

POST-CONFLICT REGIME TRANSITION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: THE CASE  
OF ERITREA AND NAMIBIA

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to Bitweded Abraha, EPLF fighter and war veteran who has been in detention since 1991 (and in solitary confinement since 1994) at the order of the current Eritrean President, without any charges because Bitweded stood for the principle of public and national interest, rule of law, and democracy.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **POST-CONFLICT REGIME TRANSITION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: THE CASE OF ERITREA AND NAMIBIA**

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Most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa achieved their independence after protracted liberation struggles. What explains the variances in their ultimate political development? Why, for example, did some post-conflict states evolve into democracies, while many others failed to do so? Through a comparative case study of Eritrea and Namibia, this dissertation analyzes the dynamics of political transitions, and examines why these transitions vary among countries despite similar historical trajectories. Events leading to self-governance in Eritrea and Namibia resulted in different outcomes, with Eritrea adopting a non-democratic one-party rule, whereas Namibia began an electoral democratic transition as they attained independence. The selection of these two countries is based on the similarity of their transitions from European colonies to African colonies, as well as the consequential liberation struggles that eventually brought independence to each nation. The case could be made for analyzing the historical transitions of several other countries. However, this study asserts that part of the explanation in this case study can be generalized to include three clear categories that apply to other post-conflict situations. First, this research examines in detail the political cultures of the liberation



groups in the two countries. Second, this study explores the strategies devised to end the liberation struggles (either through military victory or negotiated settlement). Finally, this investigation interprets the role of international actors in the development of regime types during the post-independence period in both countries. Comparative analysis provides a rich array of colonial legacies, cultural and political tensions, military strategies, colorful (and destructive) personalities and democratic initiatives that either failed or succeeded. Taken together, the scholarly literature on these topics provides a stable platform upon which this dissertation's theoretical structure has been assembled.

## **1. CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.2. INTRODUCTION**

“A form of democracy a country grows into is the result of complex interactions between the geographic, cultural, historical and intellectual experiences during its process of becoming a nation.”  
(Crepaz 2008, 24)

This qualitative study compares the post-conflict transitions of two African nations: Eritrea and Namibia. It explores the development of democracy in the two countries during and after their liberation struggles, beginning in the 1960s and culminating in independence thirty years later (in both cases). This dissertation attempts to explain the differences in the post-conflict regime types by identifying factors that contributed to democratic processes; analysis will shed light on the reasons why transitions may lead to democratic outcomes in one country and fail to do so in the other. The tentative conclusions reached in this analysis have practical implications for the study of conflict-resolution in similar situations. Identifying and analyzing all of the possible factors that contributed to different outcomes in Eritrea and Namibia is clearly beyond the scope of this (or any other) dissertation. However, numerous scholars have identified common factors in regime change, including ideology, economic conditions, leadership styles, the homogeneity or diversity of populations, global power shifts, income inequality, the roles and status of women, and many other factors (Kpundeh

1992). This dissertation narrows the focus to the three factors identified above: political cultures, wartime strategies, and the role of international actors. These aspects of liberation struggles are clearly visible in the post-conflict political transitions of Eritrea and Namibia. As explanations for the different paths each nation followed after attaining independence, these factors are informative (but not exhaustive explanations).

At the time of this research, democratic structures within the United States are being both tested and criticized. The analysis in this dissertation is relevant to the dynamics of democratic governance in every nation. Although Eritrea and Namibia have experienced only three decades of independence (compared to twenty-four decades of U.S. independence), their separate political trajectories suggest a comparative framework rooted within the socio-cultural, economic and political structures within each country. This study will unpack some of the underlying patterns each nation followed in governance after gaining independence. Even consolidated democracies like the United States face tests of their democratic institutions. The imposition of executive powers by the current U.S. President, who displays autocratic characteristics, has been likened to dictatorships that exist in African countries (Frum 2017; Gessen 2019; Fuchs 2019). Donald J. Trump's exercise of executive power has heightened tensions between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches, calling into question the durability of constitutional checks and balances. The current structural evolution in the U.S. government implies that democracy may be a fragile instrument wherever it is established—even in a nation with 240 years of experience with democratic institutions.

The majority of sub-Saharan African countries achieved independence in the early 1960s. At that time, very few resources from former European colonizers were available to the new governments. As the challenges of independence mounted, new leaders who emerged from revolutionary movements were willing to accept assistance from former colonizers for the task of nation building. Leaders who came up through liberation movements did not necessarily have the training, experience or resources to effectively manage civilian governments in the periods following armed conflicts. Despite the fact that many newly-independent African countries were potentially resource-rich, scholars noted at the time that “they lack the technical knowledge and the financial capital necessary to develop their resources” (Balewa 1962, 135).

From our current perspective, it is clear that most post-colonial states in Africa did not transition to a democratic polity. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index (DI) tracks democratic performance around the world. According to the DI, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has the highest concentration of authoritarian régimes: 7 of the 15 lowest-ranked in the world are in this region (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2019). Similarly, the EIU reported in 2018 that out of the 44 countries in the SSA region, only one, Mauritius, is a full-fledged democracy. The remaining 43 fall under the categories of authoritarian regimes (including Eritrea), hybrid regimes and/or flawed democracies (including Namibia).

Most African countries that gained their independence in the 1960s and 1970s remained under one-party rule for many years. In the early 1990s, a wave of democratic governance began to affect post-colonial African countries. However, the new African

leaders that emerged from the belated series of democratic elections resembled the earlier leadership during the colonial era, as well as the authoritarian leaders that arose from revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The governments that followed the colonial era were characterized by ethnic division, a “divide-and-rule” strategy fostered during the colonial era, which continued in the form of fierce competition among various groups during the post-independence period (Subrahmanyam 2006).

A proverb in Amharic (Ethiopia’s dominant language) says, “changing the oven will not make the food taste better.” Applied to the transition from European colonies to African self-rule, this proverb suggests the cook and recipe (i.e. leaders and theories of government) make the difference in the taste of the meal, not the stove or oven (i.e. the dominant power in charge). Despite the changes of personnel from European colonizers to indigenous leaders in post-colonial Africa, most countries failed to transition into partial or full-fledged democracies. Most anti-colonial liberation movements in Africa that achieved independence, either in the early 1960s or in the late 1980 and 1990s remained under one-party, one-man rule that resembled the former colonizers. The new despots remained in power for decades, with elections (to give some pretense of democratic legitimacy) or without elections. The majority of sub-Saharan Africa regimes are considered either flawed democracies or authoritarian regimes. According to Democracy Index, all countries in Africa except Ghana, Senegal, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa and Tunisia are classified as authoritarian or hybrid regimes (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2019).

Even those countries that have periodic elections continue to faithfully elect the same party (usually the same leader) that came to power through a liberation war. The fact that elections are used to legitimize the ruling party's unchallenged power has made it hard for any opposition groups to challenge the only party in the country. As a result, many citizens of African nations have acquired a sense of hopelessness about democratic institutions. As Claude Ake asserts, leaders of newly independent African countries saw the benefits of controlling state power and everything in their power to maintain control after seizing power (Ake 1996). Sometimes this meant aligning political parties along ethnic and tribal cleavages, leading to political competition as contentious and violent as it was during the colonial period.

Difficult transitions in post-colonial political development were often linked to the lack of genuine democratic experience which the colonial regimes and their allies had to offer new regimes. New leaders needed such experiences in order to manage the democratic process. Long-entrenched colonial systems excluded the colonized peoples from governance. The question remains whether political dysfunction was a result of limited capacity in the colonial regimes, or a lack of desire or commitment to move in the direction of democratic governance. Some regimes viewed the benefits of democratic elections in terms of legitimizing their rule, and were not committed to democratic institutions. A genuine popular desire for democracy is very important in order for democracy to take root. Francis Fukuyama argues that a nation's leaders must demonstrate commitment to internal and international order for democratic progress to occur (Fukuyama 1998).

Africa's governance dilemma obviously requires one to define what democracy means and what constitutes a democratic system. The post-colonial failure to install durable democratic governance also requires an understanding of how democracy is perceived in various societal and cultural contexts. There is a great deal of scholarly debate concerning essential concepts of democracy, its interpretation, and on processes that are critical to democracy formation.

In providing a rationale for my research project, I will sketch a short history of Eritrea and Namibia, and in subsequent chapters, I will review existing literature related to the research questions I examine followed by a chapter on research methodology. Next, I will review my major findings and evidence regarding the two cases. Finally, I will offer conclusions on the significance of transitional dynamics in each country, with a specific focus on political cultures, termination of conflicts, and the role of international actors. My ultimate goal in this research is to offer suggestions on how other states facing post-conflict situations can improve their likelihood of achieving viable, stable, secure, and inclusive democratic governance.

### **1.3. RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

The researcher's rationale goes beyond a quest to understand the challenges that liberation movements face after they seize state power. Questions about why most liberation movements gravitate toward authoritarianism are important to answer, especially for people who themselves participated in the armed struggles, sacrificed their youth, and risked their lives to create a nation that they had only imagined as free, independent and prosperous. What happens, precisely, when the vision of a democratic

nation becomes a far-fetched dream? Is democracy an inherently flawed political theory? Or does the weakness reside in the new regimes themselves—in their leadership, their cultures, or their imperfect structures? Is the tendency toward authoritarianism simply a lack of capacity to envision or understand the benefits of a functioning democracy?

Understanding the political beliefs of the diverse peoples of Eritrea and Namibia requires insights into both their traditional cultures and the character of their colonial administrations. How the general populace interacts with people in positions of power—either in terms of loyalty and compliance, or in terms of dissent—helps us to assess peoples’ submissiveness. In contrast, their assertiveness to stand up for their rights and traditions may depend up on how earlier political systems (i.e. traditional or colonial) managed interactions between the government and people. Such analysis provides a way to gauge the tolerance of dissent with the post-revolutionary leadership. Traditional interactions involve various forms of popular resistance; thus culture determines how bold people become in pressuring the government.

Similarly, the extent to which the society is open or tolerant is often reflected in the existence or lack thereof, of pluralistic opinions regarding the policies and issues adopted by the government. For this reason, examining the political cultures in the countries under consideration will shed light on the way communities engage in their socio-political affairs, which in turn shapes the policy formulation of the regimes in power. Such interactions between governments and the people who are governed are informed by unique histories and experiences within different societies.



#### **1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM**

This dissertation describes the political systems of Eritrea and Namibia, born out of unique but contemporary liberation movements. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) fought the occupying forces of Ethiopia and South Africa (respectively), eventually gaining state control. Since achieving independence, both liberation movements have consolidated their dominant positions within their societies.

The liberation movements in Eritrea and Namibia fought against the oppressive rule of occupying forces; both movements assumed power in the early 1990s. Many African independence movements opposed the violation of human rights in colonial regimes, but most did not turn out to be defenders of those same rights once they gained power. Instead, many regimes turned out to be authoritarian and undemocratic in the post-independence era (Melber 2003, 9-10). To list some examples, Zimbabwe's African National Union Patriotic Front, (ZANU-PF) has been in power since 1980; Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) under Paul Kagame has been in power since 2000; MPLA(Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), a military-socialist regime, ruled Angola without interruption under the leadership of Jose Eduardo dos Santos for 38 years. Uganda has been under the one-man rule of Museveni since 1986. In Kenya, Kenya African National Union (KANU) enjoyed four decades of power. Omar Bashir ruled Sudan for 30 years; Ethiopia suffered under the Marxist Derg regime for 17 years, followed by Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front(EPRDF) rule from 1991-2019. In Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh has ruled the country since

1999—and the list could be extended. All these countries and their respective governments share one common trait: they remained in power for decades after winning state power through armed struggle. Most of these countries held elections that were neither free nor fair and they subsequently established authoritarian governments with some fluctuation between flawed/hybrid democratic regimes and full authoritarian regimes.

Eritrea and Namibia are not exceptions to this overall pattern. Eritrea remains a one-party state under the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)<sup>1</sup>, which has ruled since it won independence in 1991. Namibia's Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) consistently won elections every five years beginning in 1990, making it the dominant party in the country for the past thirty years. One-party dominance has become the most common pattern in post-conflict societies in sub-Saharan Africa (Doorenspleet 2005). Some governments justify their legitimacy through periodic elections (as is the case in Namibia) while others avoid elections (as is the case Eritrea) at any cost, using their success in the liberation struggle to justify long term control of state power.

A thorough analysis of these two former liberation fronts—the EPLF and SWAPO—offers insights into the transitions toward independence in each country. These insights will illuminate the reasons why the two countries took divergent paths in their post-conflict political development. In order to determine whether an association exists

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<sup>1</sup> A new name the EPLF adopted at its Third Congress in February 1994. For the most part all its members and leadership remained the same despite an ongoing reshuffling of cabinet positions by the Eritrean President.

between the three factors identified and the outcome of regime type for this study. The finding shows that there is a correlation between the three factors and the outcome of regime type in Eritrea and Namibia.

Initially, both Eritrea and Namibia were colonized by European powers, and later were ruled by a larger and more powerful neighbor. Ethiopia absorbed Eritrea as a province nearly 20 years after the defeat of Italy in the Second World War. Namibia came under the South African rule after the defeat of the German forces during the First World War in 1915. Both the EPLF and SWAPO were founded to free their respective countries from the encroachments of their neighbors. An acute sense of deprivation, human rights violations, and a desire to recover their lost identity inspired both organizations. The Eritrean and Namibian nationalists mobilized their peasant populations to join in established urban movements for self-determination.

Another comparable similarity between the EPLF and SWAPO is their collaboration with the forces that were challenging the central government in Ethiopia and South Africa respectively. The Namibian struggle had much more in common with their South African counterpart, the African National Congress (ANC) whose members were fighting for racial equality in white-dominated South Africa. In Eritrea, the ELF/EPLF on its part had to create partnership with other Ethiopian groups who were fighting the central government in Ethiopia for an equal share of political power. For example, the EPLF engaged in military coordination with the Tigrayan People Liberation Front-TPLF (an Ethiopian liberation group) in defeating the Ethiopian army and the capturing the capital cities of Addis Ababa and Asmara in May 1991. The partnership

was purely military and strategic, as opposed SWAPO's and ANC's partnership that has to do with racial or political justice against the White minority apartheid regime in Namibia and South Africa.

In spite of the similarities shared by, the liberation movements in Eritrea and Namibia, the two countries also differ significantly from each other. Each country held different worldviews about the international community, and in particular, the United Nations. These views determined their levels of engagement both during and after liberation. SWAPO remained engaged with regional and international organizations (Organization for African Unity and the United Nations) whereas the EPLF was less successful in garnering regional and international attention for the Eritrean cause (Christopher Saunders 2007; Chris Saunders 2018; Weldemichael 2013).

## **OVERVIEW OF ERITREA AND NAMIBIA PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE**

At the time this dissertation is being written, the countries in sub-Saharan African (SSA) remain politically fragile and economically vulnerable. According to the 2018 Democracy Index, as was the case since the index was pioneered in 2006, a large number of countries classified as "authoritarian" regimes come from Sub-Saharan Africa. Many are poor, lack resources, experienced decades of conflict, and lacked previous experience with democratic governance (Marshall and Cole 2011). The study of the conflict periods in this dissertation attempts to identify links between the structures that operated during the liberation struggles and the regimes that emerged in the post-conflict period.

The continent of Africa has provided numerous examples of colonial, dictatorial, one-party leadership, and democratic challenges, as well as other forms of governance.

When African countries gained their independence, there were few established institutions to kick-start the democratic process. In addition, the newly independent African countries had to depend on their former colonizers to begin the nation-building process. Today, many of these countries are locked in a cycle of dependency with their former colonizers(Zartman 1976). As a result, many of these countries began their nation building in a state of political and economic dependency.

The timing of Eritrean and Namibian independence in the early 1990s coincided with the proliferation of electoral democracy with multiparty elections in many other parts of the world. In what is known as “Third Wave” countries in Latin America, Asia, Europe and African began to do away with one party regime and introduced periodic multi-party elections. Leaders in these countries had to devise political systems for their respective nations and gain recognition as sovereign states by joining the United Nations. The leadership of the former liberation movements in Eritrea and Namibia assumed the task of state building and initiated a political path for each country to follow.

### **1.5. A. ERITREA**

Eritrea is located in the northeastern part of Africa, commonly known as the Horn of Africa, bordered by Ethiopia to the south, Sudan to the west and Djibouti to the southeast. Eritrea has a 1,151 km. (715 mi.) coastline and shares a Red Sea water boundary with Yemen. The 2017 UNDP report estimated the population<sup>2</sup> at 5.1 million

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<sup>2</sup> No census has been conducted in Eritrea since it gained its independence (1993); the population size has been always an estimated figure that continues to be replicated by scholars and organizations for lack of verifiable data.

people from various cultural traditions and religions. The lack of official census data in Eritrea makes the population size speculative and projected estimate (Amir 2014). The Tigrinya-speaking majority lives on the highland plateaus of Eritrea and most are followers of Orthodox Christianity; minorities of highlanders are adherents to Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Jehovah Witness, and Seventh Day Adventists branches of Christianity. The other half of the Eritrean population adhere to the Islamic faith. Most Muslims live in the Western lowlands and belong to the Tigre<sup>3</sup>, Kunama, Bilen, Afar, Nara, Hidarib, Saho, and Rashaida ethnic groups in Eritrea (Tronvoll 1999).

Some of the environmental challenges in Eritrea include frequent droughts, locust swarms, desertification, soil erosion, over-grazing and loss of infrastructure due to decades of civil war. Natural and mineral resources found within Eritrea include gold, potash, zinc, copper, and salt. Eighty percent of the population is engaged in subsistence farming. There are three mining sites in Eritrea: Zara (operating since 2012 in northern Eritrea); Bisha Mine (operating since 2011 in western Eritrea) (Manek 2018); and Colluil, located near the Red Sea Coast, a shared venture between the Eritrean government and an Australian company. Colluil began developing in late 2018, and is expected to produce high levels of sulfate potash, a commercially valuable fertilizer (Yage and Newman 2015).

Italy colonized Eritrea in 1890. A half century of Italian rule ended when the British Forces defeated the Italian army in Eritrea in 1941. The British Military

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<sup>3</sup> Tigre is a Semitic language, distinct from related languages such as Tigrinya, Amharic and the root language Geez. Understandable confusion results from the fact that the Tigre language is rarely spoken in the nearby Ethiopian province of Tigray.

Administration took over Eritrea from 1941 to 1952. In 1952, the U.N. decided that Eritrea should be temporarily federated with its southern neighbor, Ethiopia. The federation period lasted until 1962, at which time the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie unilaterally annexed Eritrea as Ethiopia's 14<sup>th</sup> province. This annexation sparked Eritrea's nationalist war for independence (Tesfagiorgis 2010).

Even during the decade-long federation period, Eritrean students mounted mass demonstrations, followed by a four-day general strike of the Trade Union in 1958. In the same year, exiled Eritreans in the Sudan formed the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM).<sup>4</sup> The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) launched the war for Eritrea's liberation on September 1, 1961. By the mid-1970s, a splinter group from the ELF, naming itself the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), began to dominate the resistance movements by eliminating the ELF adherents. A civil war between the two guerrilla groups ensued, resulting in the death of thousands of fighters from both factions. By the early 1980s, the EPLF drove the ELF forces out of Eritrea's lowlands and positioned itself as the sole command for the liberation struggle. In 1974, a military coup installed a Marxist regime in Ethiopia, replacing Emperor Haile Selassie with yet another repressive regime known as the Derg (which means "committee" in Amharic). The Derg ruled Ethiopia for 17 years until its defeat by combined Ethiopian and Eritrean guerrilla forces in May 1991.

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<sup>4</sup> The leaders included Mohamed Said Nawd, Saleh Ahmed Eyay, and others.

By the late 1980s, the EPLF appeared to have gained control of all territories in Eritrea. This was evident in March 1988, when the EPLF defeated Ethiopia's Second Revolutionary Army in the town of Afabet. The EPLF and Ethiopia's rebel group EPRDF espoused the same Marxist ideology as Ethiopia's Derg regime; thus rebels had to walk a fine line not to directly criticize the Soviet Union. EPLF forces continued the offensive, which concluded with their seizure of the Eritrean capital city, Asmara, in May 1991. In a U.N. supervised referendum in April 1993, Eritreans voted overwhelmingly (99.83%) to become an independent and a sovereign country. Afterwards, the EPLF established a Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE), naming Isaias Afewerki, the secretary general of the EPLF, as its interim president (Connell 2011).

### **1.5. B. NAMIBIA**

Namibia is located in the southern part of Africa; its neighboring countries are Angola, Botswana, the Republic of South Africa, and Zambia. The Atlantic Ocean constitutes Namibia's western border, with a coastline of about 1,572 km (976 miles). Namibia's population is an estimated 2.3 million people belonging to diverse cultures and traditional communities. The Ovambo are the largest ethnic group (making up 50 percent of the population) living in the northern part of Namibia. The Kavango, Nama, Herero, Damara, and other smaller groups constitute the remaining half of Namibia's population.

In Namibia, 97 percent of the population identify themselves as Christians, the majority of whom are Lutherans (50%), followed by Catholics (20%), Anglicans, Reformed denominations, Adventists, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Non-Lutheran



Protestants make up about 27 percent of the population. Muslims and other non-Christian Namibians make up the remaining 3 percent (U.S State Department International Religious Freedom Report 2017).

Namibia has rich natural resources, including diamonds, copper, uranium, gold, silver, lead, tin, lithium, cadmium, tungsten, zinc, salt, hydropower, and fish. Only one percent of the land in Namibia is arable; most of the landmass is desert. The territory is exposed to prolonged droughts and environmental challenges due to limited natural freshwater, desertification, wildlife poaching, and land degradation.

Germany colonized the territory in 1886-90, naming it South West Africa (SWA). In an attempt to suppress opposition from the native Herero and Nama peoples, colonial authorities exterminated 80 percent of the Herero population. In 1915, after the Dutch allied the Germans in the final Boer War, the Cape Colony South African forces defeated and expelled the Germans (Soggot 1986). In December, 1920 the League of Nations granted the Union of South Africa a mandate to govern South West Africa. After 1945, with the establishment of the United Nations, opposition to South African rule was initially led by chief Kutako and the Herero Chiefs Council, nationalist student groups, and the South West African Progressive Association (Southall 2013).

In 1946, the United Nations and the Union of South Africa reached a stalemate: the U.N. refused South Africa's annexation of SWA; South Africa refused to place SWA under U.N. trusteeship. In 1957, the Herero Chiefs Council sent Jariretundu Kozonguizi to the U.N. with a petition from the people of South West Africa who were opposed to South Africa's apartheid policies. This opposition led to the founding of Ovamboland

People's Congress (OPC) in 1958 by Herman Toivo Ya Toivo and others. The OPC opposed the contract work system – called *odalate*– that restricted working conditions of many Ovambos. The OPC was renamed the Ovambo People's Organization (OPO) in 1959. In April 1960, OPO was formally dissolved and reconstituted as the South West Africa People's Organization, (SWAPO), adopting the twin platforms of “National Unity and Self-reliance” to represent the grievances and aspirations of Blacks in the reserves, towns and compounds (Soggot 1986, 28).

In 1966, SWAPO launched its armed struggle, bringing crucial attention to the cause of the organization and its struggle for independence. The same year, the U.N. terminated the South African mandate to administer the territory and placed the territory under direct U.N. responsibility (U.N. Peace Keeping Operations 2013). In 1968, the U.N. General Assembly renamed SWA as Namibia. In 1973, the U.N. General Assembly recognized SWAPO as the sole and legitimate representative of Namibia's people. In 1978, a U.N. Resolution declared the importance of holding free elections under U.N. supervision for all Namibians, and the unofficial Western Contact Group (representatives from governments of the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, and West Germany) was formed to facilitate negotiations among South Africa, SWAPO and the front-line states.<sup>5</sup> Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia were included

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<sup>5</sup> Frontline states are countries in southern Africa neighboring South Africa or in close proximity with South Africa that formed a coalition in 1970 to formulate a policy in their fight against the apartheid government of South Africa. These states, including Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and (from 1980) Zimbabwe, supported the liberation movements in both South Africa and Namibia.

in these negotiations. These efforts were conducted in close contact with the U.N. Secretary General and the U.N. Commissioner for Namibia at the time.

In 1988, South Africa agreed to Namibian independence in exchange for the removal of Cuban troops from Angola. The United States served as a mediator between Angola, South Africa, Cuba and SWAPO, identifying a common ground among all the parties involved. The United States supported the Union of South Africa and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA- is the acronym in Portuguese language) wanted the removal of Cuban forces from Angola and a political settlement among the different liberation forces within Angola. These included Angola, Cuba, Frontline States (Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Tanzania) and SWAPO. All were opposed to South Africa's apartheid policies and supported the independence of Namibia. Approximately 50,000 Cuban troops were stationed in Angola for thirteen years after Angola had achieved independence from Portugal (Freeman 1989). In 1975, after Angola achieved independence, the three guerrilla movements (Chinese-backed UNITA, the U.S-backed FNLA, and the Soviet-backed MPLA) failed to form a coalition government.<sup>6</sup> The military arm of SWAPO, Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), moved from Zambia to the Angolan-Namibian border, bringing the war closer to home for the South African troops, who were fighting both PLAN and Cuban forces in Angola.

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<sup>6</sup> A civil war ensued among three groups; the MPLA forces, supported by the Cuban troops (with Soviet military equipment), installed the government of the MPLA in Angola. By the early 1980s, UNITA forces reorganized and continued to put strong pressure on the MPLA government, with the help of South African Defense Forces (SADF). As time went on, the MPLA government could not keep up with the economic and military cost of conflict with UNITA and lost control of the areas near Namibia (Freeman 1989)

The U.N. supervised election for a Namibian Constituent Assembly in 1989 resulted in SWAPO's electoral victory. In March 1990, Namibia became an independent country with Sam Nujoma as its first president. Ever since, Namibia has conducted periodic elections, with SWAPO dominating the political space since independence. The party won every election conducted in Namibia, thereby positioning itself as the dominant political party. Because it has conformed to the parameter of periodic multi-party election, Namibia is classified as a "flawed democracy," or hybrid regime. This difficulty in correctly labeling the type of regime in Namibia goes to the heart of the problem in understanding democratic transitions in Africa. Many regimes in Africa display authoritarian tendencies but manage to hold periodic elections as a way of legitimizing their leadership. Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and many other nations are hybrid democracies, but the reality on the ground tells a much different story than what one can see on the surface. Thus, measures of democracy such as the Economist "Democracy Index" use labels such as hybrid, mixed, and flawed democracy to describe regimes that display characteristics of both democracy and autocracy.

## **1.6. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research project is to describe several factors that shaped regime types in post-conflict societies; emphasis is given to political patterns, cultures, and strategies of the liberation forces. This investigation is a qualitative case study of two post-conflict transitions which identifies similar or correlative influences among the types of regimes that have emerged in the post-independence era in Africa.

Numerous political and historical theories could be applied to understanding the process of regime change. Below, I have reviewed some of the alternative hypotheses presented in political science literature. These include ideologies, leadership styles, monopoly markets, homogenous societies, shifts in power balances, and wealth distribution. Each is described here briefly, followed by the factors I consider to be most significant in a comparative case study of Eritrea and Namibia.

- ***Ideologies supported by leaders of movements.*** Shin and Jhee (2005) analyze a national sample surveys in South Korea conducted during the first decade of democratic rule. They find that the democratization of a country's right-wing dictatorship resulted in a movement of many South Koreans from the right toward the left on the ideological spectrum. Russel Dalton (2006) utilizes data from the World Values Survey (WVS) that covers over 70 nations representing more than 80 per cent of the world's population. He finds that polarization along the Left/Right dimension is substantially greater in the less affluent and less democratic societies than in advanced industrial democracies.
- ***Distinctive leadership styles that capture the imagination of the populace.*** While analyzing 154 foreign policy crises, J. W. Keller (2005) finds that, contrary to conventional wisdom, leaders respond in systematically different ways to domestic constraints. One type of leader, the "constraint respecter," internalizes political constraints, while the other type, "constraint challenger," views internal constraints as obstacles to be surmounted. James Mahoney and Richard Snyder (1999) focus on variations in old regime institutions to explain the origins of opposition groups, the

failure of incumbents to maintain power, and the prospects for democratic consolidation.

- ***Monopoly markets dominate the priorities, and behaviors of government leaders.***

Peter F. Cowhey (1999) attributes regime shifts to imbalances in production capacity, with excess production becoming an accurate explanation for the timing of regime changes. Economic decline, Cowhey asserts is a necessary but not sufficient condition to produce regime change. Surplus capacity, in the absence of a hegemonic control of production, creates the conditions for regime change. Amitaya K Dutt examines the interaction between growth and income distribution in underdeveloped countries, concluding that a bad income distribution does not cause economic stagnation (Dutt 1984).

- ***Homogenous ethnic or religious groups exercising authority over opposing factions.*** In a comparative study of Zambia and Kenya, Posner (2007) showed how political competition in one- party and multiparty settings caused political actors to emphasize different kinds of ethnic identities. Kifordu (2011) argues that ethnic politics persist in Nigeria based on interactions between political institutions, institution-builders, and society at large. He asserts a contradictory link between deep-rooted elite interests and popular preferences; suggesting that this dynamic undermines movements towards democracy.

- ***Oligarchies own or control national resources, causing wealth disparities in which middle and lower classes have a diminished control over government policies.***

Haggard and Kaufman (2012) assess the claims of Acemoglu and Robinson in the

context of democratic transitions and reversions during the creation of “third wave” democracies (between 1980 and 2000). A substantial number of these transitions occur in countries with high levels of income inequality. Less than a third of all reversions to authoritarianism were driven by distributive conflicts between elites and masses. Muller (1988) demonstrates that continuous experience with democracy, over a period of many years, tends to lessen income inequality, independent of economic development efforts or other factors.

In the literature review section, I will briefly discuss the extent to which these factors influenced the process of regime change in Eritrea and Namibia. I focus my analysis (as detailed below) on three specific factors—political culture, war termination strategies, and international actors. I chose these factors because my personal familiarity with the regime transition in Eritrea (due to my status as an Eritrean immigrant) presented me with strong justifications—as well as challenges to remain unbiased—in my analysis. The more that I studied the historical evidence of the lengthy transitions from colonial rule to independence in each country, the more these three factors aligned with my experience and interpretations. A theoretical framework emerged from my knowledge of Eritrean culture and history; as a result, I felt an inner drive to test or confirm the framework’s validity with scholarly research and comparative analysis. While researching for this project, I realized that Eritrea and Namibia are among those under-researched countries and there is so much more to learn about their political histories. I hope this will be a small contribution in understanding the democratic transition of non-

western cultures in answering why some democracies flourish in some places not in others.

In addition to analyzing these three factors, this study is designed to identify solutions using theories of conflict analysis and resolution. Recent history suggests that post-conflict societies need guidance in choosing paths toward peaceful transitions from war into pluralistic political eco-systems. This study proceeds from the assumption that understanding societies within their own historical, socio-cultural and political contexts will illuminate both unique and universal attributes of societies that experience transitions. The field of conflict analysis and resolution is useful for sorting out policy options for decision-makers. Although, I focus on correlated patterns(as opposed to causative factors), I expect that this study will be relevant to similar post-colonial situations and will illuminate the reasons why—even in countries with similar or parallel histories—post-conflict regime change may not lead to expected outcomes. The real significance of this study may be arriving at the conclusion that unique socio-cultural, political, and economic factors, both domestic and international, shape every regime change. Thus, when new governments or international organizations try to design effective policies, they focus on goals, beneficiaries, and interests of every stakeholder. In short, there appears to be no single formula for producing democratic outcomes in regime change.

According to the 2013 Freedom House Report, individual liberties in the world declined for the previous seven years, with the most pronounced declines taking place in sub-Saharan Africa. Freedom House reported that in 2013, 41 percent of countries in sub-



Saharan Africa were rated as “not free.”<sup>7</sup> This dissertation’s comparative analysis will add to our understanding of the dynamics of regime change and the influences or effects those transitions have on developing societies in Africa. It is an attempt to explore particular details of two liberation movements, viewing them as social experiments which led to somewhat different leadership styles in Eritrea and Namibia. The movements in each country deserve detailed study because they had a strong impact on the way people in the two nations perceived their new governments. The liberation fronts transformed governance that were only imagined or envisioned as actual political entities. In each case political culture was defined in the heart of liberation struggles. Tragically, the approval and support of the general populous is frequently exploited by the government that gains power. Once power has been consolidated, “liberation” becomes a euphemism for imposing a culture of autocracy and violence.

In this chapter, I have reviewed the democratic challenges faced by many African countries in transition. We have noted that disruptive transitions can occur even in consolidated democracies like the U.S. This introduction summarizes a theoretical framework relevant to regime change in Eritrea and Namibia—and by extension, to many other countries. Comparative analysis in the following chapters sets forth a process for interpreting the origins and impact of regime change in post-conflict societies. In the next chapter, I will review literature that is relevant to democratic transition and political

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<sup>7</sup> Freedom House is an independent, nongovernmental organization that provides annual evaluation of countries of the world in their freedom progress. According to Freedom House rating, a country is free, where there is a broad scope for open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media. SOURCE: [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org).

culture. I will also lay out the foundation to contextualize the meaning of democracy and democratic transition within the scope of this research.

## 2. CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have described democratic formation and regime change. The literature on democratization attracted many scholars who study what makes democratic transition happen or difficult. Some democratization theorists try to explain the success of the democratic transition in terms of the economic or social development of the society under consideration. Others focus on the social structures and political culture that exists in communities to explain the democratic transition process. Below, I will review some of the works of the various scholars on the subject of democratic transition.

Some of the pioneers in the study of democratization are Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba. In their 1963 book “*The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, An Analytic Study*”, Almond and Verba studied the connection between political culture and democracy through the analysis of values and attitudes of five countries considered for the study. They argued that civic culture is a mixed set of values with attributes from both modern and traditional. They also identified three types of political cultures: parochial political culture, subjective political cultures, and participatory political cultures. Almond and Verba showed the relationship between the civic culture and democratic stability and the impact that political culture has on political systems (Rose 2017; Almond and Verba 1963).

Dankwart Rustow presented a theory of democratization that contrasting with Almond and Verba. In his 1970 article “*Transitions to Democracy: Toward a dynamic*

*model,*” Rustow, compared democratization to evolution theory where he argues that authoritarian regimes could use instability to adapt to democratization and that their beliefs may adjust over time. In Rustow’s model of democratization four different stages are outlined. The first stage is the background condition, which starts out with national unity as its primary condition followed by the preparatory phase. The second stage consists of the political processes that kick start the democratization process. At the third stage, that is the decision stage “democracy achieved through a process of a conscious action on the part of the top political leadership”(Rose 2017). The fourth and final phase, institutes a process of identifying people who are supporters and participants of democracy, who would take part in the process of election as competing parties and politicians vying for leadership position (Rustow 1970; Rose 2017).

Seymour Lipsett studied the relationship between economic development and the initiation or consolidation of democracy. In the 1959 article “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development,” Lipsett, much like modernization theory, argues that economically advanced countries are much more likely to be a democracy and to remain a democracy compared to those that are less economically advanced. Using the data for many countries in Europe and Latin For his study, Lipsett looked at number factors such as per capita income, level of literacy, and the percent of people in the agricultural sector, and urbanization. In his study, Lipsett suggests that urbanization is the first step in modernization which leads to the expansion of media and literacy rate. The second phase is industrial development, which facilitates better communication networks. That in turn, “encourages the development of formal democratic institutions such as

voting and citizen participation in the decisions of their government”(Rose 2017; Lipset 1959; 1994).

Stephen Haggard and Robert Kaufman in their article “The political economy of democratic transitions” identified the “effects of short-term economic conditions on the bargaining power and interests of incumbents and opposition” and argue that elite bargaining is part of the democratic transitions(Rose 2017; Haggard and Kaufman 1997). They argue that political elites can mobilize support or opposition in new democracies depending on how economic policy affects the distribution of income across different social groups. They also identified two types of transitions in authoritarian regime transition: crisis and non-crisis transition.

In chapter one, (on pages 20 to 22) I reviewed how scholars and policy makers analyze important factors such as ideology, markets, leadership styles, and global power shift. I will recap these factors briefly here, then provide a more in-depth review of literature that supports my primary thesis of factors affecting Eritrea and Namibia; namely, political culture, war-termination strategies, and influence of international actors.

**Ideology** Economic theories (such as Russia or Chinese Marxism, or free-market capitalism) when applied to real-world cases, often lead to unpredictable outcomes. In a parallel manner, the ideology of *Satyagraha* (non-violent resistance) produced regime change in India and South Africa—yet it was not the only factor. Mass movements based on political or religious theories (such as Islamic fundamentalism) lead to instability—not always toward regime change. Many of the liberation movements in Africa espoused leftist ideologies of some sort. Marxist or Socialist ideology, influenced by the USSR and

the Chinese communism, caused many African anti-colonial movements (from Algeria in the North to Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Benin, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, as well as ANC, EPLF and SWAPO leadership) each of which was dominated by leaders pursuing a revolutionary path. In Eritrea, a clandestine Marxist party called Eritrean People's Revolutionary party (EPRP) or simply the People's Party, offered a "vision, program and direction while molding its members to reflect its goals and objectives and to spread its message" (Connell 2001, 346). SWAPO aligned with the Soviet Socialist ideology in response to military aid and support from them. Both the EPLF and SWAPO combined nationalist guerrilla warfare with leftist ideology.

**Monopoly Markets** -Several newly independent African governments, such as Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo), were organized entirely around exploitation and export of valuable resources (for example, diamonds, gold or oil). As we have seen in the cases of Saudi Arabia or Libya, authoritarian regimes sold their resources to Western nations to increase exploitation and, control of global markets (Zak and Feng 2003).

**Leadership Styles** Visionary or charismatic personalities often rise to the top of hierarchies. In some cases, individuals like Gandhi and Nehru in India, or Mandela in South Africa, endured long-term suffering which gained for them respect in the wider population. The patterns of leadership personality tend to match patterns of government; that is authoritarian personalities rise to the top (often through violence) of authoritarian regimes.

**Homogenous or Diverse Populations** – Dominant ethnic or language groups—such as Tamils in Sri Lanka, Hindus in India, or Muslims in Pakistan, rise to the top of these nations. Some scholars (Kifordu 2011) argue that the more homogenous a society is, the less complex it is to govern. Conversely, diversity tends to produce instability (Posner 2007).

**Income Inequality** – When the wealthiest sector of society controls the governments, the bulk of official decisions and resources are directed toward concentrated wealth—to make the rich richer (Haggard and Kaufman 2012) Governments controlled by rich oligarchies can be found in both despotic regimes and in democracies. Because resources are finite in any nation, the wealth in oligarchies is concentrated at the top preventing distribution of resources to the poor or to the middle classes. Unequal distribution of wealth dis-empowers the majority population, who must focus on their own survival instead of activities that advance the broader social welfare (Zak and Feng 2003). Therefore, even in democracies, oligarchies are often able to preserve their power by manipulating public opinion (Muller 1988).

## **2.2. CULTURE, WAR TERMINATION STRATEGY, AND THE ROLE THE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

As an alternative to the above commonly discussed dynamics, I propose three additional factors pertaining to democratic transitions. These factors form the “pillars” for this study: political culture, strategies of terminating liberation wars, and the influences of international actors. As noted above (pages 22-23) I chose these factors because I was

able to identify clear historical evidence relating to their impact on regime formation in the two African countries.

The length of time required for transition is an important consideration. Regime transition happens over different time spans—roughly categorized as short, medium and long. Numerous scholars have examined the length of transition, and how it affects the process of democratic consolidation and stability (Joshi 2013). Thirty-year transitions in this case study fall into the longer end of the time-scale spectrum.

Another underlying issue in transition is political development. Political development is understood in terms of “democratic virtues”—individual dignity, security, justice, liberty, self-expression and material welfare. These qualities in turn influence the presence or lack of widespread violence, repressive rule, and democratic government (Nordlinger 1968, 500). Transition implies a journey or process with a starting point and finishing point, the speed of transition depends on the presence or absence of political values.

In his review article, Nordlinger (1968) offers two propositions about the sequencing and rates of change in political development. First, he suggests that the sequence begins with development of national identity, followed by institutionalization of the central government, and finally by the emergence of mass parties and electorates. When this sequence occurs, Nordlinger argues, it will likely lead to a political system that is non-violent, non-authoritarian and eventually democratic. Nordlinger warns that if leaders attempt to create national identity too rapidly, the result may be authoritarian abuses and wide spread violence.(Nordlinger 1968) Similarly, Campbell and Ni Aolain



stress the importance of “building the legitimacy of the rule of law and of legal institutions within communities whose experiences during the conflict has been one of exclusion, and by creating political space” in post-conflict transitions (Campbell and Ni Aolain 2005, 196).

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index —

“... at a minimum the fundamental features of democracy should include government based on majority rule and the consent of the governed, the existence of free and fair elections, the protection of minority rights and respect for basic human rights” (Democracy Index 2012, 25).

However, the EIU stresses “that measure of democracy that reflects the state of political freedom and civil liberties are not ‘thick’ enough” (Democracy Index 2012, 27). Therefore, the EIU ranking is based on five specific categories: (a) electoral process and pluralism; (b) civil liberties; (c) the functioning of government; (d) political participation; and (e) political culture. The Index also groups countries into four types of regimes based on four categories: (a) full democracies, (b) flawed democracies, (c) hybrid regimes, and (d) authoritarian regimes. All four categories are inter-related and relevant to growing democracy in new regimes. Stressing the importance of democratic culture in the smooth functioning and legitimacy of governments, the EIU report states that “a culture of passivity and apathy, an obedient and docile citizenry, are not consistent with democracy” (Democracy Index 2012, 26). Thus, the specific political culture in given cases may be considered as a relevant factor in regime change.

### **2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE**

Classical theorists from Aristotle and Plato through Montesquieu and de Tocqueville have stressed the importance of “understanding politics in terms of customs, mores, traditions, norms, and habits—all of which are aspects of culture” (Pye 1991, 490). For Aristotle, democracy depended upon the attitudes and values of the middle class. Ronald Inglehart argues that societies which emphasize “self-expression values” are more likely to be democracies than societies that emphasize “survival values” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). This line of argument goes back to the thesis that economic growth leads to a shift from survival values to self-expression values; this is essentially Inglehart’s “postmaterialist” explanation of why richer societies are more likely to be democratic. In their seminal work, Almond and Verba used political culture to mean “political orientations—attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system” (Almond and Verba 1963, 13). They further specified “the political culture of a nation is the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation (Almond and Verba 1963, 14–15). Clear understanding of political culture is an essential aspect of analyzing the process of regime change in Africa.

The link between democracy and culture has attracted as much analysis and debate as the concept of democracy itself (Fukuyama 1995; Harrison 1992; Inglehart 1977; Putnam 1994). The assertion that democratic growth and prosperity requires a preexisting culture conducive for its success has been, both defended and challenged.

Both sides of the argument have sufficient examples to support their positions. Fukuyama challenges Max Weber's assertion that democracy could have arisen only in a certain specific cultural and social conditions of Western civilization (Fukuyama 1998, 220–21). As examples of the argument against the “cultural preconditions for democracy,” Fukuyama cites countries like India, with a diverse cultural and religious heritage, able to sustain democracy since independence in 1948.<sup>8</sup> Other countries like Japan and Germany were believed to be incapable of espousing democratic values, yet they were able to develop into successful democracies despite their past authoritarian histories.

The argument that a country cannot democratize if it lacks preexisting democratic tradition or culture faces challenges from numerous societies that lack the purported “preconditions” or advantages that are conducive to democracy. The counter-argument raises the question of what conditions are critical to the emergence of stable democracies. Fukuyama argues a strong sense of national unity is very important (Fukuyama 1998). The argument over democracy and culture divided into two distinct arguments, called primordial and constructivists (Clark, Golder, and Golder 2017). The primordial argument (articulated by Montesquieu in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century) treats culture as something that is objective and inherited—a quality fixed since “primordial” times. Constructivists (such as John Stuart Mill) treat culture as something that is invented rather than inherited

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<sup>8</sup>Fukuyama's observations regarding India were offered many years before Prime Minister Modi's anti-Muslim bigotry and authoritarian tendencies emerged over the past two years. Fukuyama did not consider the brief undemocratic leadership of India under Indira Gandhi where India remained democratic despite that brief period of emergency rule.

(Clark, Golder, and Golder 2017, 224). Cultures may adapt and develop in response to historical or social demands.

Another perspective on development of democratic culture relates to the collective will of the populace. The collective sphere is where we can gauge the tendency for democratic support or lack of it. Some theorists state that culture is only a collective phenomenon, and not discernible within individuals. “If one is interested in the impact of mass attitudes on democracy, what matters is a society’s mass tendency in these attitudes, not the individual level attitudinal structure” (Inglehart and Welzel 2003, 66). However, Inglehart and Welzel also argue that individual democratic “qualities of tolerance, self-expression, trust, well-being, and participation” are essential for the functioning of democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2003, 72).

Many scholars and policy makers believe that public participation in constitution-making leads toward a transition to democracy. In *The Participation Myth*, Abrak Saati argues that there is no relationship between public participation and subsequent quality of democratic governance. Saati cites Eritrea, Uganda, and Zimbabwe as new nations that promoted public participation in the process of writing their constitutions yet saw a decline in democratic quality after the documents were written. A few new African nations like Nigeria had low participation in constitution-making yet evolved into democracies. Because of this analysis, Saati concluded that there is no relationship between public participation in constitution building and the quality of democratic institutions (Saati 2015).

Dankwart Rustow in “Transitions to Democracy” (*Comparative Politics*, 1970) argues that political elites determine all types of regime change. Consensual unity among elites to transform the political process is the key factor that distinguishes consolidated from unconsolidated democracies. Simply put, strong democracies require elites who are willing and able to consensually agree on the democratic “rules of the game” and have formal as well as informal channels through which they can influence decision-making (Rustow 1970).

Based on the World Values Survey (WVS) on two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation, i.e., traditional/secular/rational and survival/self-expression/religious values, Inglehart found that a culture of trust and tolerance makes democracy possible. Self-expression values give priority to environmental protection, tolerance of diversity, rising demands for participation in political and economic affairs, and tolerance of the out-group (World Values Survey). Most societies that have reached post-survival stages become more democratic—and these countries tend to be liberal democracies most often found in the West.

When such conditions are absent, societies that “emphasize survival values display low levels of subjective well-being, are low on interpersonal trust, are intolerant towards out-groups, low on environmental activism, and are relatively favorable to authoritarian government” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Societies with self-expression values put pressure on authoritarian regimes for political liberalization, and this pressure has been credited for the “Third Wave Democracy” movements in the late 1980s and

early 1990s. Some scholars believe this movement led to the collapse of authoritarian communist regimes and a global process of democratization.<sup>9</sup>

The consideration of culture in the discussion of democratization has been criticized as being elitist, pitting some cultures against others, and creating a presumption that Western culture is “superior” because it is compatible with democracy, whereas others that are “hostile” to democracy are less successful. One such critique is offered by Tomaso Pavone (2014), in a review of Almond and Verba (1963), who asserts that culture-based theories of democracy implicitly “decry the moral poverty of the non-Anglo-Saxon political cultures while singing the praises of the civic culture of Britain and the US” (Pavone 2014).

In this dissertation, culture is viewed through the prism of the unique experience of the EPLF and SWAPO during their liberation struggles; we examine how culture shaped their worldview in terms of political development. Culture is not a singular concept. Among other things, it encompasses, traditional ways of life, philosophical inclinations, economic status, and points of view about political development. Culture is not fixed. Although generally stable, cultures also have the capacity for flexibility, adapting to new events, influences, or ideas. Influential groups shape society, including parents, teachers, community leaders, politicians, celebrities, and artists.

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<sup>9</sup>Counter-evidence is readily available, such as the collapse of the “Arab Spring” movement that began in 2010, the return of former Soviet Union nations to authoritarian regimes; or the imperviousness to democracy in nations such as China and Saudi Arabia; or: India’s recent annexation of the semi-autonomous province of Kashmir.

Avruch and Black call for a comprehensive understanding of culture to include both generic and local cultures. Generic culture is defined in terms of broad socio-psychological traits like kinship bonds, whereas local culture is displayed through diversity, differences, and particularism.

The role of political culture is useful for understanding the outcomes of regime change in Eritrea and Namibia. Political leaders played a significant role in shaping or creating a new culture for pursuing their political agendas. The traditional ethos and values in both Eritrea and Namibia were transformed because of the liberation struggles. As we see in the literature, a defined political culture is crucial for democratic transition to take root in any given country. Culture shapes the behavior of societies. However, this does not mean that culture is the only factor that influences political and/or economic development. Other factors include prior regime types, traditional roles of leadership, and specific personalities who initiate and control the political transitions, ideologies, global political and economic factors, and others.

Leaders in countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, for example, rejected the Western concept of democracy and its emphasis on “individual rights.” They view these values as culturally inappropriate and less conducive to progress in their unique societies. Similarly, the Eritrean leaders called for a “different” kind of democracy, modeled on the “East Asian Tigers” that propelled their economies toward to an economic boom.<sup>10</sup> These countries—Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan—had gone through rapid

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<sup>10</sup>This might have been a justification on the part of Eritrea’s president to impose heavy-handed patronage in the management of the private sector.

industrialization with a high growth rate managed through state policies. The strong hand of the government in the private sector and political influences of government-guided macroeconomic policies, with long-term development stages that spur industrialization and rapid growth. In sum, these examples imply that democracy is not required for economic development, nor does it necessarily follow that wealthier societies become more democratic over time. Political culture is therefore seen as a factor, but not the determinative factor, in economic development. One question examined in this dissertation is whether political culture is determinative in regime change.

## **2.4. SOCIAL CAPITAL AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION**

In addition to culture, the discussion of democratic transitions includes social capital as another relevant variable. Social capital refers to “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam 1994, 167). Social capital refers to the collective value of social networks and shared norms which promote reciprocity, trust, and social cooperation (Putnam 1994). Drawing from his fieldwork in the Italian regional governments, Putnam argues that

“Civil associations are powerfully associated with effective public institutions. [And] social capital embodied in horizontal networks of civic engagement, bolsters the performance of the polity and the economy, i.e. strong society, strong economy; strong society, strong state” (Putnam 1994, 176).

Putnam has shown that trust, norms, and networks tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative, resulting in two kinds of social equilibrium—at one extreme, civic



engagement and collective well-being; at the other extreme, defection, distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, corruption and stagnation (Putnam 1994, 177). This binary view of reciprocity—trust versus dependency—reveals that societies that are faced with regime transition tend to evolve, and once they have attained equilibrium, they tend to become self-reinforcing. Putnam argues that the presence or absence of a civic culture (defined as social capital) explains the level of public support for regional governments in the northern and southern parts of Italy. He argues that networks of reciprocity and civic engagement were the distinguishing features of Italy's northern regional governments' capacity for good governance. By contrast, undemocratic, ineffective performance is found in southern regional governments. These observations, which apply to regional governments within a single national entity, may not apply to regime change that leads to creation of new governmental entities. However, it provides insight as to the impact of civic culture in how the governance structure of any given society

The colonial past of post-conflict societies plays a crucial role in the post-conflict socio-economic and political development. In his study of the post-colonial experiences of North and South America, Douglass North showed that both the United States and the Latin American Republics after independence shared “constitutional forms, abundant resources, and similar international opportunities” (North 1990, 101–2). However, while North Americans benefited from English parliamentary patrimony, their Latin American counterparts were “cursed with centralized authoritarianism, familyism, and clientelism that they inherited from the late medieval Spain” (North 1990, 112–17). North asserts that despite sharing similar resources and opportunities, the historical, social context

presented each part of the Western hemisphere with different challenges and incentives that created institutional difference between the two regions.

Putnam's assertion that institutional patterns are self-reinforcing (even when they are socially inefficient) suggests that societies tend to cling to the status quo rather than change course, even when it is easier and less demanding to do so. The author also notes that once development is set on a certain course, "organizational learning, cultural habits, and mental modes of social work reinforce that trajectory" (Putnam 1994, 179). Putnam's analysis can be applied to Eritrea's and Namibia's post-independence legacies, after they were liberated from Ethiopia's and South Africa's rule, respectively. These status quo tendencies will be covered in Chapter Four.

The context in which post-conflict transition happens i.e., international influences, political attitudes of legitimacy and coercion, and constitution-making—are as pertinent as the process of transition itself (Linz and Stepan 1996, 66). Many factors help (or deter) democratic development, including the legitimacy and competency of political leaders, political culture, social structures, socio-economic development, experience with civil society, and political institutions (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995: 9-32). For this study, I will only focus on a few factors relevant to comparisons between the two countries<sup>11</sup>. My analysis will focus on why their experiences diverged and continued on separate paths. Among the factors that affect regime change, scholars and policy-makers have

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<sup>11</sup>As noted on page 24, the selection of these three factors was influenced by: (a) the abundance of historical evidence that had not been previously examined; and (b) my deep familiarity with the Eritrean case. A three-factor comparative framework involving two countries is sufficiently complicated to merit analysis within a full dissertation.

emphasized economic incentives for those countries willing to adopt liberal economic and political policies. This quid-pro-quo process has been dubbed “democracy promotion.” The focus for such studies has been on mechanisms that help democracy succeed as the outcome of regime change (Larison 2012). Post-conflict democratic transitions have been difficult in some countries despite the assistance they receive from the international community (S. Bush 2015).

The challenges of having limited or no local resources to support post-conflict development has led to economic interventions by the international community (or unilateral support from rich countries) to help push for democratic transitions. This is what we call ‘democracy-promotion with strings attached’ (S. Bush 2015; Mackay 2002; S. S. Bush 2015). However, despite economic assistance, the desired outcome of democratic transition remains elusive. The examples of Afghanistan and Iraq show that massive amounts of foreign aid and economic assistance cannot guarantee democratic transition (S. Bush 2015; *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq* 2006; Mackay 2002). The experiences of countries like Botswana and Mali, which began their transitions as poor countries, but are now stable democracies, challenges the assertion that wealth makes a crucial difference in democratic transition. There is little doubt that economic advancement makes democratization more plausible (Inglehart and Welzel 2009). In many cases, improved economies demand for regime change followed economic growth as happened in many “Arab Spring” nations in North Africa and the Middle East. However, there are countries like China where economic growth did not

produce a democratic polity, despite arguments by some that democracy is a predictable outcome of economic growth (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995, 6).

Another assertion holds that previous experience with democracy can be a strong indicator of a country's likely transition toward democracy (Norris 2012). However, Eritrea and Namibia do not have previous experience with democracy. They emerged from years of liberation struggle, therefore, the experiences of the two case study countries is unique in the sense that they had a fresh start to experiment with democracy and assess their development as an independent nations since the early 1990s. There are various factors and arguments about what makes democratic transition possible. For each argument, there may be a counter-argument. For this study, I will focus on evidence that specific factors helped a democratic transition to take root in Namibia and Eritrea. The selection of these factors may seem arbitrary, but ample supportive research (cited below) indicates that they are worthy subjects for analysis.

A logical beginning point is to examine the quantitative data on regime transition. In the 2018 EIU Democracy Index referenced earlier, a large proportion of countries in sub-Saharan Africa (14 countries or 31.8 percent) were classified as authoritarian regimes, and 29 countries (65.9 percent) were hybrid or flawed democracies. These 43 SSA countries account for 25.7 percent of 167 countries included in the Index. The index shows that authoritarian regimes dominate sub-Saharan Africa. Only one country, Mauritius, has remained a democracy since its independence in 1968. According to the Index, Namibia falls under the flawed democracy category, ranking 69 out of 167 countries. Namibia received an average score of 6.25 for the five categories measuring

democracy. By comparison, Eritrea falls under the authoritarian regime category, with an average score of 2.37 on the democracy index. Eritrea ranked 151, towards the tail end of the rankings. The next section will discuss what democratization means in the context of post-conflict development of Namibia and Eritrea.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.5. DEMOCRATIZATION**

Christian Welzel sums up three ways to understand the democratization process (Welzel 2009, 74-75). First, it means the introduction of democracy into a non-democratic regime. Second, it indicates deepening of democratic attributes within an existing democracy. Finally, democratization is the protection or survival of democratic institutions. In other words, democratization is an evolutionary process that may begin with a new democracy or consolidates existing democratic institutions. The process may be seen as a series of phases/stages involving the introduction, transition, strengthening and preservation of democracy.

In the case of Eritrea and Namibia, we view democratization at the primary level of introducing democracy in each country immediately after they come into existence as sovereign nations. Their only prior experience with democracy was during periods of international conservatorship (British Military Administration in Eritrea, 1942-52, and U.N. mandate in Namibia, 1968-73.) This study addresses two questions: (a) how does the process of democratization start in countries that are born out of centralized military

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<sup>12</sup> Democracy Index 2018: Report by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

command with little or no prior experience? And (b) why does democratic transition succeed in some countries and fail in others?

Most transitions toward democracy happen in the context of major social and political upheaval, forcing those in power to change course. It is seldom a process where those in powerful positions willingly concede. Democracy is “demanded by the disenfranchised as a way to obtain political power and thus, secure a larger share of economic benefits of the system” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 29). When the cost of political repression seems too high and risky, elites choose to make concessions that may lead to democratic transition. However, when elites can maintain and control political and economic power without significant opposition, they will usually continue to repress democratic movements. The same conditions that motivate elites to prefer suppression of democracy can cause the general populace to prefer democratic institutions. In both cases, each group wants to promote their own interests (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 30). In their comparative analysis describing four countries—Britain, Argentina, Singapore and South Africa, Acemoglu and Robinson suggest four responses to democracy formation: (a) gradual stable democracy, (b) unstable democracy (democracy created but collapsing quickly), (c) stable non-democracy (i.e., democracy delayed or postponed by authoritarian leaders) and (d) the non-democracy—avoiding democracy at all cost). The authors argue that consolidation of democracy happens “when elites do not have a strong incentive to overthrow it” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006).

Another study by Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) suggests that factors leading to regime transition in the early 1990s (1989-1994) included political competition and

leadership turnover (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 6–8). In terms of leadership turnover, many leaders survived the first electoral wave and remained in power, sometimes for decades. This has led some scholars to conclude that “political liberalization is less successful in promoting leadership transition in Africa than is usually assumed and less than elsewhere in the world” (Bienen and Herbst 1996, 34). Even in those countries, where incumbents were replaced, the transitions frequently involved leaders from post-colonial regimes that came from the privileged social and political classes. In other countries where transitions occurred, the government remained weak and unable to provide the basic needs of the population. The continuation of state power was often viewed as a source of both political and economic power, coveted and fought for, just as the liberation war was used as a model for continuous struggle (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 8 &9).

## **2.6. CHALLENGES OF DEFINING DEMOCRACY**

Democracy can be defined in many ways, but it is generally defined as a distinct political, economic and social system (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995). Another definition posits that “democracy is a form of regime whose legitimacy derived from the principle of popular sovereignty: namely, that ordinary citizens are equally endowed with the right and ability to govern themselves” (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 10–11). It has also been noted that “democracy is broadly identified in terms of freedom and civil liberties” (Jou, Dalton, and Sin 2007). There appears to be no consensus on a precise definition of democracy or how to measure it. When periodic free and fair elections

accompany democracy, it is known as an electoral democracy. This style of governance “rests on rules, institutions, and political practices through which voters regularly and constitutionally replace or modify their leadership by the exercise of representative political power” (Brumberg 2004, 47). Robert Dahl also stresses the presence of political equality within democracy, giving citizens equality in casting votes (universal suffrage) to participate in the decision-making process (Dahl 1998). Dahl’s polyarchy also stresses the electoral component of civil liberties and the freedom to vote, to form and join political parties, and freedom of expression.

Democracy implies responsive rule (Saward 1998, 13–14). It is distinguished from other forms of governance because, ideally, leaders are held accountable for their actions; regular, free and fair elections are the essence of accountability. However, democracy is much more than an electoral process. Some argued that “democracy requires a supportive culture, the acceptance by the citizenry and political elites of the principles underlying freedom of speech, media and assembly; rights of political parties, rule of law, human rights and the like” (Lipset 1998, 10). Democratic processes are time-consuming and “democratic political culture must be developed, nurtured and sustained” . Most importantly, many regimes are neither democratic nor are they categorized as non-democratic. Some countries possess the characteristics of both democratic and autocratic. Scholars identify these types of regimes as partial democracies, illiberal democracies, and mixed regimes (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2014; Epstein et al. 2006; Marshall and Jagers 2010).



One measure of the attitude of people toward democracy and governance is the Afrobarometer regional survey.<sup>13</sup> It categorizes components of governance into: Civil liberties (freedom of speech, government by the people, voting and elections); Peace and unity; Equality and justice; and Socio-economic development. It also assesses four citizen perceptions that embody democratic rule, including open elections, competing political parties, legal constraint on the executive and legislative autonomy.

The minimum requirements of democracy include periodic elections, as well as individual political and civil liberties. Elections alone may not be a sufficient condition for a functioning democracy; they are, however, “the principal and the necessary condition for democracy” (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997). Democracy means more than just the holding of elections, but also the granting of civil and political rights to include freedom of press and stronger political institutions (Radelet 2010).

As noted above, there is an ongoing debate concerning different definitions of democracy in different societies, making it difficult to accommodate multiple interests or purposes within a single definition. Despite this challenge, we may still conduct a comparative analysis of Eritrea and Namibia as their post-conflict trajectories are similar, yet the political development in the two countries is distinct. It is therefore appropriate to use a single definition of democracy in this research project (as summarized above).

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.afrobarometer.org/> The various regions of the world have their survey instruments such as Asiabarometer, Arab Barometer, Eurasia Barometer, Americas Barometer (LAPOP-Latin American Public Opinion Project) This instrument is an independent, non-partisan research project that measures citizens' attitudes on the social, political, and economic atmosphere in African countries. Using survey methods to collect data about individual attitudes and behavior, the Afrobarometer covers topics such as democratic process, governance, livelihoods, markets, social capital, conflict, crime, participation, and national identity.

Democracy defined as procedural vs. substantive democracy as employed by the Freedom House, that does yearly rating of countries in the world about their progress toward or regress away from democracy. Freedom House rating use electoral democracy for countries to have met certain minimum standards for political rights and civil liberties which is different from “liberal democracy, a term that implies a more robust observance of democratic ideals and a wider array of civil liberties”.<sup>14</sup>

Regime transition could be studied from various angles. In this research project, the underlying causes for post-conflict transition, either toward a democratic regime or away from it, are linked to the definitions of democracy that we choose. Michael Bratton calls for the need to “anchor the ‘D-word’ to some sort of...universal standard” (Bratton 2010, 106). Bratton argues that in the absence of a common understanding of what democracy means among diverse countries, social groups, or individuals, it is difficult to justify any qualitative comparisons. In his analysis of the Afrobarometer, Bratton found that aligning democratic institutions with “liberal and procedural conceptions” allowed this research project to rank civil liberties first among all other factors (Bratton 2010, 107).

The fact that many scholars identify freedom with democracy does not mean that “all people understand democracy simply as freedom.” Claude Ake sees democracy in Africa as a unique social movement with popular roots. He argues that democracy movements in Africa are “based on the bitter disappointment of independence and post-independence plans [where] ordinary people are demanding second independence—this

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<sup>14</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>

time from the indigenous leadership whose economic mismanagement, together with brutal repression, have made mere survival all but impossible” (Ake 1993, 240). As a result, the democracy movement in Africa is a unique, “powerful, objective, historical force in that it expresses the desire of ordinary people to gain power and material improvement”(Ake 1993, 240). The extent to which liberation movements in Namibia and Eritrea expressed the popular will is a question further examined in Chapter 4.

Democracy may be understood as more than a free or fair electoral process, but also as a process of economic improvement. Ake’s argument is that the definition of democracy depends on the goals and plans of different groups promoting democracy. For the leadership of the democratic movement in Africa, democracy means “multi-party electoral competition, a perception which reflects [the character of] its bourgeois leadership and international support . . . democracy is [also] a strategy for power” (Ake 1993, 240). He further argues that, for democracy to be relevant and sustainable in Africa, it has to “deemphasize abstract political rights and stress concrete economic rights” such as free enterprise, access to credit, ability to form labor unions, fair rates of currency exchange, etc. (Ake 1993, 241). This line of argument emphasizes the economic aspects of democracy applied in the African context.

Similarly, critiques of Western democracy in East Asia observe that economic and social rights, as well as political order, given greater emphasis than civil and political liberties. “[Enlightened] authoritarian rulers have the right to use coercive measures in the name of some higher good, and suppress democratic opposition” (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995). Justification given for the postcolonial trend toward one-party systems in

Africa include the “alleged tradition of a single unchallenged chief, the idea of a democratic majority expressed through a single party, and the need for unity in the face of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences.” As a result, “competitive politics was rejected as an imported luxury neither needed nor affordable in developing countries by some new nations in Africa. . . . Whatever the form, one-party states and other forms of dictatorships suppressed both competition and participation, undermining the potential for a healthy civil society and the necessary institutions for democracy”(Kpundeh 1992, 12-13). The preceding description may apply to many other African countries, but it is especially relevant to post-conflict transitions in Namibia and Eritrea.

Regardless of who is responsible for creating an environment conducive to democracy, the flourishing of democracy requires certain conditions, which include (but are not limited to) having “a legal order based on human rights, societal awareness of the instrumental and intrinsic values of democracy, a competent state, a committed minority, courage, and a culture of tolerance” (Kpundeh 1992, 22).

Scholars note that transitions happen when there is pressure from either above or from below. Kpundeh notes that transition from above occurs when understanding rulers respond to crises by initiating democratic reforms. Transitions from below occur when popular pressures from the people result in national conferences, popular revolutions, coups d'état, or pact formations, all with the goal of moving toward a more democratic society” (Kpundeh 1992, 14). In the transition to democracy, “one should neither destroy the state nor leave it to wither away, but should help the state find its proper role” (Kpundeh 1992, 26). Among other factors, a strong civil society presence in Africa is an

essential prerequisite for successful transitions to democracy. Some of the constraints for democratic transition include “inefficient bureaucracies, fragile institutions, economies in serious trouble, and an undemocratic political culture wherein people live in fear with little trust or pride in government” (Kpundeh 1992, 30). For the democratic experience to have local context and become meaningful in the lives of the local population, it has to incorporate the aspirations and desires of the people who are expected to benefit. Thus, “Africans ought to draw on elements within their societies to give local relevance to democratic concepts, rather than run the risk of having democracy transplanted without adaptation, as was done with technology” (Kpundeh 1992, 10).

## **2.7. REGIME TRANSITION AND THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION**

Regime transition could be one possible outcome of the democratization process. Acemoglu and Robinson developed three approaches in addressing the question of why some societies become democratic after regime change and others do not. The first analytical approach is the economic or rational choice approach, which suggests, “people often behave strategically [and] individuals do have a well-defined preference that they understand” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 19). People behave in accordance with their evaluation of the social and economic consequences of their choices. The second approach is the assumption that politics is always conflictual. This is to say, that a policy decision produces losers and winners. “Every time society (or government) makes a decision or adopts a policy, it is implicitly siding with one group, implicitly resolving the underlying political conflict in one way or another, and implicitly or explicitly creating

winners and losers” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 20). A group that has the most political power will dictate which and what policy gets priority. This leads to a policy that favors one, group over the other. “The more the political power a group has, the more it will benefit from government policies and actions” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 21). The third approach in this analysis is the development of political institutions that engage citizens. Allowance for the participation of the majority of citizens obviously produces democratic institutions that people tend to prefer.

The politico-institutional approach requires the development of political institutions over time, where people exercise their democratic rights as they consolidate the practice of democratic culture. This approach to understanding regime change offers an obviously way to measure whether democratic transition is under way. It “emerges as a way of regulating the future allocation of political power” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 24). Citizens need to maintain their political power “by changing political institutions—specifically, by introducing democracy and greater representation for themselves—because without the institutional changes, their power today is unlikely to persist” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 25). However, this is not an easy task for countries in sub-Saharan Africa that lack democratic institutions. Once a liberation struggle is over, the country is in a state of fragile peace. The long process of peace and nation building must start from scratch. For this daunting task to succeed, these countries need visionary leadership, which is a rarity in African countries, as it is elsewhere. Post-conflict leaders compete in monopolizing state power. My analysis of regime change

takes into account the role of leadership in the outcome of regime types, as well as the ideology and political philosophy of the leaders beneath the umbrellas of political culture.

## **2.8. POST-CONFLICT NATION-BUILDING AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION**

Every newly-liberated country must embark on nation-building efforts—but nation building has different aspects. On the one hand, it is “a process of socio-political development, which allows loosely linked communities to evolve into a common society with a nation-state corresponding to it (Hippler 2005, 6). This process could begin as a political, social, economic or cultural initiative spanning for a long period that ultimately bears fruit. Conversely, the process of unification could be rapid or violent. The broad process of nation building may be seen as an attempt to achieve a specific political objective, strategy or agenda. Hippler identified three essential elements for successful nation building. These are “a unifying, persuasive ideology, integration of society, and a communal state apparatus,” all of which are closely connected (Hippler 2005, 7).

Nationalism may do just that, using national symbols for political discourse and activities. Verdery (1993) argues that there must be a unifying ideology to justify a cause.

“Nationalism is a quintessential homogenizing, differentiating or classifying discourse: one that aims its appeal at people presumed to have certain things in common as against people thought not to have any mutual connection”(Verdery 1993, 38).

Successful nation building facilitates the integration of various groups in the society into a common framework. This process is often long, often violent, painful, messy, and difficult. The third component of nation-building is the development of a communal state apparatus with infrastructural, economic and political institutions such as

transportation, communication infrastructures, the development of national economy, mass media, etc.

State-building means the development of governmental capacity to provide public goods and services(Fukuyama 2007, 12). The post-conflict regime is tasked with nation building (state-building) of the new nation. It has the immediate task of retaining a monopoly over legitimate state violence (i.e., the ability to maintain civil order and suppress opposition). The other aspect of nation building for the nascent government is the task of institution building, where the regime will engage in fully-fledged functions of the state apparatus, providing public services to the citizens. The role of the state is to have the power and capacity to regulate and govern society; transitional countries with relatively competent and impartial state institutions are unlikely to detour into violence (Mansfield and Snyder 2007, 5). Institutions such as judicial systems, free press, and representative institutions are essential in the process of peaceful transition for countries in the immediate aftermath of conflict. Therefore, inclusive political institutions that are sufficiently centralized and pluralistic, coupled with inclusive economic institutions are very important toward becoming a full-fledged state (Acemoglu 2012, 80).

The ongoing debate about preconditions for democracy in the aftermath of conflicts has generated a heated discussion. Mansfield and Snyder argue that it is dangerous to “push states to democratize before the necessary preconditions are in place”(Mansfield and Snyder 2007, 5). They emphasize the importance of sequencing in democratic transitions. Establishment of a new democracy has to be followed by institutional development capable of supporting the democratic change. Sequencing may



mean delaying competitive elections while pursuing state building and establishing the rule of law. Competent state institutions have to take root for democratic transitions to begin, according to their argument. Mansfield and Snyder defend that some preconditions are necessary before any democratic transitions happen. Snyder and Mansfield assert that building effective state institutions will likely improve the success of democratization.

Others challenge such a claim that autocratic regimes have a bad record of building impartial institutions. Therefore, postponing democratic transition in autocratic regimes only solidifies the regime's status and prolongs the existence of an authoritarian rule. "Once a country starts on an illiberal trajectory, ideas are unleashed and institutions are established that tend to continue propelling it along that trajectory." (Mansfield and Snyder 2007, 7) Thomas Carothers proposes a gradual approach to democratic transition, in which "countries where circumstances do not favor democratization take incremental but definite steps toward open political competition, while simultaneously pursuing state-building and rule-of-law reforms"(Carothers 2007, 21)

War destroys not only the material base of countries, but also political, economic, and physical structures that make transition to the post-war era very difficult. Barbara Walter argues that the challenge is to get leaders in the post-conflict countries to open up the political system and provide public service assistance to their citizens, even especially when it is not to their advantage to give up power. Third-party interventions and economic assistance could have a positive impact on "political openness and democratization" (Walter 2004, 386; McMahon, 2007).

Leadership elites in many post-conflict countries support and enable autocratic regimes. In the case of Rwanda, for example, Carothers (2002) argues that the leaders are mainly concerned with stabilizing the country, not with democratization; these leaders fear ethnic strife or reprisals based on the experiences of ethnic violence. The priority, therefore, is to keep the peace at the expense of democratic transitions. The difficulty of achieving both peace and democracy has forced some countries to choose stability (suppressing violence) over democratization, as the latter seems to present more difficulty in implementation, especially in ethnically divided societies. Fear of ethnic violence and division within an already divided society makes democracy less appealing, because the call for pluralism and open competition can be threatening. In ethnically divided societies, democratic openings are seen as zero-sum games where the winner takes all, leaving the losers at the mercy of the winners. In light of such concerns and fears, sequencing and gradualism is put forth as a possible mechanism to help peaceful transitions to democracy (Bezemer 2013).

Zürcher (2011) argues that political elites resist full-fledged democratic transition in post-war countries for various reasons. One reason could be the memory of past atrocities that followed a democratic opening, as was the case in Rwanda and Tajikistan. Another reason could be the continued outside support of an entrenched autocratic system (for example, China's influence in Tibet).

The international community's implicit preference for stability over chaotic and violent transition further complicates democratic reform in the post-conflict era (Zürcher 2011). It is argued that there must be strong demand by local elites for democracy in

order for post-war democratic transition to succeed. Zürcher provided the case of Namibia and Timor-Leste, saying that with no opposition forces to compete for power sharing, it was easier for regime transition to happen in these two countries.

Mozambique is another example of a successful democratic transition, where the opposition was willing to play by the rules. This made the democratic transition easier. By contrast, those local elites who perceive the transition to democracy as too costly failed to demand democratic transition. Rwanda and Tajikistan fell within this category of unsuccessful transition, where fear of rising inter-ethnic tensions explained the elites' apprehensions toward democracy (Zürcher 2011). Democratic transition involves a complicated process of negotiation among members of the society, paving the way for peaceful transition of power through elections, while simultaneously strengthening the building blocks of democratic institutions.

The United Nations' involvement in the various peace keeping and nation-building operations provides some data as to how successful these efforts have been. In his analysis of peace-building operations, Zürcher identified three reasons why these missions are rarely able to establish post-conflict democracies. Despite robust mandates and extensive financial and development support, peace-building missions have generally failed to secure democratic transition (Zürcher 2011, 83). First, these efforts impose "high adoption costs" in terms of access to power and resources; the elites in post-war countries are in no rush, therefore, to push for democracy because they cannot afford to lose their privileged positions. The second reason is the reluctance of the international community (in their role as peace builders) to push local elites towards democratic

reforms, for fear of placing the existing fragile peace at risk. The third reason is that local elites favor a cost-benefit calculation of the benefits of adopting democratic transitions. The elites are willing to consider democracy only if it offers them “expected benefits that are great enough to outweigh the expected costs” (Zürcher 2011, 83).<sup>15</sup>

The literature in peace building analyzes the effectiveness of various missions in securing peace in different countries. Studies show that most international missions that were able to bring about peace (and end conflict) were less likely to succeed in democratic transition. This is explained by the fact that liberation groups that were victorious in battle might risk losing power in elections if they agreed to follow democratic rules. The winners are also less likely to comply with democratic rules that place restrictions on their ability to exercise unlimited power. In addition to local elites’ resistance to democratic change, it is not advisable for the peace-building agents to push too hard to in promoting democracy. This has to do with the fear that “democratization can indeed increase the risk of war” in a situation where there is “intense elite competition, mass political participation, and underdeveloped democratic institutions can trigger renewed conflict” (Zürcher 2011, 87).

Roland Paris, who is skeptical of the “effects of democratization and marketization in the immediate aftermath of civil war,” makes a similar argument (Paris 2004, 151). Paris challenges the democratic peace theory that “liberal democracy and market-oriented economics offer the surest formula for peace, both in relations between

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<sup>15</sup> Various studies assess the impact of the U.N. on negotiated peace settlements including: Bertram (1995), Goulding (1999), D’Amato (2017), Santiso (2002) and many others.

states and within their borders” (Paris 2004, 151). In his analysis of the eleven peace-building missions launched between 1989 and 1998 whose mission was to transform war-torn countries into market-oriented liberal democracies, only two (Namibia and Croatia) were success stories. Others, like Angola and Rwanda, were failures. In most of the eleven missions under consideration, political and/or economic liberalization had the opposite effect of creating social tension and destabilization. Paris does not question the foundation of democratic peace theory where “well-established market democracies do tend to be more peaceful and prosperous than other types of states” (Paris 2004, 152). What Paris is more concerned about is the “actual process of transforming a country into a market democracy,” which encompasses “tumultuous and conflictual” interactions in war-torn countries that lack governmental institutions to handle the effects of liberalization (Paris 2004, 152). This observation is aligned with research in this dissertation concerning political culture and termination of conflict in Eritrea and Namibia.

Nicolas van de Walle’s study of the sub-Saharan countries that went through democratization between 1989 and 2000 identified two-dozen hybrid regimes, “in which genuine progress toward democracy coexists with a tincture of authoritarianism strong enough to raise doubts about the future of democratic outcomes” (Van de Walle 2002, 79). Other authors, like Radelet (2010), see a promising future for sub-Saharan African countries’ democratic transitions. He argues that substantial changes are happening in the political, economic, and social spheres of the emerging African countries. The fundamental changes that are responsible for this transformation are “the rise of more

democratic and accountable governments; the introduction of more sensible economic policies; the end of the debt crisis and changing relationship with the international community; the spread of new technologies, and the emergence of a new generation of public and private leaders” (Radelet 2010b, 93). Still others, argue, “repeated elections—regardless of their relative freeness or fairness—appear to have a positive impact on human freedom and democratic values” (Lindberg 2006, 139).

In this survey of democratization literature, we learned that numerous factors (such as ideology, leadership styles, markets and power shifts) influence democracy formation. Rates of transition and sequences of change may vary from one country to the next, but popular movements gradually become institutionalized. Cultural values (e.g. survival versus self-expression and economic growth) often determine the type of new post-colonial government that is formed—whether or not democratic institutions were present prior to independence. The success of several Asian countries suggests that democratic governance is not a pre-condition for economic development—however, some forms of social capital and civic engagement can spur economic growth. Survey instruments such as Afrobarometer provide quantitative evidence that citizen perceptions are an essential aspect of democracy formation. Finally, research indicates that regime transition must be viewed as a process, where people consolidate democratic culture and develop political institutions over a period of time.

The following chapter outlines a framework for analyzing the historical experiences of two countries that experienced conflicts which led to independent governments. The research methodology in this paper is not designed to support a cause-

effect argument predicting certain outcomes of regime change. Instead, I propose an in-depth analysis of three factors that accompanied regime change in two historical contexts, and suggest that these factors offer a partial explanation of why things happened the way they did in two African countries with similar histories.

### **3. CHAPTER THREE**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHOD, AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In order to understand post-conflict regime change, this study deals with the contemporary history of two African countries in a comparative context. Starting with the historical background, the study will analyze colonial experiences and the liberation fronts and their political orientations/cultures. This analysis will focus on the post-independence history and transitional periods, giving special emphasis to the regime types, their reasons and methods for coming into existence, and the political cultures that resulted in both countries. Despite the rich analysis that can flow from a historical approach, such analysis runs the risk of “attributing contemporary political patterns to antecedents far removed in time” (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995, 4). In order to overcome this problem, each country’s experience before and after liberation will be explored. I will compare political cultures, war-termination strategies and the roles of international actors in post-conflict regimes. This kind of analysis is also known as “historical institutionalism”, where the researcher is “interested in explaining real-world outcomes, using history as an analytic tool and in ways institutions shape political outcomes” (Steinmo, Svens in Della Porta and Keating, 2008, 122). These researchers also argue that comparative historical analysis starts from the premise that specific cases



need to be thoroughly investigated and analyzed and patterns of similarity or difference study are part of the study but not a causal argument (Goldstone 2003). Although this dissertation does not present a causal argument, I have tried to examine correlative patterns order to discern whether evidence of an association exists among the variables that support my thesis.

Through the examination of the two liberation fronts situated in their respective historical context, this study tries to analyze how wartime experience shaped post-conflict regime types. In this approach, history is not just a recounting of events, but is used to systematically analyze presumptive cause-effect relationships. History matters because, “political events happen within a historical context” that has a direct consequence (Della Porta and Keating 2008, 127). Therefore, examination of particular social, political, economic and cultural contexts permits consideration of social interactions, behaviors, attitudes, and choices—how they are made and expressed in “real world” events.

Thus, this study will be historical in its approach and comparative in its analysis. One of the reasons why historical institutionalism is useful is that it reveals critical junctures and inherited institutions (Thelen 1999). Understanding the formation of institutions and their transformation over time, and how these institutions affect the political development of a country, is useful for comparative analysis. The potential for post-conflict countries to develop into democracies varies largely, depending on where these countries were prior to the end of the conflict and what transpired during the violent phase. The countries under consideration in this study were both subjected to undemocratic occupying regimes—Eritrea suffered under Ethiopia’s imperial and (later)

military dictatorships, whereas Namibia was under an oppressive South African rule that installed its racial laws in 1920 and apartheid regime in 1948 inside Southwest Africa(later to become Namibia).

In order to understand regime transition, one must examine the historical, socio-cultural, ideological, and structural background of the liberation movements before they became governing bodies, as well as how their experiences during the conflict shaped their governing style in the post-conflict period. This transition is explored in the histories and political cultures of the EPLF and SWAPO movements, and how they succeeded in liberating their countries. Eritrea and Namibia used different strategies to achieve similar goals. During their liberation struggles, each movement was able to garner the attention and recognition of the international community.

The first factor to be examined is the political cultures of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, (EPLF) and South West African People's Organization, (SWAPO), with each movement viewed through the lens of their political programs, ideologies and military strategies. This history illuminates in the transition of the two movements into future political parties. An understanding of political culture includes the role of leadership in both the EPLF and SWAPO, and their respective political agendas during and following the years of struggle for liberation.

The second factor is the "war termination strategy" (specifically, the way the liberation war ended, either through military victory in Eritrea) or through negotiated settlement in Namibia). The EPLF and SWAPO had pragmatic reasons for choosing the war termination strategy each movement employed; these choices impacted the outcome

of post-conflict regimes. The EPLF undertook sophisticated and mechanized military operation to achieve a decisive military victory over Ethiopian forces, with little or no diplomatic or economic support from other countries. SWAPO, by contrast won its struggle for independence mainly on the diplomatic front with the assistance of the U.N. and great powers (i.e. U.S. Soviet Union, and European Union). Thus, military events had minimal importance in Namibia's transition toward independence.

The third major factor is the recognition/support of the liberation struggle (or lack thereof) by the international community, the United Nations (U.N.), and its member states, as well as the impact international support had in each nation after independence.

### **3.3. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS**

Various terms used in this research are defined in this section. First, the term "regime" refers to the rules and structures (formal or otherwise) that govern the interactions of major actors in the political system. Mainwaring (1989) writes that regime is a "broader concept than government and it involves the notion of institutionalization, i.e., the idea that such rules are widely understood and accepted, and that actors pattern their behavior accordingly"(Mainwaring 1989, 4). "Political regimes are sets of political procedures that determine the distribution of power" (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 9). A regime transition is a shift from one set of political procedures to another, from an old pattern of rules to a new one (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997,10). Simply put, transition is the change from one political regime/system to another. This implies a change in regime type from authoritarian to democratic or vice-versa. O'Donnell and Schmitter

define transition as “the interval between one political regime and another”(O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986). Democratic transition involves actors (agents) in an effort to achieve intentional goals.

For the purposes of this study, war-termination strategy means: the way a war ends, whether through military victory/loss, negotiated agreements or cease-fire/stalemates. War-time strategy is understood to include strategies that are employed to liberate a territory and people from a previous regime, using armed struggle, diplomacy or both in combination. Political culture is defined as “the beliefs and values concerning politics that prevail within both the elite and the masses” (L. J. Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995, 19). The concept of political culture is as difficult to define as democracy itself; defining political culture has engaged many scholars who disagreed on what the term means. Among these scholars, Rosenbaum identified three types of political culture: (a) civic culture (Almond and Verba), (b) fragmented political culture, and (c) integrated political culture. Similarly, Inglehart has categorized countries into a modern/post-modern dichotomy on the basis of their political culture (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995).

### **3.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The overarching question to be tackled is why some countries transition to democratic regimes during post-conflict periods, while others fail to do so? What explains variation in regime formation after armed conflict ceases? Applying these

questions to the specific case of regime transitions in Eritrea and Namibia, this study tries to answer the following specific questions.

1. Why did the transition process in Eritrea fail to produce a democratic regime, whereas the transition in Namibia led to the birth of a democratic process, with periodic elections happening consistently for nearly 30 years following Namibia's independence?
2. Despite the similarities the two countries share in their history of liberation struggle against their respective neighboring countries (Ethiopia and South Africa) Eritrea and Namibia ended up with different regimes—one a dictatorship, the other a partial democracy. What events or pre-conditions explain the difference in the outcome of regime types in the two countries?

### **3.5. THE ARGUMENT**

This study argues that differences in regime types in post-conflict societies can be traced back to their histories/experiences as liberation movements, shaped by the factors cited above. We accept as true the argument that a culture of tolerance is an important impetus in creating a suitable environment for democratic development in post-conflict societies (Inglehart 1999).

Democratic transitions are more likely to happen in societies where conflicts end through a negotiated settlement rather than military victory. This conclusion begs for an analysis of why a military victory is incompatible with democratic development. The secrecy, centralized decision-making, extra-judicial killings, culture of violence and/or an

inflexible outlook of military regimes is not conducive to democracy. In a study titled “War Termination,” which explores post-conflict peace and democratization, Toft argues that rebel victory is more stable than government victory (Toft 2010). She further argued that rebel victory can usher in considerable reform in the form of durable peace and political liberty. Moreover, Toft asserts that rebel victory out-performs negotiated settlement in subsequent political stability (Toft 2006). In direct rebuttal to Toft’s 2010 findings, this study hypothesizes the exact opposite of her conclusion. In other words, rebel victory does not necessarily lead to a democratic transition, nor do negotiated settlements necessarily lead to autocratic regimes. In fact, the opposite result may be predicted, where the victorious rebel forces use their victory as a way to delay or bring to a halt the process of democratic transition. Toft argued those results based on averages, in a large number of cases. This comparative study includes a limited number of cases which may be exceptions to Toft’s overall findings. However, analysis of specific details can reveal patterns which, a generalized study cannot. While my findings are quite different from Toft’s, it is also important to note that the two case studies considered for this research and the importance given to their unique social, cultural, historical and political developments.

### **3.6. THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

The U.N. has continued to play an important role, especially the Security Council member states, in defining and sometimes charting the future destinies of newly formed nations. U.N. decisions have had lasting impact on the political, social and economic

standing of both Eritrea and Namibia. The political futures of these territories were on the agenda of the United Nations from its formation in 1945, and were even considered by its predecessor, the League of Nations. The U.N. was an active advocate for Namibian independence but had a different approach to the Eritrean case. The primary cause for this difference in approach relates to political and diplomatic ties that Ethiopia had with members of the U.N. General Assembly and Security Council. These member states actively advocated for Ethiopia's claims of hegemony over Eritrea. This complicated matters with the EPLF leadership, who accused the U.N. of failing to uphold its neutral role and looking the other way while Ethiopia committed violations during Ethiopia's occupation of Eritrea from 1962 to 1991. Cold War political competition between the United States and Soviet Union further shaped and influenced the liberation struggles in both Eritrea and Namibia. The then super-powers sought to influence the outcome on opposite sides of the conflict, and tried to maintain their relevance in the region by providing economic and military assistance.

Understanding events in Eritrea and Namibia is helpful for comprehending the role of the international community in promoting and encouraging democracy. This international support, either in moral or material form, often resulted in disastrous consequences within developing countries. The U.S. and U.S.S.R. competed for sphere of influence while they ignored local political processes. At different times each super-power was responsible for killing the budding democratic process in order to promote

their geopolitical agendas.<sup>16</sup> National security interests took precedence; each party either supported or ignored actions of friendly dictatorial regimes. All the client regimes had to do to receive economic or military support was remain in the respective spheres of influence of the super-powers. The East-West rivalry ensured that the two competing powers were actively supporting any regimes that remained within their spheres of influence (Levine 2013).

William A. Douglas, currently a lecturer at Johns Hopkins University, is credited with developing the concept of democracy promotion in U.S. foreign policy. Democracy promotion is concerned with the creation of democratic systems overseas through support of political groups (Pee 2013). In an attempt to resolve controversies associated with covert funding of democracy promotion, Douglas proposed an open embrace of so-called “Third World” values. Douglas believed that such transparency would lead to promotion of democracies that would be less susceptible to communism, and would guarantee the West access to important raw materials (Douglas 1972). The difference in strategies between the U.S. policy initiatives and private international organizations emanated from the fact that the U.S. government had supported autocratic regimes and showed hostility to democratic regimes, despite official claims that the United States is was supposedly committed to protecting and supporting democracy everywhere.<sup>17</sup> Pee has pointed out the uncoordinated and inconsistent strategic approaches, “in which democratizing

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<sup>16</sup> The satellite nations within the Soviet sphere come to mind as victims of an anti-democratic agenda, but so do initiatives by the U.S. in Guatemala, Iran, Chile, Vietnam and many other countries.

<sup>17</sup> Autocratic regimes supported by the U.S. included Haiti, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Singapore. Democratic movements opposed by the U.S. included those in Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador and Lebanon.



reforms were supported in some cases but not in others, and were often soft-pedaled or abandoned if they began to threaten existing U.S. interests” (R. Pee 2014). Subsequent to adopting a policy of democracy promotion, US administrations countered the Soviet Union in developing nations through various strategies, including support of authoritarian regimes to prevent the spread of communism. There continues to be a tension between policy of democracy promotion and the U.S. national interest.

A nation’s prior experience with democracy is one of the factors considered when studying specific examples of democratization. In the cases under consideration (Eritrea and Namibia) both countries lacked prior democratic experience governing as sovereign nations. Neighboring countries—Ethiopia and South Africa, respectively—ruled each as secondary colonies. Ethiopia had been under imperial administration of the late Emperor Haile Selassie from 1930 until a military coup interrupted his reign in 1974. Ethiopia’s army assumed state power under Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam, The Emperor’s regime had been a feudal monarchy; the military junta that replaced the emperor assumed control as a Marxist-Leninist Party in the mid-1980s.

In 1919 South West Africa (Namibia) was transformed from a German colony and brought under South African administration by the League of Nations. South Africa maintained an internal policy of apartheid (separation of races) until 1989, when F.W. de Klerk replaced P.W. Botha as president. De Clerk subsequently released Nelson Mandela from prison, desegregated public facilities, and freed many African National Congress (ANC) activists. In 1990, South Africa, Angola, Namibia, and other regional and

international actors granted independence to Namibia after an agreement that was brokered under the auspices of the U.N.

In order to assess prior experience with democracy in both countries, this research details the political histories of both liberation movements—EPLF and SWAPO—in their respective countries. We examine why each party organized in the way it did; we describe their guiding principles during wartime, and how military conflict influenced the molding of regime type at the conclusion of fighting. After decades of war, both Eritrea and Namibia had gathered few resources, except what they had inherited from the previous regimes. In terms of democratic capital, the leading political parties in both countries lacked prior exposure to popular governance. In Ethiopia, the successive regimes (the imperial and the military administration) were brutal, anti-democratic and oppressive political systems. The apartheid system in South Africa, which disenfranchised the majority of South Africa's population and denied them citizenship, was just as oppressive as Ethiopia's regimes. Because of such backgrounds, Eritrea and Namibia had to begin the democratization process from scratch, focusing on the drafting of constitutions soon after they attained independence.

People in both Eritrea and Namibia had experienced the direct impact of anti-democratic governance. Their liberation movements were operating simultaneously as military and political organizations, fighting while advocating for independence. In later sections of this dissertation, I will contrast the functions of the EPLF and SWAPO as liberation movements, both during the conflict periods and afterward during their efforts to secure independent nationhood.

### 3.7. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

Any narrative about conflict needs to be placed within a specific historical, political and economic framework. The contextual details will provide a sense of how a particular regime might emerge from wartime circumstances. Bratton and van de Walle discussed the various approaches toward democratization, defining them as structural versus contingent; international versus domestic; and economic versus political. Their politico-institutional approach is based on “domestic political factors, with attention given to both their structural and contingent dimensions” (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 20). This interpretation of “emergent regimes” in Africa assumes that the previous regime shaped new political structures the legacy regimes. They defended their approach with the assertion that pre-existing domestic factors matter as much as the structures that were already in place, or were chosen in the newly-formed regime. Although their argument is not deterministic (requiring a certain set of pre-conditions), Bratton and Van de Walle stress the critical importance of the previous regime’s political structures in the process of regime transition. To analyze this process of regime change, one needs “detailed analysis of linked chains of events across countries—noting similarities and differences where they occur” in what the authors call comparative case studies (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 269).

Historical institutionalism is a useful framework for such analysis of events and their real-time consequences. This term encompasses one of three varieties of institutional analysis, which also include rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism (Thelen 1999). I will approach the experiences of Eritrea and Namibia,

using the politico-institutional approach that Bratton and van de Walle used in their comparative analysis. Historical institutionalism emphasizes the emergence of institutions from real-world historical processes. This study will focus on important factors that appeared to be critical in the formation and development of regimes in Eritrea and Namibia.

This qualitative research relies on written historical materials that described the two liberation movements, combined with review of existing recorded interviews of former and/or current members of the leadership of the two liberation movements, and several individuals operating outside the regimes. This study will incorporate writings of foreign journalists, independent scholars, and individuals who have written extensively about the two countries. These reports represent independent views of the movements, leaders and historical facts. Impartial analysis of the liberation struggles, seen through the eyes of outsiders or independent observers, sheds light any post-hoc revisionist interpretations of the leaders themselves, as they attempt to justify the past history of their movements. The possibility of selective memory or bias favoring the interpretations of defenders of the liberation movements is expected. As much as possible, all such claims have been fact-checked with corroborative historical documents.

When this research began a decade ago, the investigator was optimistic that the leaders of the two countries would be willing to be interviewed. However, it proved to be difficult to arrange any interviews on the Namibian side. The matter became even more complicated and frustrating as I tried to pursue my potential informants. The whole

process of requesting interviews took close to two years of email correspondence and phone calls with persons from Namibia and Eritrea.

After defending the dissertation proposal and completing the Institutional Human Subject Review Board (IRB) that would enable me to initiate interviews with potential informants including government officials, opposition representatives, and independent scholars, I encountered more obstacles in trying to contacting the people I had planned to interview. After trying several approaches, I was able to interview an Eritrean government official, (a former high-ranking official of the EPLF who now lives in exile), and an independent scholar who has written extensively on Eritrea. However, these interviews are not included in the analysis of this dissertation project because, I could not obtain comparable interview from the Namibian side. I decided to continue my research project without interviews with Namibian officials, believing that the outcome of the project will not be affected negatively, as the views and opinions of the government officials on questions of democracy in post-independence Eritrea and Namibia were easily accessed through various media channels. I learned from the few interviews that I conducted that people in political positions tend to stick to their talking points, and they are reluctant to discuss the rationales for their policies, or why they are defensible and reasonable.

The research has proceeded with the hope that analysis of the pre-independence movements will shed light on how these organizations transformed themselves into governing bodies during peacetime. The reverse of this analytical process may also be

helpful: how the political systems evolved in the post-conflict period is critical for understanding how some institutions that developed during the conflict periods.

Why conduct a qualitative study? Qualitative approaches to research are concerned with “subjective assessments of attitudes, opinions and behaviors” (Kothari 2004, 5). This study examines why a democratic transition succeeded in one country and failed in another. This kind of analysis cannot rely on single benchmarks or measures, yet it can provide insight onto the directions of the top leadership in the process nation-building. The research attempts to explain why things turned out the way they did—placing events in their appropriate historical, social, cultural and political contexts.

Quantitative data from the Afrobarometer, Freedom House and the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) provided additional comparative information in terms of ratings and ranking levels of freedom and democracy within the two countries under study, as well as other nations in Sub-Saharan Africa. These sources generally identify Eritrea as non-democratic and authoritarian, whereas Namibia is identified as relatively democratic or flawed democracy.

Countries born out of long years of conflicts, like Eritrea and Namibia, have practically no prior experience of democratic governance. They run their governments as they ran their liberations organizations, in a tightly-controlled manner, with one or just a few leaders at the top. The same leadership that waged the wars and won, who tried to transform themselves into leaders of sovereign nations, guided the outcomes of the post-conflict regimes. In Namibia, SWAPO assumed leadership through democratic elections in 1989 and formed the Namibian government in 1990. In Eritrea, the EPLF formed the

Provisional Government of Eritrea (TGE) in 1991 after achieving military victory, and conducting a U.N.-supervised referendum in 1993.

Democratization has been a topic of interest for many scholars in the field of political science. From the mid-1980s through the 1990s, the fields of international relations, anthropology, sociology, and development studies focused on the proliferation of democratic regimes that emerged after the Cold War era, in what Samuel Huntington termed the “Third Wave” of democratization. The Journal of Democracy is one of several journals dedicated to the study and analysis of democracy promotion.

Longitudinal, regional studies of democratic trends that incorporate survey methods include the Afrobarometer, Asianbarometer, Eurobarometer, and Latinobarometer. These empirical surveys have produced periodic results about citizens’ attitudes toward various issues, ranging from democracy to the economy, security issues, and other matters that affect nation-formation. Given all these analytical tools, one might ask why is this dissertation, an analysis of conflict and resolution, not a political science project?

First, conflict analysis and resolution (also known as CAR) covers a wide range of topics dealing with conflicts arising from interpersonal relationships, organizational change, and communal/societal relationships. This field of study ranges all the way from interpersonal to interstate relations. It is natural to encounter conflicts and misunderstanding at any level of relationships. CAR is concerned with identifying the root causes of conflicts through analysis, and then defining creative resolutions before conflicts become destructive. Sometimes, CAR is used to intervene in conflicts that have escalated, in an attempt to restore relations or find a way to live with compromise.

Methodologies of political science and CAR overlap, and cross-fertilization between the two fields is frequent as political science is considered the parent field of CAR study; conflict analysis and resolution is subsumed under political science in many academic institutions.

A second reason for differentiating the current study from a conventional political science investigation is that a student of conflict analysis and resolution is interested in bridging gaps between theory and practice, addressing practical historical concerns such as wars and governance. Post-conflict societies that have had to live in the shadows of poor economies, brutal political leaders, and gross human rights violations are in need of practical solutions. Understanding these societies within their socio-economic, political, historical, and cultural contexts can provide a detailed assessment of alternative courses of action. Resources that may be lacking, actors who are better equipped to do what needs to be done, and methods to navigate through the various options may be identified. The field of conflict analysis and resolution brings all these issues to the table to influence the decisions that people who are affected may be in the process of making.

### **3.8. THEORIES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Although peace and conflict resolution is a relatively recent field of historical study, conflicts themselves are as old as human history. Conflicts exist at the lowest level of human interaction, as arguments between two people, and at higher levels including conflict between countries, or global conflicts like those of First and Second World Wars. No matter which level of interaction or conflict we examine, the conflicting parties either



escalate the conflict or resolve their differences. In large-scale conflicts, social relationships break down, wars begin, economies disintegrate, and innocent civilians are killed. When parties resolve their conflicts/disputes in a constructive manner with minimum damage to relationship, they can prevent economic disastrous and save lives.

Many scholars have recommended constructive methods of conflict resolution. I will review a few of these practitioners and their proposed ways of resolving conflicts. Morton Deutsch et al asserted that the nature of the conflict and the goals of the parties in the conflict determine the negotiation style the parties would pursue. They argue that basically there are two types of negotiation styles; cooperative and competitive (Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus 2006). Accordingly, the party with a cooperative disposition will encourage an atmosphere of trust and the possibility of mutual agreement. In contrast, the competitive approach leads inevitably to win-lose outcomes—one side walks away with a victory. (In business negotiations, this is often called the “Zero-sum Theory.”) The competitive approach tends to create distrust between parties and is generally considered destructive.

Critics of the cooperative vs. competitive model, argue that both types of negotiation have their own advantages (or disadvantages) because conflicting parties may often have both diverging and common goals that could facilitate or frustrate the negotiations (Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus 2011).

Another pair of researchers, Roger Fisher and William Ury present four principles for effective negotiation. First, separate personalities from the issue being negotiated; second, focus on interests, not on positions; third, present a variety of options prior to

settlement; and fourth, make sure the agreement is based on objective criteria. Fisher and Ury argue that these principles help parties to have a better understanding of the problem (Fisher, Ury, and Patton 2011). Their theory is criticized by some who argue that it is not entirely practical to separate people from their problems, in conflicts such as identity conflicts (e.g. when one party attacks the legitimacy of the other party). Therefore, there is a need for a conflict resolution approach that recognizes people's need for parity at the beginning of negotiations.

The "Human Needs" theory of John Burton comes in handy for establishing the right atmosphere for negotiation. Burton argues that if an individual or groups are denied their basic needs for identity, security, recognition or equal participation within the society, conflict is inevitable. Identity-based conflicts are usually intractable. In such situations, it is essential to identify needs that are threatened, and parties must try to design ways to restructure and restore relationships within the social system where the needs of all individuals and groups are accommodated (Burton 1990).

Still other conflict resolution theorists and practitioners such as Bush, Folger and Lederach argue that negotiation is improved through the use of interest or need-based conflicts proposed by Fisher and Ury or Burton; however, these model do not necessarily address the negative attitudes which arise during the conflict period itself. Parties need to repair their relationship during the process of negotiation in order to avoid future destructive conflicts. Bush, Folger and Lederach argue that parties who feel empowered and able to understand both their own needs and the needs of opponents are better able to

transform their attitudes and/or behaviors by establishing constructive engagement strategies with each other. (R. A. B. Bush and Folger 1994; Lederach 2003; Lederach and Conflict resolution collection 1995)

I am by no means the first researcher to address questions about democratic process and post-conflict nation-building. This research is applicable to general questions in the field of conflict analysis and resolution (CAR), and to the two countries that share common histories, yet different outcomes. Differences include the ways that each country gained independence; the types of post-conflict regimes ushered in after conflicts ended; and the political culture that emerged in each post-conflict regime. The researcher also hopes to explain the role of outside intervention in producing specific outcomes in each country.

Why focus on those specific issues? A close examination of the historical and political birth of each of the two countries under study, as well as their political development afterwards, made this researcher curious about the dynamics which led to different political systems. Similarities in their colonial histories, their European domination, as well as later domination by a bigger and more powerful neighbor, and the development of similar organizations to lead their liberation struggles, made this comparative analysis irresistible. As many studies suggest, social movements are a product of political opportunities and effective mobilization. While that assertion is true, opportunities and mobilization happen within a specific socio-cultural context that connects people's experiences, "mediating between opportunities and concrete

mobilizations efforts are the shared meanings people bring to their lives”(Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994).

Since this study compares the post-conflict democratic transitions of Eritrea and Namibia, it requires detailed analysis of similar and dissimilar variables which explain the difference in the outcome of regime types. Using comparative methodology, the researcher must ensure that there is, in fact, variation on critical variables in case selection (Pruitt and Snyder 1969, 8). The validity of the case study method often depends on the number of cases under consideration. A single-case study or a small-sample (Small-N) study is with only a few cases (often only two) and large-sample (Large-N) studies, often with sixty to one hundred or more cases. Yin asserts that single-case and multiple-case studies require variant forms of design (Yin 2009, 19). This research project falls into the category of a small-sample (Small N) comparative case-study, with only two cases under investigation, where “a few variables are studied in a great depth with much attention to the processes inter-relating them”(Pruitt and Snyder 1969, 8).

In doing a comparative study of regime transition, the cases ideally include analysis of transitions which led to democratic regimes, and those that did not. A two-case comparative study is different from testing an experimental or hypothesis, or a Large-N study with many cases. Such comparative studies often aim for scientific explanations through citing empirical (i.e. causal) relationship between two or more variables, achieved by controlling for dependent variables through a carefully designed experiment. In contrast to experimental design, this study tries to explain where the

differences lie and help the reader grasp the process of regime change in post-conflict societies. The purpose in doing a two-case comparative study is not to generate abstract theory or to make predictions. Small-sample comparative studies, though unique in regard to the cases under investigation, provide some generalizable findings and insights that could be replicated within large-sample studies.

This study considers history as a useful tool in doing comparative analysis, tracing the trajectory of armed struggle for both the EPLF and SWAPO organizations, and utilizing historical analysis to explain the development of present regime types. Comparative history is the “organized study of similar historical phenomena in separate temporal or geographical settings” (Little 2012). The comparative method is a “method, [with] a set of rules which can be methodically and systematically applied in gathering and using evidence to test explanatory hypotheses” (Sewell 1967, 217). The comparative method requires historical imagination, where the investigator chooses cases in order to complete a thorough analysis and identify similarities and differences for the cases under review. The study of events can also be used to locate and identify historically important encounters between ruling powers and opposition forces. Comparative analysis allows the researcher to identify patterns, similarities, and chains of events that could help explain the occurrence of a particular situation or event.

Bloch identified three uses of the comparative method: (a) hypothesis testing, (b) discovery of the uniqueness of different societies, and (c) the formulation of problems for historical research (Bloch in Sewell 1967, 209). The units of analysis in comparative study vary. They include a wide range of social systems such as countries, nations,

institutions, voluntary associations, families, cities, migrations or civilizations. In the comparative method, “there is no theoretical limit on how small and insignificant the units of comparison can become” (Sewell 1967, 213). My research question deals with comparing countries and limited regime change as units of analysis. Although a sample of two may be considered a small slice of 195 countries in the world today, each of the countries in the sample offers a virtually infinite number of variable and historical events to examine.

This study describes relatively recent political developments because the variable to be explained here is regime change in the post-independence period following the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Yin argues that case study method is appropriate when a “‘how’ or ‘why’ “question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin 2009, 13). However, a historical reading of the experiences of the two countries during their respective years of armed struggle—the political, social, cultural and military strategies that eventually led to the outcome of independence—is essential. Thus, this is necessarily an interdisciplinary study, where combinations of politics, conflict analysis, history, and area studies (region of Africa) are inexorably linked to the historical and contemporary context.

Conflict analysis and resolution (CAR) places the analysis of conflict at the core of the process, prior to resolution. Identifying factors relevant to the advance of democratic systems in some places rather than others, or why political systems are more democratic in certain countries as opposed to others, is critical to the field of conflict analysis. Question about democratic transitions in post-conflict societies are not just

intellectual exercises that stop at theory-formulation phases. The study of conflicts has normative implications for policy makers and practitioners. This study tries in a small way to contribute to knowledge about democratic transition, through analyses of difficulties that two countries encountered. I will try to draw useful conclusions about issues such as democratic transition, “with real-world implications makes research meaningful, which in turn, helps generate and sustain enthusiasm for scholarship” (Munck and Snyder 2007, 13). Weber asserts the possibility of pursuing research questions that are in line with our moral and value commitments, yet doing so with impartiality, rigor, and objectivity.

However, caution is warranted regarding normative conclusions. Snyder asserts that, it is permissible to possess normative commitments in the selection of research problems, concluding that such commitments might nurture passion for research work. Others warn that normative commitments (i.e. personal opinions or values) should not blind researchers to inconvenient facts that do not support a preconceived position (Munck and Snyder 2007). In other words, the researcher is always prepared to be surprised by the findings of the investigation she is conducting.

There is, in research circles, a concern about case studies being perceived as having “lack of rigor” and “mere story-telling” (Thelen 1999). There may be concerns that the investigator does not follow systematic procedures, resulting in “biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions” (Yin 2009, 14). However, bias is not a unique problem limited to case study research; like any other research method, a

case study researcher must report each piece of evidence fairly and accurately, whether or not it fits into predictable patterns or supports a general conclusion.

To account for the difference between the countries under consideration in this study, as well as to compare the liberation movements as they transformed themselves into governing bodies in Asmara and Windhoek (the capitals of Eritrea and Namibia, respectively), this researcher asserts that a comparative approach is the appropriate method. Similar approaches have been employed by other researchers and scholars who have studied the formation, transitions, democratization and consolidation of democracy within various regimes. Although the comparative method may make the analytical work easier (in contrast to quantitative empirical research), this type of analysis presents its own challenges. When conducting cross-country comparisons, concepts and terms do not necessarily carry the same meanings in different settings. We may take as an example the term “democracy.” Some may define the term as meaning competitive elections; others might understand democracy as equality and justice. Thus, measuring the extent of “democratization” in societies without an accepted definition of democracy might create difficulties in comparative analysis or drawing conclusions. “The differences in popular understandings of democracy across continents, countries, social groups, and individuals pose more serious challenges” (Bratton 2010, 107).

This is just one obvious problem in doing comparative analysis using surveys across countries, without standardization, where there may be no universal understanding about the meaning of democracy. The comparative study of two cases presents fewer challenges, because the researcher is able to focus on certain factors and terminology in



greater detail for the selected cases. In the section that follows, I will discuss the specific research methods used for this dissertation project.

### **3.9. METHODS**

Doing research involves locating all the available resources that are useful in the project at hand. This research uses both primary and secondary sources for gathering information. Libraries, online resources and other documents were utilized. I have completed archival research of the two former liberation movements, including their military and political programs and manuals. I have also used the resources available at the U.N. Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS) on Eritrea and Namibia.

I reviewed historical records of the occupying forces of Ethiopia and South Africa, including military, intelligence and diplomatic reports. The EPLF had its first, second, and third Congress meetings in 1977, 1987 and in 1994 respectively. In each congress, the party adopted a National Democratic Program. In contrast, SWAPO produced very few official documents. It released its original constitution and political program in June and July of 1960 and the documents of SWAPO's Consultative Congress held at Tanga, Tanzania (1969-70). After 1976, three more documents were available: the movement's first "Discussion Paper on the Constitution of an Independent Namibia" circulated in 1975, and its "Political Programs," and "National Program," both produced during the latter half of 1976 (Dobell 1998, 26). These historical documents, together with books and journal articles helped me reconstruct the past as it was viewed then. These documents supplement the review of recorded interviews of officials from

both EPLF and SWAPO leadership recorded during the liberation struggle and post-independence.

Despite the researcher's inability to conduct interviews as planned, the questions that that would have been put forth have been addressed throughout this research project. Library research and review of archival recordings available on YouTube or various other media outlets were reviewed. Some interview questions that would have been asked included: the general plan and future goals of each movement; the kind of regime the leadership envisioned, whether democracy was on the agenda for the new nation; how the movement was structured and run; what guiding principles of each movement were set forth in the years of liberation struggle; how strictly did each movement follow its stated goals in post-conflict period; how adaptable to the realities of the global politics was each organization in the aftermath of independence; and finally, what was the U.N.'s role in the process of post-conflict transition? YouTube interviews with the Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki and other national and international media sources as early as the 1970s were useful resources that answered many of the foregoing questions.

I come to this research project with asymmetrical knowledge and background in regards to the two countries. I have done extensive research on Eritrea/Ethiopia for my undergraduate and graduate studies; this, along with my reading and speaking knowledge of primary languages in Ethiopia and Eritrea, provided useful background for my current research. In addition to the historical records, which are readily accessible on-line and in libraries, I reviewed local news, as well as past and recent interviews with the Eritrean President and other government officials, in order to connect the past with current events

in Eritrea. Print, visual and social media (radio, TV, newspapers and numerous websites) are primarily owned and operated by the ruling government in Eritrea. However, I also have access to independent media<sup>18</sup> (primarily web based media outlets such as awate.com , asmarino.com, assenna.com and YouTube based news outlets that broadcast and the latest development of satellite television broadcast(ERISAT & ATV)<sup>19</sup> which provide differing perspectives.

In the case of Namibia, I have complemented my library research with review of historical archives of the SWAPO. Language does not pose any barriers in either country under study. English is the official language in Namibia.

### **3.10. TIME PERIOD COVERED IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT**

This study covers 25 years of post-conflict governance (roughly 1993—2018) within the two countries, encompassing regime transitions that began in the early 1990s. Namibia became an independent country after the November 1989 U.N.-monitored election and soon afterward (in 1990) joined the U.N. Eritrea emerged victorious from its liberation war with Ethiopia in May 1991 and joined the U.N. in May 1993, after a U.N.-supervised referendum that followed Eritrea's de-facto independence. The period from

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<sup>18</sup> The entire media outlet inside Eritrea (TV, Radio and print media) is run and owned by the ruling party in Eritrea. All the independent media mentioned above are based in abroad in the USA, Europe and Canada, etc The Eritrean government shut down all private media and arrested its journalist on September 18, 2001. At the time of the writing of this paper, private media in Eritrea remains banned and its journalists remain in detention, many suspected of dead and the remaining their whereabouts unknown.

<sup>19</sup> ERISAT-Eritrean Satellite Television is a pioneer Satellite Television Broadcast that began its services in 2018 with a mission to broadcast in all Eritrean languages. ATV-Assenna TV is also another Satellite Television in Tigrigna broadcasting to its Eritrean audience since 2019.

1990-1994 has been broadly covered as “a period of regime transition in Africa that lasted approximately five years, between the beginning of 1990 and end of 1994” (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 3). The literature on democracy and democratization spans a wider range of topics, sub-topics and time periods, including a broad discussion of the definitions and meanings of democracy, as well as the varieties of democratic systems and political institutions emerging during the “Third Wave.” Diversity was clearly evident in the non-democratic political institutions as well. This research deals with comparing the divergence in the outcome of regime type in the two countries in the post-conflict period. Once again, it is important to begin with a discussion of the parameters which the research used to define democracy.

### **3.11. SCOPE**

This dissertation project is focused on transitions to democracy, not the subsequent consolidation of democratic institutions. Although it is import for democracy to take root and grow, this consolidation is beyond the scope of the study. I have chosen to focus on the factors or experiences that initially promote transition toward democracy, and to identify those factors that frustrate democratic transition, in an attempt to understand the fundamental dynamics that aided or impeded this political development.

One important distinction can be made between the two major categories of democratic and non-democratic regimes. Democratic systems, despite their institutional variations, usually subscribe to the American ideal of “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” whereas the various categories of non-democratic regimes

represent the interests of small minority of people who constitute political, economic and/or social elites. Once we accept the broader distinction between democracies and non-democracies based on their capacity to represent a wide swath of the population, we are able move on to make more refined descriptions of democracy based on the amounts of representation built into governmental institutions.

A binary classification of regimes into democratic verses non-democratic regimes cannot account for the diversity within each category. “No two democracies are exactly alike and most exhibit a number of marked institutional differences” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 16). By the same token, “there are even more stark differences between some non-democratic regimes than the differences between democracies” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 17). A key feature that is common among democracies is the fact that the majority of the people can exercise their right to vote and the “government is supposed to represent the preference of the [majority] of the population” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). Non-democratic regimes also share a commonality in that they usually represent a sub-section of the population. This translates into a degree of political equality in democracies, as opposed to inequality in non-democratic regimes. In non-democratic regimes, a smaller segment of the society benefits from government actions.

Authoritarian, non-democratic regime types could be classified as: military, one party and one-man rule (L. Diamond 2010). Some regimes fit all three categories, and there are others that fail to fit into either democratic or non-democratic categories, exhibiting characteristics of both types. These regimes are called hybrid or mixed regime types. Bratton and Van de Walle argue that “African transitions led to widely divergent

outcomes that were expressed through the installation or restoration of a broad range of authoritarian, democratic, or mixed regime” (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 6). The roles of mixed/hybrid regimes will be further elaborated in the main body of the paper to show how regimes in Africa tend to combine characteristics of both authoritarian and democratic natures.

## **4. CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.1. FINDINGS**

In this chapter, historical overview of Eritrea and Namibia will be examined to provide context for the discussion of political cultures, war-termination strategies and engagement of international actors in both countries. The transition from colony to independence occurred in a similar sequence and timeframes in each country; therefore, the same labels are used for historical periods, although events within each period were different in Eritrea and Namibia. I will conclude this chapter with a comparative analysis of the two liberation movements and regimes.

### **4.2. HISTORICAL REVIEW**

#### **4.2.1. ERITREA**

**European Colonial Period** - The Italian colony of Eritrea was first conceived of as a settlement colony, then as a source of raw materials, and then soldiers, and finally as a strategic Red Sea naval outpost for half a century, from 1890 to 1941. In his book titled “*Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941*,” Tekeste Negash outlined the different colonial policies that Italy pursued in Eritrea. The first stage or period extended from 1882-1896; Negash identified this as the settler colonization era. It began with a failed Italian invasion of Ethiopia, which was settled by the Treaty of Wuchali in 1889. The second stage was the period of uncertainty (1897-1906) during

which time Italy wavered in its commitment to compete with England, France, Germany, Portugal and Belgium in the “scramble” for African colonies. This period gave way to an Italian imperialist era, which led to Italian civilian governor in the colony of Eritrea from 1908-1932. The final period of Italian rule in Eritrea was the Fascist colonial period that lasted for nearly 10 years from 1932 to 1941(Negash 1987).

In Eritrea, the Italian colonists built an infrastructure of ports, roads, telecommunications, factories, administrative centers and police stations that unified the colony. Indigenous Eritrean opponents of the colonial authority started to develop a national consciousness. Furthermore, the participation of Eritrean men from different sections of the society as soldiers (*askari*) in the Italian colonial army (sent to Libya and Somaliland to colonize these territories) helped to strengthen the national identity among the various groups that lived in separate regions of Eritrea. Eritrean soldiers participated in war with Ethiopia as part of Italian colonial army twice: first, in 1895-1896 (during the Battle of Adwa), and again in 1935-1936 during Mussolini’s occupation of Ethiopia. The Eritrean soldiers were also involved in Italian incursions in Turkey and Libya in 1911-1912 ,as part of the Italian colonial army (“Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Investigate All Alleged Violations of Human Rights in Eritrea” 2015).

Eritrea came under temporary British Military Administration (BMA) after the Italian forces were defeated; Eritrea remained under BMA until the United Nations decided the fate of Eritrea. In 1952, the U.N. reached a decision to federate



Eritrea with Ethiopia, dashing the hopes and ambitions of the Ethiopian emperor, while at the same time frustrating Eritrean nationalists who hoped to see an independent Eritrea.

**Secondary Colonial Power** - The U.N reached a federal arrangement between Ethiopia and Eritrea as a compromise between those Eritreans who sought an independent Eritrea and those who wanted union with Ethiopia. Following World War Two (1946) the United Nations fact-finding mission delegates sent to the then Italian colony could not reach a unanimous conclusion as to what the future status of Eritrea should be. As a result, each delegate reported their own findings separately. Neither the Ethiopian emperor (who wanted nothing but the complete absorption of Eritrea under the Ethiopian crown) nor Eritreans (who desired to become an independent country) welcomed the agreement. That left the federal arrangement to become an unhappy marriage for the two countries that imagined different futures for themselves; yet they were tied together in an awkward arrangement. It became evident in the years prior to the federation that there were forces strongly advocating complete union with Ethiopia, a goal they had failed to achieve (Negash 1997).

The nationalist movement in Eritrea took advantage of the temporary British Military Administration (BMA) from 1941 to 1952 during which period the formation of political parties was encouraged. In 1941, the first political organization, named *Mahber Feqri Hager* (Association for the Love of the Country) was formed in Eritrea's capital, Asmara. Other organizations during BMA authority included the Muslim League, the Liberal Progressive Party, Eritrean Democratic Front and

Independents, and others. In 1948, after the Four Power Fact finding Commission failed to come up with an agreeable solution concerning the future status of Eritrea, the U.N. passed Resolution-390A (V) that provided for federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia. The Federal Act was implemented in 1952, with Tedla Bairu selected by the BMA, with the approval of the Ethiopian government as the first Chief Executive of the Eritrean Government (Haile 1987). Tedla Bairu served as the secretary-general of the Unionist Party (pro-Ethiopia) before he was elected as the chief executive of the Eritrean Federal Government.

**Liberation War Period** –The Ethiopian Emperor gradually began to interfere in the affairs of the Federation and violated the federal principles. The Emperor replaced the Eritrean Government Chief Executive (who opposed Ethiopia's violation of the Federal Act) in 1955 with a pro-Ethiopian governor, Asfha Woldemichael, who advocated for Eritrea's union with Ethiopia (Haile 1987). This appointment raised serious concerns among Eritrean nationalists. Opposing the Unionist faction, Eritreans began to organize actions against the imperial regime. The Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) was formed in Sudan in 1958; this group organized workers' demonstration in Asmara. Soon afterward, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was formed in 1960 in Cairo; the ELF advocated for Eritrean independence both outside and inside Eritrea. In November 1962, Emperor Haile Selassie officially annexed Eritrea as its 14<sup>th</sup> province, bringing an abrupt end to the federal arrangement. This unilateral annexation, without a plebiscite of the Eritrean

population intensified the nationalist movements begun years prior to the official annexation.

The ELF began armed opposition in the Western lowlands of Eritrea in 1961 by exploding a mine at an Ethiopian outpost. The armed struggle intensified in various regions of Eritrea. By the end of the 1960s, reform-minded members of the ELF organized a faction which later led to the formation of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Competing stories about how and why the ELF became divided into factions, and how these factions formed the EPLF, are offered by various informants. Some argue that division among the various ethnic and religious groups was the primary cause. The EPLF faction accused the ELF of failing to create a cohesive nationalist organization. ELF leadership denied the accusation and attacked the EPLF for its violent tactics and attempting to take over the ELF after destroying its leaders and dragging the ELF into internal warfare.

The liberation movement in Eritrea went through substantial organizational changes during the mid-1970s. The ELF, the predecessor to EPLF, experienced turmoil and division. Conflicts ensued among the various factions that left the ELF. After asserting its upper hand in the power struggle, the EPLF turned its attention to mobilizing the Eritrean population to recognize it as the sole organization to lead in the liberation struggle. The EPLF earned leadership by running one of the most effective and efficient liberation organizations. For any political movement to be successful, several factors must exist; such as effective management, adequate resources, popular support, and political opportunities (Woldemikael 1991).

Both liberation movements had been created for the sole purpose of liberating Eritrea from Ethiopian administration through armed struggle. Former ELF fighters remained in exile in Sudan; many emigrated to the Middle East, Europe and America. The EPLF succeeded in defeating the ELF forces and driving them from Eritrean soil, while consolidating power within a reconstituted organization.

The EPLF proved itself to be successful in mobilizing support from the Eritrean population inside, as well as outside, Eritrea. Various associations worked under its umbrella, such as a Women's Association, Youth Association, Student Associations Abroad (Connell 2002). The EPLF penetrated the social and cultural fabric of the youth and inspired them to join in the cause of self-determination. Numerous associations were formed around the world to promote the Eritrean cause, fundraising and organizing relief activities for refugees. The North American Eritrean Students Association, Eritrean Relief Association made significant contribution through public relations and fundraising, providing desperately needed resources to the fighters in Eritrea.

While some commentators attributed the ultimate success of the EPLF to external factors (such as the collapse of Soviet support for Ethiopia), others point to the resilience, determination and high morale of EPLF fighting forces, coupled with a motivated and supportive Eritrean population at home and abroad. The Ethiopian army and leadership were indeed exhausted from fighting one of the longest wars in Africa; Ethiopia struggled with the low morale of its fighting force. Collaboration between the EPLF and Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) guerrilla armies of

northern Ethiopia forced the Ethiopian army to fight on multiple frontlines. As a result of the coordinated military operations on both sides of the border, the EPLF was able to push through the major cities and towns of Eritrea, and south beyond the Eritrean borders.

In 1974, Ethiopia's new military regime, also known as *Derg*, overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie and decided to deal with the "Eritrean question" by attempting to regain ELF/EPLF held territories. Their efforts failed repeatedly, and by mid-1978 the liberation groups controlled most of the countryside in Eritrea, but not major towns, such as Asmara, Keren, Massawa, or Assab. Despite hefty commitments of arms and training from Communist countries, the *Derg* failed to suppress the Eritrean rebellion (Henze 1986). In the mid-1970s, following the civil war between Eritrea's splinter group, the governments of Libya, Somalia and Iraq tried to mediate the differences between the major factions. The first EPLF Congress was held in 1977.

The Eritrean liberation forces received inconsistent material and financial support from Arab nations (like Iraq and Syria), as well as humanitarian assistance from organizations such as Norwegian Church Aid. Countries like China also provided EPLF leaders with military training. One of a small group of liberation fighters who went to China to be trained in guerrilla tactics was the current Eritrean president, Isaias Afeworki. Neighboring nations of Sudan, Somalia, and Libya also provide moral and material support to ELF/ EPLF forces. The EPLF and TPLF

coordinated their efforts to ultimately defeat the Ethiopian army in 1991, and dismantle the thirty years of Ethiopian rule in Eritrea.

As Ethiopia tried to hold its grasp within Eritrea and Tigray, several armed groups operated within Ethiopia, putting additional pressure on the Ethiopian military regime. By the end of 1976, there were insurgencies all over Ethiopia, including the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Afar Liberation Front (ALF), the Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF) and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) operating in Ogaden on Ethiopia's western perimeter.

Through its ingenuity and skill in expropriating arms from the Ethiopian army, the EPLF was able to secure resources with minimal outside help. However, limited (yet unsustainable) assistance came from Arab countries and other nations such as Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and China in the early days. This aid was more strategic and was not based on principles or loyalty to the cause of Eritrean independence. For instance, Sudan in 1971 suspended support and sanctuary in Sudan for ELF fighters following objections from the Ethiopian emperor. Sudan and Ethiopia eventually agreed to cooperate in suppressing rebels in each country. Similarly, in the early 1970s, Yemen, hoping to get help from Ethiopia in its fight against Southern Yemen, cut its aid to the ELF. Another example of reciprocity was China's pledge to terminate their assistance to ELF in return for the Ethiopian emperor's visit of China in 1971 (Clements National Security Papers 1973).

While the Ethiopian government received a steady supply of arms from the United States during the Imperial regime, the Soviet Union played a similar role during the *Derg* regime after 1974. In exchange for their assistance, both the U.S. and Soviet Union were allowed to establish secret military bases—at Kagnaw communication facility in Asmara for the Americans, and later, the Dahlak Islands for the Russians (Clements National Security Papers) 1973).

The EPLF ultimate success could be understood by considering a number of factors. The first and most important is the organizational skill that the EPLF put on display in training a highly motivated fighting force that was strengthened by the moral and financial backing of Eritreans living abroad. The second factor, related to the first one, is the effectiveness of military tactics of EPLF soldiers when they engaged with the Ethiopian army. The Ethiopian army had superior military equipment and larger forces (a ratio of 3 Ethiopian soldiers for each Eritrean fighter); however, the EPLF was able to overcome this disadvantage by dispersing its small, mobile, and highly motivated fighters over a larger geographic area, engaged the Ethiopian army in many fronts simultaneously. This mimics the guerrilla warfare tactics that Mao Zedong of China implemented in fighting the Japanese occupying forces. Many other liberation movements, including the EPLF, incorporated these tactics in their armed struggle (Brigadier General Samuel B 1989). Facing multiple attacks from the EPLF forces, the Ethiopian army was at a great disadvantage moving its armies across wide areas.

From the 1980s onward, the EPLF fought a more conventional war from secure bases, and its military was superior compared to the TPLF. The TPLF viewed this transition to conventional warfare and military professionalism as a threat to the democratic character of their liberation struggle (Young 1996). Although the majority of EPLF recruits joined voluntarily, there were instances where local farmers were chosen, forcefully taken away at gun-point, and sent to military training (Leys and Saul 1994). Among the many differences between the EPLF and TPLF during the liberation struggle, the main disagreement was the TPLF assertion that, just as the right to seek independence extended to all Ethiopian nationalities, the same principle should be applied to the people of Eritrea. TPLF's leaders argued that "if the future Eritrea is to be truly democratic, it will have to respect the right of nations and nationalities to self-determination up to, and including, secession" (Young 1996, 108).

**Independence Period** With the defeat of Ethiopia's regime, a new government was set up in Ethiopia under the TPLF. The former liberation movement created a coalition called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)<sup>20</sup> party. Unlike governments in Ethiopia over the previous hundred years, the EPRDF did not question Eritrea's right to self-determination.

After EPLF's victory in 1991, the mood in Eritrea was one of hope and celebration, as is the case with many successful movements that achieved their goal

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<sup>20</sup> EPRDF-Ethiopian People's Revolutionary and Democratic Front-a coalition of TPLF, Amhara Democratic Front, Oromo Democratic Organization and Southern Nations and Nationalities.



by winning the liberation war. The jubilation that engulfed the whole nation remained intact for the better part of a decade after independence. In February 1994, People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) was formed in the town of Nakfa, replacing the EPLF as the ruling party of the Eritrean government.

**Post-Independence Period** - Critics and supporters of the EPLF alike considered the EPLF decision to enter into the legitimate and formal procedure of conducting a referendum to be a positive sign. The PGE's commitment to the people's voice was equated with the EPLF's commitment to democracy. The current Eritrean president and then-secretary General of EPLF (Isaias Afewerki) viewed the referendum as the natural conclusion of a long-awaited democratic choice, as "mission accomplished" for the organization he led during the country's liberation. The same *New York Times* article which described the referendum reported that Eritrea's new president was cautious about the future of democracy in his country. Isaias was quoted to have said "the creation of democratic institutions will have priority. . . Democracy should be subservient to stability in a country" (Lorch 1993).

The 1994 National Charter of PFDJ, a revision of the 1977 and 1987 EPLF political programs stated a goal of achieving political democracy in Eritrea. The Charter further called for Eritreans to be active participants in the affairs of their lives and their country and for their rights to be guaranteed by law.<sup>21</sup> The Charter also stressed the need for social justice and economic and social democracy, where there

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<sup>21</sup> PFDJ Charter February 1994. Nakfa. Six Basic Goals listed in the document are: 1. National Harmony, 2. Political Democracy, 3. Economic and Social Development, 4. Social Justice (Economic and Social Democracy), 5. Cultural Revival, and 6. Regional and International Cooperation.

was an “equitable distribution of wealth, services and opportunities” with particular attention given to underprivileged members of the society. The National Charter was intended to serve as the guiding document for the PFDJ leadership; democracy was understood to mean more than just having competing political parties or regular elections. The Charter calls for a deeper and broader definition of democracy: “the existence of a society governed by democratic principles and procedures, the existence of democratic institutions and culture, broad public participation in decision-making ,and a government that is accountable to the people” (PFDJ 1994). The same document calls for democracy to be understood as a value, more than the mere existence of external institutions. The actual participation and influence of the people in their communities and at the national level was considered to be the measure of an effective democracy (PFDJ 1994).

This reading and analysis of the 1994 PFDJ Charter sheds some light on the thinking and/or ideological convictions of the leadership and the vision they had for an independent Eritrea. They might have expressed some reservations as to whether the Charter’s content was a true commitment of the EPLF/PFDJ stance—or was it simply tailored to satisfy expectations of the international community? However, it can be safely assumed that there were some members of the Executive Committee of EPLF/PFDJ, who later became cabinet ministers in the Executive Branch who raised issues concerning democratic elections, representative government, accountability, and government transparency (Connell 2005).

The optimism that began with the popular participation of the Eritrean people in the April 1993 referendum continued through the mid-1990s. Great hope accompanied the drafting of the Eritrean constitution<sup>22</sup> and its later approval in 1997 by the Eritrean National Assembly. The Constitutional Commission of Eritrea was charged according to Proclamation 55/1994 with the task of engaging the public, gathering feedback and comments and drafting a constitution. The Commission had 50 council members, 10 of whom were selected as members of the executive committee. The commission was charged with organizing and managing “a wide-ranging and all-embracing national debate and education through public seminars and lecture series on constitutional principles and practices” (Article 4.4 of Proclamation 55/1994).

For the period of three years (1994-1997), the constitutional commission of Eritrea collected feedback and comments from the Eritrean public, both inside and outside of Eritrea. The Commission submitted the draft constitution to the national assembly for its vote on ratification; Eritrea’s Transitional Assembly, delegates of the Regional Assemblies, and elected representatives of Eritreans abroad, convened to review, deliberate on and ratify the draft Constitution. The Constitution was ratified on 23 May 1997. Implementation of the Constitution was stalled when Eritrea was embroiled in a border skirmishes with Ethiopia that quickly turned into a full-scale war in the summer of 1998. Proclamation No. 37/1993 called for adopting after the

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<sup>22</sup> “A Proclamation to Determine the Structure, Function, and Responsibilities of the Government of Eritrea, No. 37/1993”.

ratification of the Constitution, thereby ending the four-year legal tenure of the Transitional Government. However, that never came to pass, nor were the democratic principles embedded in the constitution put into practice.

The PFDJ leadership stressed its commitment to the Charter, intending it to be a road map for the development of post-independence Eritrea. The document makes it very clear that the procedural or simplistic view of democracy, as a form of government that merely allows the existence of political parties and periodic elections, is not a sufficient or substantive definition of democracy. Another argument expressed in the Charter is that democracy is a process that requires time and involves arduous, complex stages of development. The document says that democracy needs to be understood within its own local and historical context. Next, the Charter argues that the process of democratization needs to be managed carefully and that both “government and non-governmental institutions must exist to ensure public participation from the grassroots level to the national level” (PFDJ 1994). The three pillars of democracy included in the Charter are “a democratic government, an active civil society, and an independent and reliable mass media”(PFDJ 1994). Finally, the Charter calls for simultaneously developing democracy while pursuing nation-building and socio-economic development.

However, the EPLF assumed the leadership role as a transitional government in 1991 without being elected by the people. For the first few years of independence, the EPLF/PFDJ enjoyed legitimacy due to its role in liberating the country from three decades of Ethiopian occupation. Over the next decade, the PFDJ showed signs that it

was going to engage the Eritrean people in the affairs of their country by welcoming the 1993 popular referendum. The early signs of laying the groundwork for political participation and institution-building halted completely in 1998, coinciding with Eritrea's border skirmish with its southern neighbor Ethiopia.

Another important political development was the introduction of Eritrean currency, called Nakfa, in November 1997.<sup>23</sup> Previously, the Eritrean government was using the Ethiopian currency, the Birr, for consumer and financial transactions. The introduction of Eritrea's national currency, which created friction and misunderstanding regarding conduct of business in the border areas and disrupted exchange rates between the two countries, is considered to be the trigger of the 1998 border conflict with Ethiopia. In 1998, when the border conflict turned into a full-scale war, the two countries devoted their resources toward the war efforts. Both sides saw this conflict as aggression by the other side, and each side defended its involvement as self-defense to preserve sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Solidarity among the ruling EPLF/PFDJ elites began to unravel in 2001. On 18 September 2001, high-ranking officials of the PFDJ who publicly criticized the President's undemocratic practices and requested the Eritrean President to immediately convene the National Assembly. This group of Eritrean officials and leaders commonly known as Group-15 (G-15) requested Eritrea's President, Isaias

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<sup>23</sup> Nakfa, named after a town in north western Eritrea where the EPLF had set up its headquarters during the liberation war. The Eritrean national currency being named Nakfa has historical significance to the Eritreans long struggle for independence

Afeworki to convene a cabinet meeting to assess the aftermath of the border war that the country had fought with Ethiopia between 1998—2000 (“Eritrea” 2012).<sup>24</sup> After 2001, the Eritrean government continued arbitrary arrests of Eritrean former officials, members of religious minority groups, business people, journalists, and others. Dissidents inside Eritrea were detained and kept in harsh conditions. A popular election scheduled for December 2001 was postponed indefinitely. The country’s constitution, ratified by the national Assembly in 1997, also remained shelved and unimplemented

Today, Eritrea’s political culture is characterized by authoritarianism nearly identical to the EPLF culture which operated in secrecy and exercised absolute, arbitrary power (Connell 2005b). Despite the aspirations of the National Charter and the expectation of democratic governance in the Eritrean populace, the actual Eritrean political system was a move away from democratic principles. The leadership in the Eritrean government responded with defiance and shifting blame to external forces for the problems that Eritrea encountered in the post-independence era (Shabait.com 2018). The Eritrean government, in particular President Isaias Afeworki, has articulated events in the region in terms of Ethiopia’s and its allies’ coordinated effort to sabotage the self-reliant policy of the Eritrean government. The PFDJ government portrayed this as a continuation of a policy intended to isolate Eritrea, a policy which the larger powers, especially the United States, promote using the proxy of the

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<sup>24</sup> *Eritrea*. Freedom House Report. 2012. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/coU.N.tries-crossroads/2007/eritrea>

Ethiopian government. Ethiopia alleged that Eritrea had a role in assisting Al-Shabab in Somalia and instigating a border disputes with Djibouti; this resulted in the U.N. Security Council sanctioning Eritrea in 2009 and 2011. (Sanctions were subsequently lifted in November 2018.)

#### **4.2.2. NAMIBIA**

**European Colonial Period** - Formerly called German South West Africa, a treaty between Germany and Britain fixed the present boundaries of Namibia in 1890. South West Africa was Germany's first colony. On September 5, 1884 the German Empire formally declared South West Africa (SWA) as its colony, claiming an area that stretched from the Kunene River in the north to the Orange River in the south, from the sandy Kalahari Desert in the east to the Atlantic coastline to the west. Within those natural boundaries, the people had knowledge and contacts with each other, as well as a perception of the surrounding regions and their inhabitants. There were exchanges and contact with the indigenous communities in the south and the north.

Much like other colonial administrations in Africa, the Germany colony of South West Africa was characterized by violence and racial discrimination. The primary concern of the colonial power was to enforce order and stability—if necessary, by using violence and the legal system designed to protect the interests of the settler colonists. Macpherson stated that any legislation that was formulated was aimed at compelling the local population to conform to the economic system which benefitted settler colonists. Any diversion from the legal framework would result in serious consequences (Quoted in Melber 2010, 40). As Melber correctly noted, such a legal system had far-reaching

implications for the colonized people of Namibia. The majority of local populations had been victims of “such authoritarian and partial use of law, designed to artificially stabilize situations of dependency, inequality and injustice” and people were denied even the basic rights of citizenship (Melber 2010, 41).

The colonial state in the region of South West Africa considered the local population, (referred to as “natives”) as inferiors, unworthy of citizenship rights. This in turn excluded them from residential rights, social services and other services within their own territory. People also lacked any legal protections that come with citizenship. Despite its control over the colonial territories, the German regime lacked any form of representation of colonial subjects. The German colonists ruled with iron fists and violence whenever they faced any challengers or non-compliance.

Colonialism has had an incalculable impact on local African populations. Melber argues that the colonial legacy had a “totalitarian character and rigid strategies of domination and oppression also led towards the infantilisation of the population.” Colonialism also resulted in “the creation of a subordinate culture of obedience and subservience to authorities” (Melber 2010, 41–42). Melber argues that the authoritarian nature of the colonial administration, which had exclusive domain over the local population, has extended its impact to present day Namibian society. Authoritarian governance and political culture are still exhibited (Melber 2010).

After 1897, as the number of settlers continued to increase, the German colonial administration tightened its control and subjugation of the people and facilitated land



ownership through the capitalist economic system introduced to the communities in the south and central parts of South West Africa. It became difficult, for example, for the Herero people to survive; they had dominated cattle ownership and occupied the best grazing land, but cattle-plague and rinderpest exterminated their herds. This caused the Herero to sell their lands to the colonial settlers, thereby weakening their livelihoods and social positions. This disaster provided economic advantages to the German colonists when the Herero communities lost their capacity to own and trade cattle or use grazing lands. In a pattern repeated in many other colonial situations, the Herero people had to depend on European goods sold in European markets in order to survive. Herero people began working as day-laborers under the new ownership of settler colonists in Ovamboland (Melber 2010, 33–34).

As the German colonialist began to expand their control of territory and develop the economy, there was increased demand in the labor force. To supply laborers, colonial authorities forcibly recruited (enslaved) local workers to work on farms owned by white settlers. In a similar fashion, Africans were coerced into working for railway construction companies (Melber 2010, 34). Many local communities put up resistance against the colonists. However, since there was no coordination among the local groups, the colonial administration easily crushed them. Some local leaders entered into peace agreements with the colonial authorities; other, more rebellious leaders were executed, their lands confiscated, and their followers disarmed and deported. Large farms and other capitalist ventures were introduced to the territory by the German colonists. In 1904-1907, the Hereros tried to rise up to regain control over their traditional territory, but the Germans

responded by decimating 80 percent the Herero population. The remains of some Herero victims who were taken to Germany during that period were returned to Namibia recently after over a century later (BBC News 2018).

Despite the Germans' history of fierce fighting with the Herero people, the Nama chief Hendrik Witbooi called on the neighboring Herero chiefs to join in resistance against colonials. As a result of chief Witbooi's efforts, the two major pastoral groups, the Nama and the Herero, formed an alliance to oppose the colonists at every turn. However, the subsequent collaborations and local Nama and Herero rebellions against the German colonists made no difference in restoring land rights to the two groups. Instead, colonial Germany continued to tighten its subjugation of the locals, ensuring that they had no legal rights in the newly established colony. In 1884 and again in 1904, conflicts between the Nama and Herero erupted, revolving around the issues of German land appropriation that disrupted prior agreements between the two groups. The effect of these conflicts was to make room for new German settlers (Emmett 1999, 51).

Another group, the Orlam, were able to dominate their territories in South West Africa through, alliances with the Nama and Herero chiefs, and their possession of rifles and horses (Kienetz 1977). The death of Orlam leaders in the late 1890s created a power vacuum that weakened Orlam hegemony.<sup>25</sup> The Rhenish Mission Society (RMS) expanded its influence in religious, ideological, educational, economic, political and strategic activities in these areas (Melber 2010, 27).

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<sup>25</sup> Orlam community leader Jonker Afrikaner and his Herero chief ally Tjamuaha.

By 1907, the German colonial power had gained complete control over the territory after defeating local groups fighting in the central and southern parts of the country. In short, the colonial administration functioned as an extension of the economic interests of settler colonists. During that time, the settlers continued to introduce legislation to coerce local populations to meet their needs (Melber 2010). After German colonial authorities dispossessed the indigenous people of their land in the central and southern parts of the territory, the region was later known as the “police zone” (Forrest 1994). However, the discovery of diamonds and a shortage of labor forced the settlers to integrate the Ovamboland into the north as a source of migrant labor for the diamond mines in the south. In 1912-1914, a severe drought in northern Ovamboland forced the local occupants to leave their traditional livelihoods and become subsistence-level workers for German settlers. Thus, another large portion in the territory—the Ovambo communities—were integrated into the capitalist economy.

With the outbreak of the First World War, South Africa joined the Allied forces in the war against Germany. In July 1915, a large number of South African troops invaded German South West Africa (SWA) and defeated the German forces. South Africa proposed to the League of Nations to incorporate SWA as the fifth province of the Union of South Africa. The League rejected the proposal. The territory was then ceded to South Africa as a “mandate” territory in December 1920.

The Union of South Africa assumed control of the former German colony and remained in charge of the territory for the next 31 years. Some Nationalist Afrikaners (Dutch colonists) opposed South African involvement in the neighboring German

colonists because they considered Germany to be a friendly power. Despite these concerns, the Union of South Africa seized control of the South West African territory in May 1915. Outnumbered by the 40,000 South African troops, the German forces surrendered, ending three decades of German colonial rule in South West Africa.

The territory of South West Africa remained under South African martial law for five years after the German troops were defeated in 1915. South Africa's long-nourished hope and ambition to annex South West Africa was frustrated in September 1919 when it was forced to accept the territory as a League of Nations mandate. South Africa viewed this as a compromise to "annexation pure and simple" (M.H.Swanson Quoted in Emmett 1999, 65).

**Secondary Colonial Period**—Historians argue that the South African administration was much like the continuation of German colonial administration with a different regime. Emmett argues that "Namibia merely passed from one set of imperialist interests to another" where conditions within the territory essentially remained the same, where "imperialist subjection and capitalist exploitation" continued unabated even after the South African Mandate (Emmett 1999, 65).

Under the mandate, South Africa's obligation was "to govern the Territory and promote to the best of her ability the moral and material welfare of the inhabitants" (Soggot 1986, 17). However, South Africa failed to fulfill its mandate in promoting the moral and material welfare of the inhabitants of the territory (Hannum and Anaya 2011). Instead, South Africa created policy incentives and financial assistance for its white

population (most of whom had immigrated to Namibia from South Africa) to settle in SWA. As a result, the number of white settlers rose dramatically from only 200 farmers in 1920, the first year of the mandate to 1,106 by the end of 1925 (Soggot 1986). The Mandate Commission condemned the lack of social progress for the Blacks in the territory, which was evident in the wealth disparity and land ownership. A few hundred white settlers owned 90% of the land. Years later in April 1946, as the former mandated territories of the League of Nations were transferred to the United Nations trusteeship; all the mandate territories were transferred except one—South West Africa.

South Africa had ambitions to absorb SWA after its military occupation during the Second World War. The diamond reserves and its economic benefits presented a powerful incentive for South Africa to continue its control over SWA. South Africa put forth two major arguments: (a) that SWA was essential for its national security; and (b) Germany had proved itself unfit to rule over the territory by committing injustices and atrocities during its colonial administration. South Africa claimed that it could show a better record of administration of justice and fairness during their administration of SWA as a mandate territory. It became clear from the outset, however, that that South Africa's administrators of South West Africa, had failed to provide fair or just powers over the people of Namibia and its territory during the League Mandate period.

Another factor that motivated South Africans was their desire to remove internal population pressures by promising land and jobs for white South Africans in South West Africa. In effect, South Africa wanted the territory as its new settler colony. Despite, its

failures to comply with the mandate responsibility, South Africa refused to relinquish control over SWA.

In 1946, the United Nations denied South Africa's request to annex SWA. Instead, South Africa was asked to place SWA under the U.N. trusteeship (U.N. Peace Keeping Operations). South Africa ignored this demand and continued to administer SWA (Gross 1966). The United Nations passed resolution after resolution to either establish a trusteeship or to allow the territory to become independent. It required arduous procedures in the U.N. General Assembly and in the International Court of Justice to rectify the situation.

Getting South Africa to finally give up its claim over South West Africa required tremendous pressure from the international community and a newly formed liberation organization, South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) beginning in 1966. In 1973 the United Nations recognized SWAPO as the official representative of the Namibian (South West African) people. There was also a growing internal pressure coming from African National Congress (ANC) within South Africa that caused the nation's apartheid regime to believe that it was losing control over its own destiny. The South African government had to devise a way out. The situations in Namibia and South Africa were intertwined because South Africa's ruling National Party ruled both countries during the apartheid regime.

In the wake of the 1973 U.N. recognition of SWAPO as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people, the pressure from the international community intensified. In 1977, South African organized the controversial Turnhalle Conference;

representatives of various African groups and major political parties, including whites, came together in Windhoek and attempted to form a government. The U.N. and SWAPO rejected the South African National Party leadership at the constitutional conference in Windhoek. The apartheid regime continued to segregate and divide Namibians along ethnic lines and tried to neutralize SWAPO's attempts to free Namibia from South African rule.

The international uproar which followed a whites-only referendum caused South Africa's National Party to abandon the plan, resulting in the formation of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) in 1978. This party included representatives from the 11 major ethnic groups in Namibia (including whites). Each party within the DTA coalition represented a particular ethnic group; for example, a prominent Herero chief headed the National Unity Democratic Organization (NUDO) party (Forrest 1994). Beginning in 1978, the South African government proposed another election that would ensure that the DTA would dominate Namibian governance. Even with that limitation, elections resulted in a majority black membership in the National Assembly, with powers that would eliminate racial segregation. Instead, "the privileges of whites as well as the ethnic division among blacks were reinforced through the empowerment of the Representative Authorities"(Forrest 1994, 90). Moreover, the Administrator-General, who had supreme legal authority, could overturn any rulings the National Assembly passed. In 1983, restrictions such as these led to political cleavages and the collapse of South West Africa's National Assembly. It was replaced with the Multiparty Conference (MPC) which later was re-designated as the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU)

of Namibia. This transitional government was approved in 1985 and continued until early 1989. Neither transitional governments could pass laws unless the Administrator-General approved them (Forrest 1994).

**Liberation War Period** – Beginning in the late 1950s, the activism of Namibian workers and students living in South Africa, SWAPO was in the forefront of the liberation movement. The conflict period extended from 1958 to 1989, going through several stages, with diplomatic efforts at the forefront. However, in 1966 SWAPO officially launched its armed struggle for the liberation of Namibia against the South African rule in the territory formerly known as South West Africa.

Herman Toivo Ya Toivo of the Ovamboland People's Congress, (OPC) began organized opposition in 1957. He and other leaders opposed the contract work system, *odalate*, which restricted movements outside the Ovambo homeland. Workers were required to return to their homeland whenever their work permits expired and were not allowed to change employment or ask for better working conditions, nor request increased wages. The Ovambo people were significantly affected by *odalate* as “an existential predicament rather than the fruit of ideological impregnation” (Soggot 1986, 27). The restrictive labor practices led to the formation of OPC as an organization dedicated to the organization of a coordinated attack on the *odalate* system.

The OPC was renamed the Ovambo People's Organization (OPO) in 1958. In April 1960, OPO was formally dissolved and reconstituted as the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) with the twin platforms of “national unity and self-reliance in the struggle for independence.” The party aspired to represent the grievances



of Blacks in the reserves, towns and compounds (Soggot 1986, 28). In 1966, SWAPO launched its armed struggle and intensified its operations inside and outside of the Territory. Offices were opened in Dar es Salaam, New York, Helsinki, Stockholm, Dakar, Algiers, Cairo and Lusaka.

In the 1960s, SWAPO was based in Tanzania; in the 1970s, SWAPO operations moved to Caprivi Strip in neighboring Zambia, closer to the southern borders of Angola. Between 1974-1976, SWAPO's exiled leaders faced the 'Shipanga crisis' named after a senior SWAPO leader, Andreas Shipanga, who dissented from other leaders in the movement (Leys and Saul 1994). Although Shipanga was a marginal figure, his dissidence empowered the rank and file in the movement to demand democratic procedures, leadership accountability and membership participation within SWAPO. With the assistance of Zambian armed forces, Sam Nujoma, SWAPO's leader, detained up to 2,000 of his critics, some of whom were later transferred to Tanzanian prisons for "rehabilitation." SWAPO leaders ordered others to be killed (Leys and Saul 1994, 124).

Beginning with its formation in the early 1960s, SWAPO was engaged in a diplomatic campaign for the independent status of Namibia. SWAPO's leaders opposed South Africa's apartheid policy mainly from abroad., Namibians had been prevented from representation or expressing their opinions during the period of South African rule under the Permanent Mandate Commission at the League of Nations. The League's Commissioners were all white Europeans, except for one Japanese commissioner. None of those who decided the fate of South West Africa came from the continent of Africa. As a result, Namibian petitioners were unable to present their grievances, because written

petitions were submitted only through the mandatory power, and oral petitions were not permitted at all (Dale 2014).

Member states of the U.N. had been trying to engage South Africa in negotiating Namibia's transition to statehood. SWAPO, like many liberation movements in Africa, received the bulk of financial and military assistance from the East European Communist countries and Cuba (Horn 2010).

SWAPO's struggle waged against apartheid was three-pronged: diplomatic, economic, and military. Through effective efforts on these three fronts, SWAPO was able to secure the negotiated agreements. As a result of its successful diplomacy, the U.N. General Assembly recognition SWAPO to represent the Namibian people aspiration for independence (Dale 2014). Such a positive relationship contributed to the negotiated settlement that Namibia would later sign with South Africa—the culmination of three decades of diplomatic efforts.

Before this agreement, South Africa continued its suppression of the Black population in Namibia, through the extension of its racial apartheid policy begun in the late 1950s. South Africa restricted political rights to Black Namibians within their own country, while freely allowing white South Africans to immigrate to Namibia, intensified SWAPO's struggle against the South African apartheid regime. SWAPO launched an armed struggle in August 1966 to drive out the South African colonialists who had ruled Namibia since they took over the territory in 1920. Continued harassment and “humiliation of Namibians at the hands of whites, just as their equivalents struggle in

South Africa flowed from the white government's discrimination] and violence towards blacks" (Scholtz 2006, 26).

Militarily-speaking, the South African Defense forces, (SADF) assigned to patrol and control in Namibia were mostly young, inexperienced white South African recruits who had no combat or counter-insurgency experience and no cultural understanding of Namibia people. Initially, the South African Police, (SAP) had some counter-insurgency experience in Zimbabwe; with assistance from the South West African Territorial Force (SWATF) they were assigned to perform security operations in Namibia. SAP targeted the activities of SWAPO in Ovamboland in Northern Namibia. Responsibility for patrolling the border areas between Namibia and Angola was later transferred to SADF, who occasionally pursued the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) fighters inside Angola. The South African security forces were ineffective, especially after 1975 when SWAPO/PLAN was able to move its bases into Angola following Angola's independence in 1976. That move made access to Namibia through the northern Ovamboland much easier, and SWAPO stepped up its guerrilla activities to sabotage the South African troops in the border areas.

In the early 1970s, while SWAPO was operating in such an inefficient manner in its bases in Zambia, the SWAPO Youth League (SYL) was actively involved in leading the internal resistance from within Namibia. SYL activities included organizing public rallies, confronting officials, helping to organize the 1971 general strike, boycotting the appointment of Ovambo Chiefs, etc. These activities resulted in a violent response from the SADF (South African Defense Forces) and that forced SYL members to escape to

Zambia through Angola in mid-1974, joining their countrymen in SWAPO bases in Zambia. SWAPO encountered yet another crisis in Zambia between 1974 and 1976. Three main groups were vying for power within SWAPO: the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) who had fought South African forces in Caprivi Strip before the mass exodus of 1974; next, the Namibians who left in the 1974 mass exodus in order to train as soldiers in western Zambia or Angola; and finally, the SYL who joined the exiled SWAPO in mid-1974. These groups joined to call for a party congress to develop a SWAPO party platform and strategy. They hoped that SWAPO's problems of corruption, mismanagement and lack of clear goals would be addressed at the party congress. In the end, the SWAPO leadership avoided calling for a party congress. Instead, several leaders of the dissident groups discovered that they had to run for their lives as they were hunted down, arrested, placed in "rehabilitation" camps, or killed by senior SWAPO leaders.

**Independence Period** – SWAPO conducted "low intensity" military operations along the Angolan border against South African Defense Forces, (SADF) until the final peace agreement was negotiated (Wiechers 2010, 83). In 1968, the U.N. General Assembly officially renamed SWA as Namibia. The same year, SWAPO renamed itself, South West Africa People's Organization of Namibia, but kept the acronym SWAPO. The party garnered support for its causes through intensive lobbying in Europe, America, and at the U.N. This effort led to the U.N. General Assembly recognizing SWAPO as the "sole [and] authentic representative of the Namibian people" in 1973 (Soggot 1986, 29).

Negotiations between South Africa and all Namibian political parties, including SWAPO, began in 1978. The same year, the Security Council passed Resolution 385

declaring that it was imperative to hold free elections under United Nations supervision, treating all Namibians as one political entity (UNTAG 2013). The unofficial Western Contact Group (WCG) was formed in 1977-1978 and initiated negotiations among South Africa, SWAPO and the “front-line states” of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, the Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. WCG remained in close contact with the U.N. Secretary General and U.N. Commissioner for Namibia. In February 1978, the Contact Group held talks that resulted in the “proposal for a settlement of the Namibian “situation” presented to the President of the Security Council.

In 1978, U.N. Security Council Resolution 435 called for the withdrawal of South African forces from Namibia, and for the transfer of power to the people of Namibia. The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) was established in 1989 for a period of up to 12 months to ensure the independence of Namibia through free elections under UNTAG supervision. The UN Special Representative first had to verify that all hostile acts were ended; troops were confined to bases, and the South African forces had withdrawn from Namibia; all discriminatory laws were repealed, political prisoners were released, Namibian refugees were allowed to return home, and law-and-order was to be maintained<sup>26</sup> Although the Contact Group successfully negotiated a plan to end the Namibian conflict, and this plan was accepted by all parties, the conflict continued well beyond the WCG, which was dissolved in 1983.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/untagM.htm>

The presence of Cuban troops in Angola complicated the peace negotiations, dragging them out until 1988 because South Africa refused to implement Resolution 435 as long as Cuban forces remained in Angola. This issue was resolved with a trilateral agreement between South Africa, Angola and Cuba. The withdrawal of the Cuban forces in 1988 opened the way for Namibia's independence. According to the December 1988 U.N.-brokered peace accord, South Africa agreed to withdraw its forces from Namibia. Nearly a year later, SWAPO propelled itself into a position of power with the very first democratic election in the country's history. Since then, a democratic framework of government has remained remarkably stable, with periodic elections. Inside Angola, independence led to a power struggle between the two liberation forces, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).<sup>27</sup> Both liberation groups had been fighting the Portuguese, and both claimed credit for achieving independence. The Soviet Union and Cuba he supported the MPLA, while UNITA was supported by the South African government. There was serious concern within the South African administration that that the strife in Angola might lead to a direct confrontation between SADF and the Soviet-backed Cuban forces operating in Angola in support of MPLA. The government in Pretoria was motivated to find a resolution to the ongoing Namibian question which had remained unresolved since South African troops defeated Germany during First World War.

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<sup>27</sup> The acronyms are taken from the Portuguese names of these groups. The English translations do not correspond.

**Post-Independence Period** –In 1988, the Angola conflict and presence of Cuban troops in Angola motivated the United States, during Reagan administration, to find a lasting solution to the Namibian question. The withdrawal of Cuban troops was therefore diplomatically linked to the independence of Namibia. In peace talks that included Angola, South Africa and the United States, Angola's main objective was to remove South African troops from Angolan territories. In exchange, the Angolan government forces were committed to stop attacks on behalf of UNITA, and to implement the UN Resolution 435. South Africa, with the support of the United States, would discontinue their support to UNITA and allow Namibian independence.

There are different assertions as to what led South Africa to accept the U.N. Resolution of 1978. They had accepted the Resolution in principle, yet failed to follow through until 1988. Military and economic experts argue South Africa's losses in southern Angola, combined with "South Africa's \$200 million annual contribution to the Namibian budget and its \$1-billion-a-year war effort became economically unsustainable" for the apartheid regime (Battersby and Times 1988).

The U.N.-supervised election for the Namibian Constituent Assembly was held from 7-11 November 1989. Ten political parties and organizations participated, including SWAPO, which won a majority of the seats, but not the two-thirds of seats needed for one-party rule. With SWAPO forming a coalition government, Namibia became an independent country on 21 March 1990.

As stated in its constitutions of 1976 and 1983, one of the aims and objectives of SWAPO was "to establish in Namibia a democratic, secular government founded upon

the will and participation of all the Namibian people” (“SWAPO Constitution as Adopted by the meeting of the Central Committee: 28 July - 1 August 1976, Lusaka Zambia” 1976). Namibia passed the test of the simple definition of democracy—a system of periodic elections whose results are verified as “free and fair.” However, it is difficult to assess election results if the same party continues to win every election over a period of 30 years without any challenges to its incumbency. Since independence, SWAPO has enjoyed undue advantages and access to state and party resources. SWAPO’s unfair dominance in Namibia’s political sphere makes it virtually impossible for other parties to compete effectively and win. For that reason, the Polity IV Country Report of 2010 labeled Namibia as a “single party democracy” due to 30 years of single-party rule in both the executive and legislative branches of the government. SWAPO remains the dominant political organization in the Namibia. The first president of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, served three consecutive five-year terms after amending the constitution in 1998 to allow him to run for a third term. He did so and won (Melber 2003). Nujoma stepped down from office in 2005 after serving 15 years in office.

Former SWAPO leader Ben Ulenga formed the Congress of Democrats (CD) in 1999. He protested Nujoma’s paternalistic style. The U.N. 2010 Polity IV Report states that the Congress of Democrats is the first significant party in Namibia whose organization crosses ethnic and racial divisions. Despite that, the CD has been unable to challenge SWAPO in any significant way. SWAPO enjoys the support of the Ovambo ethnic majority; in return, SWAPO allocates disproportionate amounts of funding and positions to the northern region of Ovamboland (Marshall and Jagers 2010). One can



argue that the democratic process in Namibia has begun in its very basic form –through conducting periodic elections (despite unfairness in terms of access to state resources). The ruling party has asymmetrical access to state media compared to access provided to opposition parties.

SWAPO has dominated the pre- and post-independence politics in Namibia. The party still enjoys support today, either through willful submission or coercion of the population. Despite its periodic elections, SWAPO's access to state power and perennial incumbency has made it difficult or impossible for opposition parties to challenge the government. SWAPO uses intimidation tactics to discredit opposition leaders. Namibia could be characterized as a political culture of “democratic authoritarianism” carried over through “free and fair” elections every five years without formidable opposition (Bogaards 2010). Deeper analysis reveals a different story that doesn't appear in the headlines, or even in the ratings or democratic indexes of the U.N. and other organizations.

## **5. CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.1. FACTORS THAT DETERMINE REGIME TYPES**

The three factors that are selected for this study are political culture, war-termination strategies and the role of international actors. This analysis of regime change tries to examine or isolate specific factors that impacted the transition from conflict to stable governance. As we shall see in the section that follows, historical evidence suggests that three factors help to explain regime change in Eritrea and Namibia. The circumstances are unique but strikingly similar in each case. I will examine whether these events are merely random coincidences, or is there pattern of historical evidence to be examined in the struggles for independence of new nations, whether they gained their liberation from European or African colonists. I will present interpretation of these comparisons in the conclusions, Chapter 6.

### **5. 2. ERITREA**

#### **5.2.1. FORMATION OF POLITICAL CULTURE**

From the earliest days of Italy's colonial period (beginning in the 1890s), Italy's land confiscation policy was met with resistance from local chiefs, such as Bahata Hagos, in the provincial town of *Sageneti*. Italian soldiers easily crushed this local resistance. The colonial administration expropriated about 50 percent of the cultivated land in the

highlands of Eritrea with the intention of distributing it to landless Italian peasants coming to the colony.

The highland parts of Eritrea speak a common language (Tigrinya) and were in close contact with the Tigray region (also Tigrinya speakers) across the border in Ethiopia. Inhabitants of Eritrea's western lowland included various ethnic groups. Tigreans and Ethiopians raided and plundered these groups long before the arrival of Italians. The lowland villages positively welcomed the arrival of European protectors in their region (Negash 1987). Other groups,, such as Saho and Afar, who dwelt in the eastern escarpment and southern coastline, were left alone by all invaders because of the harsh climate in which they lived (Negash 1997).

One historian has argued that “throughout their entire colonial experience, Italians went to colonies more often as soldiers than as civilians” and that the military aspect of Italy's behavior dominated the colonial policy and administration (Napoli 2017, 453). The Italian colonial policies from the 1932 Fascist period onwards saw the development of apartheid-like racial laws and practices that relegated the local population to inferior status and inhumane treatment. Italian administrators systematically avoided the inclusion of native peoples in its colonial government except in very subordinate positions (Napoli 2017, 464).

The first colonial Governor of Eritrea, General Antonio Gandolfi, (governing from 1890-1892) opposed the appointment of General Oreste Baratieri to succeed him, believing that the position of Governor required a civilian, not a military, person. Over General Gandolfi's objections, Baratieri was appointed the Governor of Eritrea, ushering

in an era of military dictatorship from 1892 to 1896. In his memoir, Gen. Gandolfi called Baratieri's administration, "the return to the most autocratic and reckless militarism that our Eritrea to its misfortune has ever had" (Napoli 2017, 464). Baratieri proved to be a disastrous general as well, losing two-thirds of his forces (nearly 7,000 well-armed troops) in the decisive battle of Adua (1896). Ethiopian troops armed mostly with spears, led by Emperor Menelik, defeated the Italians.

Colonial Italy was characterized by disagreement and competition among its military and civilian officers who had different visions of how to administer the colonial territory. Such attitudes had resulted in conflicting, sometimes confusing, policies during the first few years of the colonial regime. However, the colonial administration designed apartheid policies with different sets of rules for the local people and Italian settlers in Eritrea. This included policies such as limiting education only up to fourth grade for local people, unfair market pricing for the products sold by Eritreans (i.e. the same product was sold for less if the seller was Eritrean), and exploitation of labor through unfair and discriminatory practices. Dirar argues that "in spite of repressive colonial policies, a small and informal Eritrean elite grew up during the fifty-one years (1890-1941) of official Italian colonial rule" (Dirar 2007, 258).

Some argue that nationalist consciousness began in Eritrea during the Italian colonial period, which became evident when British forces defeated the Italian colonial regime in 1941. The post-war British administration allowed political parties to proliferate in Eritrea; these parties had various agendas. Negash argues in direct contrast to claims that colonization had minimal impact on Eritreans' sense of national identity

(Negash 1987). The political parties that were created by the British in the aftermath of the defeat of Italian forces included some that called for independence; other parties argued for some kind of federation or union with Ethiopia; and still others wanted a trusteeship under Italian administration. Conflicting opinions regarding the future of Italy's former colony caused the U.N. to recommend federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia after the period of British military administration, which was scheduled to end in 1952. This proposal dismayed both Eritrea's population (who wanted independence) and Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie (who wanted to annex Eritrea to Ethiopia). For a decade after the U.N. imposed a federation arrangement, both sides worked to achieve a different outcome.

The harsh engagement of the Ethiopian imperial regime against pro-independence Eritreans forced the movement to go underground. The movement began its operations in the remote parts of Western Eritrea, largely to avoid being discovered by the Emperor's forces. Ethiopian administrators in Eritrea showed preference for the Orthodox Christian groups among the highland Tigrinya-speaking people, thus sowing discord among Eritrean religious communities. Muslims in the Western low-lands began to support the liberation movement; thus, the Eritrean population was, for a number of years, split into pro-unionist (majority Christian) and pro-independence (majority Muslim) camps. Despite some crossover among adherents of the two religions living in the two regions, Ethiopian favoritism toward Orthodox Christians created mistrust among Eritrea's Muslim population.

The source of Eritrean nationalism has been a contentious issue between those who claim that Italian colonialism unified the different ethnic groups in Eritrea against the colonial regime, versus others who assert that Eritrean nationalism is a more recent phenomenon that began to surface with the oppressive Ethiopian regimes following Eritrea's annexation to Ethiopia in 1962. Even during the early 1960s, after the armed liberation struggle against Ethiopia had begun, the debate between one group of staunch supporters of Eritrean nationalism and other nationalist groups continued about whether Italian or Ethiopian colonialism was the primary source of Eritrean nationalism. EPLF and its supporters argue that Italian colonialism was responsible for Eritrean nationalism. (Mesghenna 1988)

In defending their position that Italian colonialism awakened Eritrean national consciousness, some (including Mesghenna) argue that the repressive and exploitative colonial policies, combined with the infrastructural development such as roads and railroads, print and radio media, connected the diverse indigenous groups under one colonial administration; this was supposed to have contributed to national consciousness (Makki 2011). Makki further argues that in a society with cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, there was no other “collective identification except that of common territory and a distinct colonial history” (Makki 2011, 422).

Others, including Tekeste Negash, argue that there is little or no evidence to suggest that Italian colonialism created national consciousness among the various groups in Eritrea. Those in this camp defend their position by arguing that the lack of an Eritrean capitalist working class or elite intelligentsia left all the Eritrean people at the very

bottom of the economic and social ladder (Negash 1987). Dirar further argues that what is unique about Eritrean nationalism is that—unlike many nationalist movements in Africa or other place—the Eritrean experience was “based not on antagonism to the former colonial power, but on hostility to a new occupying force [Ethiopia]” (Dirar 2007). This in turn seems to suggest that liberation leaders had an uneasy and contradictory relationship with colonialism, during a period described as “the founding moment” of the Eritrean state (Dirar 2007, 270).

At the same time, particularly in the more “ideological literature of the Eritrean liberation movements, Italian colonialism was denounced for its exploitative and violent nature” (Dirar 2007, 270). The Eritrean nationalists defended this seemingly contradictory stance towards Italian colonialism as background, but only an impetus to its movement aimed at liberation from Ethiopian colonialism. Due to its exploitative and violent nature, Italian colonial rule was said to have helped unite Eritreans across different ethnic, language and socio-economic classes, forming Eritrean nationalism which evolved during the era of Ethiopian rule. The ambiguities and contradictions regarding Eritrean nationalism needs to be anchored in an understanding of these diverse groups, and their allegiances before, during, and after the Italian colonial period.

Much of Eritrea’s political culture was built on foundations which the EPFL established during decades of struggle to liberate Eritrea from Ethiopia. The first EPLF congress was held on January 31, 1977 in the liberated areas of *Nakfa*. The EPLF had triumphed in its power struggle with its forerunner, the ELF, just two years earlier.

During the first EPLF congress, the National Democratic Program<sup>28</sup> was adopted, calling for the following:

- The establishment of people's democratic Eritrea
- A self-reliant, independent and planned economy
- Safeguarding the unity and equality of all Eritrean nationalities
- The development of revolutionary culture, education and healthcare
- Safeguarding the economic, political and organizational rights of the working class
- The complete equality of women with men in economic, political, social and cultural life.
- A foreign policy of peace and non-alignment, of anti-imperialist solidarity with all just and revolutionary movements

These goals were articulated at the time when the EPLF forces were still fighting for the independence of Eritrea. As stated in the National Charter in 1977, a democratic Eritrea was one of the first goals of the organization after independence. The EPLF held its second Congress 12-19 March 1987 in *Orota*, in the *Sahel* region of Eritrea. During the second congress, a splinter group from the ELF/Central Leadership—also called

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<sup>28</sup> Workers' Advocate, Vol. 7, no. 2, May 12, 1977. Hail the First Congress of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. It was a leaflet issued by the Eritreans for Liberation in North America describing the EPLF's successful conclusion of the First Congress.



Center Command (CC)—participated in a “Unity Congress.”<sup>29</sup> It was during this time that the current Eritrean president, Isaias Afeworki, replaced Ramadan Mohammed Nur<sup>30</sup> as EPLF’s secretary general. Isaias<sup>31</sup> has remained as the chairman/leader of EPLF and (PFDJ) since 1987 and he is the only leader that independent Eritrea has known since independence in 1991.

The EPLF dominated the liberation war since the mid-1970 after defeating the ELF in a civil war. EPLF relied more on its skill in using guerrilla tactics, and less on support from local communities. The EPLF army would employ “push/probe” tactics where they would attack from a fixed position, then retreat and disappear into the countryside (Young 1996). Comparing the experience of the TPLF and EPLF, Young asserts that “while TPLF fighters moved widely and frequently to link up with peasant militias against the *Derg*, the Eritreans increasingly depended more on a carefully planned ‘push’ movements that advanced from fixed defended position to attack the enemy and then retreat [less on local militia]” (Young 1996, 110). The large number of local militias that were present in both the TPLF and EPLF was a testament to the fact that both Fronts had recruited sizeable militias that helped during the armed struggle.

The EPLF was organized along the lines of other revolutionary military organizations, such as the Palestine Liberation Organization, or ANC in South Africa.

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<sup>29</sup> In October 1986 the ELF-CC and EPLF agreed to merge the two fighting forces under a united command after a three year negotiations (Burgess and Cliffe 1987). The ELF had splinter into three factions.

<sup>30</sup> Ramadan Mohammed Nur had been the Secretary General of EPLF until he was replaced by Isaias Afeworki in 1987. In 1993 Mr. Mohammed Nur officially retired from his political position

<sup>31</sup> It is common to refer to persons by their given names in Eritrea. The second name is the father’s given name; the third name is the grandfather’s given name, or sometimes an honorific, such as “Elhaj” (pilgrim to Mecca).

After the EPLF asserted its strength by eliminating the ELF forces, it developed tightly-controlled, self-reliant cells—the basic elements of revolutionary organizations.

Representatives of various civilian and military institutions elected 72 Central Committee members during the EPLF's First General Congress. The central committee met every nine months, and selected a 12-member political committee that met four times a year. In both the central command and political committee, an approximate balance between Muslims and Christians was maintained. The general secretary was the head of the liberation front, officially called the Central and Political Committees. Woldemichael argues that for a political movement to be successful it should have a minimum of effective organization, adequate resources, common interest, and political opportunities (Woldemikael 1991). The EPLF possessed all these attributes.

As a military organization, the EPLF was organized along the Leninist model of democratic centralism. Every EPLF member was required to undergo one year of military training. The EPLF command operated much like a government-in-waiting, with a highly centralized, hierarchical structure, well-defined sections, each with specific functions and responsibilities. The basic military unit consists of five or six individuals who depended on one another for support and survival; these units functioned like families, where friendships and community thrived. Egalitarian principles took precedence over rank, and fighters lived, ate and slept together. Typically, such strict military organization makes it hard for individual freedom of expression or movement to exist. In general “criticism of the leadership, personal opinion, and individualist views and interests are subordinated to the [overall] goal of the Unit [movement]” (Woldemikael 1991, 35).

“The successful blending of an organizational structure based on the Leninist model of democratic centralism with Eritrean informal friendship networks and a sense of camaraderie among the fighters explains the uniqueness of the EPLF as an effective military and political organization.” (Leonard 1988, 120)

The EPLF, Richard Leonard warned, is susceptible to authoritarian domination by upper levels of the structure, where there was no political space for any differing opinions. This led to top-down communications, with no substantive feedback upwards. The EPLF did have a mechanism of expression of criticism, self-criticism; it tolerated dissenting views, but only within the Front’s framework of democratic centralism.

One of the characteristics of the EPLF that made it an effective revolutionary movement was “its commitment to simultaneous social and political struggle” transforming the society it liberated (Connell 2011, 345). Despite its limited resources and lack of sustained external material and financial support, the EPLF relied mainly on its ingenuity and support from Eritreans living outside of Eritrea and a few Arab countries. With the limited resources at its disposal, the EPLF managed to put forth a sustained military challenge to the Ethiopian army; the movement was also able to build basic infrastructure in the liberated zones, such as construction, transportation and communications, as well as small scale agricultural activities. In other words, the EPLF was operating as a “shadow government” while fighting for Eritrean independence.

The EPLF had waged “diplomacy of liberation” in the various capitals of the world, as well as in the United Nations, to garner support for the cause of Eritreans independence. Ethiopia’s stronger influence in the international stage made the efforts of Eritrean nationalists challenging (Weldemichael 2013). Limited success in the diplomatic

arena caused EPLF leaders to prioritize the military aspect of the liberation war over diplomacy. Matsuoka and Sorenson noted that

“over the course of the history of the Eritrean nationalist movement two contradictory tendencies have opposed one another . . . an egalitarian tendency has encouraged self-reliance. . . opposing this is a tendency to control everything. This tendency is rooted in some authoritarian aspects of traditional culture and in the exigencies of a prolonged and desperate war” quoted in (Dorman 2005, 208).

Similarly, Michela Wrong assesses how the challenges Eritreans faced in their long history of struggle for independence created both “an extraordinary inner strength [while at the same time] distorted a national psyche, sending a community down strange and lonely path” (Wrong 2005, xiii). This led the EPLF leadership to mold a vision for the country on ‘their own terms’, without any interference from the outside world. Ms. Wrong described the wounded self-righteousness that characterizes societies that have suffered a great injustice, and how they continue to hold on to their grievances for decades. The feeling that the international community abandoned the liberation movement during the years of struggle, created a sense of victim-identity. The Eritrean people have a tremendous respect and deference to the former liberation fighters (*tegadelti*) who paid the highest price to bring about the liberation of Eritrea.

Indebtedness to the sacrifices of the EPLF fighters combined with the sense of feeling that [they] the fighters were (figuratively and literally) their own children, makes it difficult for many Eritreans to indulge in disagreements or differences of opinion. Every Eritrean is expected to believe an official narrative; and they are expected to think alike when it comes to defining Eritrea’s political destiny. The EPLF readily exploited the traditional values of deference and loyalty to authority to elicit public obedience. EPLF

leaders molded the Eritrean population to “create a disciplined nationalist liberation army impervious to social, ethnic, regional, tribal, religious and ideological divisions” (Pool 2001, 55).

After Eritrea’s military style leadership assumed control, plans and programs were executed with little or no feedback from the general public. Within the top leadership circle, ideas were thoroughly discussed and voted on with no further discussion on the issue after a vote was taken. This practice has remained the standard procedure for 28 years after independence. Policies are neither debated nor discussed in public; instead, they are presented for rubber stamping by the top leadership circle. Pool argues that the centralist conception of democracy “set the tone for the way in which Eritrean society was mobilized by the leadership both during the armed struggle and after liberation” (Pool 2001, 77).

The EPLF created an isolationist identity because it lacked external political and economic support and had to rely on its own internal resources. It can be argued that fear of religion, ethnic, and regional divisions pushed the EPLF to create a strictly controlled united front. In the end, the EPLF transformed itself into a very sophisticated military organization, with centralized command structure. Even the name change to PFDJ signaled the EPLF leadership’s intention to keep the organization as a popular Front. The leadership was straight-forward about their opinion regarding multi-party politics; namely that Eritrea is not in a rush to encourage public participation. The 1994 PFDJ National Charter stated that democracy in Eritrean should be understood in relations to the historical development and actual condition of the country. In further elaborating this

point, the 1994 Charter, states that in the context of Eritrean society, “democracy is dependent not on the number of political parties and on regular elections, but on the actual participation of people in the decision-making process at community and national level.” The ruling party added any other understanding of democracy is “superficial and not historical” and misses the “broader and deeper historical” context of what democracy means (PFDJ 1994).

Eritrea’s political culture today is characterized by authoritarianism, as was the case when the EPLF operated in secrecy and arbitrary exercise of absolute power (Connell 2005b). Despite the aspirations of the PFDJ’s national charter and Eritreans’ expectation of democratic governance, the experience of the Eritrean political system after 1993 has been a retreat from democratic principles articulated in the EPLF First Congress of 1977. The Eritrean leadership’s response has been defiance and placing blame on external forces for the problems that the country has faced in the post-independence era (Shabait.com 2018). The Eritrean government, and particularly President Isaias Afewerki, articulated the sense that Eritrea has been the victim of a coordinated effort by Ethiopia and its allies to sabotage the country’s policy of self-reliance. This sentiment was the continuation of a grievance by the leadership in Eritrea against the big powers, particularly the United States, because they had isolated Eritrea and supported America’s proxy in the Horn of Africa, the Ethiopian government at different times in history.

Sanctions against the Eritrean government were lifted by The United Nations in November 2018 after Eritrea and Ethiopia peace rapprochement. The Eritrean

government consistently argued that the EPRDF-led government of Ethiopia initiated sanctions. In 2018, the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments forged a new friendship through the surprise initiative of a new Prime Minister of Ethiopia who assumed power in April 2018 (Igunza 2018).

Despite the lifting of sanctions, concerns about human rights violations within the Eritrean government remain. They include politically motivated killings; people dying or disappearing after government forces detained them; and reports of torture inflicted on army deserters, national-service evaders, independent journalists, those trying to flee the country without travel documents, and some religious groups (Morello 2018).

The Eritrean Government expressed suspicions about liberal democracy on the pretext that this Western style of government is conflict-prone, contentious, and unsuitable to the realities on the ground. Taken at face value, these may have seemed like reasonable argument. However, the alternative to liberal democratic politics is not suppression of all democratic voices or actions. As the ruling party set forth in its National Charter, democratic institutions that are instrumental for building a democratic system need to be encouraged and planned with urgency and focus. If the government of Eritrea argues against the kind of democracy imported from elsewhere without authentic roots in the country, then it is the government's responsibility to fulfill the goals of the liberation struggle by building internal democratic institutions within the framework of Eritrean history, cultures and contexts.

Although the Eritrean government had initiated arrest and mass incarceration of dissidents prior to 2001, this year became the turning point for Eritrea as a political entity. Detention of the G-15 members paved the way for the former liberation organization to promote more extreme forms of repression and dictatorial leadership. After a short period of independent media existence <sup>32</sup>(from 1997 to 2001), the Eritrean government banned independent media and dozens of independent journalists were arrested. The shut-down remains in effect until now (“Government Suspends All Private Newspapers” 2001).<sup>33</sup>

Current practices of the PFDJ government were evident during the struggle for Eritrea’s liberation from Ethiopia. These practices were maintained either in their original form or with minor modifications. Characteristics of PFDJ governance include informality and/or lack of protocol in conducting official business, secrecy, lack of accountability, lack of bureaucratic structures in the various branches of the government, and a personality cult attached to the Eritrean President, Isaias Afewerki. The absence of accountable government and the arbitrary use of law affect every aspect of life in Eritrea. The general Eritrean population may be viewed as either non-participants or willing accomplices to whatever the government dictates. Having no constitutional protection or rule of law, the majority of Eritreans chose to remain silent. Many “vote with their feet” by leaving the country. About 12 percent of Eritrea’s population has fled the country,

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<sup>32</sup> Proclamation No. 90/1996 of The Press Proclamation of Eritrea

<sup>33</sup> “*Government suspends all private newspapers*,” Committee to Protect Journalists. September 20, 2001. <https://cpj.org/x/a7e>



leaving at the rate of 5,000 per month. As of the end of 2018, 504, 0000 Eritreans have become refugees, according to the latest United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report.<sup>34</sup>

A great number of Eritreans cross the borders to the neighboring countries of Sudan and Ethiopia to start the arduous journey to Europe or the U.S., often traveling through the Libyan dessert. By any route, escape requires a long trek assisted by smugglers, traveling across deserts, on flimsy boats (with many tragically sinking in the Mediterranean) to Italy or Spain or long journeys through many Latin American countries to cross America's southern border (Selsky and Whittle 2019; Averbuch and Sieff 2019). Eritrea's half-million refugees speak the truth about Eritrea's failed political culture more emphatically than does the rhetoric of the current regime in power.

### **5.2.2. WAR TERMINATION STRATEGIES**

The EPLF employed ruthless political maneuvers and military actions to eliminate its predecessor ELF<sup>35</sup> in civil wars (1972-74) and 1981. The current Eritrean president is believed to have personally ordered some of these eliminations when, as commander of liberation forces, he felt a threat to his position. During the civil-war between the ELF and EPLF forces, many fighters were killed in those confrontations between the two faction groups. Some argue that the management of such a strict organization requires

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<sup>34</sup> [eritreanrefugees.org/refugee-stats/](http://eritreanrefugees.org/refugee-stats/)

<sup>35</sup> ELF-Eritrean Liberation Front, the forerunner of the independence movement in Eritrea, created in the early 1960s and launched the armed struggle in Eritrea until it was defeated by a faction that broke off and later named itself the EPLF

the suppression of different views/opinions. This type of heavy handed leadership, some argue made it possible for the liberation struggle to succeed. After Eritrea gained its independence in 1991, the victorious EPLF made it clear to former members of ELF that they could return to Eritrea only on one condition—they had to renounce their membership or allegiance to ELF. This was one of the early signs that the EPLF intended to remain the sole organization to rule the country, and the only legitimate political party (Mark 2015).

For its military strategy, the EPLF launched guerrilla style armed struggle from a base in the north western Eritrean town of *Nakfa*. The military base served as a safe haven for the EPLF fighters who built schools, clinics, day care centers, small scale factories, and a military training academy for the new recruits (Connell 1993). The EPLF focused on winning its cause through military victory over the Ethiopian army, devoting most of its resources toward achieving that end. However, there were some efforts on the diplomatic front in the late 1970s; by that time the EPLF was already putting up a formidable challenge to the Ethiopian army (Ottaway 1989).

In September 1989 the Washington Post reported that former U.S. President Jimmy Carter facilitated peace talks, the first public and official meeting of the representatives of the EPLF and the Ethiopian government. The warring parties, as well as by the United States and the Soviet Union, welcomed President Carter's effort to find a resolution to long-running conflict in Africa. (Both super-powers were backing the Ethiopian regime at the time.) The Washington Post reported that previous secret contacts in 10 other sessions in various European capitals from 1982 were unproductive.

The meeting in Atlanta, which President Carter facilitated, was the first public meeting with encouraging signs of readiness and commitment from both warring parties to conduct peace talks.<sup>36</sup>

The Ethiopian government was forced to turn to negotiation with the EPLF in 1989 because of the changing situation in the battlefields, as well as the international arena. The Cold War had come to an end; the Soviet Union and East Germany had cut back their military support to Ethiopia, forcing it to begin negotiation with the EPLF as well as the TPLF forces in northern Ethiopia. The Ethiopian National *Shengo* (Congress) approved a call for U.N. conditional peace talks with the EPLF on July 5, 1989. Both sides agreed to request former U.S. President Carter to act as a mediator for their first meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. At that meeting, the two sides agreed on a number of procedural issues and agreed for the next round of meeting to be held in Nairobi later that same year in November (Ofcansky and Berry 1991).

The EPLF success in ending the war militarily could be understood by considering a number of factors. The first and most important is the organizational skill that the EPLF put on display in training a highly motivated fighting force that was strengthened by the moral and financial backing of Eritreans living abroad. The second factor, related to the first one, is the effectiveness of EPLF military tactics when they engaged with the Ethiopian army. The Ethiopian army had superior military equipment

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<sup>36</sup> Carter Opens Peace Talks between Ethiopia and Eritrean Rebels” by David B. Ottaway, The Washington Post, Atlanta, GA September 8, 1989.

and larger forces (a ratio of 3 Ethiopian soldiers for each Eritrean fighter); however, the EPLF was able to overcome this disadvantage by dispersing its small, mobile, and highly motivated fighters over a larger geographic area, engaging the Ethiopian army in many fronts simultaneously using guerilla tactics. Facing multiple attacks from the EPLF forces, the Ethiopian army was at a disadvantage moving its armies across wide areas.

Eritrea's political system can best be understood as continuity from the past, where secrecy and undemocratic practices were part of the liberation struggle. These practices have continued since Eritrea's independence in 1991 under the leadership of EPLF/PFDJ regime. Initially, the PFDJ government began the process of democratization, but did not complete it. The government in Eritrea has remained unelected for the 26 years since the country was officially declared independent after a U.N.-supervised plebiscite in 1993. In fact, the situation on the ground shows that the country had moved in a more undemocratic direction, making the future of the country's political development unpredictable. In the event of Isaias' death (he is now 73) a violent power struggle and competition among groups who have no experience with compromise or democracy may ensue. Eritrea is one of many historical examples of a people who win the war yet lose the peace.

### **5.2.3. ENGAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS**

The victors of the Second World War signed a Peace Treaty with Italy in Paris on 10 February, 1947, in which Italy renounced all its claims to its three African colonies of Eritrea, Italian Somaliland, and Libya. The "Four Powers"—France, the United

Kingdom, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) were to decide the future of the three territories within a year after the Peace Treaty, i.e. by September 15, 1948. If the parties reached no agreement by that date, the Treaty included a clause to take the matter to the United Nations.

A Four-Power Commission of Investigation went to Eritrea and held numerous consultations on the future of the territory. They did not reach an agreement within the one-year time period, so the question of Eritrea's future was referred to the U.N. A report, issued in the late 1940s stated that the majority of the U.N. General Assembly members were in favor of incorporating Eritrea into Ethiopia. However, there was a disagreement as to which regions of Eritrea were involved ("The United Nations and the Independence of Eritrea" 1996, 7).

The U.N. General Assembly began deliberating on the future of the three former Italian territories in 1948. In November 1949 the General Assembly passed a majority resolution 249 (IV) that would grant Libya and Italian Somaliland independent and sovereign status. With this resolution, it was decided that Libya would gain its independence no later than January 1952, while Italian Somaliland was to remain under Italian trusteeship no longer than 10 years from the date of approval of the trusteeship.

In regard to Eritrea, the General Assembly recommended that another commission of inquiry consisting of representatives from Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and South Africa go to Eritrea and report their findings. These representatives could not reach a consensus regarding the future status of Eritrea; therefore, they wrote

two separate reports with recommendation concerning what should happen to Eritrea (“The United Nations and the Independence of Eritrea” 1996).

Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa put forth one of the memoranda which argued that because of the poverty of the country and its dependence on ‘Ethiopia’s rich farming resources and transit trade, the best solution would be for Eritrea to have a close political association with Ethiopia. Burma and South Africa recommended the federation of Eritrea as a self-governing body with Ethiopia. Norway recommended the integration of Eritrea as a province within Ethiopia. Guatemala and Pakistan submitted another memorandum recommending that Eritrea be placed under the International Trusteeship System, with the U.N. as the Administering Authority for a period of 10 years, at the end of which Eritrea would become completely independent (“The United Nations and the Independence of Eritrea” 1996, 9). In the end, the proposal of the federation of Eritrea as a self-governing body was adopted as a compromise solution by the UN General Assembly Resolution 390 A(V) on December 2, 1950 taking the interests of the major powers of the day including the Ethiopian emperor (Webb 1951).<sup>37</sup>

The U.N.’s involvement in the Eritrean case, after the federal arrangement, and later when Ethiopia annexed Eritrea in 1962, was very limited, at best. The abrogation of the federal arrangement by the Ethiopian emperor was ignored by the guarantors of the arrangement the UN and its member states. The Eritrean nationalists intensified their

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<sup>37</sup> National Security Council Progress Report by the Under Secretary of State [James E. Webb] on the Implementation of U.S. Position on the Disposition of the Former Italian Colonies (NSC 19/5). Washington, April 30, 1951

agitation for a liberation struggle which already began organizing a couple of years before the actual annexation of Eritrea into Ethiopia's territory. The U.N. reengaged after the EPLF (the governing body in post-liberation Eritrea) assumed control in the early 1990s. The political future of Eritrea had been on the agendas of the powerful members of the U.N. Security Council. Ethiopia, as well as the General assembly and its Secretariat, recognized that Eritrea had gained its independence through armed struggle in 1991. At the invitation from the EPLF leadership, the U.N. was actively involved in the organization, educational campaigns and voter monitoring of the Eritrean Referendum in 1993. The U.N. arranged for the participation of an independent observer group through its United Nations Observer Mission to verify the Referendum in Eritrea (also known as UNOVER).

As a newly independent country, Eritrea fought border conflicts with Yemen in 1995 over the island of Hanish al-Kabir (Greater Hanish) that forms "a group of approximately 40 hot, dry and mostly uninhabited island, islets and rocks"(Lefebvre 1998, 369). This border conflict between Eritrea and Yemen was about control over maritime resources, although external powers (Europe, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia) had strategic and economic reasons to support each side in the conflict. With the mediation efforts of France, Eritrea and Yemen agreed to resolve their dispute through international arbitration in 1996.

There had been other historical collaboration and competition between neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea had a long history of collaboration with the Sudanese government during the liberation era and afterward. For example, the

Eritrean government broke its diplomatic relations with the National Islamic Front (NIF) government of Sudan between 1994-1996 accusing the government of assisting Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EIJM) (Lefebvre 1998). In retaliation, the Eritrean government began assisting groups opposing the Sudanese government.

The resolution of Eritrea's conflict with Yemen was believed to offer a model for conflict resolution; however, Eritrea fell into a border conflict with Ethiopia in 1998. Negotiations failed to prevent the two countries from engaging in one of the most destructive wars in modern times. Peace came after two years of trench warfare along the 600-mile border, in which both sides exhausted their military resources, as well as costing 100,000 lives (mostly of soldiers). The June 2000 Algiers agreement under the auspices of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and the U.N. brought the two countries to a peace agreement and cessation of hostilities.<sup>38</sup> In July 2000, United Nations peace-keeping forces were deployed in the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) to monitor the peace between the Eritrean and Ethiopian forces stationed 25 kilometers away from the TSZ. After eight years, in July 2008, the U.N. Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) terminated its mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia citing "crippling restrictions imposed by Eritrea on UNMEE, as well as the cutting off of fuel supplies – making it impossible for the operation to continue carrying out its mandated tasks, and putting at risk the safety and security of U.N. personnel" ("UNMEE" n.d.). After 20 years

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<sup>38</sup> The December 2000 agreement terminated the hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The agreement, inter-alia, established a neutral Boundary Commission to delimit and demarcate borders based on colonial treaties and called for an investigation regarding the origins of the conflict. It also established a Claims Commission to decide by binding arbitration all claims for loss, damage or injury by one government against the other or by nationals against the parties.



of diplomatic deadlock between the two countries, in July of 2018 the two countries signed a peace agreement and resumed diplomatic relationship (T.G 2018).

Eritrea was also embroiled in a border conflict with Djibouti in 2008<sup>39</sup> over “the status of Dumeira Island, to which both countries claimed ownership (*BBC News* 2017). Qatar offered to mediate between the two countries and deployed its peace keeping forces in 2010. In 2017, Qatar withdrew its peace keeping forces and Djibouti accused Eritrea of moving its forces inside the conflict zone. Tension in the Dumeria area is related to the fact that the island is close to Bab-el Mandeb, one of the busiest petroleum shipping routes in the world; this created great concern within the international community. The African Union (successor to the Organization for African Unity), backed by the U.N. Security Council, called on the two countries to resolve their difference peacefully and sent a fact-finding mission to Eritrea and Djibouti (*AfricaNews* 2017). In all these border conflicts, one may conclude that international actors did little to resolve conflict in the Horn of Africa and in some instances made matters worse.

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<sup>39</sup>Clashes broke out between Eritrea and Djibouti in 2008 when Djibouti accused Eritrea of sending troops across its border. Africa News reported that after several days of fighting “a dozen Djiboutian troops were killed and dozens were wounded.” Qatar decided to pull its peacekeeping forces out from the dispute area after both Djibouti and Eritrea sided with Saudi Arabia against Qatar in its diplomatic dispute that led to blockade in 2017.

### **5.3. NAMIBIA**

#### **5.3.1. FORMATION OF POLITICAL CULTURE**

Like Eritrea, Namibia's modern social structure is based in part, upon its colonial past. The modes of production and lifestyles of the different language/ ethnic groups in the territory were affected by the depth of German colonial exploitation.

“The process of imposing a different system of power structures and patterns of dominance upon the people living in the territory nowadays defined as Namibia has been based largely on external or exogenous forces” (Melber 2010, 17).

The northern Ovamboland has fertile soil and higher rainfall than other regions of Namibia, making it more suitable for agricultural production and livestock. The Ovambo people were settled agriculturalist, unlike cattle herders in other parts of the country who had to move from place to place to avoid pressure from outsiders. The Ovambos were less mobile and more attached to cultivating their land, making it hard for outsiders to penetrate. As a result, European colonizers established large farms for extensive cattle-ranching in other parts of today's Namibia, but left the northern Ovamboland untouched. Initial colonization had a greater impact on the various Nama groups (including members of the Khoi-khoi and San groups and the Hereros) who had been the dominant social entities prior to colonization in the central and southern parts of Namibia.

The Herero, who were nomadic cattle-breeders, shared Bantu-language ties with the Ovambo and occupied large parts of the central region. Some Herero clans also operated far to the east and north-west. The Nama groups, sharing a similar mode of food production with the Herero, were generally less successful in cattle-breeding, owing to the fact that they lived in the less fertile western and southern parts, with less rainfall and

more desertification. They are part of the Khoisan-language family, as are the other distinct groups of Damara and San. The latter two, smaller in population, tried to survive and maintain an independent existence as desert hunters and gatherers during the colonial penetration (Melber 2010).

Henning Melber asserts that in “the early colonial history of Namibia one finds two semi-autonomous sets of social relations and structures” that shaped its development, first as a colony and later as an independent nation (Melber 2010, 18). The Ovambo, who inhabited northern Namibia, had a cultural affinity to the people in southern Angola; this group constitutes about half of Namibia’s current population. Groups living in other parts of Namibia were susceptible to internal social change, Melber argues; the Nama and Herero were examples of groups who shared control of the southern and central regions and were in constant contact with external forces, making them easily accessible to direct colonial penetration (Melber 2010, 19). Moreover, Werner asserts that

“Ecological constraints and imperatives often resulted in military competition among the local population, including sectional rivalry among members or units of the same language group, for control of natural resources that were necessary for maintaining the basis for economic production and reproduction” (Werner, 1980 quoted in Melber, 20).

It is also asserted that the Orlam people, who were refugees from the Boer controlled Cape Colony, influenced events in the central and southern part of present-day Namibia. The Orlam crossed the Orange River to South West African territory in the early 1800s (Kienetz 1977, 559). These migrant communities were organized in a quasi-military fashion and “[already] possessed a higher degree of social and political centralization than the resident Nama” in southern Namibia (Melber 2010, 21). This

resulted in fierce competition between the resident Nama and the incoming Orlam communities over use and control of the natural means of production—i.e. land and water resources. This competition intensified with scarcity of resources due to natural causes, such as drought. In an attempt to manage this scarcity, the migrant and resident communities engaged in military confrontations and constant migration. In the process, migrating groups would find themselves becoming a threat to other people in neighboring regions, as was the case with the Orlam groups.

Prior to the 1950s, traditional tribal leaders dominated colonial resistance in South West Africa; they served not only “as a symbolic link between early traditions of resistance and birth of new forms of political activity in Namibia, but also directed the first petitions to the newly formed United Nations,” a move which would chart the future course of the nationalist struggle (Dobell 1998, 27).

During the apartheid era, the “educational system corresponds to the economic structure, with a deliberate attempt that kept Africans as a pool of cheap unskilled, non-unionized labor.... [The] whole arrangement of Namibian society[reflected] through political and economic domination, institutes informal but effective controls over culture and information and legal controls”(O’Callaghan 1977, 166). The ideology of white control and supremacy suppressed indigenous African traditions by forcing people to live in reserves and co-opted local chiefs. Institutionalized apartheid not only destroyed cultural traditions of local populations; it also disrupted communities and created fear through practices such as public flogging of resisters(O’Callaghan 1977).

The Namibian case was directly tied to South Africa, not only in terms of its colonial status, but also because of the link that Namibian nationalists and labor movement leaders had with South Africa's own liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC). The political climate in South Africa had inspired many Namibian students and contract laborers to be actively involved in politics and form their own organizations. For example, Namibian students in South Africa who were inspired by the ANC's 1952 Defiance Campaign against unjust apartheid laws formed the South West African Student Body (SWASB) (Vahed 2013).

By 1960, three distinct strands of Namibian nationalist politics were engaged: the Herero Chiefs' Council (HCC), the South West African National Union (SWANU) and SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization). In 1957, over 200 Namibian students and contract workers came together in Cape Town, South Africa to form the Ovambo People's Congress (OPC). Herman Toivo ya Toivo organized this initiative, primarily as a labor movement for migrant workers in South Africa with the goal of abolishing the unfair contract labor system (Dobell 1998, 29). The OPC also mobilized against the incorporation of Namibia into South Africa. It later developed into a nationalist organization fighting for the independence status of Namibia and its people. The Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC) was the forerunner to the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). The OPO and SWAPO were formed in Namibia between 1959 and 1960 by activists Sam Shafishuna Nujoma, Louis Nelengani and Andreas Shipanga, amongst

others.<sup>40</sup> According to the 1983 constitution of SWAPO, one of the ten aims and objectives states, “to establish a democratic Namibia, secular (not theocratic or church controlled) government founded upon the will and participation of the Namibia people.”<sup>41</sup>

The military and economic campaigns in Namibia were closely connected. This is to say, the military wing of SWAPO, PLAN (People’s Liberation Army of Namibia) was operating initially from its bases in neighboring Zambia; in 1975 it moved its bases to Angola when Angola became independent. From Angola, PLAN fighters were crossing the border to northern Namibia, infiltrating southwards into areas of white-owned farms, bringing the war closer to home. The SWAPO-PLAN fighters were able to sabotage property and infrastructure and lay landmines in some of these raids. However, PLAN’s most important goal was to “loosen state [South African] control over territory and population” (Dale 2014, 128). Despite its other activities, PLAN fighters were unable to establish liberated zones, as the EPLF had done in the town of *Nakfa*, in the northwestern part of Eritrea.

SWAPO enjoyed a wide range of support among black Namibians, due to the oppressive policies of South African authorities, who practiced apartheid policy in Namibia through social segregation and a homelands policy similar to South Africa’s. There were many instances of discrimination that made it easier for the majority black population in Namibia to give their support to SWAPO. In 1959, during the forced removal (as part of homelands policy) of black residents from the Old Windhoek location

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/andimba-herman-toivo-ya-toivo> South African History Online: towards a people’s history

<sup>41</sup> SWAPO Constitution 1983

to *Katutura*, the police, killed 11 and wounding 54 people (Scholtz 2006). In 1963, the South African regime banned all sorts of public meetings; most SWAPO activities and sympathizers were subjected to repression in the form of dismissals from their jobs and schools; many were sent to remote parts of the country and were subjected to house arrest. In 1964, the Odendaal commission Balkanized the Namibian population into several “Bantustans,” which was the Afrikaaner term for homelands.

SWAPO was able to garner support from Namibia’s Black population despite not having the elements of what a guerrilla organization typically possesses. SWAPO was operating from outside of Namibia, away from the people it was fighting for; and because of this, it had limited access to the population to promote its political programs. In his writings on “Guerrilla Warfare,” Mao Zedong used the metaphor of “fish in the water” to stress the symbiotic relationship that the people must have with the guerrilla movements. Successful, movements are rooted within and among the people that they are fighting for. Another important factor of success in guerrilla warfare was political work among the people to win their trust in the national cause. The importance of such work is also expressed by a Vietnamese General, Vo Nguyen Giap, who wrote that “political activities were more important than military activities, and fighting less important than propaganda.”<sup>42</sup>

In 1976 the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the U.N. recognized SWAPO as the “sole and authentic” representative of the Namibian people. This gave the

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<sup>42</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap: *People’s War, People’s Army. The Viet Cong’s Insurrection Manual for Underdeveloped Countries* (New York, Bantam, 1968), p. 68.

organization's leaders a boost on the world stage. SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma, for example, was elevated to membership in the league of African presidents and began to expect and demand similar deference and largely unquestioned loyalty like his authoritarian counterparts in other African countries. Similarly, the "quasi-traditional norms of deference to age and to the authority of the established 'Headman' reinforced a sense of rightful preeminence by SWAPO leadership to justify incumbency and unchallenged position" (Leys and Saul 1994, 126).

After assuming power from the former South African apartheid regime in 1994, ANC monopolized state power through periodic elections. The brokered peace agreement resulted in ANC and SWAPO majority rule which transferred power from the minority white apartheid government in both South Africa and Namibia. However, economic power still belonged to the minority white citizens of the two countries leaving the majority black population in the margins of poverty as a result of generations of discrimination and oppression during colonial rule. This problem of social and economic inequality/injustice remains a very sensitive and difficult issue for the political leadership in both South Africa and Namibia. Neither country has yet to deliver on their promise of economic and social equality among those who participated in the liberation struggle with the hope of better life.

According to Afrobarometer, 60 percent of Namibians think that their country's economy is well-managed, whereas only 23 percent of Namibians think that the government is doing "fairly well/very well" in narrowing income gaps. Eighty-two



percent of Namibians disapprove of one-party rule. Namibians citizens have participated in the five rounds of surveys since 1999 when the Afrobarometer surveys began.

Opposition parties in Namibia failed to capture state power not only because they lacked resources to compete with SWAPO, but also because they did not put forth an alternative policy platform to convince Namibians to vote for them. It has been argued that SWAPO political dominance stems from the “liberation myths, Ovambo ethnic group support, working class solidarity, the popularity of Namibia’s [first, and three-term] president, Sam Nujoma; and advantage of incumbency (Cooper 2017, 9). During the power succession in 2004, when Nujoma announced his decision not to run for a fourth term, three candidates were nominated from SWAPO’s politburo, one of whom was the Lands Minister Hifikepunye Pohamba, who enjoyed the support of President Nujoma.

Despite that support, Hifikepunye failed to secure the majority vote in the first round. It was only after the second round that he won a seat. The other two candidates who lost to Hifikepunye were foreign minister Hidipo Hamutenya and education minister Nahas Angula. Three years after his defeat, Hamutenya broke away from SWAPO and formed his own party, the Rally for Democracy Party (RDP). When many of his supporters joined Nahas, they were purged from the ruling SWAPO party (Cooper 2017). Cooper argues that members of RDP were forced to form their own party because they lost their ministerial positions when, in 2005, Hamutenya lost to Hifikepunye in the contest to succeed Nujoma. Second, some ex-SWAPO members expressed fear of authoritarian behavior from within SWAPO leadership. For example, Cooper says that

Hamutenya told him that after he failed to secure a seat in the parliament, it became apparent to him that Nujoma was out to destroy him politically. There was no point, he said, in staying with SWAPO and following Nujoma. Moreover, another deputy minister who joined RDP stated that from his experience, he recognized that it was impossible “to change SWAPO from within [because] Nujoma adopted an autocratic attitude, where he would marginalize people who he sees as different from his views” (Cooper 2017, 12). Thus, despite periodic elections and leadership changes, authoritarian rule persists in Namibia.

### **5.2.2. WAR-TERMINATION STRATEGIES**

In 1978, the U.N. drafted a timetable for the independence of Namibia, which the South African government did not accept until a decade later. In 1988, the Angola conflict, which involved the presence of 50,000 Cuban troops, motivated the United States government to partner with the South African government, to find a permanent solution for self-rule in both the Angola and Namibia. This led to the withdrawal of the Cuban troops and to U.N. involvement in a transition toward independence of Namibia.

Indirectly, this transition was a result of the agreement between the governments of Angola, South Africa, Cuba and the United States. Failure to end the Angolan conflict involving the governing party and opposition groups (MPLA and UNITA) would jeopardize the prospect of peace in Namibia; the continued presence of Cuban and South African troops would also prolong Angola’s progress toward independence (Battersby and Times 1988). The Soviet-backed Cuban troops backed the MPLA movement in Angola, as well as SWAPO. MPLA was still fighting UNITA, which was assisted by

South African Defense Forces and the United States. This civil war jeopardized resolution of conflicts in both Angola and Namibia.

In the case of SWAPO's efforts to liberate Namibia from South African control, the neighboring nation of Angola (a former Portuguese colony) became a sanctuary for SWAPO's fighting force, as well as a close ally and base for incursions across Angola's border. Soldiers from the Ovambo group dominated SWAPO. SWAPO representatives abroad placed the question of Namibia's independence on the United Nations agenda. During the liberation struggle, many SWAPO members were exiled. The SWAPO organized its opposition to South African control from within Namibia and outside through its network of members in the neighboring Angola, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. Just as the EPLF cooperated with the TPLF, SWAPO had connections with South Africa's liberation movement; the African National Congress (ANC) and SWAPO members were trained and worked inside South Africa.

During peace talks, Angola's main objective was the removal of South African troops from Angolan territories, in exchange for implementation of the U.N. Resolution 435, and United States and South Africa withdrawal of support to UNITA.

SWAPO was not immune to accusations of alienating or eliminating critics of its inner circle, as well as accusation of torture of prisoners in exile<sup>43</sup> (Wren 1989). A faction formed in Sweden in June 1978; it broke off from SWAPO, calling itself SWAPO-Democrats (SWAPO-D). These dissidents took SWAPO leaders to task for their

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<sup>43</sup> 200 of the 40,000 Namibians who were in exile and returned in the aftermath of independence asserted that they were imprisoned and tortured by SWAPO's security forces (Wren 1989)

undemocratic actions and accused its leaders of being responsible for the disappearance of some of its members. In fact, SWAPO-D was formed in response to a major disagreement (known as the “Shipanga Rebellion”) within SWAPO which resulted in the forced detention of Andreas Shipanga and Solomon Mfifma during a 1975-76 SWAPO crisis. SWAPO-D and SWAPO had nearly identical political programs, especially in their opposition to the South African rule in Namibia. Despite its participation in the very first national election in Namibia in 1989, SWAPO-D failed to win a single seat. As a result, it was disbanded in 1991 (The Namibian 2012). In Namibia, as in Eritrea, all signs of internal opposition had been suppressed during the liberation struggle.

### **5.3.3. ENGAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS**

After its creation in 1945, the U.N. assumed the role of deciding the future of former colonies, including Eritrea and Namibia. Eritrea’s future was later to be decided by the U.N. a decade after the Allied Forces defeated the Italian colonial forces who were placed under the temporary administration of the British military. South West Africa was under the administration of South African Forces that replaced the German colonial administration beginning in 1915.

Many other African countries were engaged in their own independence wars during the 1960s including the so called “frontline states” of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. (All of these states were former colonies that bordered white-dominated South Africa.). Angola and Zambia shared borders with Namibia in the north and the east (respectively); each had provided sanctuaries to Namibia’s liberation fighters as they fought South African application of

apartheid in Namibia. After Angola gained its independence, the two main liberation forces in Angola—the Movement for People’s Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) began a power struggle which later developed into a civil war. The MPLA’s armed force, called *Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola* (FAPLA) was a Marxist-inspired group supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba. The anti-communist *Union Nacional para a Independencia Totale* (UNITA) was supported by the South African government. UNITA’s primary mission was to fight the MPLA.

In Namibia, the democratization process began with a U.N.-supervised democratic election where SWAPO won the most votes to form the initial government of independent Namibia. SWAPO continues to win the periodic elections every five years, and remains in power, but allows some political space for opposition parties. However, other parties that continue to compete and run against SWAPO have a slim chance of winning enough votes to assume state power due to their asymmetrical power balance and financial resources, compared to the incumbent SWAPO party.

The case with SWAPO was no different than the EPLF in terms of its authoritarian tendencies. Signs of such a tendency began as early as late 1960s when a group of Namibians who returned from a military training in China in 1968 began to target SWAPO leadership for criticism. These trainees were referred to as “China men;” they called for a party congress to be held for debates among SWAPO members. However, the leadership of SWAPO construed these demands as dissent, and the “China men” were jailed in Tanzania at the request of SWAPO’s leaders (Leys and Saul 1994).

In December 1969, after sidelining the critics who called for a party congress, SWAPO held a party congress in Tanga, Tanzania. One of the tasks set before the congress was to set up a committee to draft a constitution and an intention to have a follow-up congress in 5 years. However, Leys and Saul argue that in the first Tanga Congress, “structures of decision-making, accountability and financial control” did not change following the 1969 congress (Leys and Saul 1994, 127).

U.N. Resolution 435 (1978) and the New York Accords of 22 December 1988 facilitated the implementation of Namibian independence, leading to the establishment of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group, (UNTAG). However, continued clashes between the SWAPO’s military wing, the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and South African forces continued a few months before the implementation. Fighting broke out on April 1, 1989, the day the ceasefire was supposed to come into effect.

Despite its shaky start, UNTAG began its operation to prepare and manage the democratic transition of Namibia’s independence. UNTAG’s ambitious and multi-dimensional mandate included: supervising the independence of Namibia through free and fair elections; monitoring the ceasefire; ensuring both SADF and SWAPO troops were confined to bases; facilitating the reduction and eventual removal of South African military forces from Namibia; maintaining law and order; repealing discriminatory laws; releasing political prisoners; preventing intimidation; and facilitating coordination of the repatriation and return of refugees (UNTAG2013).

One of the reasons for the success of the U.N. mission in Namibia could be attributed to the “robust logistics and budgetary provision” that made the mission’s

presence felt throughout the country (Dzinesa 2004, 653). In addition to the role the UN played as a “conciliator and facilitator,” the parties’ commitment to the “settlement plan and their confidence in” the U.N. mission made it possible for the UNTAG mission to be a success (Dzinesa 2004, 655).

## **5.4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

This section will compare and contrast Eritrea and Namibia using the three-factor analysis based on the different historical trajectories the two countries experienced. The finding of this study suggests that these facts have impacted the way the regimes in the countries turned out to be. The analysis of the reasons for differing outcomes will be covered in the final chapter, the conclusions.

### **5.4.1. FORMATION OF POLITICAL CULTURE**

Armed resistance against occupying European forces that were defending racist and repressive colonial regimes dominated the history of anti-colonial movements in Africa. What sets apart the histories of Eritrea and Namibia is the fact that European powers not only colonized these two countries during the scramble for Africa, but were colonized a second time by a neighboring country after the European colonialists departed. While both Germany and Italy lost in World War I and World War II (respectively), the territories they had controlled did not become self-governing after their departure. The subsequent role of large neighboring countries was comparatively even stronger than European colonialism. Germany’s colonial rule in Namibia lasted from 1884 to 1915—slightly more than 30 years (Emmett 1999). Italy’s colonial rule in Eritrea lasted from 1889 to 1941—a total of 52 years (Sherman 1980, 35). If you add together

all the years between initial colonization and independence, the total for Namibia and Eritrea were roughly similar—between 101 and 105 years. (For comparison purposes, North America’s transition from British colony to independence was 160 years.)

The EPLF and SWAPO organized liberation armies in sub-Saharan Africa in roughly the same historical time periods in the early 1960s up to early 1990s. These organizations fought to gain control of their respective territories immediately after their neighboring countries (Ethiopia and South Africa, respectively) tried to annex them. Although both organizations had unique histories and backgrounds for engaging in long-term liberation struggles, they also shared similarities in terms of their overall goals and purposes. That is to say, both movements argued that their causes were national in scope, must lead to self-determination, and needed to be resolved by any means possible, including armed struggle. Both the EPLF and SWAPO were fighting against larger and stronger neighbors that considered them as part of their own greater sovereign territory. For these reasons, each side argued and fought with different perspectives, goals, and agendas, framed in starkly opposite terms. Ethiopia and South Africa framed their occupation of smaller neighbors as justifiable protect of territory that was rightfully theirs. Both Ethiopia and South Africa thought they were struggling against “foreign agents” who were essentially “terrorists” or “rebels.”

The larger secondary colonialists referred to these conflicts as “border wars,” “secessionist movements” fought by “terrorists,” or “bandits,” or “infiltrators.” The South Africans viewed their fight against SWAPO as a struggle against communism (Scholtz 2006), or saw it as a fight to realize their long-standing ambition to absorb SWA/Namibia



as the country's 6<sup>th</sup> province. Similarly, Ethiopians saw their fight against the EPLF as a fight to restore and protect the territorial integrity of Ethiopia and viewed Eritrea as their 14<sup>th</sup> province. The Eritrean liberation fighters were called "Arab sell-outs." Both Ethiopian and South African governments used their access to international media, as well as economic and military alliances, to win over anyone who might have sympathies for EPLF or SWAPO fighters. Despite what seemed like insurmountable challenges in front of them, both the EPLF and SWAPO forces were able to conclude three decades of struggle by achieving full independence for their nations.

It cannot be denied that the colonial past shaped the post-independence regimes of both Eritrea and Namibia. The hundred years of colonial rule by European and neighboring countries initiated a political, economic and social trajectory in each nation that continues in today's political climate. A unique form of colonial administration that we term "secondary colonialism" applies to Ethiopia's hegemony over Eritrea and South Africa's over Namibia. They are secondary chronologically, as they occurred after the end of European colonization. The geographic proximity of large neighbors made it easier for larger neighbors to absorb each former colony in the aftermath of the European powers' defeat.

These transitions from colonies of European powers to colonies of regional powers did not happen overnight. In both cases, the transitions involved international organizations intervening: the League of Nations in the case of Germany's departure from South West Africa and being replaced by the neighboring South Africa; the newly-created United Nations in the case of Ethiopia annexing Eritrea. This process took

tremendous efforts of maneuvering and lobbying by the Ethiopian and South African governments in their attempts to absorb the former colonies, both of which were located north of their respective territories. Both larger countries asserted claims of historical and social ties with the former colonies, as well as arguments of geopolitical necessity in their respective regions. Ethiopia and South Africa were ultimately able to take over the territories of Eritrea and South West Africa by applying intricate political and diplomatic maneuvers within the international bodies.

As time progressed with Ethiopia's administration of Eritrea and South Africa's of Namibia, it became clear to both sides that the national question was not going to be resolved quickly or peacefully. Therefore, nationalists within Eritrea and Namibia, as well as the governments of Ethiopia and South Africa, intensified their respective conflicts. Each liberation movement had its own internal supporters and opponents that prolonged or hindered them from achieving their stated goals. For the ruling government of Ethiopia and South Africa, their goal was to eliminate the threat of war and defeat the "bandits" or "terrorists" and maintain their territorial integrity. The liberation fighters of the EPLF and the SWAPO, on the other hand, defended their armed conflict as a justified means to free their territories from domination and oppression from the new (secondary) colonizers.

After the EPLF came to power through military victory, it could pick and choose the direction of transition for the new country. In contrast, SWAPO was compelled to abide by the standards and expectations of the international community in managing its democratic transition as agreed on the negotiated settlement.

During its years of struggle, the financial and political support SWAPO enjoyed from the U.N. equated to easier transition to democracy for the post-conflict regime. Moreover, SWAPO pursued a reconciliation strategy in solidarity with its ally in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC). Both organizations tried to avoid any moves that might prevent the white minority government in South Africa from making political concessions. Although the Namibian constitution has a provision for affirmative action, the leaders in post-conflict Namibia did not press hard for social justice and land reform. Both of these issues are still sensitive in Namibian politics (Sarsar and Adekunle 2012, 217 & 218).

The Ethiopian government lost control over Eritrea as a consequence of military defeat, whereas the South African government relinquished Namibian territory through a negotiated agreement. Namibia started out relatively better off economically than Eritrea, as it had not been ravaged by war. The military conflict in Eritrea affected every economic, social and cultural aspect of the entire territory over a 30-year period (1961-1991). Eritrea's devastated economy at independence once again was shattered by a border-war with Ethiopia from 1998-2000.

#### **5.4.2. WAR-TERMINATION STRATEGIES**

Anti-colonial movements in both Eritrea and Namibia both began while they were still under European colonization. However, those rebellions did not bring about the change that local rebel forces aspired to see. In fact, they led to strong and violent reactions from the colonial powers. In Namibia, for example, the Nama and Herero

chiefs' rebellions led to the decimation of 80 percent of the Herero people, 50 percent of the Nama, and 30 percent of the Damaras (Emmett 1999, 59). The earlier Herero peoples' mobilization played a crucial role in the later creation of stronger nationalist liberation movement in Namibia. Emmett further argues that the initial stages of ethnic mobilization motivated popular resistance in the early 1920s and the formation of the nationalist movement in the late 1950s with the Ovambo group taking the lead (Emmett 1999, 216).

The colonial administrations in both Eritrea and Namibia shaped the responses from the liberation forces organized to challenge the better-equipped Ethiopian and South African armies. The anti-colonial movements were born out of the realities of the two countries' situations at the hands of the secondary colonial administrations impacted each country's developments as independent nations, and more specifically, the development of their political consciousness. This is to say that the liberation movements in Eritrea and Namibia had to make pragmatic decisions over time and as situations dictated their conditions at the moment.

Various attempts of the local population in both Eritrea and Namibia in the early days failed to weaken or drive out the colonial powers from their respective territories. Instead, various local groups in each colony responded with collective resistance to racial subjugation and repression of the Italian and German colonial administrations. Many of the opponents who might not have had much contact with each other before colonial penetration became connected. Ironically, colonial infrastructural changes (transportation and communications) made this easier and inter-group contact possible. Colonial polices

designed to keep the local population as second-class citizens in their own lands also served the purpose of creating a sense of victimhood and shared injustices among the various communities, due to foreign forces subjugating their populations.

The secondary colonial influence of Ethiopia on Eritrea and of South Africa on Namibia is reflected in the post-liberation politics and political development in each of the two new countries. The EPLF and SWAPO had collaborated with local groups within their larger neighbors, and these outside groups challenged the respective governments to ensure democratic rights and equal representation in power sharing. There were strong ties and collaboration for example between the EPLF and the TPLF in Tigray region of northern Ethiopia, while SWAPO had collaboration with ANC in South Africa and MPLA in Angola.

The leaders of the two liberation movements (EPLF and SWAPO) had shown signs of authoritarianism in the early stages of the liberation struggles. Critics within the groups and others who challenged them or their leadership/polices were crushed or eliminated. Those on top of the leadership pyramid were able to justify any action against their critics by portraying the motives of their opponents as selfish, unpatriotic and treasonous. Those actions continued even after independence, when the liberation movement leaders assumed power and employed the state apparatus to persecute and remove any opposition.

In Namibia, and in many parts of Africa for that matter, “the post-liberation society represents an arena, in which democracy and authoritarian forms of rule are both integral features of the state and the political culture in existence” (Melber 2015, 46).

Authoritarian regimes in Africa have taken various forms such as personal dictatorships, one-party or dominant party systems, and military regimes.

Eritrea and Namibia were able to win their liberation through military victories and negotiated settlements respectively. Both countries replaced political systems that were oppressive and undemocratic. In the case of Ethiopia (Eritrea) the previous regime was oppressive and autocratic. In the case of South Africa (Namibia) the earlier governance was racist (based on apartheid) as well as oppressive to the majority of Black Namibians. This history of non-democracy in both original European and secondary colonizers in both regions had an impact in the outcome of the post-liberation regimes. The two former liberation organizations, EPLF and SWAPO, fought undemocratic and oppressive regimes and assumed control of newly won independent countries. They were experienced only with leading liberation movements committed to eliminating competition from any other organization with a similar liberation agenda.

The Eritrean leadership looked for a role model that best suits their vision of the country's economic future and found their inspiration in the "Asian miracle" countries. Eritrea's new leaders emphasized economic and social development at the expense of civil and political rights. This authoritarian tendency can be traced to the years of the liberation struggle. A dual strategy of resisting the enemy while creating nationalist solidarity was extremely effective during the thirty-year war for the independence in Eritrea. As is the case in countries like Rwanda, some argue for economic growth, "compared to a weak democracy, a growth-favoring dictator may have an advantage in overcoming political economic obstacles" (Gilson and Milhaupt 2011, 227). However, it

is not without a consequence, as is the case with Rwanda, China, and Ethiopia where there is wide spread political oppression and civil rights limitations.

SWAPO, on the other hand, invested its resources on external diplomatic efforts at the expense of organizing the nationalist consciousness of Namibians. Through extensive lobbying in the international community, SWAPO learned the politics of working through the bureaucratic machinery of the UN system. In the process, SWAPO acquired the necessary skills and tactics and negotiated the 1988 peace accord. This experience with the UN later allowed SWAPO to negotiate a peace agreement with the South African government, leading to a democratic transition to independence.

Both the PFDJ party in Eritrea and SWAPO party Namibia share similar historical origins and trajectories in terms of alienating or exterminating their opponents, who were defined narrowly as anyone within the movement or party who had called for transparency, accountability or for a simple debate over issues. Both parties saw that such democratic space might cost them support, or even their positions within the organization. Each party chose the path of eliminating critics instead of reaching compromises. After independence Namibia continues to operate within the minimum democratic measure of periodic elections. Eritrea on the other hand, continues to be authoritarian /one-party/ one-man rule/ totalitarian regime. The only substantive difference between the two governments is that SWAPO operates within the minimum bounds of democratic elections and the population has approved a constitution which is praised as one of the most liberal constitutions) in Africa. Nevertheless, the ruling party in Namibia amended its constitution (from 2-term limits) to allow its first President a

third term. In the case of Eritrea, the PFDJ government does not shy away from openly expressing its disdain for liberal democratic practices and is not in a rush to approve a constitution, arguing that what Eritrea and Eritreans need is development before democracy.

As the former liberation fighters set up their post-independence regimes in their capital cities (Asmara and Windhoek), the hope for democratization and popular participation was high. However, the process of nation-building began with a volatile mix of popular support for the freedom fighters and a desire for democracy. Members of the liberation struggle had assumed leadership of the newly birthed nation of Eritrea without an electoral process. In Namibia, the new regime began with a U.N. monitored and verified free and fair election. The SWAPO-led government thus acquired legitimate authority to lead with the blessing of the Namibian people who voted in the first national election 1989. Close to three decades of periodic elections in Namibia have repeatedly placed SWAPO in power as the majority party in the country since independence (Simon 2000).

Despite the complexity of dissecting what democracy means in the case of these two movements, there is room to conceptually define democracy in practical terms. For example, there have been periodic elections in Namibia since its independence; opposition parties are allowed (despite their inability to win elections or to assume political power). The SWAPO led government in Namibia has a better record of respecting political and civil rights of its citizens, although the income disparity and wealth distribution remains to be a sensitive issue.



The GINI coefficient is a single number aimed at measuring the degree of inequality in income distribution. It is most often used in economics to measure how far a country's wealth or income distribution deviates from a totally equal distribution. According to the GINI, Namibia is the second most unequal country next to South Africa in terms of income distribution with a GINI coefficient of 0.597 in 2010. Another measure called PALMA Ratio measures the difference between the richest countries with the poorest; according to that ratio, Namibia falls under the bottom four after South Africa, Haiti and Botswana.

#### **5.4.3. ENGAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS**

Like Eritrea, Namibia was one of several flashpoints for U.S. and Soviet Union Cold War manipulation and proxy conflicts fought in Africa. (The Cubans were also involved, with 50,000 combat troops in Angola ready to advance on Namibia.) The war-weary South African regime had to concede to settle the political question of Namibia and allow a U.N.-supervised election to chart the political future of Namibia without South Africa's interference. The election was conducted over five days (November 7-11, 1989). SWAPO failed to win a constitutional two-thirds majority and had to form a multi-party government. The peace-keeping mission and supervised elections were considered one of the most notable achievements of the United Nations in its entire history.

Although the expectation of a better future seems to rise in the first few years after independence, it is often followed by resignation or in some cases might develop

into incipient rebellion against the government. Namibia's SWAPO government has failed to fulfill several of commitments made during the liberation struggle, including job creation, comprehensive land reform, and addressing the high unemployment level in Namibia (Simon 2000). When countries transition into self-determination and try to initiate democratic processes, it is imperative that the architects of such political change give equal attention to the socio-economic aspects as they do to the political aspects of civil liberties. This is one aspect of democracy that many who do not come from liberal traditions fail to understand. The socio-economic aspect of people's lives must be incorporated into governance. Some scholars may discount the notion that emphasis on political democracy overshadows socio-economic stability, or others could regard this idea to be irrelevant and as meaningless.

A widely-held belief among proponents of economic development and social justice argues that political liberalization should follow economic development. Citing the economic successes of East Asian countries of China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea, proponents of the developmental state argue for delaying democracy until a country reaches a certain level of economic development. Proponents of the "Lee thesis" (named after the late Lee Kuan Yew, former prime minister of Singapore) defend their argument using the example of "Asian miracles" of economic success under authoritarian political system (Sen 1999, 15). Many academics and policy makers believe that authoritarian regimes are an interim step toward promoting economic growth in poor countries (Knutsen 2012). However, the evidence is not persuasive to suggest that denying political and civil liberties actually stimulated rapid economic

growth, as had happened in those Asian countries. Scholars like Przeworski et al (Przeworski et al. 2000) argue that the evidence to show that democracy's effect on economic growth is insignificant or unknown. Diamond (Diamond 2008) assert that the evidence is not clear-whether democracy helps economic growth, and Tsebelis (Tsebelis 2002) argues that there is no evidence to show democracy leading up to economic development. The appearance of such a relationship may simply be a case of statistical correlation without causation.

The Eritrean-PFDJ ruling party shares this potentially flawed notion of delayed democracy (based on the “Lee theory”) which openly expresses its disdain for liberal notions of democracy, with its emphasis on elections, individual liberties, and free expression. Third EPLF Congress in 1994 drafted and adopted the National Charter of the EPLF; this document clearly outlines the direction that the ruling party was intended to take in independent Eritrea. At the same Congress (in February 1994, the EPLF changed its name to PFDJ transforming itself from a military organization to a political party in charge of the Transitional Government of Eritrea (TGE). In this very important Congress, the victorious EPLF was credited with accomplishing; (a) adopted the National Charter, which was designed as a road map for the political and socio-economic future of Eritrea; and (b) making it clear that the PFDJ would be the sole party to guide the country through the subsequent stages of political and economic developments.

In Namibia, power remains in the hands of the incumbent SWAPO party. The first Presidential candidate from SWAPO won the next three consecutive elections; the third one occurred after the legislature amended the Namibian constitution to allow the

president a third term. Eritrea has held no national election since its de facto independence (1991) and de jure independence (1993). It is hard to argue that having periodic elections with no winning opposition parties makes a system more democratic than one that has no elections at all (as is the case in Eritrea), when the same party remains in power for decades. However, despite the inability of opposition parties to take over power, parties are allowed to form and run for office, there is an independent media, and freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution. The Freedom House rates Namibia “free” with a total score of 77 measuring political rights(31) and civil liberties(46) score, while Eritrea is rated “not free” with a total score of 2, 1 score each for political rights and civil liberties.

The role of the United Nations in Namibia was slightly different than the one the U.N. played in Eritrea. The U.N. was supportive and positive throughout the years of SWAPO’s liberation movement. Despite the active role of the U.N., however, the South African forces remained in control of Namibia for nearly 65 years, from 1915 until 1989, when a negotiated settlement was reached. These negotiations involved the South African Government, SWAPO leadership, and regional/international actors.

It became evident in the post-independence era that Eritrea and Namibia followed different routes in terms of political and economic policies. As *the Economist* reported, Namibia has become known as one of Africa’s economic and political success stories, transforming itself into a middle-income developing country with rich natural resources and good infrastructure. Namibia is credited with having a stable and democratic government, harmonious race relations, a free press, and an economy with a growth rate

of 4.2% per year since its independence (*The Economist, Print Edition* 2011). This is a significant change from the period of its liberation struggle, yet Namibia has an unequal distribution of resources and—according to UNDP—it is one of the most unequal countries in the world. Despite, the fact that Namibia’s per-capita GDP has doubled since independence, the extent of poverty remains the same, and two in five Namibians live on less than \$1.25 a day (*The Economist, Print Edition* 2011).<sup>44</sup> In spite of the extreme level of inequality, poverty, and growing corruption, SWAPO continues to enjoy the support of many Namibians, including the minority 6% white population.

Eritrea, on the other hand has progressed little after independence in either the political or economic spheres. The political system remains closed and the regime is known as one of the most autocratic countries in the world. In its economic performance, Eritrea progressed slightly in the first few years after independence but regressed in the aftermath of its 1998-2000 border conflict with Ethiopia. The Human Development Index (HDI) value for Eritrea in 2018 was 0.434—which put the country in the low human development category—positioning it at 182 out of 189 countries and territories<sup>45</sup>. The recent report by *The Economist* states that even the 2018 peace agreement with Ethiopia after 20 years of enmity has produced nothing substantial for Eritreans, politically or economically. The country remains under the ruling party’s political dictatorship and control of the economy (*The Economist* 2019).

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<sup>44</sup> The Economist 2011, additionally reported that the unemployment is over 50% and over 60% of the population earns a living as subsistence farmers, that the HIV prevalence rate is high

<sup>45</sup> [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/ERI.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/ERI.pdf)

As a general conclusion to this section, events in these two cases suggest that liberation wars are unlikely to produce democratic leaders because these leaders have to place a priority on maintaining military control. When independence is finally achieved, authoritarian patterns are likely to continue. The democratizing influence of international organizations appears to be limited and temporary, at best, and has little long-term impact on the affected countries.

## **6. CHAPTER SIX**

### **6.1. CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.2. RE-STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This dissertation project examines historical events, which led post-conflict democratization to originate in one country, while facing uphill challenges in another. This analysis of the reasons for the different outcomes considered three factors: political culture, war-termination strategies, and the roles played by the international community. In this qualitative study, the three factors are compared in the context of the independence in two African nations: Eritrea and Namibia. The purpose of this comparison is to demonstrate that some developmental variables are unique, even when very similar trends are determining the outcome in each case.

Despite their differences in geography, development and location, we have seen that both Eritrea and Namibia share some striking similarity in terms of their colonial histories. They both were colonized first by European intruders who arrived in these countries at the time of the “Scramble for Africa.”<sup>46</sup> Italy set foot in the coastal parts of Eritrea, at Assab, in 1869, and later Italy expanded to the entire coastal region. They named the colony Eritrea, after the Latin name for the Red Sea. Similarly, in the Southern

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<sup>46</sup> The “scramble” term was coined after the Berlin Conference of European powers in 1884. At the time, 90% of Africa had indigenous governments. Thirty years later, the proportion shrank to 10%. Ethiopia, Liberia and parts of Somalia were the only non-European powers on the continent by 1914. (Griffiths 1986)

part of Africa, German forces advanced and colonized the area that was known as South West Africa in 1884. The colonial expansion in these two African regions was not accomplished without resistance from the communities that occupied these territories. However, resistance was met with brute force, including the Germans' attempts genocidal extermination of the Herero and the Nama people in Namibia.

After the Allied forces defeated European colonizers in the First World War (in Namibia's case) and Second World War (in Eritrea), the colonial powers were required to leave. Both Eritrea and Namibia were absorbed by their larger southern neighboring countries (Ethiopia and South Africa) and then had to wage thirty-year liberation wars in order to free themselves from secondary colonization. The similar trajectory of these former colonies is one of history's most striking coincidences, making it useful for comparative study. The secondary colonizers had much greater impact in shaping the political, social and political structures of the two countries than they had "inherited" when the Europeans left. Ethiopia had Eritrea under its administration for 29 years, from 1962-1991, while South Africa administered Namibia for 75 years, from 1915-1990. During these years, the former colonies were referred to as provinces or territories, yet they endured constant struggles— Ethiopians with Eritreans and South Africans with Namibians. Residents of the smaller territories viewed themselves as living under unjustifiable oppression, which should be resisted by every means possible.

The author's curiosity about the historical similarities and the divergent post-independence trajectories of Eritrea and Namibia led to this project. The three factors considered for this study became a tentative hypothesis for explaining both similarities



and differences in the case study. All three factors played an important role in the dynamics of each country's post-conflict development. Liberation forces adopted many practices during the conflict period, and continued them in the post-independence era. However, one organization (EPLF) captured state power by force, while the other (SWAPO) gained power through a negotiated settlement.

It is important to stress that EPLF and SWAPO were distinct organizations during their struggle years, which explains in part their evolution into governing bodies once they achieved independence. The national identities and birth pangs in Eritrea and Namibia were different. Eritrea pursued a policy of self-reliance, which resulted in political and economic isolation. Namibia pursued limited popular democracy (during its initial phase) by staging periodic elections. Both countries wrote liberal constitutions, including protections for free press and political participation. Eritrea's constitutional process was completed, but never implemented or ratified by popular vote. Namibia implemented its constitution, but continues to govern itself as a one-party democracy. Constitutional governance is completely absent, however, in the case of post-independence Eritrea, where only one party—the PFDJ (formerly the military leadership) continued to rule the country without a legitimizing election. In part because Eritrea has not adopted its constitution, the country has no free press, restricted freedom of movement, and prohibitions against free assembly. There is no legal or constitution protection of citizens in Eritrea.

Despite the limitation of its governing practices, Namibia began independence with a political vision of democratic governance. Compared to Eritrea, Namibia is more

democratic and it has begun the process of building inclusive and pluralistic society with legal and constitutional protection of its citizens. There is a potential for Namibia to solidify its democratic space and become a full-fledged democracy. Immediately after independence, democratic political culture was introduced through adoption of a constitution, a free and independent media, and multi-party politics. However, Namibia's political culture also regressed toward entrenched one-party leadership, in direct contradiction to the nation's democratic founding principles.

Eritrea may be to a ticking time bomb waiting for the ripe moment to explode into a popular uprising like those that have occurred in neighboring countries (Ethiopia and Sudan). The Arab Spring peoples' movement of 2011 in Egypt that ousted President Hosni Mubarak led to reinstallation of a military dictatorship. The Egyptian people are in their second round of anti-government opposition, including protests in September 2019, calling for the removal of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The Sudanese people anti-government protests in 2018 ended the thirty-year dictatorial rule of President Omar Al Bashir. The country that initiated the Arab Spring uprisings, Tunisia is now in its second election cycle after the anti-government protest that removed the country's dictator in 2011.<sup>47</sup> In Ethiopia, in 2018, change in leadership within the same ruling party (EPRDF) brought some reforms, such as releasing political prisoners, allowing opposition parties to participate in the political process, and is on schedule for new elections in 2020. A long-

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<sup>47</sup> Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia ruled Tunisia for 23 years from 1987, before forced out of office by mass protester in 2011. He died in exile at the age of 83 in September 2019. He was credited with bringing stability and some economic prosperity, yet he was also criticized for suppression of political freedom and widespread corruption that led to his ouster in 2011. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49752876>

term historical view suggests that the longer a political system remains closed and tightly controlled, the more likely it is that oppressors who prefer the status quo will encounter violent clashes from those who demand change. National Liberation Movements in Africa had accomplished the task of liberating their countries against oppressive colonial and/or racist forces. However, the same liberation movements have significant flaws that they displayed in the post-conflict period. Liberation movements had

“projected unity, but at times bitterly divided; they have proclaimed human rights, but had been guilty of terror and atrocities; they incorporated women, yet were overwhelmingly patriarchal; while declaring themselves democratic, they were in many of their practices deeply authoritarian”(Southall 2013, 327).

The same movements that fought for liberation and self-determination, usually against racist and oppressive systems end up becoming authoritarian, intolerant and in some instances racist themselves as post-conflict governing bodies.

### **6.3. RECAP OF THE SCHOLARLY CONTEXT**

In any given community, political culture is expressed through habits, norms, symbols, and customs “regarding power, authority, participation and representation” among members of the community, including elites as well as ordinary citizens (Robinson 1994, 39). Culture is never permanent; it continuously evolves, adjusting, adapting and learning in response to political and social trends. Whether democratic or otherwise, culture is in a constant state of flux, expanding and changing in response to domestic and external events. As Robinson asserts, the culture of politics is “the product of a polity’s distant and its more proximate political past” (Robinson 1994, 40). Because of its malleability or adaptability, political culture is not the exclusive domain for

explaining regime change in any given society. Culture in general—and political culture in particular—will always continue to evolve.

The evolutionary nature of political culture was evident in Eritrea and Namibia, where both nations had roots in the authoritarian colonial era (first and secondary colonial periods). Authoritarian politics was also well entrenched in the liberation organization's of both the EPLF and SWAPO; both movements later assumed political power during the independence periods. In each country, status-quo parties that had evolved from liberation movements dominated the political space; they assumed control over the socio-economic and political affairs of their respective countries. In such non-democratic cultures, popular participation was reduced to simply approving the policies of the top party leaders.

The literature on political culture affirms that a culture of trust, tolerance and political moderation is conducive for democracy to prosper. Societies characterized by trust and collaboration tend to become more democratic than those that have deficits in social capital. Putnam's extensive study of Italy's regional governments concluded that those regions that possessed greater social capital (defined as trust, reciprocity, civic engagement and a collective sense of well-being) tended to have a rich civic culture, resulting in good governance. By contrast, those regional governments characterized by lack of trust, defection, and exploitation (which Putnam called un-civic community) also lacked functional capacity and competent governance. Putnam affirms the importance of social capital in the form of a culture of tolerance, diversity, cooperation, reciprocity, and

trust. He concludes that civic culture is essential for the promotion and nurture of democracy (Putnam 2002).

Acemoglu and Robinson devised a three-tier analysis of why societies become democratic or non-democratic. The first tier is called the politico-institutional approach, which argues that people tend to place their trust in an institutional framework, rather than in economic or rational choices, or in conflictual governance that emphasizes winners and losers. The authors argue that the institutional approach is more likely to lead a society to democratization because it requires the development of structures over time. Democracy develops gradually as people exercise their rights while democratic culture is taking roots. The authors assert that well-formed institutions are essential for promoting democratic culture and inclusive participation (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006).

War-termination strategy (the way wars end) is the second focus of this dissertation. Whether a war concludes militarily or through negotiated agreement is a key variable in this study. Toft asserted that rebel victories performed better in shepherding long-lasting political liberty compared to new regimes set up as a result of negotiated settlements (Toft 2006). Despite Toft's findings, the two cases reviewed here include liberation movements that fit the rebel victor category, yet led to different outcomes than Toft's analysis might predict. While SWAPO's victory in Namibia included a negotiated settlement, the EPLF won a strictly military victory in Eritrea. According to Toft's findings, the EPLF should have performed better at democratization than SWAPO's negotiated settlement—yet the opposite occurred. Although the

comparisons in this study apply to Tofts rebellion-versus-negotiation conflict model, I believe it is useful to apply part of her argument to show that rebel victories do not necessarily lead to democratic transitions, nor do negotiated settlements fail to democratize. The current study has shown the exact opposite. We found that the rebel victor, the EPLF, failed to democratize, and in fact performed far worse than the negotiated settlement case of SWAPO. Namibia began the democratic process soon after independence, yet Eritrea, a military victor, has yet to embark on a path toward democracy after nearly thirty years of independence.

The acceptance or rejection of diplomacy is another way to evaluate the effectiveness of a newly established government. Although both the EPLF and SWAPO employed some sort of diplomacy during their armed struggles, the time and effort devoted to diplomacy versus armed struggle varied between the two liberation movements. During the EPLF's armed struggle, the liberation movement received scant attention from the international community. EPLF had little choice but to wage a sophisticated guerilla operation against a stronger, well-armed opponent, ultimately succeeding in liberating Eritrea in 1991. Diplomatic peace talks between the EPLF forces and Ethiopian government occurred only in the late stages of conflict, in the 1980s; by then the EPLF had proved itself to be a force to be reckoned with. Thus, it is safe to say that the EPLF focus was almost exclusively on military methods as a way to bring an end to conflict.

SWAPO was constantly engaged in diplomatic efforts to secure Namibia's independence, and later adopted a military strategy to complement its engagement with

the United Nations. As a result, SWAPO succeeded in negotiating Namibia's independence from South Africa with the assistance of the U.N., other nations, and the neighboring frontline states. In SWAPO's case, the emphasis on diplomatic efforts, combined with low-level armed struggle, led to a U.N.-supervised constitutional assembly and an election in 1989, which concluded with Namibia's independence in 1990. In this case, termination of conflict was achieved through negotiations, rather than by military means.

The third factor considered in this study is the role of the international community, especially the U.N. Security Council. The engagement (or lack) of international organizations had a clear impact on the way the two liberation movements transformed into regimes. Although both Eritrea and Namibia began the post-independence era with optimism and grand gestures from the international community, the post-conflict experiences of Eritrea and Namibia inform us that international actors and institutions had both positive and negative impacts on conflict resolution in Africa.

In Eritrea's post-independence politics, as winners of the liberation war, the new government made it clear to all groups, whether political or civic, that they would not tolerate affiliations with any other groups outside of the EPLF. This quickly led the country in a direction where dissenting political opinions or views were actively suppressed. Despite a constitution- drafting procedures declared to be open, with requests to the Eritrean public for suggestions and feedback, the ruling party did not allow participation of opposition groups. This prevented the constitutional drafting from being truly inclusive or representative of the popular will. A repressive environment

surrounding the formation of Eritrea as an independent nation promoted distrust, silence and a submissive political culture among the Eritrean citizens. This culture persisted after independence as the government continued to rule with a heavy hand, arresting its critics, “disappearing” and detaining large number of people at the order of the leader of the former liberation movement, now Eritrea’s president, Isaias Afewerki.

In Namibia, after, the U.N.-supervised election led to elections of constituent assembly members in November 1989, over eleven political parties (in addition to SWAPO) participated. Despite SWAPO’s expectation that it would win the majority of seats in the new parliament, it did not win the two-thirds majority required to form a government. As a result, SWAPO had to collaborate in the country’s first constitutional drafting task with the other parties that shared parliamentary seats. As a result, Namibia’s constitution is considered to be one of the most liberal in Africa. Although other parties later struggled to win elections, there is a legal and constitutional framework for them to compete and participate in the democratic processes of the country. Namibia also has an independent media that places checks on the government and its policies. The judicial branch is also relatively independent from the executive. All these institutions exist despite the fact the SWAPO party has dominated since independence for nearly 30 years (as in the case of the EPLF in Eritrea,). These institutions are a testament to the fact that Namibia followed a constitutional process inspired by close involvement of the U.N. and the international observers at the moment of independence. This led Namibia to begin its nation-building process by engaging with other nations of the world.



This contrast with the Eritrean case proves that limited access or engagement with the international community can have negative consequences. On one hand, the regime in Eritrea continued to shame the international community for ignoring its plight when the EPLF fought a bitter three-decade war with Ethiopia. When the EPLF finally asserted Eritrea's independence, it engaged briefly with the international community on its own terms. While there were a few international agencies present after independence, the Eritrean government has subsequently asked all non-government organizations and aid agencies to leave Eritrea (including recently, requiring all clinics and schools operated by the Roman Catholic church to be turned over to the government<sup>48</sup> (BBC News 2019).

It is apparent in this comparative case study that the victorious EPLF has taken a path different from what Toft's findings might have predicted. She asserted in 2006 that rebel victors are more likely to become democratic and less likely to return to war. The exact opposite has happened in the case of the EPLF, as we have seen. The EPLF grew more autocratic over time and found itself in another border conflict with Ethiopia in 1998. The EPLF's former ally, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which was the dominant party in the EPRDF coalition, led the war with Eritrea between 1998 and 2000. For the next twenty (1998-2018) years,<sup>49</sup> Eritrea's former ally became its sworn enemy.

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<sup>48</sup>BBC News reported that the Eritrean Government shut down the 22 clinics and schools run by the Catholic Church in retaliation to the church's call for reform to stem the migration to Europe.

<sup>49</sup>The Eritrean government led by PFDJ fought a two-year border war with its former ally EPRDF (TPLF) between 1998-2000. Both governments signed peace agreement cessation of hostilities in December 2000. However, for the next 20 years both countries cut all diplomatic, economic and political ties. It was in July 2018, that the two countries re-engaged after the former Prime Minister of Ethiopia resigned and a new Prime Minister was appointed and called for peace with Eritrea.

In Namibia, the case of SWAPO proves that despite a negotiated settlement leading to independence, the SWAPO party continued to rule as an electoral democracy, with free (but not necessarily fair) elections held every five years over three decades.

Despite the laying of a foundation for democratic governance, the most sensitive and difficult part of political development in Namibia's post-independence era has been the large disparity of economic status and income. Namibia is one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of the gap between the "haves" and "have nots." If Namibia is to become a truly a democratic country, with her citizens enjoying an equal say in matters that affect their economic, social and political lives, then citizens need to be empowered to participate in the country's governance. The SWAPO regime struggled to design a way to change the colonial apartheid legacy that favored the small minority or wealthy white farmers. A fraction of Namibian citizens (mostly white) own most of the wealth of the country, leaving the vast majority to live on a meager subsistence. My analysis suggests that only when there is greater economic equality will the majority of Namibians participate in their government. Otherwise, as is the case with many post-independence governments, the regime may lose its support base in the long run. Another significant issue in Namibia's nation-building effort is the issue of land reform that remains to be a sensitive subject for the government to address.

Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the history of Eritrea and Namibia is a story of colonization and domination of outside forces against local people struggling and negotiating to keep their autonomy. The response from the European forces against indigenous African forces was extremely violent, leading to German forces committing

genocidal crimes in Namibia. Later, pervasive racial discriminatory practiced of the South African white characterized Namibia' minority governance. The discriminatory policies of the Italian colonial regime in Eritrea relegated the local people into second-class citizenship. This was followed by Ethiopian administration of the territory through military force and persecution (including execution) of Eritreans nationalists.

Additionally, Ethiopian forces terrorized and burned numerous Eritrean towns that were suspected of providing cover for the liberation fighters. Against these historical backgrounds, the pre-independence struggles in the two countries impacted the types of regimes that came into being in the post-independence era.

Namibia's post-independence experiences resembled South Africa's post-apartheid policies. This is due to the fact that rule of the National Party in both South Africa and Namibia ended, leading to democratization of both countries. The African National Congress (ANC) came into power in 1994 with Nelson Mandel as South Africa's first democratically elected black president. This regime change was a source of inspiration for Ovambo People's Congress/Organization (OPC/O) that was formed in Cape Town as the predecessor to SWAPO. Both Namibia and South Africa embarked on the economic front as both the ANC and SWAPO struggled to lessen the disparities between the minority white citizens (who controlled the economic sector) and the majority black populations in each country. The black majority had finally secured their democratic rights to vote in their country's elections through costly struggles, yet still had not seen the rewards of democracy translated into social or economic equality.

In Eritrea, the post-independence era was heralded with the referendum vote, which decided Eritrea's independence. Conducted in April 1993 under supervision of the international community, Eritreans voted overwhelmingly for independence. Soon after, on May 23, 1993 Eritrea officially became an independent country and joined the United Nations. Ethiopia had seen regime change through similar armed struggle. The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) had waged coordinated attacks with the EPLF on the Ethiopian army. Both liberation armies entered their respective capitals (Asmara and Addis Ababa) after aggressive military attacks in 1991. Ethiopia was supportive of Eritrea's self-determination and was one of the first countries to recognize Eritrea's sovereignty after the 1993 referendum. The EPRDF government supported economic development and provided a very limited democratic structure, including voting rights, and space for some opposition political parties. While the EPLF never entertained opening up the democratic space in Eritrea, Ethiopia's EPRDF government began its post-Derg/military era by drafting a constitution (1995) based on the principles of ethnic federalism. When the two countries engaged in a border conflict, a twenty-year period of no-peace and no war followed. This situation seriously weakened Eritrea economic and political development.

To summarize the main difference between the two liberation organizations, the EPLF/PFDJ and SWAPO that later assumed government powers in the capitals of Asmara and Windhoek; first the EPLF had fought the war from a position of permanent station from late 1970s. The EPLF operated within the Eritrean territory conscripting fighters from within the community. SWAPO on the other hand, did not have permanent

military presence in Namibia even after the formation of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) in the mid 1960s. PLAN activities were limited to guerrilla attacks on the South African forces that were stationed along the border of Namibia and Angola. Their presence came in close proximity with that of South African troops after 1975 (Independence of Angola) that made it easier for its forces to relocate closer to the border areas. This situation had an impact in the way the two organizations operated during the struggle years. The EPLF had direct access and influence on the Eritrean population and depended on the resources of the Eritrean people while SWAPO had a very limited access and interaction with the Namibian population that they were fighting for. This situation necessitated for the EPLF to be more inward looking while SWAPO to depend on the lobbying and soliciting help from the international community. Thirdly, the two organizations' war termination strategies; EPLF-military victory over Ethiopian army while SWAPO's negotiated settlement with the South African government that was coordinated in close the United Nations and other Western countries that led to the first democratic constituent assembly election which resulted in the drafting of the Namibian constitution and subsequent democratic elections in the country since 1990. The EPLF, however, halted a hopeful democratic process of constitution making when the PFDJ regime failed to implement the ratified constitution of 1997. Thus, is locked in a cycle of autocratic system of administration since the early days of Eritrean independence.

#### **6.4. ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS**

We can conclude that recent or past historical events impact the way regimes behave after they have achieved independence. Societies born out of oppressive regimes tend to perpetuate the status-quo in the post-independence context. In the early 1960s or afterwards, African freedom fighters who become leaders resembled the leaders in systems that they fought to replace in the way in their autocratic characters. From Jose Eduardo Dos Santos in Angola, Idriss Deby in Chad, Mobute Sese Seko in Congo, Omar Al Bashir in Sudan, Hosin Mubark in Egypt, or the late Robert Muagbe in Zimbabwe, we can see the hard realities of Africa's descent into corruption and autocratic regimes. Most of these leaders have brought their nations to the brink of failed states.

Despite the ongoing problems of autocratic leadership and economic mismanagement, many countries in Africa have until recently, tolerated this type of governance. Ethiopian youth groups demanded change and forced the Prime Minister to resign in early 2018. The new Prime Minister began swift reforms by opening up the political space to opposition parties. Ethiopians in exile were allowed to return. An anti-government rally in the Sudan forced an end to the 30 –year autocratic rule of Omar Al Bashir in mid-2019. Most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa fall under different categories of non-democratic regimes, ranging from fully autocratic to strangely mixed regimes, with democratic constitutions that include strong executives with weak checks and balances in other branches of government. In some instances like the case of Eritrea, there is no functioning legislative and judicial body.

## **6.5. LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The three factors considered for this study were used to provide a partial answer to the question of how democratic transitions are promoted or impeded in two case study countries. By no means did this research answer all the questions raised within this examination, let alone the many questions beyond the scope of this study. For example, the political cultures considered here only in the context of the EPLF and SWAPO, as the winners of the liberation struggle in Eritrea and Namibia. These are very particular wartime cultures that transitioned into independent countries. This inquiry can extend to examine the concept of political culture in the wider society; how the ruling parties gained influence over society. Some researchers might argue that the transition of authoritarian culture into democratic culture would be a natural focus of this study. Additionally, the role of women in the post-conflict societies and their contribution in the democratization process is a topic that needs its own separate dissertation project. (Lynch and VonDoepp 2019; Benard et al. 2008) With the role that women played in the liberation war, fighting at the front lines as well as at base station in the case of Eritrea (ELF/EPLF) and its implication about the role those women played in post-independence period needs to be studied. Another limitation is, despite the focus on the liberation organizations' structures, this investigation was unable to include interviews of the political leaders of each movement. The difficulty encountered in securing interviews from the Namibian side made it necessary to rely on secondary historical resources.

The study of history helps us answer the “who, what, when, how and why” questions (Torres 2014). However, history has limitations in three ways, Torres argues.

First, history is interpretive. Second, it is readily distorted or misunderstood to support particular biases; and third, the historical narrative is always incomplete (Torres 2014). What this means is that history is subject to different interpretations by different historians and readers (or deliberately skewed by the writer); and, most importantly, there are gaps in any story. There is an inevitable problem of source bias when consulting secondary or limited resources. These limitations may present an incomplete picture of the historical evidence. It is often noted that the victors write history, and historical narratives are biased when they investigate only one side of a story.

## **6.6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Possession of an understanding of societies and their political cultures can assist leaders in drafting policy recommendation for the design of inclusive, less conflictual political systems. The examples of Eritrea and Namibia reveal social and political cultural practices persisting from liberation struggles to independence, over long periods, can be instructive. In both cases, cultures of domination, suppression of ideas, and pressures to conform were pervasive during the years of liberation struggle. These pressures continued after independence, more so in the Eritrean case. Countries like Eritrea are able to resist large powers like Ethiopia (that benefitted from the backing of the Soviet Union and the U.S.) because the liberation forces are able to demonstrate their capacity to survive in the face of external challenges. This attitude might lead to an isolationist perspective, which compounds the serious political and economic difficulties of a poor country like Eritrea. The Eritrean government began to force international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to leave Eritrea in 2005; the last NGOs had departed



in 2011. Recently, after 20 years of conflict with Ethiopia, there has been renewed hope that Eritrea would resume its diplomatic ties with its larger neighbor. In July 2018, leaders of both countries met to begin a process of rapprochement. Although the initiative is expected to lead to some positive outcomes, democracy still is a distant hope in Eritrea. There is not much that has changed since the lifting of the sanctions and the peace agreement with Ethiopia in 2018.

Eritrea and Namibia share some similar experiences, yet these experiences led to different outcomes. Any recommendations must consider each country's historical events. A complete understanding of democracy takes into account the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the society under consideration. However, critics of liberal politics often use debates over the meaning of democracy as a point of criticism. They claim it is too contentious or they fear that an emphasis on civil and political rights can obscure other aspects of social justice, such as economic equality. We have identified other factors, including the colonial legacy and the post-colonial policies of international financial institutions. We have also pointed to corrupt practices/governance of the autocratic leadership as reasons as a major cause for poverty in developing nations. Communities and countries chart their own political and economic futures, with structures in place to ensure domestic and international accountability and the rule of law. The issue at the center of the democratization argument is the difficult task of creating systems that works for a given society. Governing structures must empower citizens to become full participants in their political and socio-economic affairs. This is easier said

than done, but there is no alternative except to begin with a process that takes into accounts the historical realities in each country.

In any newly independent country, domestic political parties work with local communities through civic associations, media, labor unions, and educational institutions to define the roles these groups play in democratic transition. However, in Eritrea, there is no constitution, individual freedom is highly restricted, and involvement in any activities outside the government's knowledge is dangerous. Therefore, internal change agents must undertake their activities in a clandestine manner. Some youth movements in Eritrea like *Fenkel* are involved in protesting the conscription of high school student into *Sawa*, the government's compulsory military training camps. These latter-day rebels distribute pamphlets, post anti-government graffiti, and quietly express their opposition to the endless national service that is employed to restrict individual freedom.

The Eritrean and Namibian communities living abroad could play a vital role in the initiation or expansion/consolidation of democracy. The Diaspora<sup>50</sup> communities can provide moral and financial support for any democratic developments in their respective home countries. Due to the educational or financial advantages they enjoy in the countries in which they reside, Diaspora communities can be a positive force by supporting democratic initiatives of independent media; they can provide training

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<sup>50</sup> The role of the Diaspora communities in sending remittance in their country of origin, as well as the moral, material and political support they lend to the local movements is a crucial aspect of many communities like Sudanese Diaspora who fueled the anti-government movement in Sudan in 2018-2019. The same could be said of the Eritrean Diaspora instrumental in supporting the Eritrean government through a 2% tax imposed on overseas Eritreans, this support slowed down after 2009 when sanctions were imposed on Eritrea by the U.N. Many Eritrean Diaspora Eritreans broke with the regime due to its oppressive polices. They opposed providing moral and financial support to the regime, and advocated for internal democratic movements in Eritrea.

programs for younger generations and encouraging change inside their home countries. Members of the Diaspora community can also establish links with influential international organizations the UN, academic institutions, human rights organization, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) committed to building democratic institutions.

These external influencers benefit from paying closer attention to countries like Eritrea and Namibia, not only to assist people in the process of their nation-building efforts, but also to learn from the experiences of common people, and to stand with their struggles for democracy. Support from citizens who live in democratic societies includes publicizing human rights abuses of the governments, providing moral and financial support to people in the resistance, or offering sanctuary and asylum for refugees<sup>51</sup> who have emigrated to Western Europe and North America.

Future research may delve more deeply into each of the factors considered for this study: political culture, war-termination strategy and the role of the international community. Additional research would identify other factors in the political development of each country in this case study, or any other countries that one might choose to study. The analysis in my research suggests that Eritrea and Namibia are two of the least-studied countries in Africa; it would benefit scholars and policy-makers to examine the dynamics of regime change, as well as the patterns of development in the post-independence era.

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<sup>51</sup> Many of these immigrants show up at the borders of Western nations after taking life threatening risks. Some do not make it alive due to the dangers they encounter in transit. Libya has been a transit route for many African immigrants, including Eritreans. In 2018, 2,275 migrants perished as they tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea to seek asylum in Europe. One of the many tragic events was the October 2013 Lampedusa boat accident that claimed 366 lives including men, women and children, many of whom were from Eritrea. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/22/lampedusa-boat-tragedy-migrants-africa>

## **6.7. PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

When movements like EPLF and SWAPO are victorious in their efforts to rise to the top, there are losers in the internal struggles, including groups such as the ELF or SWAPO-Democrats, whose movements also deserve focus and investigation in order to obtain a complete picture of the internal competition within liberation movements. Such studies might illuminate the political differences that were dismissed as regionalist, religious, anti-nationalistic or imperialist. The social, economic, and ethnic diversity within each country needs to be analyzed in order to appreciate the ongoing roles of distinct groups, as well as the roles of women, peasants' associations, students, workers, and Diaspora communities who contributed to the fight for independence, and are often overlooked in studies of the post-independence period.

Another area for future research is the role of race in determining how the international community engages in regime transitions. Did Namibia's quest for independence gain the attention of the United Nations due to the prominent roles white settlers played in the country's economy? Did Namibia and Angola receive more attention from international actors compared to the Eritrean/Ethiopian conflict because in the latter case, there were no prominent white communities or Western companies under threat? This is an area worth pursuing and expanding our understanding of the unconscious and unspoken factors that influence international decisions. Assumptions about racial favoritism have historical consequences; it is important to illuminate those consequences when international organizations try to negotiate future conflicts.

A single organization or a leader cannot secure the liberation of a country. Independence is rather the sum of efforts by the majority of the people who were organized and sensitized to pursue a common cause. People commit to charting their destiny as a conscious community. If the independence of Eritrea and Namibia is to remain meaningful, it must at the very least, involve the very people who advocate for self-determination. Democracy may be difficult to achieve, but it honors the sacrifices of those who fought and died to create a country. Any step taken in the direction of democratic processes will be worth the effort. Democratic nations from every culture understand that the process takes time, but the foundation of democracy must be built one-step at a time.

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Saba Tesfayohannes Kidane Heritage received her Master of Arts in African Area Studies with Political Science emphasis from UCLA in 2006. Prior to that, she received another Master of Arts Degree in Peace and Justice Studies from the University of San Diego. She has worked for different non-profit and government agencies while pursuing her graduate studies. Saba was born and raised in Ethiopia and moved to Eritrea in 1992 when Eritrea became independent. In Asmara, she completed her undergraduate studies in Political Science at the now defunct University of Asmara. She also studied at the University of Addis Ababa between 1996 and 1998.

Saba is fluent in Amharic and Tigrinya, the main languages in Ethiopia and Eritrea respectively. She is also actively involved in a pioneer media organization, ERISAT-Eritrean Satellite Television that has been broadcasting into Eritrea since late 2018 in various Eritrean languages with a mission to inform, engage and empower the Eritrean public through an independent news, arts, entertainment, culture and diverse topics of interest. Ms. Heritage came to the United States in 2002 to pursue graduate studies and currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband, Tim and daughter Madison.