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Urban violence: history and Ethiopians dilettante to learn from it, 1916–1991

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ABSTRACT

In Ethiopia, urbanization and urban violence are recent phenomena dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In the country's long history, politics and urban violence have been bedfellows and reliable means of change, devolution, and reform. Since 1916, Ethiopia has essentially experienced more violence in its urban's than in its rural areas due to recurrent episodes of political instability at the national level. Ironically, Ethiopian leaders were amateurs who were unable to draw lessons from their past deeds. Nevertheless, Ethiopian historiography has devoted little attention to the magnitude of political issues-related urban violence in Ethiopia. As a result, the paper attempted to analyse two goals. First, it tries to analyse the historical events of Ethiopian urban violence from 1916–1991, and secondly, it tries to explain the tradition of Ethiopian leaders to learn from past deeds. To document this extraordinary theme, the paper grey on both primary sources and published secondary literature that have been available to the writer to date. The collected data was systematically verified, analyzed, and interpreted through qualitative data analysis.

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Introduction

Ildefons Cerda was the person who first used the word 'urbanization' about 150 years ago (Cerda, 1867). However, the urban crisis dates back to the Industrial Revolution. According to Adams, the cities served as a multi-stakeholder, transit hub for money and goods, resulting in urban-centred socioeconomic and political violence (Adams, 2014). The formally organized violence predominantly in rural areas was transformed into a more diverse political opposition and conflict in urban areas. Hence, urban violence exhibits a variety of agents, motives, intensities, and causes. It can be considered a response to the problems of capacity and poor governance in cities or a response to demographic and political changes in different countries (Raleigh, 2015). Based on the findings of studies on civil wars, it is more probable that insurgent and separatist activities may arise in remote and peripheral locations (Fearon & David, 2003); Urban regions have higher rates of violence against civilians during civil wars, and these areas are also more frequently the site of rebel and military force engagements, which are characterised by dense populations and high infrastructure (Buhaug & Jan Ketil, 2006; Raleigh & Hegre, 2009). Although there is no evidence to suggest that the same violent agents are active in both urban and rural violence, there is a lack of awareness regarding the mechanisms and conditions that drive urban violence outside of civil conflicts.

The organisation, primary agents, objectives, intensities, and duration of urban violence are different from those of rural and civil war violence. Its distinctive features include less formal organisational structures, and its greatest efficacy comes from seizing the urban population's limited but transient capacity for collective action. Urban conflict involves more acts by political militias, which are the armed wings

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of opposing political elites, and communal violence with identity groups vying for control over local resources and authority. It also features less civil war events, which means that fewer rebel and insurgent groups are involved. Urban areas have higher rates of civil society protests and riots (Tilly, 2003).

In Ethiopia, urbanization and urban violence are recent phenomena dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. The new political participation had strong roots in the urban middle classes that had developed during the closing decades of imperial authority, even though it resonated across socio-economic divides. Emperor Haile Selassie I actively encouraged the formation of these new meritocratic middle classes, free from regional interests and ostensibly loyal to the central court, to restrain the traditional nobility's power and to staff the Ethiopian state's growing bureaucracy (Levine, 1965). According to Nunzio, the urban middle class was characterized by Western education and differentiated by the acquisition and achievement of a Westernized culture (Nunzio, 2012). Messay contends in one of the most critical analyses of the Ethiopian student movement that the interaction with Western education caused a 'cultural rupture' for the Ethiopians to become involved (Bahru, 2014; Mesay, 2008). Thus, this upheaval proved to be a fruitful ground for the new elite's global connections, which led to the fruits of cultural fusion that rendered late imperial Addis Ababa 'the pinnacle of modernist ambition (Wiebel, 2012)'.

In essence, since 1916, the national political reasons that erupted many times in Ethiopia have caused more urban violence than the economic and social conditions. Urban dwellers are disenfranchised by undemocratic institutional structures and practices, leading to increased resentment and alienation. Restrictions on collective action lead to more diverse and heterogeneous urban violence, increasing the frequency of deadly acts committed by political groups, civic and civil society organizations, and resentful communities (Raleigh, 2015).

However, the magnitude of Ethiopian urban violence due to political issues has received little attention in Ethiopian historiography. As a result, a comprehensive understanding of urban violence has been absent from the academic discourse on a national scale. To the best of our knowledge, a handful of works by Bahiru Zewde, Harold Marcus, Richard Pankhurst, Richard Greenfield, and Margaret Perham have little to say about Ethiopian urban violence in a comprehensive way. The above-mentioned scholars and others have written about Ethiopia's urban violence in juxtaposition with other themes. Thus, when it came to Ethiopian urban violence, some writers tried to see the period from the perspective of war and its consequences. In a limited capacity, many other scholars have tended to prematurely point to specific urban violence developments. For instance, among other things, they focused on achievements and failures, hardships, the extent of government, and people's reactions to overcome political crises. In this regard, it is time to review the existing literature to determine the extent of urban violence's political impact in Ethiopia.

Therefore, the paper tried to analyse two objectives. First, it tries to analyse the historical events of Ethiopian urban violence from 1916–1991, and secondly; it tries to explain the tradition of Ethiopian leaders to learn from past deeds. To document this remarkable theme, the paper is limited to the use of both primary sources and published secondary texts that have been available to the writer to date.

The 1916/18 urban violence

Lij Iyasu ruled Ethiopia from 1913 to 1916. Menelik's decision to designate his grandson, Iyasu, as heir to the throne sparked a power struggle between the Shewan nobilities and Lij Iyasu. Meanwhile, the Shewan aristocrats met and accused Iyasu of apostasy and subversion of the Christian norm (Fisiha, 2004).

The logic of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' has become deeply embedded in the political fabric of Shewan's nobilities, and they made friends with Lij Iyasu's enemies. Among his enemies, the Shewan aristocrats maintained strong diplomatic relations with the Allied powers of the First World War participants, such as the British and France (Fisiha, 2004; Greenfield, 1965; Tilahun, 1996). According to Harold Marks, with the outbreak of World War I, the ruling elite in Ethiopia became increasingly anxious, and Iyasu started an alliance with Islam as well as the Central Powers. The heir to the throne thought that Ethiopia could be able to drive Italy out of Eritrea and Somalia if the Allies were defeated. Seyyid Muhammed Abdullah, also known as Mad Mullah, had been waging an anti-colonialist war in Somalia for a long time and, as a result, wanted to ally with them (Marcus, 1999). Ironically, his alliance with the central powers and his pessimistic outlook on them forced the Allied powers, the British and France, to

assist Shawan aristocrats in removing Lij Iyasu from his power. Fisiha Yazie documented an interesting story about T.E. Lawren, the British consul at Harar, who played a significant role in removing Lij Iyasu. Consequently, to disseminate Lij Iyasu's conversion to Islam publicly, Lawren commissioned the Armenian photographer Mussie Leon to produce twenty thousand copies of Lij Iyasu's attire (Fisiha, 2004).

Later on, the Shawan nobilities, in collaboration with mehal safari (those civil servants and soldiers) and Allied powers, carried out a coup d'état against Lij Iyasu when he arrived at Harar on 27 September 1916. As soon as possible, the coup was held, and following the designation of Empress Zewditu and Tafari as regents, urban violence erupted in Addis Ababa and Harar (Tilahun, 1996).

The urban violence was instigated by the Shawan nobles, and they targeted the young, educated elites, Muslims, and others who opposed the coup. Thus, they were flogged, detained, and terrified by being moved to the periphery. As for the estimated deaths, 500 people died in Harar and 500 in Addis Ababa (Fisiha, 2004; Greenfield, 1965). The inability of the coup leaders to dialogue with each other or with their internal rebels resulted in armed violence and the involvement of civilians in civil wars. This led to the battle of Tora Mesk and Seggele.

Another astonishing historical event that led to the outbreak of 1918 urban violence was the removal of members of the council of ministers, except the then-war minister Habte Giorgis and the bishop. The 1918 event was instigated by Mehal Sefary (Tilahun, 1996). Consequently, the war had largely cut off Ethiopia from its typical suppliers and customers in 1918, making life in the capital challenging for those looking for work in the transport, construction, and day labour industries. Misfortune also followed thousands of soldiers, who claimed that their leaders had defrauded them out of food and payment and that the ministers had stolen money. The military men convened and appointed a commission to look for justice. On March 20, the unnamed leadership demanded that the entire council of ministers be removed from office and that power be given to a regency council made up of Zewditu, Habte Giorgis, and Tafari (Fisiha, 2004; Marcus, 1999).

Tafari remained uninformed of the conspiracy during the crisis, and he later claimed in writing that he had objected to the dismissals as being out of the ordinary. Since he is a skilled self-propagandist and is now in charge of leading the government alone following the resignation of the ministers, his disclaimers cannot be taken seriously. Tafari was primarily a player from the background who influenced actors and situations in his favour. Even if he tried to hide his methods, his political objectives in this instance, gaining control of the government were always clear (Fisiha, 2004).

The 1936 urban violence

The Italian occupation (1936–1941) caused several concurrent urban conflicts that altered Ethiopia's history to a great extent. Among the acts of violence were the 1936 Haile Sellasie expatriate, the 1937 Addis Ababa massacre, and the 1941 liberation period. Some writers argued that between the emperor's departure and the arrival of the Italians, Addis Ababa experienced three days of intense bloodshed and violence, which lasted from 2–5 May 1936 (Tadla, 2004). However, regarding the extent of urban violence, different writers forwarded different arguments.

Richard Greenfield mentioned that the departure of Emperor Haile Selassie led to violence in Addis Ababa, which manifested itself in the looting of governmental as well as private properties (Greenfield, 1965). Harold Marks also documented that law and order collapsed when Addis Ababa learned that the imperial family had left for exile. An angry and dissatisfied mob ransacked the commercial district of the city, killing, plundering, and setting everything on fire. According to him, the Italians' arrival on May 5 put a stop to the uproar, and on May 9, in front of a cheering crowd in Rome, Mussolini proclaimed the Ethiopian-Italian Empire. Marshal Badoglio, who left for Rome on June 11, was replaced as viceroy of Ethiopia by Marshal Rodolfo Graziani (Marcus, 1994).

Solidifying the above-mentioned two writers' argument, the known modern Ethiopian history writer Bahru stated that law and order were completely out of order. Burning, looting, and sporadic shooting started to become the norm. According to him, the violence was centred in Arada's commercial district. It was a perplexing phenomenon that included aspects of mass psychosis, incipient class conflict, hopelessness, and resistance. In so far as the violence had a target at all, it was the wealthy and foreigners; the palace, the *gebbi*, which housed weapons and was a popular tourist destination, was also not spared.

Many foreigners sought safety in the legations, finally filling the roles for which they had been trained. Against such a background of lawlessness, the Italians might come in as the bringers of peace and order. Some people have even claimed that the Italians' deliberate tardiness in entering the city was a cynical attempt to make their presence appear as a sign of deliverance (Bahru, 2002).

Colonel Alhendero Del Baye, who was Emperor Haile Selassie's military advisor, recorded that Emperor Haile Selassie ordered everyone to use the scorched earth policy for the sake of barring any ruins from the Italian colonial administration (Tesfaye, 1928). As a first-hand source, he directly engaged in fulfilling the Emperor's scorched earth policy, in which he ordered every person to loot the weapons from the treasury, looting food, offices, and others. To his chagrin, the Emperor ordered the residents to loot and burn institutions and offices that would be significant for Italians. In response, the soldiers destroyed the three-kilometer railroad, the Ethiopian radio station, the palace, and the Addis Ababa airline station. According to Birhanu Dinkie, each household has a weapon that was stolen from government stores. This event led to people firing their weapons either for training or to check up on their weapons (Berhanu, 1981). Contrary to these painful events, some residents began to prevent the casualties ordered by the Emperor. Their differences led to conflict among themselves. The damage targeted not only materials, houses, and infrastructure, but also animals. This was evidenced by the fact that the soldiers killed horses at the Haile Selassie recreation area, realizing the Lions (Tesfaye, 1928).

Colonel Del Baye documented one interesting event: the residents looted and drank different kinds of wild alcohol. The writer mentions one interesting story of the event: a person who carried an armament in one hand and drank alcohol in the other hand, and to their chagrin, he saw that a person looted a pharmacy and drank the liquid iodine bottle. Hence, according to him, unknowingly, people eat and drink every solid as well as liquid medicine from pharmacies (Tesfaye, 1928).

Surprisingly, the event has phases. At first, they began looting, then they began burning, and then they began looting foreign legations. According to his records, he counted 500 corpses in Addis Ababa's streets in one round of visits. Besides Ethiopians, those 20 to 30 whites from Greece and Armenia who were intermarriage with Ethiopian women were targeted and burned (Tesfaye, 1928).

The 1937 urban violence

Numerous atrocities occurred during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, such as the execution without trial or due process of captives who had been arrested, the killing of Christian Orthodox bishops, and the demonization of non-Christian notables as 'witch doctors (Adejumobi, 2007)'.

It was apparent that on 19 February 1937, a significant event that deteriorated the relationship between the Ethiopian people and the fascist government took place. At that time, the Graziani administration launched its darkest winter of terror against the Ethiopian people in Addis Ababa. The massacre began right after the two young Ethiopians attempted to kill Graziani and other Italian officials. In this attempt, Graziani was seriously wounded, and several other officials were assassinated. In response, the Italian government became discontented by the deeds of Abraha Deboch and Moges Asgedom, and thus Ethiopians were massacred indiscriminately.

The massacre profoundly violated human rights. It was Graziani, backed by the Italian black-shirt soldiers, who exterminated several innocent Ethiopian civilians. It was apparent that the action was directed against humanity. People were burned alive, and the heads of individuals had been chopped off. Simultaneously, houses with their inhabitants were burned down, and pregnant women were also executed publicly (Tadesse & Girma, 1990). In addition, the massacre profoundly eliminated the Ethiopian intelligentsia, who acquired their modern education in Ethiopia and abroad and were highly targeted by the summary execution. The indiscriminate killings of the February Addis Ababa Massacre created what has come to be known as the missing generation in Ethiopian intellectual history. Almost all generations of the intellectual group have been eliminated. It was at that particular time that Ethiopia had indeed lost its educated manpower (Kinfe, 2001). Thus, the massacre had a profound negative impact on Ethiopia's progress. The enlightened generation had been exterminated by fascist forces. Therefore, this created a big manpower vacuum between the pre-war and post-war Italian occupations (Bahru, 2002).

From the above meticulously documented table carried out by Ian Campbell, who has spent most of the last twenty-eight years in Ethiopia, we now know much more about these events than before. How

much did the Italians detain Addis Ababa residents regardless of their differences in gender, age, occupation, and others were debatable (Campbell, 2016) (Table 1).

Paulos Gnogno stated that the 1937 Addis Ababa Massacre was the darkest and cruelest in the country's history, and people were traumatically slaughtered (Paulos, 1988). According to him;

... ኃይለሥላሴ እና ተገቢ ያልሆነ ጭፍጨፋ ነበር። ሽማግሌዎች እውሮፕላን እግር የሌላቸው ለማቆም ደሆች እና እናቶች ከነ ልጆቻቸው ነበሩበት። ባለ ጥቁር ሽማግሌ በግቢው ውስጥ እየተረዋዋጡ በህይወት ያለ ኢትዮጵያዊ ይፈልጉ ነበር። ከፊደላዊ መካከል የሚተነፍስ እንዳለ እያሉ ይገድሉ ነበር። ከ ጥቂት ደቂቃዎች በካላጠባለ ጥቁር ሽማግሌ እና የጦር ወታደሮች በከተማው ውስጥ ይረዋዋጡ ነበር። ሱቆች ሁሉ እንዲዘጉ አደረጉ። የውጭ ሀገር ሰዎችም ከቤታቸው እንዳይወጡ አዘዙ። በተለይ ፎቶ ግራፍ ማንሻ እየተፈተሽ ይወሰድ ነበር። መንግሥት ሁሉ ጭር ብለዋል። የፖስታ እና የስልክ አገልግሎት ተቆረጠ። በቤተ-መንግስቱ አጠገብ ያሉ መንገዶች ሁሉ በፊደላዊ ተሸፈኑ።

... ደም እንደውሃ የፈሰሰው ያንጊዜ ነበር። የወንዶች፣ የሴቶች እና የህፃናት ሬሳ በያለበት ተኝቷል። የሕዝብ ቤት ከተፈተሽ በኋላ ሰዎች በውስጥ እንዳሉ በእሳት ይቃጠላሉ። ቃጠሎው ቶሎ እንዲዝ በቤንዚን እና ዘይት ኬሚካሎች ይጠቀሙ ነበር። ሠው ከእሳት እየሸሸ ከቤቱ ሲወጣ በመትረፍ ይገድሉታል። በቁጥር 4154 ግራዚኒ ሮማ ላለው ለቅኝ ግዛት ሚኒስትር ባስተላለፈው መልክት እኚህ ጥቁሮች የኛን ወታደር ሲያዩ ኢትዮጵያ ለዘላለም ትኑር ይላሉ። ይህንን የሚሉትንም ለመቀጣጫ ሁሉንም አስጨረሰኳቸው ብሏል። በመሆኑም የካቲት 12 ቀን 1929 ዓ/ም በተጀመረው እልቂት በሦስት ቀን ውስጥ ብቻ 30000 (ሠላሣ ሺህ) ሰዎች ከተገደሉ በኋላ ሌላው እየታፈሰ ወደ በረሃ እስር ቤት ተላከ። (Paulos, 1988)

It had been dangerous that elders, blinds, handicapped, poor, beggars, and mothers with their children were victims of the massacre. The Italian black-shirt soldiers patrolled the Addis Ababa palaces and gathered civilians from the capital. The Italians checked Ethiopian dead bodies and killed them after a few minutes. The black-shirt soldiers patrolled the palaces in and around Addis Ababa. They ordered shops to be closed and informed foreigners not to go out of their homes. In addition, the Italians forbade photo cameras and took them for themselves. Postal and telephone services have been interrupted. Generally, human bodies were found in and around the palace. What type of cruelty was it? It was then that blood flowed like spring water. Male, female, and children's bodies lay as they were. The Italians were in a position to check individuals' homes, and they began to burn with fire. Apart from this, they used chemicals like benzene to facilitate burning. They killed people while attempting to escape the fire.

From the above table, it has been inferred that captured captives were also executed summarily without being given a chance to defend themselves (Paulos, 1988) (Table 2). However, the above-mentioned traumatic causalities were hardly known for three key reasons. According to Ian Campbell's who wrote three interesting books on the themes of Italian colonial occupation, he forwarded his stance that the first one is that the Fascist-run media and the official Italian records at the time were quite good at concealing or downplaying them. Second, the majority of Italian historians after the Second World War were either unable or unwilling to address the history of colonial occupation: unable because access to the pertinent archives was restricted for years and the archives were protected by colonialism apologists;

Table 1. The number of Addis Ababa prisoners and their destinies following the 19 February 1937 incident (Source: Campbell, 2016).

Groups	Destiny	Number
Aristocrats and high-ranking nobles	Expatriations to prisons in Italy	200
Middle-ranking nobles and notables	Imprisonment at Nocra camp	400
Addis Ababa resident Civilians	Imprisonment at Bedenanie prison, Somalia	6,500
Educated and low-ranking notables	Detained in Addis Ababa prisons	1,100
Criminals and hard core	Recollecting in prison	200
Vulnerable elders	Died from starvation	940
Peoples officially or unofficially captured	Detained in different custody	2,460
Those identified as harmless	Released	6,000
Total	indicative estimate only	17,800

Table 2. The number of prisoners from different social groups who died in different custody (Source: Paulos, 1988).

Groups	Destiny	Estimated number
Addis Ababa resident Civilians	Died by diarrheal at Bedenanie prison	3175
Educated and low-ranking notables	Executed after trial court	1,100
Vulnerable elders	Died from starvation	940
Peoples officially or unofficially in custody	Killed while in custody	2,460
Total		7675

unwilling because Italy's colonial adventure had ended with the fall of Fascism, making it simple for post-war Italians to incorrectly view it as linked to Fascism and part of a generalized badness from which it was separate (Campbell, 2014).

Hungarian physician Laszlo Saska, who was working in Addis Ababa at the time, is one of the international eyewitnesses. He pointed out that most of the casualties were due to the victims' heads being hit by a sword and being hit on the forehead while the shooting continued throughout the night. Entire streets were destroyed by fire, and anyone who tried to flee their burning homes was machine-gunned (Saska, 2015).

From the above table, we infer that the above-estimated numbers slaughtered in Addis Ababa by Italians were carried to Gulelie, drenched in gasoline, and burned because it was impossible to dispose of them in the city due to the sheer quantity of casualties. What is painful is that those victims, either dead or alive, had been hurled by the Italians into water sources, such as wells used for drinking water, following Graziani's pattern of contaminating water sources while suppressing resistance in Libya (Campbell, 2016).

In addition to mass murder and burning, the Italians also participated in looting Addis Ababa. What is known is that throughout tens of thousands of assaults on people, loot, including cash and other items like jewellery, watches, rings, and bracelets, was taken; all victims, including the dead, were meticulously searched and plundered. It may be reasonably inferred that during the process they were also robbed since educated Ethiopians in the city (apart from those working for Graziani's administration) were either executed or deported and their properties commandeered. Graziani's administration gave the robbery and looting of the possessions of the wealthy Ethiopians who had been put to death or imprisoned a legal gloss a few months later. By executive order, he authorized the seizure of all movable and immovable property owned by 61 people who allegedly participated in the attack on the palace of 12 Yekatit, which he afterward referred to as 'the massacre (Campbell, 2016)' (Table 3).

Large portions of the seized lands were depopulated, and punitive expeditions were dispatched to places like the Ankober area. Following the attempted murder of Graziani, the fascist Blackshirts rampaged through Addis Ababa and the nearby towns, destroying numerous ancient buildings, including St. George's Cathedral, which was built under Menelik II (Adejumobi, 2007).

The 1941 urban violence

On 5 May 1941, during the Italian occupation, new urban violence erupted as Emperor Haile Selassie returned to Addis Ababa after a five-year exile. Interestingly, the Emperor officially proclaimed that all Italians in Ethiopia had to be deported; he said that their existence was required since the nation was experiencing a food scarcity to maintain roads, keep up industries, and maintain fields. The Italians could at least provide for their immediate food needs. Despite being the enemy and anticipating suffering from Ethiopia's response to the emperor's homecoming, the Italians profited from his benevolence and protection (Sbacchi, 1979).

Table 3. The death phases and descriptions, with their estimated numbers, of the Addis Ababa massacre (Source: Campbell, 2016).

Segments	Descriptions	Estimated death
12 Feb 1937	Deaths within the grounds of the Governo Generale	400
19 Feb 1937	Death around the perimeter of the Governo Generale	2500
19 Feb 1937	Slaughter in Siddist Kilo and Arada	1250
19 Feb 1937	Random killings throughout the city	1200
20 and 21 Feb 1937	Victims of Adis Ababa peoples	11,500
22–29 Feb 1937	Random daytime attacks in Addis Ababa	2000
22–29 Feb 1937	Young Ethiopians and nobles arrested in Addis Ababa	700
22–29 Feb 1937	People injured who later died from their injuries	2200
27 Feb 1937	Massacre of military college cadets	200
29 Feb 1937	Death of young Educated Ethiopians	300
Total		25,850

Ethiopians had two reactions to Italy's fate. Interestingly, Ethiopians sympathized with the Italians more than the British, and many of them helped their former colonial masters by giving them housing, nourishment, funds, and refuge, as well as by assisting them in escaping from prisons and labor camps. While there were 30,000 Italians living in Addis Ababa towards the end of 1942, 56 of them were killed, 96 were injured, and 103 were the victims of armed robberies, according to the International Red Cross. These crimes were perpetrated by Ethiopians who had unfinished business with the Italians. This is evidenced by Fitaurari Kumsa, who was a patriot leader who protected Italian citizens and whose forgiving conduct was recorded (Sbacchi, 1979).

However, any violence that happened took place during the transition from Italian rule to the Anglo-Ethiopian government. Between May and July 1941, Addis Ababa saw a period of unrest lasting about three months, during which crimes against people and robberies on public routes occurred during the day. The attack by Ethiopians carrying handguns on Mrs. Jole Zambon's home was the worst. Italians and their property were respected, thanks to Abebe Aregai. He put guards in every Italian neighbourhood and stationed sentinels outside the residences of notable Italian officers and civilians. During the liberation, the British army massacred 150 Addis Ababa people at the Italian Trianon Hotel on 5 May 1941 (Tilahun, 1996).

The 1960 urban violence

Throughout Ethiopia's long history, there have been coups, revolutions, and political assassinations, but the unsuccessful 1960 coup d'état stood out in many ways. Its leaders aimed to reform and reshape the entire political system, not just the incumbent national leaders (Greenfield, 1965). The 1960 coup d'état, which resulted in armed conflict and the engagement of urban people in the crisis, was caused by the imperial regime's incapacity to implement socioeconomic and political reforms. The coup plotters made two major arguments: the nation's backwardness in comparison to newly independent African governments and the Emperor's inefficiency. They concluded that a peaceful revolution was required to bring about any kind of change. As a result, they got ready for the coup (Bahru, 2002; Greenfield, 1965).

The most surprising thing is that the coup was orchestrated by Germame Neway, Mengistu Neway, General Tsigie Dibu and Workineh Gebeyehu. The coup took place when Emperor Haile Selassie visited Brazil. Contrary to the coup planners, there were also a sizable number of ardent followers of Emperor Haile Selassie, which led to urban bloodshed. Due to them, there was urban fighting between the Imperial bodyguards' coup plotters and the army under the command of Merid Mengesha and Kebede Gebrie, who demanded the return of his majesty's power. Actually, the coup attempt was unsuccessful as a result of Colonel Tadesse Biru's defection (Greenfield, 1965).

On Thursday, December 15, in the late afternoon, fighting started. It continued for four days. On Thursday and Friday, the rebels were driven back into Addis Ababa despite having a significant weapon advantage. Since they had been led to believe they were fighting for the Emperor, many regular Bodyguard soldiers were disheartened to learn they were fighting against him. Once the combat had begun, the locals rallied to the side of the Emperor's supporters. Germame and others turned machine guns on (Greenfield, 1965) the 15 politicians who had been taken prisoner the first night and were being held captive before fleeing (Clapham, 1968).

The above meticulously documented table carried out by different writers affirmed how much the coup makers arrested the abovementioned people from different professions and ranks (Berhanu, 2005; Greenfield, 1965) (Tables 4 and 5). In essence, official casualty figures, which are likely to be underestimated, indicate at least 300 people were killed, many of them civilians caught in the street fighting.

Unpredictably, this upheaval is confined only to Addis Ababa, and the rest of the country lives in peace and stability (Marcus, 1999). The recruitment strategy used by these numerous armed political

Table 4. The number of prisoners and their destinies in different groups during the coup (Source: Berhanu, 2005; Greenfield, 1965).

Groups	Destiny	Estimated Number
High rank Military Officers	Life Imprisonment	24
Aristocrats and business men	Minimal Imprisonment	15
Civilians (including students and elites)	Small Imprisonment	44
Total		83

Table 5. The number of deaths and the death fates of different groups during the attempt at a 1960 coup d'état (Source: Berhanu, 2005; Greenfield, 1965).

Groups	Destiny	Estimated Number
Civilians	Death	500
High government officials	Political massacre	40
Aristocrats and business men	Massacre	19
Armed Force	Death	29
Imperial Guards	Death	174
Soldiers	Death	2000
Total		2762

movements is particularly unsettling because it focuses on the general populace. From 13–16 December 1960, government troops under the leadership of General Merid Mengesha launched a military uprising in Addis Abeba that was led by Brigadier General Mengestu Newaye, and nearly 500 people were killed (Clapham, 1968).

Everyone can understand the terrible results of the coup attempt from the meticulously recorded table mentioned above. As a result, civilians were involved, either freely or through coercion. In addition to the deaths, Birhanu also documented the estimated total number of wounded people. According to him, 442 civilians, 43 armed forces, and 300 Imperial Guards were wounded (Berhanu, 2005).

Abortive coups can make the political and economic climate more unpredictable because the Imperial administration typically uses severe tactics to deal with those responsible. These actions typically involve the proclamation of states of emergency, the suspension of liberties, the seizure of property, incarceration, and even the execution of the participants (Fosu, 2002). On the other hand, it shows a change of attitude by physically opposing the monarchy for modernizing reasons. Although the coup plotters were able to disseminate their policies and strategies, they failed to find new sources of support, other than the symbolic loyalty of the students (Clapham, 1968).

The 1965 urban violence

After 1941, educational institutions in Ethiopia expanded significantly. These institutions are still a great advance on pre-war conditions, although they are still inadequate for the country's requirements. By the late 1960s, about 700,000 youth were enrolled in school. Not all schools are established by the government (Bahru, 2002).

After the second half of the 1960s, the Ethiopian student movement was the only effective resistance against the government. Benefiting from modern education, the students took the lead in fighting against the ailing monarchy. Meanwhile, the old regime was not obeyed, even though the students presented many socioeconomic demands (Tafesse, 2012). Addis Abeba students took their first steps to save Ethiopia from autocracy and feudalism, and they were on their way home from Brazil to thwart the attempted coup d'état as the Emperor saw it (Marcus, 1999).

Marxism became the new norm as high school and university students joined the newly emerging political groups in significant numbers, politicizing their private and social lives, as Bahru Zewde has underlined in his recent study of the student movement. Aklilu Kebede speaks for many when he reflects on the connection he established between youth belonging to 'the generation' and political activism: 'This is my responsibility as a youth; I have to take part in this revolution'. It is evident from the divergence between the primarily apolitical activities and objectives of the preceding young generations in the city (Bahru, 2014).

Therefore, Emperor Haile Selassie's firmness to learn from the attempted 1960 coup d'état led to other urban violence that was instigated by students of the time since 1965. In essence, the advent of scholarship, the 1960 attempt at a coup d'état, 1960 African politics, and the stagnant nature of Haile Selassie's socioeconomic and political administration were the reasons that caused students to lose faith in the regime. Initially, their inconsistent struggle lasted for about the thirteenth year. During this period, the government held the demonstration for minimal reasons, and students' deaths did not exceed three in each student's peaceful demonstration (Tilahun, 1996).

Ironically, the 1965 Ethiopian urban violence was instigated by Ethiopian students. The violence differed from others in that there was strong dissatisfaction between students of Menelik Secondary School and Tefari Mekonen School. Their dissatisfaction was attributed to their social class. Hence, those laymen and poor family students are expected to enter Menelik, whereas Tefari secondary school belongs only to noble students of the time. During the riots and peaceful demonstrations, the two school students criticized each other (Tilahun, 1996).

According to Tilahun Birhane Sellassie, the Imperial regime deliberately assassinated Tilahun Gizaw, the university students' president at the time. The only alternative to the increasingly radical movement was the government's violent suppression method. By the 1960s, the regime's repression had progressed from huge deportations to the scorching Gibe River Valley, starting with the imprisonment of student leaders at Addis Abeba's police stations. This incident caused a lot of urban violence between government forces and students in Addis Ababa. The government's repressive measures have resulted in the deaths of many students, both inside and outside the university compound. However, the writer refrained from writing about the estimated student deaths at the event (Adejumobi, 2007; Legesse, 1979; Tilahun, 1996). On 25 August 1969, the New York Times reported that more than 100 student protesters were in jail.¹

Urban violence: during the derg regime

The 1974 Ethiopian popular revolution was the result of an old socioeconomic and political problem. Thus, the revolution was instigated by the students, taxi drivers, teachers, workers, and soldiers who mutinied against the Imperial regime. The revolution led to the overthrow of the monarchy on 12 September 1974, which left the country with a power vacuum. The low-ranking military officers formed the Derg, or coordinating committee, and took the lion's share of the revolutionary process. However, its acceptability was strongly rejected by leftist civilian organizations, which inherited different political perspectives from Ethiopian student movements (Wiebel, 2012). Consequently, the military regime's habitual modus operandi suppressed the challenges violently. Thus, the violent response of the military regime manifested itself in the massacre of high officials of the monarchy and of Aman Andom, the first revolutionary head of state, in November 1974 (Andargachew, 1993). Meanwhile, fourteen generals, six colonels, eight dejazmach, three fitawurari, two ras, and twenty-seven other notable civil government officials were massacred by Derg officials. Thus, among the sixty deaths, eight were Derg officers, while the remaining belonged to the monarchical regime. The Massacre of the Sixty, or Black Saturday (ጥቁሩ ቅዳሜ, tikuru kidami), was an execution that took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, commissioned by the Derg government against 60 imprisoned former government officials at Kerchele Prison on the morning of 23 November 1974. The prison was commonly called Alem Bekagn (Fisiha, 2004). Mengistu produced a dramatic violence-legitimizing performance, smashing bottles filled with red fluids while declaring that henceforth we will avenge the blood of our comrades' double- and triple-fold (Bahru, 1995).

As the military comrades led by Lt. Colonel Negussie Haile and Captain Debessu Beyene rebelled against the military regime of Derg from 20–21 April 1975, the government crushed and executed twenty urban dwellers. The military regime executed two hundred urban residents of Addis Ababa who were victims of execution between the transition periods and August 1975. Emperor Haile Selassie died while being held captive on 27 August 1975, which sparked a clash in Addis Ababa between security forces and protesters that resulted in the deaths of seven people. Later, on 30 September 1975, a state of emergency was declared by the military government in Addis Ababa. The state of emergency was lifted by the military government in Addis Ababa on 6 December 1975. On 21 April 1976, government troops opened fire on demonstrators in Addis Ababa, and one person was killed. Brigadier General Getachew Nadew and 19 other people were killed by government forces following the unsuccessful coup d'état of 1976 (Bahru, 1995).

The actual period of the Red Terror (from late 1976 to late 1978) was thus only the most intensified form of repression. By the end of 1976, urban Ethiopia was quickly engulfed by a double spiral of conflicts. The conflict within the civilian population itself was one of the two threads, with the other being the conflict between the military regime and its opponents among the civilian population. Numerous conflicting revolutionary terror operations claimed the lives of thousands of young, educated Ethiopians over the next two years. The All Ethiopia Socialist Movement (Meison) and other political groups that had associated themselves with the government, as well as the opposition Ethiopian People's Revolutionary

Party (EPRP), were held responsible for the atrocities. Ethiopia saw a political, social, and cultural transformation under the Terror. The brutality of the day permeated every aspect of urban life (Wiebel, 2012).

The first tactic employed by the radical Derg against urban rebels involved targeting its sympathizers; the second focused on disarming its adversaries. On March 23, the Derg began their initial comprehensive Asesa 'search campaign' throughout the city. All routes were closed to illegal traffic for four days while search teams, primarily made up of local Abyot Tebeka squads, scoured the area in search of smuggled opposition activists, weapons, and propaganda materials. Several top EPRP leaders lost their lives during the operation (Bahru, 1995).

In the history of Ethiopian terror, in May 1977, Addis Ababa witnessed the most horrible urban disaster taken by the military regime, which led to mass killings. It is onerous to ascertain defined numbers of deaths, especially since many youths were driven outside the city for execution. However, according to Lefort, the official death toll was 732, indicating a significantly higher figure, whereas Robert Rinehart estimates that 2,000 youths were killed that night (Wiebel, 2012).²

The atrocities took place after local protests were put down by a combined force of Kebele and military authorities, who planned for the city-wide demonstrations using intelligence gathered through interrogation chambers. Local protests were put down by a combined force of Kebele and military authorities, who planned for the city-wide demonstrations using intelligence gathered through interrogation chambers, and the atrocities took place. Following the first incidents of violence, thousands of protesters were imprisoned, and executions proceeded all night. Following the massacres, devastated parents received the notorious Kebele guards' charges for the bullets that murdered their children.

Derg heightened tensions with its ally by placing the blame for the May Day atrocities on both Meison and the protesting teenagers, the Derg heightened tensions with its ally. However, despite its protestations, the netsa ermeja 'free measure,' the pinnacle of decentralized terror in urban Ethiopia, was immediately taking place under its watch. During this time, most of the 'revolutionary measures' carried out in the Derg's name stopped being officially announced, justified, or explained; the normalization of revolutionary violence was complete. The netsa ermeja, like earlier revolutionary reigns of terror, was characterized by hasty justice, symbolized by troops or, more frequently, by local Kebele officials, who 'arrested the suspect, being judge, counsel, observer, and murderer all at once (O'Kane, 1991).

Another significant yet habitually overlooked action of netsa ermeja that became part and parcel of urban violence was a sexual mugging. Meanwhile, these female prisoners were hardly affected by this horrible sexual mugging within the prison. Though it is onerous to ascertain a precise number of sexual assault victims, according to Gebru Tarek, thousands of women were raped during this period. Accordingly, the participants targeted those Red Terror members' families, such as wives, daughters, or other family members, who were vulnerable to this devilish sexual assault (Gebru, 2004).

In the meantime, the Derg planned to eliminate the urban opposition wing of the Ethiopian Revolutionary Party (EPRP) once and for all. To achieve their dream, in 1977/78, the Derg began a gigantic operation of murdering, detaining, flogging, and terrorizing the urban residents. Therefore, the government began to terrify the urban dwellers, whose terror revolved around and prolonged the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement. In the course of the crisis, according to Gebru Tarek, ten thousand people lost their lives (Gebru, 2004).

On 21 May 1991, and 23 May 1991, respectively, EPRDF rebels took Adis Alem and Debre Birhan. The negotiations between representatives of the government and the EPRDF took place in London on 27 and 28 May 1991, under the mediation of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen. On 28 May 1991, insurgents of the EPRDF overthrew the government (Gebru, 2004). Ten people lost their lives as a result of fighting between Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) soldiers and protesters in Addis Ababa on 29–30 May 1991. On 1–5 July 1991, the EPRDF organized a national conference that included participants from more than 20 political movements, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) (Gebru, 2004).

Urban violence: Ethiopian dilettante

The onset of urban violence in Ethiopia makes the political and economic landscape unpredictable, as the then administration typically used harsh tactics to maintain their power. These actions usually include a declaration of emergency, suspension of freedom, confiscation of property, imprisonment, and

execution of the perpetrators. Thus, the recurrence of urban violence may be accompanied by economic disruption and deterioration (Fosu, 2002).

From a normative perspective, 'history is said to be past politics'. It is a great teacher of politics that demands no fees or gains for its lessons. However, Ethiopia's leaders were dilettantes and could not learn from past deeds. Indeed, during Ethiopia's long history, when they failed to advance the country's socio-economic and political developments, the then-Ethiopian rulers developed and shared various habitual *modus operandi* features. The comparison of their deeds with their predecessors, the externalizing of their weaknesses, the problem of seeing themselves, glorifying their power on the ruins of their parents' weakness, and deliberately forgetting the past deeds of heroes and heroines were their habitual *modus operandi*.

In Ethiopia, the new leaders considered themselves the only saviour and messiahs of the country. Particularly, the imperial and military regime leaders were highly engaged in personality cults rather than answering the socioeconomic and political quests of their citizens. Meanwhile, in the eyes of political elites and the general public, Haile Selassie suffered from a loss of legitimacy. This started with the accusation made against him by many Ethiopians that he was exiled from his country like a coward in 1936 when the Italians invaded it. To its dismay, Haile Selassie refused to learn from the 1916, 1918, 1960, and 1965 urban violence; rather, he continued his paternalistic administration. Here, the Emperor denies his predecessors' good deeds and builds his cult by degrading past deeds. This was manifested in his biography of 'Hiwotie ena ye ethiopia ermija' where metaphorically, the Emperor calls himself 'I am cement in the hose of granite that is Ethiopia' ³.

Emperor Haile Selassie's extraordinary personality cult was never witnessed by any of his predecessors or successors. Hence, his cult was usually witnessed in every grand project that must bear the emperor's name. For instance, Tafari Mekonen School, Tafari Mekonen Hospital, Haile Selassie Primary School, Haile Selassie Secondary School, Haile Selassie First University, Haile Selassie Hospital, Haile Selassie Cinema, Haile Selassie Stadium, Haile Selassie Air Station, so many Haile Selassie roads, Haile Selassie Square, and others. In addition, Haile Selassie's ego was not limited to controlling the country as he wanted but also, frankly, reflected his dislike for Menelik's deeds. That is why, in the meantime, Emperor Haile Selassie changed Menelik's secondary school name to Asfa Wosen School in 1934. However, in 1937, because of students' and people's influence, the school changed its name to the former. According to Tilahun, the Emperor forced the school management to remove Emperor Menelik and Taytu's picture from the school wall and replace them with their family pictures (Tilahun, 1996).

Derg blamed his predecessors for Ethiopia's backwardness. He began to build his ego on the ruins of Haile Selassie's weakness. This was manifested in his book, 'Our Struggle'. According to Mengistu, the imperial regime took responsibility for Ethiopia's backwardness, the *gebbar* system, the Ethiopian loss of sovereignty, and the unbalanced Ethiopian relations with the outside world. In his book, he blamed the Haile Selassie regime for the 1960 post-attempt coup treatments, such as detaining, flogging, and massacring those participants. However, he did not convey those people who were detained and massacred because of the 1974 Black Saturday, the Red Terror casualties, the 1989 attempted coup casualties, and others (Mengistu, 2004).

By and large, Ethiopian rulers commonly shared that they wasted their time degrading their forefathers' deeds rather than learning what was good and bad from them. Ethiopian norms created fertile ground that ignored the new idea. Hence, after a repressive measure taken by the then rulers over urban dwellers, the inhabitants compared the existing rulers with the past and also predicted the future, metaphorically saying, 'The devil it knew better than the devil did not'.

Conclusion

Politics and urban violence are bedfellows in Ethiopia's long history. In essence, the recurrent political pretentiousness of Ethiopian urban violence from 1916–1991 was a major legacy of generations of violence, insecurity, and sepsis about the meaning of politics, disengagement from public life, distrust of the intentions of the state, and reluctance to talk about past losses of relatives and loved ones, habitually grown from the muting and suppression in the years they ruled. Depending on dependable sources, since 1916, the national political reasons that erupted many times in Ethiopia have caused more urban violence than the economic and social conditions.

The government has taken the lion's share of the history of urban violence in Ethiopia. Thus, the government in power used the army, police, weapons, and other means of violence to govern; it forced people to obey, and the role of the police and military was primarily to force people to behave in certain ways. The opposition forces knew very well that those in the government did not believe in negotiation, so they resorted to urban violence to get their point across. Therefore, since those in power do not want to relinquish power, the best way to get rid of them is generally by force. The routine practice of the military regime in campaigns such as Red Terror, Black Saturday, the *Netsa Ermeja* 'Free Measure,' and others confirmed the government's involvement in urban violence.

Urban violence in Ethiopia has been a reliable means of change, devolution, and reform. Hence, the political goals of violence and movements revolved around the idea of social change that should guarantee democracy, equity, peace, and justice. However, governments' resistance to accepting social realities and opposition groups' demands often degenerated into indiscriminate violence, terror, and looting against the population from 1916 to 1991. The government's rejection of citizens' desire for change has led to a transition from less aggressive politics to widespread armed conflict. This was seen in the 1960 attempted coup d'état.

Ethiopia's leaders were amateurs who were unable to draw lessons from their mistakes. Instead of learning from the good and terrible behaviour of their ancestors, they squandered their time criticizing them. Hence, they consider themselves the one and only rescuer and messiah of the nation.

Notes

1. New York Times, August 25, 1969, 3.
2. It is difficult to ascertain a precise number of deaths, especially since many youths were driven outside the city for execution. Some literature affirmed that the official death toll was 732, indicating a significantly higher figure, whereas, others estimated that 2,000 youths were killed.
3. Reading the biography of Emperor Haile Selassie enabled the readers to better understand his attitude towards his predecessor. See Haile Selassie (Bio), *Hiwotie ena ye Ethiopia eremija*, (Ethiopia: Berhan ena selam printing press, 1964) (Selassie 1964).

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