for us Ethiopians... If it is difficult to force them directly to abandon their culture, it should still be part of the law the violation of which should entail punishment, primarily their leaders who failed to change their respective people.⁴⁰

In short, the Derg’s early policies toward the Anywaa embodied a blend of political centralization and cultural domination.

Nonetheless, the revolutionary regime’s campaign against the traditional authorities, institutions, and practices of the Anywaa found favor among the younger generation of Anywaa, especially the emerging educated class. Viewing the revolution as an opportunity to modernize their communities, “a significant number of educated Anywaa joined the revolutionary camp,” where they then “actively campaigned against traditional dietary practices and initiation rites,

³⁷ Quoted in: Kurimoto, 228.

³⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 220.

³⁹ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 41–42.

⁴⁰ Quoted in: Dereje Feyissa, “Ethnic Groups and Conflict: The Case of Anywaa-Nuer Relations in the Gambella Region” (Ph.D. dissertation, Martin Luther University, 2003), 332. See also: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 221.

which they believed provided conspicuous evidence of backwardness.”⁴¹ For many Anywaa youth, the revolution also promised opportunities for political and social advancement beyond the control of traditional institutions. For instance, with the hereditary *nyieye* and *kwaari* disempowered, the Derg turned to educated Anywaa to fill some of the positions in the local administration.⁴² Additionally, the monetization of bridewealth increased the availability of social advancement via marriage for young Anywaa since previously “many sisterless bachelors (*bouth*) had been unable to marry because of the scarcity of *dimui*.”⁴³ Now, those with sufficient money could marry at their own discretion. The importance of this policy change for the younger generation of Anywaa should not be underestimated. Indeed, as Eisei Kurimoto states, “Young men had difficulties in getting married, which, I believe, was a major motive that drove many to participate actively in the revolution.”⁴⁴

In addition to fostering a generational divide, the *zamatcha*, especially its “revolutionary rhetoric of *chiqona* (exploitation),” tended to resonate more with Anywaa women than men.⁴⁵ This is hardly surprising given the gender inequality embedded in traditional Anywaa practices, such as the requirement that women kneel when serving food to their husbands.⁴⁶ The upending of this traditional system brought with it an increased sense of agency among some Anywaa women, as illustrated in the declaration of a villager from Pijwo: “We [the women] deposed the *kwaari* and we can now talk freely in front of men.”⁴⁷

⁴¹ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 44.

⁴² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 220.

⁴³ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 44.

⁴⁴ Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 228.

⁴⁵ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 44.

⁴⁶ Feyissa, 44; Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 227.

⁴⁷ Quoted in: Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 44.

Finally, while women and youth were the main beneficiaries of the Derg's early policies, the Anywaa population also generally welcomed the revolutionary government's investment in infrastructure and education in Gambella. These developments included the construction of the Baro Bridge in Gambella town and the opening of twelve primary schools throughout the region.⁴⁸ Naturally, instruction at the schools was in Amharigna to facilitate the assimilationist goals of the central government.

Nevertheless, even while many Anywaa welcomed some of the changes brought by the Derg, "the regime's officials found the Anywaa response to the Revolution lukewarm at best."⁴⁹ Of course, some resistance came from those that enjoyed power and privilege under the traditional system, such as the *nyieye*, *kwaari*, and the elderly.⁵⁰ But this was to be expected. More bothersome for the regime was general population's lack of interest in waging class struggle against these apparent feudal oppressors.

Arguably, this was because while the *nyieye* and *kwaari* certainly enjoyed some power and privileges, these rested on customary respect for their offices and their acquisition of clients through *dimui*, rather than an exploitative land tenure system.⁵¹ Indeed, even the revolutionaries' own "History of the Broad Masses of the Gambela District" concedes:

Because the district was large and the population small, there was no shortage of land. The technique of production was primitive and this did not create land shortage. Because their rulers were not capable or interested in surplus production there was little economic exploitation of the scale we find in other parts of the country. It was difficult to convince them of the benefits of the land proclamation

⁴⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 220–21; Feyissa, "Power and Its Discontents," 44–45.

⁴⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 221.

⁵⁰ Feyissa, "Power and Its Discontents," 44.

⁵¹ Dereje Feyissa illustrates the limited privileges enjoyed by these local leaders: "Anywaa traditional leaders hardly qualified for the term 'feudal' in the sense of personified rule or inherited rights: they had exclusive rights to some hunting trophies; did not observe *wudo* (ceremonial respect for various categories of affine relatives followed by ordinary men); did not appear barefoot; and they were greeted with *gunji* (the ceremonial low-bowing posture). But 'these courtesies are to the office, not to the incumbents.'" See: Feyissa, 41.

act too. In order that they become aware of exploitation and take up arms against the balabats, ninety peasants were brought from the highlands. It took three years to prepare the people of Gambella to start the struggle.⁵²

Since the *kwaari* and *nyieye* did not expropriate resources among the Anywaa in anything near the degree that the *neftegna* and *balabbat* did among the Oromo, their deposal through the 1975 Land Reform and *zamatcha* was not perceived by the Anywaa as economic liberation. Instead, it was interpreted as a move against traditional Anywaa culture.⁵³ For some, such as Anywaa youth and some women, abandoning elements of this culture was desirable and the abolition of these traditional offices acceptable. For others, this first attack on their culture began a process of “rude and often violent intrusion into their lives” fueling resentment and resistance.⁵⁴

In 1978, discontent toward Derg policies sparked a small traditionalist revolt, which came to be known as the Jor rebellion. Led by the village chief, *kwaaro* Umed, dissidents drove out the highland teachers at the adult education center in Jor before burning the books within.⁵⁵ Over the next two years, these traditionalist rebels killed several highland teachers and revolutionary guards in the region, burned down schools, even seized control of eight villages in Jor *wereda*.⁵⁶ However, by that point additional Derg policies had begun to alienate the Anywaa population more deeply and generally. Consequently, in the next period, not only would the Jor rebellion pick up steam, but a broader ethnic rebellion would, with the support of Anywaa intelligentsia, form under the Gambella People’s Liberation Movement (GPLM).

⁵² Quoted in: Feyissa, 43.

⁵³ Feyissa, 41.

⁵⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 221.

⁵⁵ Markakis, 221; Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 42.

⁵⁶ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 42.

While this first period did witness the beginnings of a traditionalist revolt in its final year, there was no peripheral rebellion among the Anywaa by the end of 1978. The level of state intrusion among the Among the Anywaa was certainly sufficient to remove insulation from revolutionary policies. Anywaa nobility and village headmen were coercively removed and replaced by peasant association leaders, which were appointed and paid by the Derg. In response, traditionalists complained that the new peasant association leaders were more answerable to the central state than to the local population.

Following this assertion of central control, the revolutionaries implemented a series of policies designed to further undermine traditional Anywaa institutions and practices. These policies produced apprehension and some resistance, especially among those Anywaa empowered under the traditional authority system. However, the level of polarization among the Anywaa was only medium. Both Anywaa youth and many women embraced their expanded social and political opportunities under the Derg's initial rule. Even more generally, Anywaa tended to welcome the development and education made available by the revolutionary state.

Finally, the Derg's policies failed to produce either a common cause among ethnic elites or create a focal point for peasant communities. Instead, these policies produced a clear division among the rising educated elite which eagerly became stakeholders in the new regime and traditionalist villagers that only mobilized against the revolution in 1978. The absence of rebellion during this period thus supports the centrality of alienating policies, not merely state intrusion, in explaining peripheral rebellions against revolutionary states.

8.1.3 Resettlement, Refugee Camps, and Nuer Domination (1979-1991)

Three developments from the end of the 1970s through the mid-1980s overwhelmingly turned the Anywaa against the Derg regime and led to the onset of ethnic rebellion. First, and most importantly, the Anywaa were displaced and dispossessed through the Derg's resettlement and villagization policies. Second, the Anywaa were impoverished and outnumbered by refugees from Sudan, which the Derg hosted in Gambella. Third, the Anywaa were increasingly subjected to Nuer administrators. As disaffection over these policies grew, so did support for - and participation in - rebellion against the revolutionary state.

In the late 1970s, the Derg began several agricultural development schemes in Gambella including an irrigation project and a 2,500ha. state farm for cultivating cotton.⁵⁷ Unlike the previous educational and infrastructural developments in the region, the Anywaa were not beneficiaries of these schemes.⁵⁸ Rather, large numbers of Anywaa farmers were evicted to make way for these projects, while highlander settlers were brought in to work the land. Alexander De Waal reports, "In 1979, 4,000 Anuak and Nuer fled to Sudan, claiming their land had been confiscated by the government."⁵⁹

Parallel to this first round of land confiscations and highlander resettlement in Gambella was a major conscription campaign among the Anywaa. As with the *zamatcha*, the Anywaa's closer proximity to the Ethiopian state made them the primary focus for conscription in the area, while leaving the Nuer relatively unaffected.⁶⁰ Dereje Feyissa explains, "Embroidered in multiple

⁵⁷ Kurimoto, "Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa," 225.

⁵⁸ Fana Gebresenbet, "Land Acquisitions, the Politics of Dispossession, and State-Remaking in Gambella, Western Ethiopia," *Africa Spectrum* 51, no. 1 (2016): 10.

⁵⁹ Waal, *Evil Days*, 334.

⁶⁰ Though, as discussed later in this chapter, the Nuer were targeted for conscription by the SPLA.

wars, the Derg embarked on large-scale drafting of youth into the army, further alienating the Anywaa. Nearer to administrative centers and defined as ‘more Ethiopian’ than the Nuer, the Anywaa were targeted for conscription.”⁶¹ As with other parts of Ethiopia, this military conscription was often carried out coercively. Notably, while many Anywaa were compulsorily recruited to fight outside the region, others were armed by the Derg to form a loyal Anywaa militia in Gambella.⁶²

The combination of these policies deeply impacted the Anywaa. Ugolli Ulwoc, a villager from Cwobo, where the Derg had constructed the aforementioned state farm, expressed the feeling of being caught between conscription and confiscation:

People are caught just like chickens [for National Service, i.e., military service, for which many were recruited by force]. What can we say? It’s just like that... Our fields were taken, our children have nothing to eat... Later fields became only for sowing cotton. The fields by which we fed our children, became nothing. Now we eat hunger for a long time. ‘Guests’ [*welle*, settlers] were also brought by force, brought from over there [highlands]. It is like taking these people over there, to the war over there.⁶³

Discontent toward the Derg would only build in the mid-1980s as the revolutionary state drastically ramped up its resettlement program in the context of a major famine. From 1984 to 1986, the Derg resettled over 60,000 peasants from the highlands to four sites in Gambella: Ukuna, Tata Zuria, Perpengo, and Ubala.⁶⁴ Composed of Amhara, Tigrayans, and Oromo from famine-stricken areas in northern and southern Ethiopia, the Anywaa referred to the resettled highlanders collectively as *Kambaathe*.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 47.

⁶² Waal, *Evil Days*, 334.

⁶³ Quoted in: Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 225.

⁶⁴ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 46; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 221; Waal, *Evil Days*, 335.

⁶⁵ Referencing the region of Kambata, where some of the settlers came from. See: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 221.

Although there were resettlement sites outside of Gambella, it was in this region that the program had the greatest effect on the local demographic balance, as “the proportion of settlers to natives reached 40%, the highest in the country.”⁶⁶ This raised fears among the Anywaa of becoming a minority within their home territory.⁶⁷ As with its precursor in 1979, the four resettlement sites created in the mid-1980s were all located in Anywaa areas but designed to solely benefit the highlander settlers. While the settlers received foreign relief aid and government subsidies, Anywaa peasants were compelled to vacate their farming, fishing, and hunting grounds without compensation or assistance. As Dereje Feyissa observes, “The task of the Anywaa was to cater to their needs, which above all meant appropriation of land and excessive corvée labor.”⁶⁸ Finally, the resettlement program hampered the ability of Anywaa farmers to make a profit on their produce, as the output of the new state farms depressed prices.⁶⁹

Then, in June 1986, the revolutionary regime introduced villagization in Gambella, which included compelling the Anywaa to relocate into integrated villages with the resettled highlanders.⁷⁰ Located along the Baro River, the Baro-Abol Rehabilitation and Support Program (BARSP) was a “mixed integrated resettlement scheme” wherein Anywaa peasants “were forced to join the highlanders in five Peasant Associations.”⁷¹ The new villages have been compared to forced labor camps.⁷²

⁶⁶ Markakis, 221.

⁶⁷ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 46.

⁶⁸ Feyissa, 46.

⁶⁹ Feyissa, 46.

⁷⁰ Waal, *Evil Days*, 335.

⁷¹ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 46.

⁷² Waal, *Evil Days*, 335.

Whereas the resettlement program fostered bitterness among the Anywaa through exclusion and expulsion, villagization exacerbated it through their inclusion and integration.

Uceri Akwer recounts the responses of some of his fellow Anywaa to the integrated villages:

Kambaathe entered among the people. It was said, ‘You, nobody can stay at his home. You mix together with these people [Kambaathe].’ Some people refused and some went [to stay at ‘integrated villages’ together with settlers]... [Then a man said] ‘Is this the way of living?’ A man stood up, returned to his home and said. ‘Cultivation [at home] is better [than at the integrated village]. I have never eaten a tin [relief food]... Today, I have got a government that prohibits me from getting fish. I have got a government that prohibits me from getting wild animals. I have got a government that prohibits me from getting food... Why? Was there any of my grandfathers who ate a tin?’ ... Some villagers fought [against the government] and people died. They were killed.⁷³

As this account illustrates, the policies of resettlement and villagization were interpreted by at least some Anywaa as a direct threat to their livelihood, thereby provoking some to fight.

Further aggravating Anywaa anger towards the Derg was the revolutionary regime’s use of Gambella to host massive numbers of Sudanese refugees in the 1980s. With civil war raging in southern Sudan, refugees began to flow into Ethiopia in 1983. The Ethiopian government settled these refugees, the majority of which were Nuer, into two enormous camps at Itang and Pinyudo (also called Fugnido).⁷⁴ Alexander De Waal estimates that, by 1990, the Itang camp held around 150,000 refugees, while the camp at Pinyudo had around 50,000 to 60,000.⁷⁵ As a result, the Sudanese refugees in Gambella “outnumbered the local inhabitants by a factor of three to one.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, as with the resettlement sites, both refugee camps were placed on Anywaa land.

⁷³ Quoted in: Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 228–29.

⁷⁴ Kurimoto, 221; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 222.

⁷⁵ Both camps had even larger numbers of registered refugees, but this was “due to some having double-registered and others having left the camp but remained on the register.” See: Waal, *Evil Days*, 335–36.

⁷⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 222.

The influx of such a large number of refugees, whom the Anywaa referred to as *Ajwili*, into Gambella had severe repercussions for the Anywaa. As with the highlander settlers, the refugees not only displaced the Anywaa, but also enjoyed access to external resources while the local Anywaa were excluded. As Uceri Akwer, the son of a *nyieya*, lamented, “They [Ajwil] combined themselves with Gaala (highlanders) and said, ‘Anywaa have no place here.’ The money which was given by the people of the world to all people was eaten by them. Anywaa were left outside. It was eaten by Kambaathe, Gaala, Ajwil and Nuer... Now our problem is that the land is being invaded.”⁷⁷

More than that, much of the food aid sent to the region ended up being sold in local markets, which dramatically depressed the prices of agricultural produce beyond the impact already made by the resettlement sites’ state farms. The depreciation became so severe that, for a time, “the price of a quintal of maize fell to three birr, less than the cost of the bag itself (5 birr), forcing local producers out of the market.”⁷⁸ This created a “crippling disincentive to local production,” as Anywaa peasants found it more economical to buy food in the market, rather than cultivate it.⁷⁹ This is illustrated in the following comment from Abagaala Ulok, the villager from Cwobo: “Now people believe in the market... People go to the market and buy things and forget the work at home. Because of the maize which is brought for ‘guests’ (*welle*, settlers and refugees), people have left their work and think about the market.”⁸⁰

Thus, for the Anywaa, the refugee camps and resettlement program primarily produced impoverishment and an increased dependence on foreign imports. These in turn triggered a wave

⁷⁷ Quoted in: Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 229.

⁷⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 222.

⁷⁹ Markakis, 222.

⁸⁰ Quoted in: Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 226.

of social problems previously unknown in traditional Anywaa communities.⁸¹ As Dereje Feyissa notes, the Anywaa experienced “a marked increase in alcoholism,” as well as “the ‘four Ks’: *kac* (hunger); *kwac* (begging), *kap* (prostitution) and *ku* (theft).”⁸² Importantly, Anywaa elites placed the blame for the emergence of these social issues squarely on “the arrival and expansion of the Ethiopian state identified with and represented by the highlanders.”⁸³

Alongside the refugees from southern Sudan, the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) also established a significant presence in Gambella during this period. Though officially denying that the SPLA’s existence on its soil, the Ethiopian government allowed the SPLA to operate freely in this western region.⁸⁴ In fact, the refugee camps, where young men and boys constituted around three quarters of the population, essentially doubled as bases for the SPLA and the group openly recruited among the refugees.⁸⁵ The rebels even set up their headquarters near Itang. The Derg welcomed the SPLA not only as a weapon in its geopolitical competition with Sudan, but also as a tool to keep emerging Anywaa dissidence in check. When Anywaa civilians were victimized by the undisciplined SPLA guerrillas, their pleas to the Ethiopian authorities fell on deaf ears.⁸⁶

The most extreme example was a massacre of Anywaa in Pinyudo village in September 1989.⁸⁷ After a dispute over whether the village market should close for the Ethiopian New Year Day culminated in Anywaa militiamen firing on refugees, a group of refugees armed and

⁸¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 222.

⁸² Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 46. See also: Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 227.

⁸³ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 46.

⁸⁴ Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 221–22.

⁸⁵ Waal, *Evil Days*, 336; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 223.

⁸⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 223.

⁸⁷ Markakis, 223; Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 222.

supported by the SPLA attacked and burned Pinyudo village. At least 120 Anywaa villagers were killed in the attack. Shortly thereafter a different Anywaa militia was wiped out by refugees in Itang. Markakis describes the Derg's response: "The Ethiopian authorities took no action, and no one was punished for these acts. Instead, the Anywaa militia in Gambella town was disarmed and replaced by Nuer."⁸⁸

This ties into the final major source of Anywaa resentment toward the Derg during this period: the revolutionary regime's progressive appointment of Nuer to positions of power in Gambella. Proximate to administrative centers and more assimilated to Ethiopian highlander culture, many of the Anywaa's educated elite expected to be favored over the Nuer in the Derg's selection of local and regional administrators.⁸⁹ Indeed, these same factors had been key in the heavy conscription of Anywaa, rather than Nuer, into the army. Yet, while the Derg initially struck a balance between the Anywaa and the Nuer, by the early 1980s it was clear that the government had selected to administer through Nuer agents. In 1984, Thuat Pal, a Nuer and son of a former *balabbat*, was appointed as the regional representative for the Derg's newly formed political party, the Worker's Party of Ethiopia (WPE).⁹⁰ In 1987, another Nuer, Joshua de Luol, was promoted to chief administrator of the new Administrative Region of Gambella.

Anywaa disaffection was both a partial cause and a definite consequence of the shift to Nuer administrators.⁹¹ In the context of the traditionalist Anywaa revolt in the late 1970s and growing Anywaa discontent over resettlement, the Nuer were considered more "politically

⁸⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 223.

⁸⁹ Feyissa, "Power and Its Discontents," 45.

⁹⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 223; Feyissa, "Power and Its Discontents," 45.

⁹¹ Kurimoto affirms, "The appointment by the central government of Nuer men to two key local posts, the head of administration and first secretary of the Party, was seen by most Anywaa as an attempt to control and oppress them." Kurimoto, "Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa," 222.

reliable.”⁹² It didn’t hurt that Nuer elites could also “serve as a link with the SPLA establishment, which had a strong Nuer component.”⁹³ Nevertheless, by favoring the Nuer, the Derg deeply alienated the educated Anywaa that had previously been among their most stalwart supporters. By the early 1980s, many of these Anywaa intelligentsia had switched sides, even making common cause with the traditionalist dissidents in Jor, to form the Gambella People’s Liberation Movement (GPLM) and rebel against the revolutionary government.⁹⁴

However, while growing Anywaa disillusionment in the 1980s would give life to the GPLM insurgency, its somewhat convoluted organizational origins actually began in Sudan in 1976. Recognizing an opportunity to increase its influence in Gambella, the Sudanese government facilitated the creation of an Anywaa political organization known as the Gambella Liberation Front (GLF).⁹⁵ Through the late 1970s, the GLF “recruited youth on both sides of the international boundary to its military base at Galabal.”⁹⁶ Concurrently, Sudan made contact with the traditionalist rebels in Jor through an intermediary: Ageda Akwei, the foremost *nyieya* of the Anywaa, who happened to be based in region of southern Sudan bordering the Jor district.⁹⁷ As discussed earlier, the dissidents in Jor had started targeting highland teachers, schools, and revolutionary guards in 1978. By 1980, the Jor rebels had even taken control of several villages in the district. The prospect of Sudanese assistance encouraged the traditionalist rebels to further escalate. As Dereje Feyissa reports, “Emboldened by this external support, the rebels caused

⁹² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 223.

⁹³ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 47.

⁹⁴ Feyissa, 45.

⁹⁵ Feyissa, 45.

⁹⁶ Feyissa, 43.

⁹⁷ Feyissa, 43.

more damage to government forces, killing twenty-nine and wounding thirty.”⁹⁸ But this support was short-lived.

With civil war looming in southern Sudan, the GLF fractured. One contingent, which would come to form the core of the GPLM, initially sought to join the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) which had begun operating in Sudan.⁹⁹ Additional educated Anywaa, disillusioned with the Derg, fled to Sudan during this period to join the rebellion.¹⁰⁰ But it quickly became evident that the Anywaa’s political grievances vis-à-vis the revolutionary state did not mesh with those of the OLF. Concerning the Anywaa rebels’ efforts to secure assistance from other insurgent groups, one GPLM leader would later recount:

Then we approached the OLF. After initial welcoming, we disagreed. They defined us as ‘Black Oromo’. They said “we do not have a separate political question.”... We also had contact with the EPLF. They said to us “the political problem in Ethiopia is Amhara colonialism,” but we said our problem is with the Nuer and the *gaala*. There weren’t many Amharas in Gambella, except the *safarai* [settlers] who came recently. What we know were the Oromo. Whatever happened in Gambella it happened through the Oromo. Besides, we did not make a distinction between the Amhara and the Oromo. For us they were all *gaala*... The OLF did not like our position. They said “the main issue was the political system which was created by the Amharas”. For some of us it was not even clear who is Amhara and who is not.¹⁰¹

In the early 1980s, the Anywaa dissidents formed their own resistance group: the Gambella People’s Liberation Movement (GPLM). As Markakis highlights, “Among its founders and future leaders were members of the emerging intelligentsia who had earlier embraced the Revolution and served the Dergue regime.”¹⁰² Now, “inflamed by resettlement,

⁹⁸ Feyissa, 43.

⁹⁹ Feyissa, 45.

¹⁰⁰ “Ethiopia: Opposition Disintegration?,” 7.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 224.

¹⁰² Markakis, 224.

villagization, and the presence of the SPLA,”¹⁰³ as well as their subjection to Nuer officials, these educated Anywaa declared their intention to liberate Gambella from the Ethiopian *gaala* and Nuer domination.¹⁰⁴

By the mid-1980s, the “political alienation of the Anuak had crystallized” to the point that the GPLM was able to carry out “sporadic attacks on Derg establishments in the region.”¹⁰⁵ In 1986 and 1987, the GPLM launched a series of attacks on resettlement sites, integrated villages and police posts in the region.¹⁰⁶ Highlander settlers and government employees were particularly targeted for violence. By the end of the decade, perceived local support for the GPLM was sufficiently high that “the Anywaa were generally considered as anti-government.”¹⁰⁷

The Ethiopian government responded harshly to rebellion among the Anywaa. First, in the early 1980s, the Derg sought to crush the traditionalist rebellion in Jor. Dereje Feyissa describes the regime’s brutal approach:

In February 1982, the Derg organized a large-scale military campaign to put down the Anywaa rebellion. One of the rebel leaders, *kwaaro* Batade Ulaw, was beheaded and the “political trophy” was taken to the district’s capital (Gog) for public display; government authority was thus symbolically reconstituted through state terror. A song was composed to commemorate the victory, and two Anywaa terms were coined to warn of the futility of further resistance: *nyegulaw* (destruction of Ulaw) and *dimjor* (submission of Jor).¹⁰⁸

When the GPLM then became active in the mid-1980s, the Derg again sought to terrorize the Anywaa into submission. Following several GPLM attacks on resettlement villages and a

¹⁰³ Waal, *Evil Days*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 224.

¹⁰⁵ Gebeyehu, “Ethnic Conflict, Interaction and Cohabitation in Africa,” 106.

¹⁰⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 224; Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 48; Waal, *Evil Days*, 335.

¹⁰⁷ Kurimoto, “Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa,” 222.

¹⁰⁸ Feyissa, “Power and Its Discontents,” 43.

police post in April and May 1987, the government retaliated by executing eighty Anywaa in Gambella town.¹⁰⁹ Many others were imprisoned and tortured. Additional counterinsurgent efforts included imposing a strict curfew, arming the highland settlers to act as local militia, and giving the SPLA a free hand in the region. Though Anywaa communities were devastated by the Derg's policies and attempted suppression, the rebellion was not eliminated.¹¹⁰

In 1989, the GPLM reached out to the EPRDF and soon became an affiliated organization.¹¹¹ When EPRDF forces drove the Derg out of Gambella in 1991, the GPLM was granted the central role in administrating the area.¹¹² For their part in collaborating with the Derg, as well as their association with the SPLA, the Nuer lost political influence in the region. Thus, while the GPLM played little part in the defeat of the Derg, it still shared in the spoils of victory due to its open opposition to the revolutionary regime.

What explains the emergence and general support for the GPLM among the Anywaa during this second period? As with the previous period, the level of state intrusion was high. The Derg controlled local administration through the peasant associations, which now included armed loyalist militias. The Derg then went even further by placing Nuer collaborators in positions of authority over the Anywaa. This final point would deeply aggravate the educated Anywaa that had earlier shown a willingness to serve the Derg.

Whereas the revolutionary state's initial policies had appealed to many Anywaa, its implementation of resettlement and villagization during this period were broadly and intensely

¹⁰⁹ Kurimoto, "Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa," 222; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 224; Waal, *Evil Days*, 335; Feyissa, "Power and Its Discontents," 48.

¹¹⁰ For an eyewitness description of conditions among the Anywaa in the late 1980s, see: Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 225.

¹¹¹ Gebeyehu, "Ethnic Conflict, Interaction and Cohabitation in Africa," 106–7; Clapham, *The Horn of Africa*, 75.

¹¹² Waal, *Evil Days*, 335; Gebeyehu, "Ethnic Conflict, Interaction and Cohabitation in Africa," 105; Kurimoto, "Fear & Anger: Female versus Male Narrative among the Anywaa," 230.

resented. Introducing massive numbers of highlander settlers and Nuer refugees into the region was interpreted as directly threatening the way of life of the Anywaa. The forced integration with settlers in integrated villages was blamed for a multitude of social and economic ills. Outside of those serving as the state's agents, such as those in the militia, the Anywaa were deeply alienated to the revolutionary state. While some succumbed to feelings of powerlessness, others were motivated to fight.

While the Derg's policies during the early years had appealed to the educated youth but alienated the traditionalist elders, the regime's later policies created a unifying threat. The GPLM was even founded and led by some of the Anywaa intelligentsia that had originally sided with the Derg. The presence of this opposition organization provided the leadership needed for general rebellion among the Anywaa. Though the Derg and the SPLA kept the GPLM from making a major impact, it still was able to mount enough resistance to become an affiliate of the EPRDF and be given political leadership over the region after the fall of the Derg.

In stark difference to the Anywaa, yet again, were their Nuer neighbors. Mostly untouched by the Derg's alienating policies of resettlement, villagization, and conscription, the Nuer were instead benefitted by the resources available in the regime's refugee camps (to which Nuer, but not Anywaa, had access). Under the Derg, the Nuer also increasingly enjoyed positions of prominence in the region's administration and loyalist militias. Consequently, the Nuer were both insulated from alienating revolutionary policies in their own communities and empowered by the Derg's policies in the region. Thus, the absence of rebellion against the Derg matches the expectations of my theory.

8.2 Overview of South Omo

South Omo, in the southern periphery of Ethiopia, is populated by multiple, small ethnic groups including the Aari, Hor (Arbore), and Maale. Both cultivators and agro-pastoralists are found in this region. The presence of the imperial state in South Omo was limited, though northern settlers (which became feudal landlords) and Christian missionaries did penetrate into the higher elevation zones.

The reach and impact of the revolutionary state varied dramatically across the different ethnic groups in this region. Among the higher elevation communities of the Aari and Maale, the peasantry mostly embraced the *zamatcha*. Traditional leaders were deposed, peasant associations organized, and northern landlords became targets for violence. Those previously educated by Christian missionaries were often the most enthusiastic supporters of the revolution and pursued training to become local administrators. Later Derg policies, including villagization, military conscription, and increased taxation, soured support for the revolution. Even so, organized rebellion failed to occur in these cases, arguably due to powerful memories of state suppression and debilitating intra-group rivalries.

The revolution had far less impact – positive or negative – on the Hor. While representatives of the revolution reached this ethnic group as well, they did so later and in fewer numbers. Untouched by feudalism, revolutionary Derg policies were largely inapplicable to the Hor. Local leaders were able to keep revolutionary officials and other outsiders at arm's length and thereby generally insulate their communities from revolutionary change. As a result, there was no need to rebel against the revolutionary state.

8.3 Aari

Table 8.2: Variable Values and Predictions in Aari Case

Time	State Intrusion	Peripheral Polarization	Cross-Cutting Threat	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
1974-1979	Medium or High	Low	Absent	No Rebellion	No Rebellion
1980-1991	High	High	Vertical and Horizontal	Rebellion	No Rebellion (Resentment and resistance but no rebellion)

8.3.1 Before the Revolution

Residing in one of the higher elevation zones of South Omo, the Aari are primarily sedentary farmers, whose main crops include maize, sorghum, coffee, and ensete. The Aari also keep livestock including sheep and cattle. Historically, the Aari have been politically structured around chiefdoms ruled by ritual kings (*baabi*), which have occasionally warred with one another.¹¹³ Aari society is also characterized by a caste system with rigid, “immutable” boundaries.¹¹⁴ Certain types of relations between the high and low castes are prohibited, such as “sharing a meal or having sex together,” for fear of pollution to members of the higher caste.¹¹⁵

In the late 1800s, the Aari chiefdoms were defeated by the Ethiopian army and the Aari were incorporated into the imperial state. With Ethiopian garrisons established near South Omo,

¹¹³ Naty, “Memory & the Humiliation of Men: The Revolution in Aari,” 60.

¹¹⁴ Naty, 64.

¹¹⁵ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 218.

highlander *neftegna* began to settle area, including among the Aari. As was done among the Oromo, Aari peasants were forced into a subservient relationship with the *neftegna*, which some equated with becoming women or sheep.¹¹⁶ Alexander Naty describes the exploitative system:

With the conquest, an institution of serfdom known as *gebbar sirat* was established, in which Aari families were assigned to imperial soldier-settlers (*neftennya*). Besides paying an annual tribute (in cash as well as in kind), Aari families had to perform labour services for the soldier-settlers. When families failed to pay tribute or perform labour service, their members were taken as domestic slaves. Aari oral history indicated that a considerable number of Aari were taken as slaves when they could not pay tribute or undertake labour services.¹¹⁷

The Italian occupation of the region from 1938 to 1940 brought a welcome, albeit brief, reprieve for the Aari and some actively collaborating with the Italians.¹¹⁸ This backfired when the authority of the imperial Ethiopian state was restored in 1941 and the *neftegna* returned to Aariland. In a period that the Aari called “*aushra dagnia*,” meaning “justice by the gun,” the *neftegna* carried out violent reprisals against the disloyal Aari.¹¹⁹

The restoration of imperial rule in 1941 triggered an additional change for the Aari. As Emperor Haile Selassie sought to reform imperial administration in the periphery, particularly in the hope of increasing the state’s tax revenue, “many former tribute-paying peasants (*gebbar*) voluntarily became tenants (*chisennya*) by moving on to the lands of local landlords.”¹²⁰ The reasoning was simple, the tax burden for *chisennya* was less than for *gebbar*. Ironically, this change further reduced the tax revenue for the central government, while increasing it for the landlords. More importantly, it perpetuated the local domination of the *neftegna* landlords, who

¹¹⁶ Markakis, 153.

¹¹⁷ Naty, “Memory & the Humiliation of Men: The Revolution in Aari,” 60.

¹¹⁸ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 153.

¹¹⁹ Markakis, 154.

¹²⁰ Naty, “Memory & the Humiliation of Men: The Revolution in Aari,” 61–62.

would evict those tenants that failed to pay their taxes - while also confiscating their produce.¹²¹ Highlander control over the Aari was further sustained by the fact that police and administrators in the district were basically all Amhara, either ethnically or through assimilation.¹²²

A final important development during the imperial period was the introduction of Protestant Christianity beginning in the 1950s.¹²³ While the success of missionary work in South Omo was mixed, a significant number of converts were produced among the Aari. As occurred among other groups, the revolution's promise of equality and a radical break from tradition were most enthusiastically received by the Protestant Aari.

8.3.2 *Zamatcha, Revenge, and Reassertion of Amhara Authority (1974-1979)*

Among the Aari, the 1975 Land Reform and *zamatcha* were embraced as economic and social liberation from the northern settlers. Economically, Aari peasants were freed from the exploitative system of tenant farming, wherein they had frequently faced the threat of eviction and confiscation. The Aari were also relieved of the tax burden that they had shouldered under the imperial state. As Naty finds, "The Aari spoke favourably of the taxation system of the socialist state during the initial period of the revolution, when according to informants, peasants did not pay taxes."¹²⁴ Although, as Naty further remarks, "This... may have to do with the weakness rather than the benevolence of the state."¹²⁵ Nevertheless, it fostered a positive perception of the revolutionary regime, which the Aari compared to a father figure in speech and song.

¹²¹ Naty, 62.

¹²² Naty, 63.

¹²³ Naty, 63.

¹²⁴ Naty, 71.

¹²⁵ Naty, 71.

Socially, the *zamatcha* students' messages of equality and class struggle resonated with important segments of Aari society. Importantly, though, these new revolutionary ideologies were understood by the Aari through established concepts in their communities. Naty explains:

The Aari supported the revolution not only because of the land reform, but also for its appealing discourse. The discourse of equality was particularly appealing to the Protestant Aari, who were familiar with the Biblical notion of equality of all human beings and who rejected Aari ideas of naturalized hierarchy. The ideology of class struggle was, moreover, compatible with the Aari concept of revenge.¹²⁶

As a result, there was a degree of disjuncture between the changes envisioned by the student campaigners and those desired by the Aari.

While readily accepting the notions of equality with and/or class struggle against the *neftegna*, most Aari were averse to applying these principles to their own traditional political and social structure. When the revolutionary students sought to agitate class struggle against the *baabi* and local religious leaders, the Aari peasantry took only moderate steps against them, such as confiscating their guns and requiring payments to the newly formed peasant associations.¹²⁷ The *zamatcha* students' efforts to instill a sense of equality within Aari society were even more coldly received. Attempting to destroy the barrier between the high and low castes, "the student campaigners of 1975 slaughtered an ox and instructed members of the two groups to eat together to symbolize the equality between the two castes."¹²⁸ While the Aari attendees obliged, many were offended and members of the high caste afterward "performed purification rituals in an attempt to protect themselves from the misfortunes that this violation of the norm would bring about."¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Naty, 63.

¹²⁷ Naty, 64.

¹²⁸ Naty, 64.

¹²⁹ Naty, 64.

On the other hand, against the Amhara landlords and settlers, the Aari were all too eager to wage class struggle and enforce equality. The 1975 Land Reform and *zamatcha* triggered an explosion of violence against the *neftegna* in the area. In a brief, but severe, campaign of revenge, property was plundered, livestock slaughtered, and women raped.¹³⁰ Whereas the violence was primarily perpetrated by groups of young Aari men, Aari elders generally worked to restore peaceful relations. Naty proposes a rationale for this generational divide:

The tendency of the elders to discourage the juniors' acts of revenge was a result of the memory of counter-revenge by the northern settlers that took place after the defeat of the Italians in 1941. Given this memory, it was the anticipation and fear of a possible future counter-revenge, and not so much the notions of working together or consanguinity, that motivated Aari elders to portray such a pacifist attitude. The juniors had no such memories. This lack of experience, and the need to vent their anger, pushed the juniors to be more violent and rebellious. For them, the initial period of the revolution was a moment to declare their defiance.¹³¹

The concern of the Aari elders turned out to be well-founded. When the *zamatcha* students left the region, "the *neftegna* and police raided the area arresting looters and confiscating animals."¹³² While the socioeconomic *neftegna-gabbar* system was not restored, the former landlords and police did reassert their political authority in Aariland. Despite this, relations between the Aari and the revolutionary state for the rest of the 1970s remained cooperative.¹³³

Although the Aari carried out violent attacks during this first period, these were directed against the highlander landlords and settlers in the area, rather than the revolutionary state. I contend that the revolutionary policies during these early years gave the Aari little reason to rebel. I do find the level of state intrusion to be somewhere between medium and high. On the

¹³⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 218; Naty, "Memory & the Humiliation of Men: The Revolution in Aari," 64.

¹³¹ Naty, "Memory & the Humiliation of Men: The Revolution in Aari," 67.

¹³² Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 218.

¹³³ Naty, "Memory & the Humiliation of Men: The Revolution in Aari," 68.

one hand, the peasant association established among the Aari did appear free to engage in a certain level of self-administration, as evidenced by their more lenient policies toward traditional authorities than that desired by the *zamatcha* students. This would suggest a medium level of intrusion. On the other hand, following the departure of the student campaigners, the local highlander settlers and police seem to have wielded significant authority. This might suggest a high level of state intrusion as the Aari were again subjected to rule by ethnic others.

More importantly, though, was the low level of polarization caused by revolutionary policies during this period. Excepting the offense caused by the *zamatcha*-enforced, taboo-violating meal, the Aari were generally benefitted by the Derg's peripheral policies. As it was among the Oromo, the 1975 Land Reform was extremely liberating for the Aari. The revolutionary rhetoric of equality and class struggle were also embraced, albeit only in relation to the *neftegna*. Perhaps most revelatory of the low level of alienation toward the state, is the following observation by Naty: "...the Aari portrayed a positive attitude toward the state during the initial phase of the socialist regime, regarding it as their 'father'. The Aari used to sing songs in praise of the state invoking this fatherly image during the early phases of the revolution."¹³⁴ Naturally, this means there was no threatening policy available to unify different segments of Aari society against the Derg.

8.3.3 *Villagization, Extractive Policies, and State Suppression (1980-1991)*

Beginning in the early 1980s, three Derg policies would provoke strong resentment toward the revolutionary state among the Aari. First, villagization dislocated Aari farmers from their homesteads, violated social norms, and facilitated state extraction. Second, military

¹³⁴ Naty, 71.

conscription fractured Aari families in a coercive and arbitrary manner. Third, heavy taxation impoverished the Aari and demolished the image of a benevolent, providing state. Although these policies were resisted, peripheral rebellion did not emerge among the Aari. In this case, the continued empowerment of the former *neftegna* and previous episodes of state suppression appear to have overpowered my mechanism of peasant outrage.

Through villagization, Aari households were relocated to state-designated villages that were road accessible and organized in grid patterns. While villagization was introduced for counterinsurgency purposes in some regions of Ethiopia, this was not the case in South Omo. There, it was justified as a way for the state to develop and provide services to the rural population more effectively, such as education and healthcare. Its main intent, however, was to more easily surveil and extract from the peasant population. Demonstrative is the fact that while taxation and conscription were broadly and heavily implemented in these villages, the state's promised social services were only introduced in some of them.¹³⁵

Beyond the subsequent increased exposure to conscription and taxation, villagization was alienating to the Aari for economic and social reasons.¹³⁶ Economically, the relocation to villages sometimes put Aari farmers at a distance prohibitive for tending to their crops, especially high maintenance plants such as coffee and ensete. Although new plots might be planted closer to the village, it would take costly time for these to yield a harvest. Socially, the new villages were criticized for seriously violating norms and facilitating social decline. For instance, since the new settlements integrated both high caste and low caste families, some Aari feared "the spread of diseases in the villages due to the polluting effect of the low castes."¹³⁷ Others were concerned

¹³⁵ Naty, 68.

¹³⁶ For a more detailed discussion, see: Naty, 68–69.

¹³⁷ Naty, 68.

that the living in such close proximity would promote adultery, theft, and violent feuds between Aari families. Finally, being uprooted from their homesteads was spiritually and emotionally jarring for the Aari. As Naty explains, “The Aari bury their dead in the vicinity of their homesteads. Dislocation from their homesteads meant not only a physical and spiritual detachment from their land, but also from their relationship to the dead, particularly their important ancestors.”¹³⁸

Throughout the 1980s, the villagized Aari were subjected to repeated rounds of forcible military conscription. The local peasant associations were the primary instrument used to carry out these conscriptions. Typically, each peasant association would be given a quota of conscripts to fulfill by any means necessary. Those peasant association leaders that failed to satisfy the quota could be subjected to fines or even imprisonment.¹³⁹ Consequently, as readily available recruits became difficult to find, desperate peasant association leaders resorted to more coercive and arbitrary means of conscription. For instance, Naty mentions, “When a peasant association could not fulfil its quota, militiamen often surrounded a village early in the morning and forcibly took whoever they came across. Sometimes the militia were not able to find young men. Consequently, they ended up taking even old men from the villages.”¹⁴⁰ Once recruits were gathered, the armed peasant association militias would guard them until they could be collected by the army.

The Aari deeply resented the Derg’s policy of forcible military conscription and the role the local peasant associations played in implementing it. Indeed, some peasant association

¹³⁸ Naty, 68.

¹³⁹ Naty, 70–71.

¹⁴⁰ Naty, 70.

leaders faced strong resistance and personal threats in their efforts to secure recruits. Naty describes the result:

Trapped between the increasing demands of the state for conscripts and the resistance of the people, the peasant association leaders were helpless. The 1989 suicide of Worku Gebre-Mariam, chairman of the peasant association of Sinigal, was a direct result of this helplessness. In April 1989 state officials in Jinka requested conscripts from Sinigal, but when Worku tried to recruit, he encountered resistance. Caught between the resistance of the Aari and the demand of the state for conscripts, he killed himself.¹⁴¹

A sense of helplessness was not confined to the peasant association leaders. It was also a common response for those Aari whose family members were forcibly conscripted. As one Aari man conceded after his son was conscripted, “It is impossible to stop the sunrise and sunset. We cannot stop the Ethiopian government from conscripting our sons for national military service.”¹⁴² Along with the feeling of being unable to stop conscription was the recognition that many of those conscripted would either not return home or only with serious injuries. This created an added layer of bitterness toward the revolutionary state.¹⁴³

Finally, it was also during this period that the Derg began to heavily collect taxes from the Aari. In addition to regular taxes, the Derg also extracted money for famine relief, the war effort, and membership fees for women’s and youth associations.¹⁴⁴ This tax burden and its reach beyond merely family heads (as was the practice under imperial rule), were derided by the Aari. No longer perceived as a benevolent father, the revolutionary state was now considered “parasitic” and attempts at tax evasion became common among the Aari.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Naty, 71.

¹⁴² Quoted in: Naty, 70.

¹⁴³ Naty, 70.

¹⁴⁴ Naty, 71.

¹⁴⁵ Naty, 71.

Together, villagization, military conscription, and heavy taxation produced strong alienation toward the revolutionary state among the Aari. Some Aari responded by engaging in strategies of resistance, such as attempting to evade conscription and taxation, as well as physically threatening the peasant association leaders enforcing these policies. Others, despite their resentment of Derg policies, appear to have complied out of a sense of helplessness.¹⁴⁶ Surprisingly absent is any form of peripheral rebellion on the part of the Aari.

This outcome admittedly contradicts the predictions of my theory. With the peasant associations clearly functioning as extensions the state designed to implement central policies during this period, the level of state intrusion is high. Moreover, the policies of villagization, conscription, and taxation were highly polarizing and are acknowledged as producing powerful resentment and even resistance. Finally, while there was no elite opposition organization to lead rebellion, the abundant and acute threat presented by Derg policies, especially mass conscription, during this period would seem perfectly suited to produce a bottom-up, outrage-induced peasant uprising. That one fails to materialize does represent a failed prediction of my theory.

In this case, it would appear that state suppression overwhelmed my anticipated mechanism of peasant outrage. That is, with the *neftegna* continuing to wield power under revolutionary rule and not one, but two, recent memories of brutal counter-revenge following periods of open defiance, a critical mass of Aari seem to have succumbed to a sense of helplessness instead of resorting to rebellion. Consequently, while resistance still occurred, it was waged with the weapons of the weak.

¹⁴⁶ Naty, 72.

8.4 Maale

Table 8.3: Variable Values and Predictions in Maale Case

Time	State Intrusion	Peripheral Polarization	Cross-Cutting Threat	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
1974-1979	Medium (in S and E); High (in NW and Bala)	Low	Absent	No Rebellion	No Rebellion
1980-1991	Medium (in S and E); High (in NW and Bala)	High	Absent	No Rebellion	No Rebellion (But small traditionalist uprising)

8.4.1 Before the Revolution

Dwelling just beyond the southern edge of the Ethiopian plateau, the Maale are primarily sedentary farmers that also keep cattle and goats. While Maale society was organized into several chiefdoms, the ritual king (*kati*) was the central figure. This was because “the *kati* maintained the fertility and prosperity of the country in all its aspects—the ripening of crops, the fecundity women, the reproduction of cattle and goats—through sacrifices and invocations to his ancestors, the past kings.”¹⁴⁷ Historically, the chiefdom of Bala, where the *kati* lived, was both geographically and politically central to the Maale, while the other Maale areas to the northwest, east and south were locally peripheral to it.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Donald L. Donham, “A Note on Space in the Ethiopian Revolution,” *Africa* 63, no. 4 (October 1993): 584, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1161007>.

¹⁴⁸ Donham, 586.

The incorporation of Maale into imperial Ethiopia in the early 20th century, and especially the establishment of the garrison town of Bako to the northwest, triggered several changes that would prove critical to the Maale's later reactions to the revolution. To begin with, while the *kati* and Maale chiefs were left in their traditional positions, they were also made local *balabbat* as part of the imperial state's system of indirect rule. Donald Donham sums up the arrangement: "As long as a minimal degree of order was maintained and a modest amount in taxes extracted, the empire was content to leave local affairs in local hands."¹⁴⁹ This kept the local presence of the imperial state negligible for most Maale (and even helped foster a generally positive image of Emperor Haile Selassie).

The major exception was in the northwestern Maale region which was both closest to the imperial garrison town of Bako and separated from Bala and the other Maale regions to the south and east by a range of mountains. In this northwestern area, a significant number of Amhara *neftegna* settled and, in the process, "replaced Maale chiefs as local notables."¹⁵⁰ As a result, Maale farmers were integrated into the exploitative *neftegna-gabbar* system in Region 1, but not beyond the mountain pass where very few Amhara settled and local authorities were left intact. Consequently, disaffection toward the Amhara and the imperial regime was strongest among the Maale peasantry of the northwest.¹⁵¹

The location of Bako and the geography of Maale also led to different levels of exposure to the Protestant evangelists that sought to convert the Maale in the 1960s and 1970s. Because the mission station was in Bako, the Maale in the northwest region were the earliest and most intensively proselytized by the Protestants. Their nearness to Bako also allowed these Maale to

¹⁴⁹ Donham, 585.

¹⁵⁰ Donham, 586.

¹⁵¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 154; Donham, "A Note on Space in the Ethiopian Revolution," 586.

take advantages of the services provided by the mission station there, including medical care and schooling in Amharigna. As a result, many Maale in the northwestern region became Protestant converts. In contrast, while there across the mountain pass in Bala, there were almost none in the eastern and southern Maale areas.¹⁵²

This distinction was politically salient as these Maale Protestant converts tended to be “more educated and entrepreneurial” than their counterparts and began to “identify themselves as Ethiopians, rather than simply as Maale.”¹⁵³ Indeed, the evangelists had taught these converts “a certain contempt for traditional ways – particularly for smoking, drinking and Maale ritual – along with the value of working hard and getting ahead.”¹⁵⁴ This put the Maale Protestants at odds with their traditionalist kin and made them extremely amenable to the revolution when it came.

8.4.2 *Zamatcha, Peasant Associations, and Local Enthusiasm (1974-1979)*

It was not long after the Derg’s deposal of Emperor Haile Selassie that aggrieved Maale began to deploy revolutionary rhetoric against their local opponents. In November 1974, for instance, a temporary coalition composed of “a disinherited son of the richest chief and a group of Protestant converts... formally accused the king’s son, the richest chief, and northern landlords living in Maale of misdeeds and, in their words, ‘oppression’.”¹⁵⁵ Although these local authorities remained in power following this court accusation, this episode provided a preview of the upheaval that would ensue the following summer when the *zamatcha* reached Maale.

¹⁵² Donham, “A Note on Space in the Ethiopian Revolution,” 587.

¹⁵³ Donham, 587.

¹⁵⁴ Donham, 587.

¹⁵⁵ Donham, 585.

In June 1975, *zamatcha* students, primarily high schoolers from Addis Ababa between the ages of 16 and 18, arrived in Maale to implement land reform and organize the peasantry. Over the next couple months, as they “virtually governed the region around Maale,” these student campaigners worked to destroy alternative authority structures - both imperial and indigenous.¹⁵⁶ Those formally accused in November 1974 were now arrested including local Amahara landlords, the late *kati*’s son, and wealthy Maale chiefs.¹⁵⁷ In their place, peasant associations were established to provide local administration. Finally, the *zamatcha* students “entered the sacred grove of Maale, took out the dead king’s bones, and buried them unceremoniously along the path.”¹⁵⁸

In all these revolutionary deeds, the Maale of the northwestern region, especially the Protestant converts, were eager to play their part. Encouraged by the student campaigners to take action, it was these Maale that apprehended the northern landlords, rich Maale chiefs, and even the king’s son, who was visiting the northwestern region when the upheaval began.¹⁵⁹ Once these leaders were arrested, the agitated Maale targeted their property: “Landlords’ houses were ransacked, and some of their cattle slaughtered and eaten on the spot. Most of the rest of the property of both the Maale and northerners arrested were confiscated and given to the new peasant associations organized by the students.”¹⁶⁰ In the newly formed peasant associations, Maale Protestants “overwhelmingly dominated the leadership” in both the northwestern region and Bala.¹⁶¹ Last of all, it was Maale Protestants that led the *zamatcha* students to the sacred

¹⁵⁶ Donald L. Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale: Ethiopia, 1974 to 1987,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 1 (1992): 49.

¹⁵⁷ Donham, “A Note on Space in the Ethiopian Revolution,” 585.

¹⁵⁸ Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 50.

¹⁵⁹ Donham, “A Note on Space in the Ethiopian Revolution,” 588; Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 50.

¹⁶⁰ Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 50.

¹⁶¹ Donham, “A Note on Space in the Ethiopian Revolution,” 587.

grove - and then actively participated in the burial of the *kati*'s bones. Among these participants was Taddesse, a mission-educated Maale who then became the first elected chairman of the peasant association in Bala.¹⁶²

Surprisingly, although eschewing the active, radical role embraced by the Protestants, Maale traditionalists generally took an optimistic appraisal of the *zamatcha*. Curiously, they hoped the revolution would provide the Maale an opportunity to restore their traditional sociopolitical order as it existed before imperial intrusion. Donham elaborates:

For Maale traditionalists, in contrast, the initial events of the revolution removed the distortions of their society which the northern conquest had introduced. By doing so, the revolution restored the ideological possibility of a return to the status quo ante of the nineteenth century. Amhara landlords had never been viewed as legitimate, and Bailo, the dead king whose bones were taken out of the grove and buried, was never seen as a legitimate *kati*. In the optimism and excitement created by the events of the summer of 1975, there was much talk of restoring Yebirka (who was still alive) to the kingship. In a dramatic confrontation, Maale elders knelt before the students in the old imperial manner of petitioning a lord and begged them for a new king. "Without a king, our wives will not bear children. Without a king, our cattle will not calve. Without a king, we will kill each other off." When the students refused with modernist condescension, traditionalists were prepared to sit back and to see what happened.¹⁶³

The complacency of traditional elites with the *zamatcha* also resulted from their ability to maintain positions of power in much of Maale even under the new political order. Certainly, the peasant associations in the northwestern region and Bala were dominated by young, educated Protestants - their local rivals. But in the peasant associations of the southern and eastern regions, "elements of the old Maale chiefly elite, not Protestants, managed to retain leadership roles."¹⁶⁴ This, combined with the limited access of the revolutionary state to these areas, permitted these

¹⁶² Donald L. Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution* (University of California Press, 1999), 166; Donham, "A Note on Space in the Ethiopian Revolution," 587.

¹⁶³ Donham, "Revolution and Modernity in Maale," 51.

¹⁶⁴ Donham, "A Note on Space in the Ethiopian Revolution," 588.

Maale communities a certain degree of insulation from the revolutionary change rampant in other areas, where the revolution's local allies held administrative power. There was thus "no opposition to the new order" among the Maale in 1975, but rather "much enthusiasm, even among traditionalists."¹⁶⁵

Then, in August 1975, the Derg abruptly cracked down on the *zamatcha* students for stepping beyond their mandate in their efforts to radicalize the peasantry. While some students were confined to their quarters, others were "imprisoned for their 'excesses.'"¹⁶⁶ In the wake of this reversal, some traditionalists seized the opportunity to strike a blow against their Protestant rivals in ideologically-divided Bala. As Donham relates:

This change in atmosphere became apparent to Maale, and two of the Bala elders who traditionally helped to install Maale kings took the opportunity of traveling to Jinka to accuse Tadesse of desecrating a grave... In the case at hand, the two elders won a temporary victory. Tadesse—even though he had been elected the first chairman of the new peasant association—was jailed for approximately four months. After his release, he was removed from the chairmanship, and the man originally elected as the vice-chairman, Maja, took over leadership.¹⁶⁷

However, as discussed in the next section, Tadesse would not only regain leadership over the Bala peasant association by 1980, but also play an important part in both triggering and suppressing a traditionalist uprising in that year.

Despite the clear enmity between the radical Protestants and the conservative traditionalists during this first period, neither group rebelled against the revolutionary state. Instead, reactions ranged from fervent support to a cautious wait-and-see attitude. My theory helps account for these responses.

¹⁶⁵ Donham, "Revolution and Modernity in Maale," 51.

¹⁶⁶ Donham, *Marxist Modern*, 167. See also: Donham, "Revolution and Modernity in Maale," 49.

¹⁶⁷ Donham, *Marxist Modern*, 167.

First, it is crucial to recognize variation among the Maale in terms of the level of state intrusion. In the northwest and Bala, which were more accessible to the Ethiopian state via Bako, the level of intrusion was high. Local powerholders in these areas were arrested and their property destroyed. The peasant associations formed in these areas were dominated by the revolution's local supporters, namely young, educated Protestants. In contrast, the level of state intrusion in southern and eastern Maale was medium. In these areas, local chiefs were not arrested, but instead tended to secure leadership in the new peasant associations. So, the level of revolutionary upheaval in these parts of Maale was far less severe.

Second, the revolutionary policies introduced during this period caused very little alienation. Practically all Maale supported the arrest of the local *neftegna* and the confiscation of their property. While the burial of the old king's bones could have produced alienation among the traditionalists, the questionable legitimacy of the former king undercut this. In addition, the traditionalist frustration that did exist was instead directed at the Maale Protestants rather than the student campaigners. Most importantly, the livelihoods of the Maale peasantry were not adversely affected by revolutionary policies during this early period. Consequently, there was no motivation to rebel.

8.4.3 Disparate Alienation of Protestants and Traditionalists (1980-1991)

In the ensuing years, the revolutionary state greatly expanded its institutional reach into Maale communities. The local peasant associations were central to this enterprise. Donham's discussion is informative:

The imperial state... no longer floated above Maale society; instead, revolutionary state agents became increasingly integral parts of local social organization. Teachers from outside Maale were posted to newly created schools in each new peasant association. Health workers and other state agents followed.

On command from above, the peasant associations built roads into areas never before traversed. In general, the associations became much more efficient conveyer belts of state policies than the old chiefs and king. One measure of this efficiency was the institution of complete tax lists of all male household heads... And perhaps not least important, each peasant association came equipped with its own jail and locally appointed policemen. Whatever else it meant, the Ethiopian revolution brought the state into Maale in an unprecedented way.¹⁶⁸

Not all these changes were popular among the Maale. As with the Aari, the Maale took issue with their growing tax burden as the revolutionary state began to enforce tax collection on all married households.¹⁶⁹ Additional demands to contribute to the war effort and pay peasant association fees only deepened the disaffection. Even the new system of roads became “a venue for extortion.”¹⁷⁰ With the transport of many common trade goods declared illegal, Maale vehicles were frequently stopped and searched by local officials who would confiscate contraband and issue fines. Finally, the military conscription of Maale to fight against the rebels in the north was infuriating, especially to Maale traditionalists.¹⁷¹

Beyond these general grievances, there were reasons specific to Maale Protestants and traditionalists that independently drove both groups to become deeply disillusioned with the revolutionary order. For Maale Christians, alienation developed as the Derg began a suppression campaign against Protestantism beginning in the late 1970s. Presented as “an un-Ethiopian religion,” Protestant churches and schools, including in Maale, were shut down and the buildings appropriated for use as government schools.¹⁷² In some cases, these closures and confiscations were “forcefully resisted” by local adherents.¹⁷³ Maale Protestants serving in peasant associations were forced to choose between their government positions or their membership in

¹⁶⁸ Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 52.

¹⁶⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 219; Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 53.

¹⁷⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 219.

¹⁷¹ Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 53.

¹⁷² Donham, 52.

¹⁷³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 219.

the church. Those who held to their faith encountered abuse and the possibility of imprisonment. The result: “By the 1980s, Protestants, early enthusiasts, had become almost totally alienated from the new order.”¹⁷⁴

For Maale traditionalists, the revolutionary state’s repeated refusal to allow the Maale to install a new *kati* became a major grievance in early 1980 when drought struck the area.¹⁷⁵ Since it was the *kati* who led the prayers to the ancestors for rain, the traditionalists now viewed the instatement of a new ritual king as an urgent matter. Critically, as noted by Donham, “Many traditionalists believed that opposition to the Maale kingship was concentrated at the local level and that revolutionary officials above would not oppose their wishes for a *kati*.”¹⁷⁶ Consequently, Galshila, the chief of Irbo in the southern region, reportedly contacted Tadesse covertly to gauge the receptiveness of the Bala peasant association to the idea. Tadesse’s apparent response infuriated Galshila and the other traditionalists:

According to Ziso, a revolutionary insider, Tadesse used a visit by a woreda administrator to intimidate traditionalists, to try to convince them that they had no chance of reinstalling another king. In something of a reenactment of the events of the original zemecha campaign, the administrator (at Tadesse’s urging?) ordered peasant association police to reenter the sacred forest where the king’s treasury was kept and confiscate two or three items for a museum display. He said that the spears, bells, and beads would be used to teach Ethiopians about their “feudal” past, a past superseded by the progress afforded by the revolution.¹⁷⁷

Outraged by the confiscations, Galisha mobilized his supporters to revolt against those considered most responsible: the peasant association leaders and Protestant Christians in Bala. Considered the revolution’s local agents and the primary obstacle to the restoration of a *kati*, the Protestants of Bali were physically attacked, their property looted, their animals slaughtered, and

¹⁷⁴ Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 52.

¹⁷⁵ Donham, *Marxist Modern*, 166.

¹⁷⁶ Donham, 170.

¹⁷⁷ Donham, 170.

their coffee trees cut down.¹⁷⁸ One peasant association leader was “tied up and ridden around the marketplace like a donkey.”¹⁷⁹ Taddesse, however, manages to elude the traditionalists dissidents and secure government reinforcements from the administrative center of Jinka. With these forces, the uprising was swiftly put down and 38 Maale traditionalists, including several chiefs, were arrested and imprisoned for months in Jinka.

In summary, by the early 1980s, the revolutionary state, especially through its local agents, had extended its reach into Maale and implemented policies that strongly alienated both Protestants and traditionalists. (That is, while state intrusion remained somewhere between medium and high, the level of polarization was now unquestionably high.) Yet despite some separate stirrings of resistance from both groups, including a short-lived uprising, a peripheral rebellion against the Derg did not materialize among the Maale. Why?

Importantly, neither the presence of local beneficiaries nor state suppression provide satisfactory explanations for this lack of rebellion. First, while there were some local Maale that “enjoyed upward mobility in the new order and who were, therefore, committed to carrying out state designs,” they were exceptionally few in number.¹⁸⁰ For example, the Worker’s Party of Ethiopia (WPE) - created in the mid-1980s as the state party - had “no more than ten members.”¹⁸¹ Such a small number of local Maale beneficiaries in positions of power should have further aggravated polarization, not diminished it. Second, although Donham argues that “the memory of violent confrontations of the early 1980s served to inhibit opposition to the state

¹⁷⁸ Donham, 166, 170.

¹⁷⁹ Donham, 166.

¹⁸⁰ Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 53.

¹⁸¹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 218.

in Maale,” this reasoning becomes less convincing toward the end of the decade as the Derg’s military power decayed.¹⁸²

Instead, this outcome seems best explained by two factors. First, insulation from revolutionary disruption at the community level explains the absence of rebellion in the southern and eastern regions of Maale. As discussed earlier, while peasant associations were established throughout Maale, in the east and south their leadership was generally composed of traditional authorities. Lacking the revolutionary fervor of their Protestant counterparts in Bala and the northwest, these traditionalist peasant association leaders used their positions to insulate, at least partially, their communities from the revolutionary state and its policies. The following anecdote from Donham is illustrative:

One day a cadre riding through southern Maale came upon an old man on the path, and he asked which peasant association the man belonged to. The old man, piping up in broken Amharic, allowed as how he belonged to the youth association. In fact, local leaders had listed him in the youth association in order to protect him from higher tax rates.¹⁸³

Though not a perfect shield against the revolutionary state’s intrusion and disruption, such actions appear to have been sufficient to undercut the need for armed rebellion.

Second, the lack of a unifying threat to both Protestants and traditionalists explains the failure of the Maale to rebel in Bala and the northwestern region. Though both groups of Maale were disillusioned with the revolutionary state, their enmity toward each other was even stronger. Consider, for instance, that even when a traditionalist uprising emerged, it was directed primarily against the Maale Protestants - and the peasant associations they led - rather than against the Amhara representatives of the state. Indeed, both Protestants and traditionalists

¹⁸² Donham, *Marxist Modern*, 172.

¹⁸³ Donham, “Revolution and Modernity in Maale,” 53.

proved willing to use the state against their counterpart when given the opportunity. As Donham points out, “in the context of open and protracted local political disagreements, it was always in the interests of one side or the other to appeal their conflict to a higher level of the state, to give information about their local enemies to state agents.”¹⁸⁴ For example, two Bala elders went before state authorities in Jinka to accuse Taddesse of grave desecration, while Taddesse would later flee to Jinka to secure government reinforcements against the revolt led by Galshila. In short, both sides were more willing to use the state’s agents against their local rivals than to unify in rebellion against the state.

8.5 Hor

Table 8.4: Variable Values and Predictions in Hor Case

Time	State Intrusion	Peripheral Polarization	Cross-Cutting Threat	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
1974-1991	Low	NA	NA	No Rebellion	No Rebellion

8.5.1 Before the Revolution

The Hor (also known as Arbore) inhabit the southern frontier of Ethiopia near the Kenyan border. As subsistence agro-pastoralists, the Hor primarily grow sorghum and herd cattle. Untouched by landlordism, “agricultural land is communally owned and redistributed annually” among the Hor.¹⁸⁵ A small ethnic group numbering only a few thousand, the Hor dwell in four main villages, along with temporary settlements. Each of these villages is led by a ritual leader,

¹⁸⁴ Donham, 54.

¹⁸⁵ Tadesse Wolde, “Evading the Revolutionary State: The Hor under the Derg,” in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, ed. Wendy James et al. (Oxford, England : Addis Ababa : Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 38.

known as a *qawot*, and a named age-grade. While the age-grade is in charge of the administration of the community, the *qawot* is claimed “to have influence over the natural and social order of the region.”¹⁸⁶ To obtain blessings from the *qawot*, ordinary Hor come through the leader’s cattle gate bringing gifts. A final important characteristic of Hor society is their conscientious control over access to their villages. As Tadesse Wolde remarks, “The Hor do not allow visitors other than their bondfriends from other groups and those traders who take traditional trade routes to come to their villages. In order to travel to Hor villages the prior knowledge and agreement of their leaders is essential.”¹⁸⁷

The presence of the imperial Ethiopian state in Hor territory was minimal and late-coming. In the late 1950s, a police station was constructed in Hor territory, around which a small settlement developed known as Tabya (meaning “station”). The policemen that manned the station, on assignments no shorter than two years, were the only northerners to live in the area throughout the imperial period. The relationship between the police and the Hor was characterized by separation and mutual disdain. The police “did not mix with the Hor, as mixing with unbelievers, commensality and other social intercourse was considered unhealthy.”¹⁸⁸ For their part, the Hor considered Ethiopians to be lazy and dishonest, glutting themselves on the labor of others.¹⁸⁹ The Hor were especially concerned about the possibility that the police would attempt to disarm or imprison them.¹⁹⁰ In reality, though, the effect of the police station on the daily life of the Hor was negligible, especially compared to the imposition of the imperial state among other ethnic groups. For example, at a time when some peripheral groups were being

¹⁸⁶ Wolde, 37.

¹⁸⁷ Wolde, 38.

¹⁸⁸ Wolde, 39.

¹⁸⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 154.

¹⁹⁰ Wolde, “Evading the Revolutionary State: The Hor under the Derg,” 39.

forced to pay taxes in cash, the Hor were still permitted to pay their annual taxes in livestock. When the Derg seized power in 1974, the police station at Tabya remained “the only state institution in the area.”¹⁹¹

8.5.2 *Inapplicable Revolutionary Policies and Hor Insulation (1974-1991)*

News of the revolutionary overthrow of the imperial regime was met with “neither jubilation nor surprise in Hor country.”¹⁹² Unaffected by the *neftegna-gabbar* system and beyond the reach of Christian missionaries, the Hor were hardly primed to support the revolution.¹⁹³ This is evidenced by the fact that, in the area, “no individual or group complaints were filed against any of the regional or national members of the recently overthrown government.”¹⁹⁴ But neither were the Hor invested in the imperial system. Initially, life simply went on for the Hor.

Especially in the early years, information about revolutionary policies hardly reached the Hor. Government decrees were not issued in their language and *zamatcha* students weren’t assigned to their territory. Instead, the message of the revolution’s ideology and programs came first from “very low-ranking members of the armed forces and the police, who made occasional visits to Hor country for this purpose,” and then via “some junior cadres with very inadequate schooling.”¹⁹⁵ The delegation of this duty to the young and inexperienced suggests the low priority the regime placed on revolutionizing this far periphery. Nevertheless, communicating through the few Amharic-speaking Hor interpreters available, these regime representatives held

¹⁹¹ Wolde, 39.

¹⁹² Wolde, 39.

¹⁹³ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 218.

¹⁹⁴ Wolde, “Evading the Revolutionary State: The Hor under the Derg,” 40.

¹⁹⁵ Wolde, 40.

periodic meetings in Tabya to convey the Derg's revolutionary agenda and indoctrinate the Hor and other ethnic groups in the region.

Overall, the response of the Hor to these meetings can be described as polite disinterest.¹⁹⁶ Tadesse Wolde elaborates:

The Hor say that these meetings were long, with boring subjects, and that they often coincided with herding and agricultural work. Officials were easily offended when they saw Hor participants lying down on their backs and headrests during meetings. The Hor would say that it was their ears that were listening and that there was no point in sitting up straight... The agendas of meetings varied from time to time and depended on events at the political centre, which lacked relevance for local people in this area.¹⁹⁷

This was because most of the revolution's policies simply didn't seem applicable to the Hor. For example, the 1975 Land Reform held little promise for Hor communities where land was already communally owned and redistributed yearly by local decision-making assemblies. Even the Derg's most ambitious programs for pastoralists and peasants - sedentarization and villagization, respectively - were essentially already practiced among the Hor.¹⁹⁸ Consequently, the Derg's meetings were generally considered an inconvenience and the Hor soon decided to send only a few senior elders from the villages to the Tabya meetings, while allowing the bulk of the population to go about their daily work.¹⁹⁹

There were a few exceptions to the Hor's overall indifference to Derg policies. On the one hand, the prospect of receiving guns and military training from the regime was alluring, as were programs to provide inoculation for children and veterinary services for animals.²⁰⁰ On the

¹⁹⁶ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 218.

¹⁹⁷ Wolde, "Evading the Revolutionary State: The Hor under the Derg," 41.

¹⁹⁸ Wolde, 41.

¹⁹⁹ Wolde, 42.

²⁰⁰ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 218; Wolde, "Evading the Revolutionary State: The Hor under the Derg," 41.

other, the Derg's promotion of education and gender equality brought apprehension.²⁰¹ In particular, the Hor were concerned that state education would corrupt their children, turning them against their own agro-pastoralist culture. As a result, the Hor resisted the registration of their children until the local administrators backed down. Crucially, this resistance did not entail a direct confrontation against the Derg, but rather intrigue against those Hor actors attempting to implement its policies. Tadesse Wolde reports, "When Duba Fora, of the Hor *qebele* or pastoral association, and Hora, the secretary, tried to register children for the new school, the Hor conspired and attempted to murder them. Duba Fora told me that they ostracized him until he finally gave up the idea."²⁰²

But the event that provoked the greatest suspicion toward the Derg was the abrupt arrest of Konso Ali, the senior *qawot*, and the public breaking of his long staff.²⁰³ An ostensibly unprovoked strike against the Hor's traditional authorities and institutions, this act made the Hor wary of the revolutionary state. Rather than rebelling, however, the Hor instead sought to reinforce and enhance its insulation from the revolutionary state and other outside influences. To do so without further aggravating the Derg, the Hor sought to coopt revolutionary institutions at the local level, while isolating the Hor villages from outsiders. As Tadesse Wolde notes, "...the Hor seemed to understand that the only way to block the threat of the new regime was by adapting the new institutions to their own conditions and to take as much control of these institutions as possible."²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Wolde, "Evading the Revolutionary State: The Hor under the Derg," 44–45.

²⁰² Wolde, 45.

²⁰³ Wolde, 45; Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 218.

²⁰⁴ Wolde, "Evading the Revolutionary State: The Hor under the Derg," 46.

This is exemplified well in the establishment of pastoralist associations, or *qebele*, among the Hor. Traditional Hor assemblies, or *nab*, were composed of members of the initiated generations and met frequently in Hor villages to address local matters and make administrative decisions. When the Hor were obliged to organize pastoralist associations, they essentially replicated the *nab* by electing *qebele* leaders from members of the traditional assembly.²⁰⁵ In addition, the Hor established a single *qebele* in Tabya to represent all Hor, rather than creating separate *qebele* in the four main villages. All *qebele* business was conducted in Tabya, including the reception of outside Derg officials, thereby “leaving Hor villages free from any outside presence.”²⁰⁶

With the revolutionary state kept at arm’s length, and entirely beyond the limits of the Hor villages themselves, Hor leaders were free to reinterpret or, in some instances, altogether ignore revolutionary state policies. For example, the Hor reinterpreted the fundamental unit for taxation. While the Derg ordered that all married households be individually taxed, the Hor “redefined this to mean a *wori*, a number of married brothers and their parents who share the same cattle-gate.”²⁰⁷ In this way, Hor leaders were able to reduce the tax burden on individual married households. In terms of ignoring Derg policies, the Hor not only didn’t establish women’s and youth associations in the villages, but also filled these associations in Tabya with non-Hor residents living there. At the same time, Hor leaders continued to administer their villages in basically the same manner as they had before the revolution. In summary, although

²⁰⁵ Wolde, 46.

²⁰⁶ Wolde, 46.

²⁰⁷ Wolde, 46.

the Derg “succeeded in coming closer to the Hor than any previous government... its reach did not extend beyond the Tabya barrier set up by the Hor.”²⁰⁸

In this case, the outcome of no rebellion is straightforward. Although the arrest of *qawot* Konso Ali sparked concern, it proved to be an exception in the Derg’s interactions with the Hor. The level of state intrusion was low throughout the period. While Derg officials made some effort to introduce revolutionary policies among the Hor, their supervision of these changes was late and haphazard. Largely left intact, the traditional leaders of the Hor ably took control of local revolutionary institutions and used this control to keep the state at a distance and blunt, even negate, the impact of revolutionary initiatives in Hor communities. As a result, there is little evidence of grievances toward the state during this period and there was no mobilization for rebellion.

8.6 Alternative Explanations and Conclusion

How well do the rival explanations of direct rule, state weakness, and ethnic exclusion fare in explaining the various responses to revolutionary rule in Gambella and South Omo? First, the disempowerment of traditional authorities, which was a common objective of the *zamatcha* in these areas, produced different reactions among these groups. Among the Anywaa and Maale, traditionalist revolts did materialize, but these tended to be small, short, and after a few years of revolutionary rule. On the other hand, in both of these cases, educated youth, especially Protestant converts, enthusiastically supported the move against these local authorities. As for the Aari and Hor, neither showed much enthusiasm for class conflict against their traditional

²⁰⁸ Wolde, 54–55.

leaders and therefore did the bare minimum required to sate the revolution's representatives. Critically, only among the Anywaa did resistance reach the threshold of peripheral rebellion - and then only after several other revolutionary policies had cultivated deep resentment toward the Derg.

Second, in terms of state weakness, the results are mixed. On the one hand, the enhanced reach of state institutions and past experiences of state suppression do appear to have played a part in preventing rebellions by the increasingly disaffected Aari and Maale. On the other hand, the exceptionally weak state presence among the Hor did not lead to rebellion, even after the Hor's senior *qawot* was arrested. Of course, one might argue that the Hor ethnic group was so small that even minimal state presence was prohibitive for rebellion. However, the nearby Surma did not rebel against the Derg either, even though they were larger and well equipped with firearms.²⁰⁹ Instead, both the Hor and Surma took advantage of the state's weakness at the local level to successfully insulate themselves from revolutionary policies and their adverse effects.²¹⁰ Finally, the Anywaa rebelled against the Derg after the state increased its administrative and coercive institutions into the area.

Third, the ethnic exclusion argument is largely inapplicable to the small ethnic groups of Ethiopia's western and southern borderlands. This is because none of these ethnic groups qualifies as politically relevant according to the definition provided by Lars-Erik Cederman,

²⁰⁹ Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 154.

²¹⁰ For more on the Surma's interactions with the revolutionary state, see: Jon G. Abbink, "Paradoxes of Power & Culture in an Old Periphery: Surma, 1974-98," in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, ed. Wendy James et al. (Oxford, England : Addis Ababa : Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); Jon G. Abbink, "Authority and Leadership in Surma Society (Ethiopia)," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi e Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 52, no. 3 (1997): 317-42.

Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min.²¹¹ These ethnic groups are simply beyond the scope of the ethnic exclusion argument as defined by its main proponents.

²¹¹ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?,” 98–99.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

What explains peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states? The existing explanations of direct rule, state weakness, and ethnic exclusion all prove insufficient to explain these rebellions for two basic reasons. First, all three tend to characterize states before revolutions as much as, or even more than, states produced by revolutions. This begs the question of why these rebellions are more likely to emerge in the years after the revolution. Second, these three conditions are often peaceably tolerated, and at times even welcomed, by peripheral populations. On the one hand, direct rule can bring greater resources and opportunities to peripheral groups. On the other hand, state weakness can mean minimal external interference and disruption to daily life. Relatedly, ethnic exclusion may matter little to most of the peripheral population if their way of life is unaffected.

Instead, I argue that the state policies imposed by revolutionary states, and how their implementation impacts the lives and livelihoods of peripheral populations, are central to explaining the onset of peripheral rebellions in revolutionary states. There are three elements to this argument. First, the imposition of central state authority at the community level disempowers local authorities that could otherwise insulate their populations from revolutionary change. Second, the specific policies then introduced polarize the population into beneficiaries and those socially and economically alienated by these policies. Where those disadvantaged by revolutionary policies heavily outweigh those profited, resentment toward the state and its local agents foments a strong motivation to rebel. Third, revolutionary policies that cut across class and community boundaries can create a common threat that either attracts the masses to elite-led opposition movements or provides a focal point for decentralized, grassroots rebellion.

I have assessed this argument through a mixed methods approach. In chapter three, I conducted a cross-national quantitative analysis to evaluate the correlation between revolutionary state policies and the onset of peripheral rebellions. Employing multivariate regression analysis on existing data of revolutionary policies and domestic rebellions for all available country-years from 1946 to 2004, I found a strong, positive correlation between the presence - and breadth - of revolutionary policy changes and the initiation of new peripheral rebellions. This result held despite the inclusion of control variables generally expected to shape the probability of rebellion, including operationalizations of the alternative explanations of state weakness and ethnic exclusion. The results also proved consistent across several different operationalizations of both the independent and dependent variables. Nevertheless, this analysis was characterized by three common limitations of statistical evaluation, namely construct validity, poor data granularity, and the inability to identify and evaluate causal mechanisms. For this reason, the bulk of the empirical analysis involved disaggregated-comparative process tracing in qualitative case studies, a method outlined and justified in chapter four.

Leveraging the rich diversity of reactions to revolutionary rule within and among peripheral groups in Ethiopia under the Derg regime, chapters five through eight constitute the qualitative analysis of my theory and the alternative explanations. In chapter five, I outlined center-periphery relations in imperial Ethiopia, summarized its revolutionary overthrow, and detailed the progression of revolutionary state policies employed by the Derg at the national level. Chapters six through eight then explored how these revolutionary policies were implemented and received among several of Ethiopia's peripheral groups. For each group, their prerevolutionary background was also summarized to give context to how revolutionary policies

impacted preexisting socioeconomic structures and practices. Next, I briefly review the findings of these case chapters.

Chapter six investigated the Afar and Tigrayans where peripheral rebellions emerged fairly early as traditional elites garnered mass support for what amounted to counterrevolutionary rebellion. That these early rebellions were largely directed by semi-autonomous ethnic leaders driven from power by the Derg would seem to support the direct rule argument. Yet the context of the 1975 Land Reform, specifically its implications for Afar and Tigrayan landholders and agricultural wage laborers, was critical to accounting for the timing of rebellion. In particular, this helps explain why Ali Mirah's forced flight triggered an immediate uprising, while Ras Mengesha's exile was initially accepted. But these counterrevolutionary rebellions were short-lived. Among the Afar, internal divisions and the prospect of regional autonomy undercut rebellion. Among Tigrayans, indiscipline and conflict with rival groups brought an end to Teranafit. However, Tigrayan rebellion found new life in the TPLF. Notably, while the TPLF was organized in the first year of Derg rule, largely motivated by the grievance of ethnic exclusion and based in Dedebit to take advantage of the state's weakness in the area, it wasn't until the late 1970s and early 1980s that the TPLF grew drastically as Derg policies increasingly drove the Tigrayan peasantry to join its ranks.

Chapter seven assessed the somewhat later rebellions of the Somali and Oromo. While both had suffered under - and rebelled against - imperial Ethiopian rule, their paths diverged starkly in the first years of the revolution. As the Somalis continued to be subjected to military administration, their disaffected population became fertile ground for the externally organized, Somalia-backed WSLF insurgency. In contrast, the Oromo were initially heavily benefitted by the revolution and the SALF and OLF struggled to gain the supporters needed to wage effective

rebellion. Indeed, popular support for the OLF would not emerge until the Oromo were generally disillusioned by the Derg's extractive and abuses policies and practices. Even as aggressive COIN strategies suppressed these rebellions in the east, the OLF reemerged in western Ethiopia as Derg policies began to sour Oromo attitudes there.

Finally, chapter eight explored several smaller ethnic groups located in the far peripheries of western and southern Ethiopia. In these areas, most groups did not rebel beyond some small traditionalist uprisings. The main exception was in Gambella where resettlement, villagization, and other Derg policies threatened to make the Anywaa an impoverished minority in their own homeland. As a result, peripheral rebellion erupted among the Anywaa in the form of the GPLM, notably led by those educated Anywaa that had initially worked with the Derg. As for the other groups in these far peripheries, some were able to remain insulated from revolutionary policies, such as the Hor and Nuer, while others initially embraced revolutionary change, such as the Aari and Maale. Notably, these latter groups ultimately became disillusioned but failed to rebel. In these last cases, the specter of state suppression (combined with internal divisions) does seem to have inhibited armed resistance.

There are several main takeaways from this dissertation with implications for theory and policy. First, this dissertation has demonstrated the central role specific state policies can play in motivating and facilitating rebellion among peripheral groups. Vitaly, it has shown that understanding popular reactions to policies requires evaluating how a policy is actually implemented and the ways in which it impacts the lives and livelihoods of ordinary people at the community level. The similarities and differences between the Derg's policies and those of the TPLF are especially illuminating. Both introduced land reform, peasant associations, and even resettlement among Tigrayan peasants. However, while these policies provoked resistance and

rebellion against the Derg, they buttressed support for the TPLF. The difference was the way they were implemented. The Derg took a top-down, authoritarian approach that provided little room for local input or modification. Even the peasant associations were transformed into instruments under the control of the central state. For its part, the TPLF took a participatory approach to policy implementation that made space for local feedback. Where the TPLF's ideological aspirations clashed with local peasant sentiments, the latter tended to win out. One need not impute benevolence from the TPLF's approach to revolutionary policy implementation. The TPLF understood that its success relied on peasant support and therefore used its policies, and selective exclusion from their benefits, to secure this support. The policy implication, then, is that policymakers can mitigate the risk of resistance and rebellion to even radical policies by providing space for community input and demonstrating flexibility to local conditions.

Second, this dissertation has shown that direct rule provides a permissive condition for peripheral rebellion but does not alone drive it. While direct rule exposes peripheral populations to the unfiltered policies of the central state, these policies are not automatically detrimental or alienating. In some cases, large portions of the local population will not mourn the disempowering of traditional or co-ethnic leaders, but instead welcome the introduction of central authority. For instance, the deposal of the *nyieye* and *kwaari* and the end of the *dimui* system was embraced by most Anywaa, especially the educated youth and women. Even the ouster of Ras Mengesha Seyoum as an ethnic Tigrayan governor was tolerated by most in Tigray. In short, direct rule is not inherently grievance-inducing. It is the state policies then imposed by the center which shape whether its rule is embraced or resisted.

Third, the findings of this dissertation suggest that state weakness and ethnic exclusion are more useful for explaining the elite "first movers" that form opposition organizations, than

they are for explicating the broader participation needed to mount major peripheral rebellions. In the Ethiopian case studies, educated elites did articulate their relative exclusion from educational and state employment opportunities, as compared to their Amhara counterparts, as a central grievance. In addition, these dissident elites highlighted the window of opportunity presented by the Derg's initial weakness as a central reason for rapidly resorting to armed insurgency. Finally, in line with the state weakness argument, these rebellions were begun in remote areas characterized by difficult terrain and minimal state presence.

Yet these cases provide little evidence that the grievance of exclusion or the opportunity of state weakness were predominant concerns for the peripheral populations that determined whether these opposition movements turned into major rebellions. Instead, the evidence points to peasant participation being driven by resentment toward revolutionary state policies. This helps explain why groups like the TPLF and OLF formed early but didn't initially enjoy much peasant support or pose a significant threat to Derg rule.

A final, unanticipated takeaway from the Ethiopian case studies is the recognition that, in some circumstance, foreign occupations may have a similar impact on center-periphery relations within a state as that caused by revolutions. As noted in the introduction chapter, revolutions are followed by a period in which the revolutionary state must reestablish a relationship of rule with peripheral groups. In this context, I have argued that peripheral rebellions erupt where central authority is both directly asserted down to the community level and accompanied or followed by polarizing revolutionary policies. Curiously, the case studies reveal a similar process occurring decades before the revolution when the Italian occupation interrupted existing center-periphery relations, thereby forcing the imperial Ethiopian state to reestablish these relations once reinstated.

As with the later Derg regime, the reassertion of imperial rule among Ethiopia's peripheral groups after the Italian occupation was met with different responses including early resistance and rebellion in the 1940s and 1950s among the Tigrayans and Anywaa, later rebellion in the 1960s among the Somali and Oromo, and peaceful cooperation as was established among the Afar. Like the revolutionary context, responses to the reinstatement and expansion of imperial authority were largely shaped by the policies which accompanied it. Where there was little disruption to daily life, as among the Afar and early on among the Somali, the assertion of central authority was not resisted. Alternatively, where and when alienating imperial policies were introduced, especially the requirement of tax payments in cash, resistance and rebellion developed. The Ethiopian case studies therefore suggest the potential transportability of this argument to non-revolutionary contexts. The study of state policies as a source of peripheral discontent and rebellion thus presents a fruitful area for further research.

Appendix

Country	Leader	Years in Dataset	Revolution Magnitude	Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onsets	Center-Seeking Rebellion Onsets
Afghanistan	Taraki	1978	7	0	1
Albania	Hoxha	1945-1984	7	0	0
Cambodia	Pol Pot	1975-1978	7	0	1
China	Mao Tse-Tung	1949-1975	7	1	0
Myanmar	Saw Maung	1988-1991	7	2	1
Myanmar	Than Shwe	1992-2004	7	4	0
Russia	Stalin	1945-1952	7	5	0
Ethiopia	Mengistu Marriam	1977-1990	6	3	4
Iran	Ayatollah Khomeini	1979-1988	6	1	1
Iran	Rafsanjani	1989-1996	6	0	0
Laos	Phomivan	1975-1991	6	0	1
Libya	Qaddafi	1969-2004	6	0	0
Myanmar	Ne Win	1962-1987	6	13	0
Albania	Berisha	1992-1996	5	0	0
Algeria	Boumedienne	1965-1977	5	0	0
Argentina	Peron	1946-1954	5	0	2
Benin	Kerekou	1972-1990	5	0	0
Bulgaria	Mladenov	1989	5	0	0
Bulgaria	Popov	1990	5	0	0
Burundi	Micombero	1966-1975	5	0	0
China	Chiang Kai-shek	1946-1948	5	1	1
Comoros	Soilih	1975-1977	5	0	0
Congo	Ngouabi	1969-1976	5	0	0
Costa Rica	Leon Herrera	1948	5	0	0
Costa Rica	Figueres Ferrer	1953-1957	5	0	0
Cuba	Castro	1959-2004	5	0	1
Czechoslovakia	Calfa	1989-1991	5	0	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mobutu	1965-1996	5	0	3
Egypt	Nasser	1954-1969	5	0	0

Table A.1: Revolutionary States, Magnitude of Policy Change, and Rebellion, 1946-2004
(Continued)

Country	Leader	Years in Dataset	Revolution Magnitude	Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onsets	Center-Seeking Rebellion Onsets
Egypt	Sadat	1970-1980	5	0	0
Ethiopia	Banti	1974-1976	5	2	2
Ethiopia	Meles Zenawi	1991-2004	5	1	1
Greece	Papadopoulos	1967-1972	5	0	0
Hungary	Szuos	1989	5	0	0
Iraq	Karrim Kassem	1958-1962	5	1	1
Iraq	Hassan Al-Bakr	1968-1978	5	2	0
Iraq	Saddam Hussein	1979-2002	5	0	1
Laos	Phounsavanh	1992-1997	5	0	0
Laos	Siphandon	1998-2004	5	0	0
Madagascar	Ratsiraka	1975-1992	5	0	0
Nicaragua	Daniel Ortega	1979-1989	5	0	1
Panama	Torrijos Herrera	1968-1980	5	0	0
Poland	Walesa	1990-1994	5	0	0
Russia	Yeltsin	1991-1999	5	2	1
Somalia	Siad Barre	1969-1991	5	0	5
Sudan	Nimeiri	1969-1984	5	0	3
Yugoslavia	Milosevic	1989-1999	5	4	0
Afghanistan	Burhanuddin Rabbani	1992-1995	4	0	2
Bangladesh	Ziaur Rahman	1977-1980	4	0	0
Burkina Faso	Sankara	1983-1986	4	0	0
Burundi	Bagaza	1976-1986	4	0	0
Burundi	Buyoya	1987-1992	4	0	1
Czechoslovakia	Gottwald	1948-1952	4	0	0
Egypt	Naguib	1952-1953	4	0	0
El Salvador	Majano Ramos	1979	4	0	1
El Salvador	Duarte	1980-1981	4	0	1
Fiji	Rabuka	1987-1998	4	0	0
Guatemala	Castillo Armas	1954-1956	4	0	0
Guinea	Conte	1984-2004	4	0	1
Iraq	Salem Aref	1963-1965	4	0	2
Madagascar	Zafy	1993-1995	4	0	0
Mali	Traore	1968-1990	4	1	0

Table A.1: Revolutionary States, Magnitude of Policy Change, and Rebellion, 1946-2004 (Continued)					
Country	Leader	Years in Dataset	Revolution Magnitude	Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onsets	Center-Seeking Rebellion Onsets
Mauritania	Ould Haidalla	1980-1983	4	0	0
Pakistan	Ayub Khan	1958-1968	4	0	0
Pakistan	Zia	1977-1987	4	0	0
Romania	Roman	1989-1990	4	0	1
Spain	Franco	1945-1974	4	0	0
Sudan	Al-Bashir	1989-2004	4	0	3
Syria	Al-Hafiz	1963-1965	4	0	1
Thailand	Plaek Pibulsongkram	1946-1956	4	0	1
Uganda	Amin	1971-1978	4	0	4
Venezuela	Hugo Chavez	1999-2004	4	0	0
Yemen Arab Republic	AL-Sallal	1962-1966	4	0	1
Yemen People's Republic	Ali Rubayyi	1969-1977	4	0	0
Yemen People's Republic	Ismail	1978-1979	4	0	0
Afghanistan	Mullah Omar	1996-2000	3	0	1
Bolivia	Paz Estenssoro	1952-1955	3	0	0
Bolivia	Siles Zuazo	1956-1959	3	0	0
Bolivia	Paz Estenssoro	1960-1963	3	0	0
Bolivia	Torres	1970	3	0	0
Brazil	Costa de Silva	1967-1968	3	0	0
Burkina Faso	Campaore	1987-2004	3	0	1
Chile	Pinochet	1973-1989	3	0	0
Comoros	Abdallah	1978-1988	3	0	1
Ghana	Rawlings	1981-2000	3	0	1
Guinea-Bissau	Vieira	1980-1998	3	0	1
Liberia	Doe	1980-1989	3	0	2
Peru	Velasco Alvarado	1968-1974	3	0	0
South Korea	Hee Park	1961-1978	3	0	0
Thailand	Sarit	1958-1962	3	0	0
Thailand	Thanon Kittakachorn	1963-1972	3	0	0
Uganda	Museveni	1986-2004	3	0	8
Zimbabwe	Mugabe	1980-2004	3	0	0

Country	Onset Year	Rebellion	Incompatibility	Ethnic Rebellion?	Coup Attempt?
Afghanistan	1979	Jam'iyyat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan	Government	No	No
Afghanistan	1993	Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami	Government	No	No
Afghanistan	1995	Taleban	Government	Yes	No
Afghanistan	1996	UIFSA	Government	Yes	No
Argentina	1955	Military faction (forces of Eduardo A. Lonardi Doucet)	Government	No	Yes
Argentina	1955	Military faction (forces of Samuel Toranzo Calderón)	Government	No	Yes
Burkina Faso	1987	Popular Front	Government	No	Yes
Burundi	1991	Palipehutu	Government	Yes	No
Cambodia	1978	KNUFNS	Government	No	No
China	1946	PLA	Government	No	No
Comoros	1989	Presidential guard	Government	No	Yes
Cuba	1961	Cuban Revolutionary Council	Government	No	No
Democratic Republic of Congo	1967	Military Faction (Forces of Jean Schramme)	Government	No	No
Democratic Republic of Congo	1977	FLNC	Government	No	No
Democratic Republic of Congo	1996	AFDL	Government	Yes	No
El Salvador	1979	ERP	Government	No	No
El Salvador	1980	FMLN	Government	No	No
Ethiopia	1976	EPRP	Government	No	No
Ethiopia	1976	TPLF	Government	Yes	No
Ethiopia	1977	EDU	Government	No	No
Ethiopia	1983	EPDM	Government	No	No
Ethiopia	1989	EPRDF	Government	No	No
Ethiopia	1989	Military faction (forces of Amsha Desta and Merid Negusie)	Government	No	Yes
Ethiopia	1991	Military faction (Harar garrison)	Government	No	No

Country	Onset Year	Rebellion	Incompatibility	Ethnic Rebellion?	Coup Attempt?
Ghana	1983	Military faction (forces of Ekow Dennis and Edward Adjei-Ampofo)	Government	No	Yes
Guinea	2000	RFDG	Government	No	No
Guinea-Bissau	1998	Military Junta for the Consolidation of Democracy, Peace and Justice	Government	No	No
Iran	1979	MEK	Government	No	No
Iraq	1959	Military faction (forces of Abdul Wahab al-Shawaf)	Government	No	Yes
Iraq	1963	Military faction (forces of Abd as-Salam Arif)	Government	No	Yes
Iraq	1963	NCRC	Government	No	Yes
Iraq	1982	SCIRI	Government	Yes	No
Laos	1989	LRM	Government	Yes	No
Liberia	1989	NPFL	Government	Yes	No
Liberia	1990	INPFL	Government	Yes	No
Myanmar	1990	ABSDF	Government	No	No
Nicaragua	1982	Contras/FDN	Government	Yes	No
Romania	1989	Military faction (forces of Nicolae Ceausescu)	Government	No	No
Russia	1993	Parliamentary Forces	Government	No	Yes
Somalia	1982	SSDF	Government	No	No
Somalia	1983	SNM	Government	No	No
Somalia	1989	SPM	Government	No	No
Somalia	1990	USC/SSA	Government	No	No
Somalia	1991	USC/SNA	Government	No	No
Sudan	1971	Sudanese Communist Party	Government	No	Yes
Sudan	1976	National Front	Government	No	Yes
Sudan	1983	SPLM/A	Government	Yes	No
Sudan	1996	NDA	Government	Yes	No
Sudan	2003	JEM	Government	Yes	No
Sudan	2003	SLM/A	Government	Yes	No
Syria	1966	Military faction (forces loyal to Nureddin Atassi and Youssef Zeayen)	Government	No	Yes
Thailand	1951	Military faction (navy)	Government	No	Yes
Uganda	1972	Kikosi Maalum	Government	No	No

Country	Onset Year	Rebellion	Incompatibility	Ethnic Rebellion?	Coup Attempt?
Uganda	1974	Military faction (forces of Charles Arube)	Government	No	Yes
Uganda	1979	Fronasa	Government	No	No
Uganda	1979	UNLF	Government	No	No
Uganda	1986	HSM	Government	Yes	No
Uganda	1986	UPDA	Government	Yes	No
Uganda	1987	UPA	Government	No	No
Uganda	1988	Lord's Army	Government	Yes	No
Uganda	1988	LRA	Government	Yes	No
Uganda	1996	ADF	Government	No	No
Uganda	1996	WNBF	Government	Yes	No
Uganda	1997	UNRF II	Government	Yes	No
Yemen Arab Republic	1962	Royalists	Government	No	No
China	1947	Taiwanese insurgents	Territory	Yes	No
China	1950	Tibet	Territory	Yes	No
Ethiopia	1975	ALF	Territory	Yes	No
Ethiopia	1976	WSLF	Territory	Yes	No
Ethiopia	1977	OLF	Territory	Yes	No
Ethiopia	1977	SALF	Territory	Yes	No
Ethiopia	1983	SLM	Territory	No	No
Ethiopia	1991	IGLF	Territory	Yes	No
Iran	1979	APCO	Territory	Yes	No
Iraq	1961	KDP	Territory	Yes	No
Iraq	1976	PUK	Territory	Yes	No
Iraq	1977	KDP-QM	Territory	Yes	No
Mali	1990	MPA	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1962	SNUF	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1964	ANLP	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1964	CPA	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1964	SSA	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1966	KNU	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1969	SSNLO	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1969	SURA	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1973	RPF	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1973	LNUP	Territory	No	No
Myanmar	1976	SSRA	Territory	No	No
Myanmar	1977	ALP	Territory	No	No
Myanmar	1984	TRC	Territory	No	No
Myanmar	1985	MTA	Territory	Yes	No

Country	Onset Year	Rebellion	Incompatibility	Ethnic Rebellion?	Coup Attempt?
Myanmar	1991	RSO	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1991	NSCN-K	Territory	No	No
Myanmar	1996	BMA	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1996	RCSS	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	1997	UWSA	Territory	Yes	No
Myanmar	2000	God's Army	Territory	Yes	No
Russia	1946	Forest Brothers	Territory	Yes	No
Russia	1946	LNPA	Territory	Yes	No
Russia	1946	LTS(p)A	Territory	Yes	No
Russia	1946	BDPS	Territory	Yes	No
Russia	1946	UPA	Territory	Yes	No
Russia	1994	Chechen Republic of Ichkeria	Territory	Yes	No
Russia	1999	Wahhabi movement of the Buinaksk district	Territory	No	No
Yugoslavia	1991	Republic of Slovenia	Territory	Yes	No
Yugoslavia	1991	Croatian irregulars	Territory	Yes	No
Yugoslavia	1991	Republic of Croatia	Territory	Yes	No
Yugoslavia	1998	UCK	Territory	Yes	No

Table A.3: Binomial Logit Results with Shifted Major Revolution Cutoff

Variables	(1) Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset	(2) Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset
Major Revolution	-0.0171 (0.408)	1.980*** (0.424)
Minor Revolution	0.522*** (0.198)	0.598 (0.381)
Prior Armed Conflict	0.913*** (0.172)	1.647*** (0.257)
Per Capita Income	-0.179*** (0.0463)	-0.127** (0.0502)
Population Size	-0.0498 (0.0661)	0.449*** (0.0863)
Mountainous	0.193*** (0.0616)	-0.0943 (0.107)
Oil Exporter	0.390* (0.236)	0.585* (0.335)
New State	0.419 (0.605)	2.465*** (0.537)
Instability	0.810*** (0.167)	0.181 (0.287)
Democracy	-0.000725 (0.0139)	0.105*** (0.0233)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-0.0145 (0.0210)	0.00831 (0.0148)
Excluded Population	0.514* (0.304)	1.135** (0.483)
Constant	-3.674*** (0.598)	-9.442*** (0.932)
Observations	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.4: Binomial Logit Results with Revolutionary Magnitude

Variables	(1) Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset	(2) Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset
Revolutionary Magnitude	0.0768* (0.0394)	0.248*** (0.0600)
Prior Armed Conflict	0.879*** (0.172)	1.693*** (0.255)
Per Capita Income	-0.178*** (0.0461)	-0.126** (0.0506)
Population Size	-0.0406 (0.0661)	0.446*** (0.0862)
Mountainous	0.174*** (0.0608)	-0.0469 (0.104)
Oil Exporter	0.375 (0.236)	0.541 (0.338)
New State	0.415 (0.605)	2.506*** (0.537)
Instability	0.851*** (0.166)	0.0802 (0.282)
Democracy	0.0000417 (0.0139)	0.100*** (0.0227)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-0.0238 (0.0224)	0.00794 (0.0147)
Excluded Population	0.614** (0.300)	0.942** (0.468)
Constant	-3.696*** (0.596)	-9.505*** (0.933)
Observations	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.5: Binomial Logit Results with Peripheral Policy Index

Variables	(1) Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset	(2) Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset
Peripheral Policy Index	0.152 (0.0981)	0.487*** (0.134)
Prior Armed Conflict	0.888*** (0.171)	1.729*** (0.253)
Per Capita Income	-0.180*** (0.0463)	-0.128** (0.0510)
Population Size	-0.0421 (0.0660)	0.432*** (0.0858)
Mountainous	0.173*** (0.0607)	-0.0425 (0.104)
Oil Exporter	0.359 (0.235)	0.470 (0.336)
New State	0.395 (0.605)	2.441*** (0.534)
Instability	0.852*** (0.166)	0.0806 (0.282)
Democracy	-0.00170 (0.0138)	0.0907*** (0.0218)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-0.0221 (0.0222)	0.0120 (0.0141)
Excluded Population	0.597** (0.300)	0.874* (0.465)
Constant	-3.661*** (0.595)	-9.293*** (0.926)
Observations	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.6: Binomial Logit Results with Revolutionary Land Reform

Variables	(1) Center-Seeking Rebellion Onset	(2) Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset
Revolutionary Land Reform	0.102 (0.346)	1.194*** (0.444)
Prior Armed Conflict	0.901*** (0.171)	1.818*** (0.252)
Per Capita Income	-0.178*** (0.0461)	-0.124** (0.0510)
Population Size	-0.0347 (0.0656)	0.441*** (0.0861)
Mountainous	0.173*** (0.0606)	-0.0182 (0.103)
Oil Exporter	0.332 (0.234)	0.368 (0.333)
New State	0.361 (0.604)	2.371*** (0.535)
Instability	0.860*** (0.166)	0.133 (0.281)
Democracy	-0.00646 (0.0134)	0.0715*** (0.0203)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-0.0147 (0.0203)	0.0274** (0.0127)
Excluded Population	0.587* (0.300)	0.814* (0.471)
Constant	-3.712*** (0.596)	-9.379*** (0.938)
Observations	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.7: Binomial Logit Results with Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Episode

Variables	(1) Center-Seeking Rebellion Episode	(2) Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Episode
Major Revolution	0.899*** (0.268)	1.553*** (0.300)
Minor Revolution	0.756** (0.303)	-1.192 (1.028)
Prior Armed Conflict	-0.821*** (0.287)	0.833*** (0.242)
Per Capita Income	-0.171*** (0.0479)	-0.182*** (0.0577)
Population Size	0.0245 (0.0759)	0.709*** (0.0907)
Mountainous	0.124* (0.0718)	0.108 (0.109)
Oil Exporter	1.039*** (0.246)	0.920*** (0.300)
New State	0.343 (0.732)	2.579*** (0.537)
Instability	0.601*** (0.216)	0.308 (0.280)
Democracy	0.0293* (0.0160)	0.0577*** (0.0214)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-0.00537 (0.0194)	-0.0178 (0.0150)
Excluded Population	0.956*** (0.355)	0.803 (0.503)
Constant	-4.441*** (0.681)	-11.92*** (1.044)
Observations	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.8: Binomial Logit Results with Ethnic Rebellion Episode

Variables	(1) Ethnic Rebellion Episode	(2) Non-Ethnic Rebellion Episode
Major Revolution	1.308*** (0.252)	0.984*** (0.297)
Minor Revolution	0.0552 (0.449)	0.699* (0.364)
Prior Armed Conflict	0.320 (0.211)	-0.347 (0.284)
Per Capita Income	-0.206*** (0.0515)	-0.185*** (0.0527)
Population Size	0.502*** (0.0750)	0.108 (0.0820)
Mountainous	0.140 (0.0861)	0.0794 (0.0824)
Oil Exporter	0.967*** (0.252)	1.008*** (0.277)
New State	1.841*** (0.509)	0.639 (0.737)
Instability	0.267 (0.234)	0.452* (0.247)
Democracy	0.0481*** (0.0176)	0.0439** (0.0179)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-0.0110 (0.0135)	0.00198 (0.0178)
Excluded Population	1.137*** (0.382)	0.239 (0.442)
Constant	-9.311*** (0.805)	-5.213*** (0.758)
Observations	6,128	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.9: Binomial Logit Results with Myanmar Control Variable

Variables	(1) Autonomy-Seeking Rebellion Onset
Major Revolution	1.030*** (0.373)
Minor Revolution	-1.047 (1.034)
Prior Armed Conflict	1.318*** (0.276)
Per Capita Income	-0.0969** (0.0474)
Population Size	0.571*** (0.0947)
Mountainous	-0.178 (0.112)
Oil Exporter	0.708** (0.346)
New State	2.510*** (0.567)
Instability	0.503* (0.295)
Democracy	0.0925*** (0.0231)
Excluded Ethnic Groups	-0.00394 (0.0172)
Excluded Population	1.202** (0.509)
Myanmar	2.517*** (0.432)
Constant	-10.51*** (1.028)
Observations	6,128

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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