

The Need for Establishing Oromo National Civic Institutions: The Cases of Global *Gumii* Oromia and Oromia Global Forum

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Abstract: The lack of institutional or organizational capacity exposes a society to abuse, oppression, and exploitation or even extermination by a better-organized entity or society. Today, the Oromo is one of such societies. The precolonial institutions of the Oromo people were dismantled by Ethiopian colonialism and its political structures, which eroded their norms and democratic traditions. Consequently, there have been political fragmentation and uneven development of Oromo nationalism (national *Oromummaa*) that undermined the development of Oromo national institutional or organizational capacity. Empowering the Oromo people to safeguard the gains achieved so far through huge sacrifice and to continue the national struggle for human dignity and freedom require national organizational capacity building urgently. The building of independent and strong national civic institutions puts the Oromo cultural and political gains on firmer grounds and facilitates the struggle for sovereignty and egalitarian democracy. The efforts to achieve Oromia national self-determination and the building of a democratic society require the restoration of the best elements of *gadaa/siiqqee* (Oromo democratic) principles and the restoration and sharpening of the indigenous Oromo knowledge. The difficult journey toward genuine democracy necessitates also the existence of strong national political organizations with sophisticated knowledge of democratic principles. Furthermore, the development of strong Oromo social movements is necessary to support such national political organizations to defeat the political and ideological hegemony of the Ethiopian colonial state. The paper uses the examples of Global *Gumii* Oromia (GGO) and Oromia Global Forum (OGF), which are Oromo national civic organizations formed by Oromo intellectuals, professionals, and Oromo from all walks of life residing in North America, Australia, and Europe, to empower Oromo society in order to solve its cultural, political, economic, and social problems. The GGO and OGF were formed to experiment with the strategy of building Oromia national civic institutions, which were modelled after the *Gumii Gayyoo* of the Borana Oromo. In this paper, I combine a structural approach with a social constructionist model of human agency. Specifically, I employ interdisciplinary, multidimensional, and critical approaches to examine the dynamic interplay among Oromo social structures, human agency, and social/national movements.

Keywords: *Gadaa/siiqqee*; *Global Gumii* Oromia; Knowledge; Organizations; Oromia Global Forum; Oromo institutions; *Qeerroo/Qarree*

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1. Introduction

Every society has its unique epistemology, civilization, and institutions. This shows that the world is epistemologically and culturally diverse. Colonized peoples such as the Oromo had their epistemologies that helped them in producing and disseminating their cultural-centric knowledge and wisdom before their domination and subjugation. Counter-hegemonic interpretive and political frames and indigenous theories and forms of knowledge (rather, modes of knowing) highlight the fallacies of hegemonic theories and knowledge that naturalize, rationalize, justify, and promote social hierarchies in the name of scientific rigor. Oromo society was known for its formidable social, political, and cultural institutions which were organized under the *gadaa* system (Legesse, 2000) before their colonization by the alliance of Ethiopian settler colonialism and European imperialism during the last decades of the nineteenth century (Jalata, 1993[2005]). Almost for the last one century and a half, this society has been systematically terrorized, repressed, exploited and prevented from rebuilding its national institutions by Ethiopian colonial institutions such as the army, the state, the Orthodox Church, the media, and the educational system (Jalata, 2016).

To overcome these difficult challenges, Oromo nationalists have been engaging in organized efforts by creating their independent organizations such as the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association (MTA) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the 1960s and 1970s, respectively. Despite the fact that the Oromo national movement has been achieving certain gains such as restoring the Oromo language and Oromo culture, the journey toward building strong national organizations and institutions is still torturous. The building of GGO and OGF is an attempt to apply *gadaa/siiqqee* principles and indigenous Oromo knowledge to empower Oromo society by building its national institutional capacity. The paper raises four major questions: (1) what are the major factors that have hindered Oromo society from effectively organizing culturally and politically to build its national power? (2) What kinds of civic institutions do the Oromo need to rekindle their suppressed democratic traditions and indigenous knowledge? (3) How can the cultural experiments, such as the GGO, and OGF, help Oromo society to effectively organize through restoring its democratic traditions and indigenous knowledge? (4) What are the practical steps that need to be taken to organize and empower all sectors of Oromo society in order to protect its past and current gains and achieve more political, cultural, and economic objectives?

2. Methodological and Theoretical Insights

In this paper, I face the difficult and complex task of encountering several methodological and theoretical challenges. Data for this research was collected from historical records, empirical observations, interviews, and published books and articles. To date, social movement studies focus primarily on wide structural changes or behavioral issues and pay little attention to the role of human agency. In order to overcome these limitations, I combine a structural approach with a social constructionist model of human agency. Furthermore, instead of using the approach of the overspecialization of social science disciplines, I combine idiographic and nomothetic modes of analysis to understand a collective human behavior in relation to individual and collective leadership. Specifically, I employ interdisciplinary, multidimensional, and critical approaches to examine the dynamic interplay among social structures, human agency or leadership, and social/national movements.

Employing a social-constructionist model of making societies (Roy, 2001) and critical comparative political economic and sociocultural approaches are necessary to demonstrate the deficiencies of dominant social theories and systems of knowledge production. Social theories, as all forms of knowledge, are socially constructed. Since the beginning of the modern age, the capitalist class and its intellectual supporters have utilized liberal Enlightenment's claim to universality as the ideology of promoting human equality in order to overthrow the feudal order. However, later on, liberal Enlightenment philosophers and other scholars have "naturalized" the capitalist order and opposed the

project of emancipating ordinary people by defending the processes of creating and perpetuating private property via dispossession and exploitation.

Mainstream scholars constructed theories, concepts, and ideologies of race and racism, and further consolidated gender and class hierarchies, to facilitate and intensify the ongoing accumulation of capital and wealth (Jalata, 2012 [2001]). In reality, there is historical evidence of an extensive period in human history when racial and class categories and gender hierarchies did not exist, and when all human groups were non-hierarchical and non-exploitative (Trigger, 2006). Elites began to construct and maintain social hierarchies of gender, class, and race/ethno-nation through the invention and establishment of institutions: “What becomes socially constructed is disproportionately the result of dominant institutions in society. Institutions are groups of organizations, categories, and ways of doing things that do something important in society” (Roy, 2001: 22). Hence, it ought to be the purpose of our analytical tools, concepts, and categories to enable us to demystify ideological constructions of social, political, cultural, and economic forms that naturalize inequalities in a society, as well as all those theoretical paradigms and methodologies that, either by default or intent, legitimate and perpetuate forms of injustice and exploitation that benefit the rich, powerful racial/ethno-national groups, patriarchy, and dominant classes, and to focus on the development of an emancipatory project for humanity as a whole. My research and methodological stance confirm the need for scientific methods to be enlarged toward such demystification in order to overcome the pitfalls of traditional research methods and theoretical approaches that justify the destruction of the Oromo epistemology, original culture, and institutions.

Colonized peoples such as the Oromo had their epistemologies that helped them in producing and disseminating their cultural-centric knowledge and wisdom before their colonial domination and subjugation. So, the Oromo had their unique epistemology and cultural knowledge manifested mainly through their democratic governance called the *gadaa/siqqee* system, their indigenous religion known as *Waqeffannaa*, their practices of farming, cattle herding, environmental protection, and their techniques of military organization and warfare for national self-defense before they were colonized. Since colonization, the Oromo have been prevented from freely developing the cultural, political, military, religious, and educational institutions that they used to produce and disseminate their authentic knowledge. Generally speaking, all colonialists sought to destroy “every last remnant of alternative ways of knowing and living to obliterate collective identities and memories and to impose a new order” (Smith, 1999: 69). Colonialism and imperialism oppose the plurality of cultures and diversity of knowledge, and modern sciences, more or less, are the tool of colonial and imperial institutions (Santos, 2007: xix). The suppression of indigenous knowledge is a form of “epistemicide ... the other side of genocide” (Santos, 2007: xix). Mainstream scholars call the modern sciences, both natural and social sciences, universalistic. However, Harding (1923) calls these sciences ethnocentric or Eurocentric. I call these kinds of sciences knowledge for domination and exploitation. There are scholars who call such sciences colonial knowledge that must be decolonized (Smith, 1999). Mainstream academic, religious, and other institutions have promoted the knowledge for domination and corrupted the minds of the colonized in general and that of the educated elites in particular. According to Smith (1999: 23), “The reach of imperialism into ‘our heads’ challenges those who belong to colonized communities to understand how this occurred partly because we perceive a need to decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity.”

Until the intellectuals of the colonized communities develop critical knowledge for human liberation by decolonizing their minds and the modern sciences, which help perpetuate domination and exploitation, there cannot be a true human liberation because mainstream knowledge cannot facilitate human freedom and justice. Realizing this reality, Lorde (1979: 98-101) states, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (emphasis in the original). Counter-hegemonic interpretive and political frames, indigenous theories and forms of knowledge (rather, modes of knowing) highlight the fallacies of hegemonic theories and knowledge that naturalize, rationalize, justify, and

promote social hierarchies in the name of scientific rigor. Scientific knowledge – including social-scientific knowledge – is not value-neutral but based on standards that are (or reflect) social constructions, and it frequently enforces and perpetuates related perspectives that result from and inform the socio-historical context that generates and sustains those standards. According to Third World Network (1993: 485),

scientists are strongly committed to beliefs and certain cultural ethos, which compel them to convert diversity and complexity into uniformity. In addition to this belief system and cultural ethos – which manifest themselves in the propositions that scientists embrace – science has its own power structure, reward systems and peer groups. All of these [factors] combine to ensure that [mainstream] science is closely correlated with the existing, dominant and unjust, political, economic and social order of the world.

Mainstream as well as oppositional critical social theories and knowledge embody Euro- and North America-centric and other dominant perspectives and notions, which at the same time constitute their horizon of concern and inquiry (Harding, 1993). Consequently, in the names of modernity, progress, civilization, and cultural universalism, dominant theories and scholarship have suppressed, or at least implicitly and/or explicitly distorted the cultures, traditions, and knowledge of indigenous peoples (McGregor, 2004). These dominant theories and knowledge have presented the destructive capacities of more than five hundred years of global capitalism and colonialism as beneficial to indigenous peoples. As McGovern (1999: 27) observes, indigenous “knowledge systems have been represented by adjectives such as ‘primitive’, ‘unscientific’, and ‘backwards’, while the ‘[dominant] system’ is assumed to be uniquely ‘scientific and universal’ and superior to local forms of knowledge.... The modern knowledge system ‘is merely the globalized version of a very local and parochial tradition’ arising with ‘commercial capitalism’ and ‘a set of values based on power.’” Hegemonic theories, scholarship, and the ruling ideas have ignored that the colonized peoples have been “a data mine for social theory” (Connell, 2007: 369) and the source of objective knowledge production. The hegemonic and state-centric knowledge limits our understanding of humanity as a whole by ignoring the geo-cultures of indigenous and other subaltern groups. Of course, there have been critical and leftist scholars who have labored to expose the exploitative and oppressive aspects of global capitalism by focusing on hierarchies based on gender, class, and race/ethno-nation.

However, due to the confining horizon of their thinking, their limited knowledge of indigenous societies, and proclivity toward versions of evolutionary and modernist thinking, most critical scholars have glossed over the problem of indigenous peoples like that of the Oromo. Furthermore, with the exception of a few instances, their works on indigenous peoples have been contradictory, incomplete, or distorted. Because of the rejection or neglect of multicultural knowledge and wisdom, and the tradition of abyssal thinking (Santos, 2007), the dominant theoretical and intellectual knowledge from right and left has been prone to disregarding the humanity of indigenous peoples. To a greater or lesser extent, these intellectual traditions have tended to see indigenous peoples as organized socially in forms that are unable to withstand the onslaught of the process of modernization. Mainstream political and social theories and approaches to social research have supported or promoted colonial and neo-colonial agendas, explicitly or implicitly, or have neglected to engage in the requisite critical reflexivity, thus promulgating suppositions about indigenous peoples that originated in ideological definitions of societal reality. “If the success of these sciences required the military and political defeat of non-Western peoples,” Harding (1993: 8) writes, “we are entitled to skepticism about claims that the history of these sciences is unmitigated the history of human progress; progress for some has been at the expense of disempowerment, impoverishment, and sometimes genocide for many others.”

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Liberation Knowledge and Organizational Capacity Building

What are the connections among liberation knowledge, political consciousness, and organizational or institutional capacity building in Oromo society? As we shall see below, the inability of the *Qeerroo/Qarree* movement to fulfill its political and economic objectives of national self-

determination, *Abbaa biyyummaa* (sovereignty), and sustainable development has demonstrated that Oromo society still faces national institutional or organizational deficits. Why did Oromo nationalists and Oromo society fail to solve the problem of national organizational capacity building despite the fact that they have several political organizations and civic institutions? Liberating a society from repression, exploitation, and injustices requires developing liberation knowledge that incorporates the best elements of knowledge and wisdoms of all human groups that are essential for national institutional or organizational capacity building. The state-centered knowledge elites have suppressed or destroyed multicultural knowledge by objectifying indigenous peoples and other subaltern groups. Rahman (1993: 14) asserts that “domination of masses by elites is rooted not only in the polarization of control over the means of material production, but also over the means of knowledge production, including control over social power to determine what is useful knowledge.”

Knowledge for liberation, however, attempts to replace history of domination by history of liberation by recognizing the agency of the oppressed and exploited classes and groups. This agency involves critical knowledge, political consciousness, ideological clarity, pragmatism, and institutional capacity building. The knowledge elites with support of states have produced “official” history that has completely denied a historical space for the subaltern groups in general and that of indigenous peoples in particular. Negative views about the oppressed and exploited groups have prevented some scholars from understanding subaltern histories and cultures as well as their resistances and movements. Some of the intellectuals who have studied subaltern groups such as the Oromo have promoted the interests of the ruling classes and the dominant racial/ethnonational groups and their collaborators at the cost of the terrorized, colonized, oppressed, and exploited classes and groups. Others claiming that they are maintaining objectivity and neutrality have ignored the suffering of such peoples. The main stream Euro-American centric scholars and their foot soldiers in the peripheral world have dominated the writing of historiography of the oppressed classes and groups; such scholars have an ideology of the so-called cultural universalism and a top-down approach that have completely ignored or distorted the social and cultural history of the colonized and subjugated peoples (Wallerstein, 1983).

Cultural universalism is an ideology that the dominant racial/ethnonational groups and classes and their collaborators use to look at the world from their own cultural perspectives and control the economic and cultural resources of the dominated peoples; it also helps in creating and socializing a global intermediate class by subordinating or destroying cultures in the name of science and technology (Wallerstein, 1983). According to Heaney (1993: 41–42), “With the writing of history, knowledge became power, or rather an expression of power and a tool for maintaining it. History, and later, science, were frequently used not merely to understand, but to legitimize historically shaped political relationships and institutions.” Progressive scholars who are involved in studying social democratic movements need to debate openly and honestly to transform their scholarship and suggest ways through which liberation knowledge develops and expands. Therefore, the building of democracy of knowledge is the first step towards the liberation of global humanity from repression, exploitation, and injustices by exposing the fallacies of the knowledge for domination and maintaining status quo. Going beyond the so-called universalist history of the west and their collaborators in the rest and studying all experiences of humanity without being limited by a modernist mindset can help in developing critical theories and praxis that are necessary for building an alternative world system, which will promote egalitarian multicultural democracy.

Furthermore, progressive social movement scholars should challenge the problems of false cultural universalism and exclusionary relativism; they need to identify all positive humanist and democratic values of all cultures, and negative, reactionary, and oppressive elements of all cultures and build on the positive ones while delegitimizing those values that dehumanize and harm individuals and groups. These approaches can help in truly developing progressive global cultural universalism based on multicultural democracy that is compatible with inclusionary and progressive cultural particularism. The fallacy of the liberal theory and practice of political equality and false cultural universalism must

be critically analyzed because they exclude the praxis of economic democracy and multiculturalism. Progressive social movements should struggle by combining political democracy with economic or social democracy, and by promoting a genuine global human rights movement through the inclusion of the best element of cultural practices of every society in the world. In order to achieve Oromo liberation via the development of political consciousness and national organizational capacity building, it is essential to understand the process of oppression by learning about the crises in both individual Oromo biographies and collective Oromo history. As Bulhan (1985: 55) asserts, “the experience of victimization in oppression produces, on the one hand, tendencies toward rebellion and a search for autonomy and, on the other, tendencies toward compliance and accommodation. Often, the two tendencies coexist among the oppressed, although a predominant orientation can be identified for any person or generation at a given time.”

The oppressed are chained physically, socially, culturally, politically, and psychologically; hence, it is difficult to learn about these problems and search for ways to overcome them. The conscious person of the oppressed “opts for an introspective approach and emphasizes the need to come to terms with one’s self—a self historically tormented by a formidable and oppressive social structure” (Bulhan, 1985: 56). As the current Oromo national crisis unfolds, Oromo nationalists in general and leaders in particular should start to engage in critical self-evaluation in order to identify the impact of oppressive and destructive values and behaviors on the Oromo political performance. Oromo psychological liberation from ideological confusion and oppression requires fighting against the Oromo external oppressor and the internalized oppressive values. Most oppressed individuals understand what the oppressor does to them from outside, but it is difficult to comprehend how the worldviews of the oppressor are imposed on them and control them from within. As Bulhan (1985: 123) explains, “institutionalization of oppression in daily living ... entails an internalization of the oppressor’s values, norms, and prohibitions. Internalized oppression is most resistant to change, since this would require a battle on two fronts: the oppressor without and the oppressor within.” The Ethiopian political system has denied critical education to the educated Oromo elites in order to keep them less informed and submissive.

Colonial education is “a perfect device for control from without” (Woodson, 1990 [1933]: 96). So, it has been difficult and challenging for most Oromo elites to struggle and liberate themselves from the values and worldviews of their oppressors. That is why the *Qeerroo/Qarree* movement has not yet developed national institutional or organizational capacity and allowed itself to be manipulated and used by the Ethiopian political system. Because of the inadequate political consciousness, the oppressed individuals and groups learn the behavior of the oppressor, engage in conflict, and abuse one another. Attaining critical political consciousness enables the oppressed individuals and groups to regain their identity, reclaim their history and culture, and regain self-respect internally while fighting against the oppressor externally. Those people who are disconnected from their social and cultural bonds are disorganized, disoriented, and alienated; lacking critical understanding of individual biographies and collective history, the Oromo have not yet successfully completed their struggle by building national organizational capacity and dismantling the values and institutions of their oppressors. Colonialism attacks the individual psyche and biography, as well as the collective history, of a given people. “These damaging processes occur through various forms of violence, including colonial terrorism. Violence is any relation, process, or condition by which an individual or a group violates the physical, social, and/or psychological integrity of another person or group. From this perspective, violence inhibits human growth, negates inherent potential, limits productive living, and causes death” (Woodson, 1990[1933]: 135).

Nationalist projects of the oppressed emerge to deal with these complex problems. A few Oromo nationalists who gained political consciousness and self-respect by overcoming the psychological and cultural impacts of Ethiopian colonialism in the 1960s and the 1970s began to engage in Oromo nationalist projects by creating a self-help association, a musical group, and a liberation front, while most Oromo elites were serving their own interests and the interests of their colonial masters. When

some elements of the colonized people develop political consciousness, organize, and engage in the struggle for freedom, they turn their internalized anger, hostility, and violence that destroyed relationships among them against the colonizers. The emerging Oromo nationalists have faced monumental political problems as the result of the decadent Ethiopian political system. In addition to brutal violence and repression, the oppressor uses various methods of social control.

The oppressed is made a prisoner within a narrow circle of tamed ideas, a wrecked ecology, and a social network strewn with prohibitions. Their family and community life is infiltrated in order to limit his [her] capacity for bonding and trust. His [her] past is obliterated, and his [her] history falsified to render him [her] without an origin or a future. A system of reward and punishment based on loyalty to the oppressor is instituted to foster competition and conflict among the oppressed (Woodson 1990[1993]: 123).

The Oromo have been living under political slavery for one and a half century; they have been denied the freedom of self-expression, organization, and assembly. The colonialists and their Oromo collaborators have committed various crimes against Oromo culture, history, language, and psychology. The founding fathers and mothers of Oromo nationalism understood these complex problems and tried to solve them by developing social, economic, cultural, and political projects. Human beings have basic attributes that Bulhan (185: 262) characterizes as “essential human needs and essential human powers,” both of which are necessary in order to survive and fully develop. The people who have been colonized and dominated cannot adequately satisfy their basic needs and access their self-actualizing powers. These include “(a) biological needs, (b) sociability and rootedness, (c) clarity and integrity of self, (d) longevity and symbolic immortality, (e) self-reproduction in praxis, and (f) maximum self-determination.” Most of the Oromo people are incapable of satisfying their basic needs because of the “violent development” that the Ethiopian government has imposed on them to dispossess their economic and cultural resources through disempowering them.

Human beings must fully satisfy their basic biological needs, such as food, sex, clothing, and shelter in order to survive (Bulhan: 185: 262). However, these biological needs can only be satisfied in a culture that provides sociability and rootedness. Those people who are economically dispossessed and whose culture is attacked and disfigured by colonialism are underdeveloped. Colonialism can be maintained by committing genocide or ethnocide and/or by organized cultural destruction or mental genocide and the assimilation of a sector of the colonized population (Woodson, 1990[1993]). Ethiopian colonialists expropriated Oromo economic resources and destroyed Oromo institutions and cultural experts and leaders; they have also denied the Oromo the opportunity to develop the Oromo system of knowledge by preventing the transmission of Oromo cultural experiences from generation to generation. All these colonial policies have been designed to uproot the Oromo cultural identity and to produce individuals who lack self-respect and are submissive and ready to serve the colonialists. The Ethiopian colonialists—having caused the physical death of millions—have further attempted to introduce social and cultural death to the Oromo people. Both the Amhara and Tigrayan colonial elites have attempted to destroy or control the Oromo selfhood in order to deny the Oromo both individual and national self-determination. From all angles, the Habasha elites or the Amhara-Tigray ruling elites have tried their best to prevent the Oromo from achieving clarity and integrity of the Oromo self; they have prevented the Oromo from establishing cultural and historical immortality through the reproduction and recreation of their history, culture and worldview, and from achieving maximum self-determination.

The founding fathers and mothers of Oromo nationalism purposely engaged in political praxis to save the Oromo from psychological, social, cultural, and physical death. Without a measure of self-determination, a person cannot fully satisfy his/her biological and social needs, self-actualize, and engage in praxis as an active agent to transform society and oneself. Explaining the meaning of self-determination, Bulhan (1985: 262) states the following: Self-determination refers to the process and capacity to choose among alternatives, to determine one’s behavior, and to affect one’s destiny. As such, self-determination assumes a consciousness of human possibilities, an awareness of necessary constraints, and a willed, self-motivated engagement with one’s world. As individuals and groups, the

Oromo must struggle to achieve their personal and national self-determination through building national institutional and organizational capacity. The Oromo have the internal power to make their choices from the best possible alternatives and to have control over what they do. The Ethiopian colonialists have assumed almost complete control over the Oromo in an attempt to deny them the right of self-determination, both individually and collectively. Oromo individuals and groups who do not clearly comprehend the essence of self-determination and who do not struggle for it are doomed to both psychological and cultural death.

The founding fathers and mothers of Oromo nationalism (national *Oromummaa*) as a social group reclaimed their individual authentic biographies and Oromo collective history and defined the Oromo national problem; they sought the political solution of national self-determination. In order to continue the policy of social, cultural, psychological, and physical death and control of Oromo society, the Ethiopian colonial state has killed or destroyed these leaders and destroyed or suppressed their civic and political organizations. Without psychological liberation and organized, conscious and collective action, the Oromo people cannot fulfill the objectives of the Oromo national movement. Currently, most Oromo elites and leaders do not realize the problems they are causing for the Oromo national struggle because of their socio-cultural and psychological crises and their failure to critically understand the Oromo national crisis. The continuation of these crises and the absence of a united Oromo national leadership and national organizational capacity allow the continuation of the psychological, social, cultural, and physical death of the Oromo people.

Physical, social, or psychological death is too heavy a price for an accustomed passivity, a corrosive apathy, self-defeating individualism, and predictability of stagnation. Psychological work with the oppressed must give priority to organized and collective activity to regain power and liberty. One critical focus of intervention has to do with unraveling, through active involvement and demonstrations in the social world, the self-defeating patterns of relating, the tendency towards betrayal of the self and/or others, the internalized script for failure and disaster, as well as the conditioned fear of taking a stand or even fear of freedom—all of which derive from a contrived system of socialization, and elaborate formula to produce willing victims. Another crucial focus is the comprehension and refinement of strategies as well—as tactics for regaining power and liberty (Bulhan, 1985: 123).

In the capitalist world system, might is right. Those people who cannot empower themselves through liberation knowledge, psychological recovery, and the will to organize and defend themselves in a united movement cannot survive as a people. We know that one of the major reasons why the colonialists were able to destroy most indigenous peoples in the world was the result of these peoples' lack of unity and strong organizations. It is not enough to know about the impact of colonialism without recognizing and solving the internal crises of the colonized or the oppressed. Critical knowledge and psychological liberation are needed to solve internal crises of a colonized society. "A psychology of liberation would give primacy to the empowerment of the oppressed through organized and socialized activity with the aim of restoring individual biographies and a collective history derailed, stunted, and/or made appendage to those of others. Life indeed takes on morbid qualities and sanity becomes tenuous so long as one's space, time, energy, mobility, and identity are usurped by dint of violence (Bulhan, 1985: 123)." The Oromo elites and leaders must realize that Oromo society cannot achieve the liberation objectives without understanding and overcoming the internalized values that they have learned from their oppressors and the inferiority complex that they are suffering from. To overcome these problems, Oromo leaders need to understand the following facts: "To transform a situation of oppression requires at once a relentless confrontation of oppressors without, who are often impervious to appeals, to reasons or compassion, and an equally determined confrontation of the oppressor within, whose violence can unleash a vicious cycle of auto-destruction to the self as well as to the group (Bulhan, 1985: 123)".

Without using the tool of liberation knowledge to develop political consciousness and restore their usurped biographies and history and without building national institutional capacity, the Oromo cannot confront and defeat the oppressor within and without. The Oromo national movement is still suffering from the oppressor within and the lack of effective leadership and national organizational

capacity. Since the Oromo masses are not organized and educated in the politics and psychology of liberation, they have been reluctant participants in the Oromo national movement. They have been waiting to receive their liberation as a gift from Oromo political organizations. In reality, the Oromo liberation can only be achieved by the active participation of an effective portion of the Oromo people. As Adolfo (1965[1967]: 2) states, "Liberation does not come as a gift from anybody; it is seized by the masses with their own hands. And by seizing it they themselves are transformed; confidence in their own strength soars, and they turn their energy and their experience to the tasks of building, governing, and deciding their own lives for themselves."

The Oromo can challenge and overcome multiple levels of domination and dehumanization through multiple approaches and actions. As Collins (1990: 227) puts, "People experience and resist oppression on three levels: the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context ... and the systematic level of social institutions." Currently, the Oromo have started to develop individual and group political consciousness, but they are lacking national organizational capacity. The dominant groups are against mental liberation, and they use institutions such as schools, churches or mosques, the media, and other formal organizations to inculcate their oppressive worldviews in our minds. According to Collins (1990: 229), "Domination operates by seducing, pressuring, or forcing ... members of subordinated groups to replace individual and cultural ways of knowing with the dominant group's specialized thought. As a result ... 'the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situation which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us.' Or ... 'revolutionary begins with the self, in the self.'" As Collins (1990: 230) notes, "Empowerment involves rejecting the dimensions of knowledge, whether personal, cultural, or institutional, that perpetuate objectification and dehumanization ... individuals in subordinate groups become empowered when we understand and use those dimensions of our individual, group, and disciplinary ways of knowing that foster our humanity as fully human subjects."

The Oromo oppressors have continued to disrupt Oromo consciousness-building process through different mechanisms, particularly by infiltrating Oromo communities and organizations and dividing and turning them against one another. They have imprisoned and tortured or killed self-conscious individuals and bribed and promoted those Oromo who are not politically conscious or those opportunists who cannot see beyond their individual self-interests. According to Akbar (1996: 30), "Human beings have consistently worked to create the circumstances to maximize their consciousness and to ensure that each subsequent generation will know fully who and what they are. On the other hand, whenever human beings chose to oppress or capture other human beings, they also did all that they could do to undermine any expansion of consciousness by the oppressed They understand that ultimately the control of the people was in the control their thinking, in control of their minds, in control of their consciousness." By preventing the restoration of the Oromo heritage, culture, history, and institutions, the colonialists have limited the expansion of Oromo consciousness and self-knowledge. The colonialists have also continued to disseminate lies or distorted information to the Oromo people and others using the media, education, and religion, leading to their continued acceptance of the worldviews of their oppressor.

The process of mental liberation requires courage, hard work, discipline, and commitment; it involves individual, family and community. "Since the new consciousness can take a lifetime to begin to show tangible results," Akbar (1996: 41) writes, "it takes a great deal of courage to persist in breaking the chains of the old consciousness and developing a new consciousness." Every Oromo nationalist has a moral and national obligation to promote and engage in consciousness-building projects and national institutional capacity building. Colonialists and their collaborators use community divisions to keep mental shackles on their subjects. Most Oromo—despite the fact that they brag about it—forgot their *gadaa/siqqee* tradition, which was based on democracy, solidarity, and collectivity. Oromo nationalists must realize that there is strength in democracy, solidarity, and unity, and there is weakness in loneliness and fragmentation. Akbar (1996: 46) says, "As we gain

greater knowledge and information, many of those divisions will disappear because they cannot stand under the light of Truth and correct information.” In the capitalist world system, the less informed are the less organized. The less organized are the ones who are physically and mentally controlled by those who are better organized.

In forming solidarity and building institutions and organizations, Oromo nationalists do not need to agree on everything; their unity must be built on their common denominator. As Akbar (1996: 43) states, “In the process of liberation, it is important to recognize that unity does not require uniformity. We can stand together and preserve our separate qualities which serve to enhance further the objectives of freeing ourselves and all of our people.” Oromo nationalists and leaders need to have faith in themselves and their people. They have many talented individuals in many areas, which can play central roles in the process of mental liberation and consciousness- and institutional-building. “We must work to re-educate ourselves and our young people by seeking and studying new information. We must find every opportunity to celebrate ourselves and we must challenge the fear that causes us to hesitate in taking the chains out of our minds. We must work together, and we must have faith that our struggle will be successful, regardless of the opposition (Akbar, 1996: 46).” The accumulated grievances and the broadening of the gradual political consciousness of the Oromo in general and the youth in particular have resulted in the Oromia-wide peaceful protest movement between 2015-2018. This popular movement is called the *Qeerroo/Qarree* movement. The activist networks of *Qeerroo/Qarree* gradually blossomed as a form of *Oromummaa* or Oromo nationalism. For the first time since their colonization, national *Oromummaa* (Oromo nationalism) has tied all Oromo branches together to take a coordinated collective action to defend their common interest.¹

How did this Oromia-wide social movement emerge? As I explain below, the availability of political opportunities, such as politicized collective grievances; the existence of the OLF and its underground cells; the increase in political consciousness of students; the activities of legal Oromo political organizations; the cultural renaissance initiated by the MTA and students; the further development of national *Oromummaa*; the introduction of technological innovations such as social media, including mobile phones; internet and tweets; satellite TVs; and radios, had galvanized the Oromo people in general and the youth in particular to engage in the clandestinely organized and systematically networked peaceful protest movement that mobilized almost all sectors of Oromo society. This movement has produced far-reaching consequences for the Oromo national struggle and the politics in the Ethiopian Empire despite the fact that this movement did not yet develop its national organizational capacity to fully achieve the political, economic, cultural, and social objectives of the Oromo national movement as I demonstrate below.

3.2. The *Qeerroo/Qarree* Protest Movement

There have been politicized chains of historical and contemporary grievances and momentous events that have caused the emergence of this powerful peaceful protest movement in all parts of the Regional State of Oromia. While engaging in low-level guerrilla activities in rural areas, the OLF organized activist cells or nucleus to propagate its political objectives and to develop Oromo nationalism among Oromo urban dwellers, farmers, and students.² Civic institutions and legal political organizations have also engaged in Oromo cultural renaissance and political activities in Finfinnee and beyond. For instance, the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association (MTA) reemerged in Finfinnee in 1995, after it was outlawed in 1967, and restarted to rejuvenate Oromo culture, history, identity, and language through its weekly activities of cultural and musical festivals, poems, art, and writings in Finfinnee and in the surrounding towns.³ The MTA formed the Committee of Culture, History and

¹ The Oromo took coordinated actions as a people only in the 16th and 17th centuries under the *gadaa/siiqqee* system to establish their country by fighting against the Christian and Muslim empire builders in the Horn of Africa.

² Telephone interview with Abbaa Caalaa Lataa on June 18, 2017.

³ Interview with Diribi Demisse Boku, President of the Macha-Tulama Association,

Religion to engage in Oromo cultural renaissance.⁴ One of the significant achievements of this committee was the restoration of *Irreecha*, the popular Oromo national thanksgiving festival at Hora Arsadi, Bishoftu. The celebration of *Irreecha* started in 1997 by forty people, and in 2015, it was celebrated by about five million.⁵ Members of all Oromo branches, religious and age groups, and men and women from all over Oromia have started to travel to Hora Arsadi to celebrate *Irreecha* yearly by demonstrating their national culture, history, and identity and by realizing their potential as a people.⁶

At this festival, people sang protest songs and expressed cultural codes to express their opposition to the Tigrayan-led regime⁷ and Ethiopian colonialism. Recognizing the revolutionary potential of MTA, the regime outlawed it in 2011 to prevent the Oromo people from initiating cultural renaissance and from struggling for their human and national rights. Learning from the experiences of MTA, Oromo students in different universities formed cultural organizations known as the Gumii Aadaa, Afaan fi Seenaa Oromo (GAASO) (the Assembly of Oromo Culture, Language, and History) and the Gumii Aadaa fi Afaan Oromo (GAAO) (Assembly of Oromo Culture and Language) to retrieve Oromo culture, language, and history through artistic expressions, poems, and writings.⁸ When these activities contributed to the blossoming of national *Oromummaa*, the government labeled the prominent leaders of these cultural movements as terrorists, narrow nationalists, and members of the OLF, and targeted them for imprisonment, torture, and elimination.⁹ All these factors had contributed to the blossoming of Oromo nationalism or national *Oromummaa*, which has been mobilizing the Oromo nation.

The name *Qeerroo* gradually developed in 2011 after the OLF clandestinely organized Oromo students for many years.¹⁰ After the OLF was forced from the transitional government, in 1992, it has focused on armed struggle and clandestinely organizing the Oromo in general and the students in particular.¹¹ Organizing the Oromo youth continued for many years, but it was intensified when the Bale and Borana forests of Oromia were burned and thousands of wild animals killed from January to the first week of April 2000. The Ethiopian government ignored the problem. In fact, the Oromo in Bale and Borana and others believed that the regime set the fires in order to deny a base to OLF guerrilla fighters when it was fighting against Eritrea in 2000.¹² Realizing that the government was not interested to put out the fires, the Oromo students from the Addis Ababa University volunteered to put out the fires (Bulcha, 2014). The killings and imprisonments of the students increased the determination of Oromo students to resist the regime and to continue their struggle. Between 2000 and 2004, Oromo students and civic organizations such as the MTA and legal political organizations such as the Oromo National Congress and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement resisted the moving of the capital city of Oromia Regional State from Finfinnee to Adama.¹³ When on January 4, 2004, the leaders of MTA organized a peaceful protest against this change of the Oromia capital city, Oromo students, journalists, activists, and other civilians were targeted for repression.¹⁴

Oromo students in universities engaged in various activities; in addition to publishing their graduation bulletins every year, they celebrated an Oromo indigenous calendar that starts in January.¹⁵ The more Oromo students in higher institutions increased their political and cultural activities, the more the regime increased its repression. The expulsion of 350 Oromo students in 2004 from the

⁴ Telephone interview with Abbaa Biqila (Lagasse Deti) on June 21, 2017.

⁵ Ibid. Interview with Diribi Demisse Boku on August 20, 2016, Greenbelt Station, Maryland.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Abbaa Biqila, *ibid.*

⁸ Telephone interview with Beekan Guluma, *ibid.*; Diribi Demissie, *ibid.*

⁹ Telephone interviews with Beekan Guluma and Dessalegn Nagari, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Telephone interview with Abbaa Caalaa Lataa on June 18, 2017.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Telephone interview with Dessalegn Nagari on June 24, 2017.

¹³ Dessalegn Nagari, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Tarekegn Chimidi, "Systematic repression and rampant human rights abuses against the Oromo People in Ethiopia," www.gadaa.com/SystematicRepressionAgainstOromoByEthiopianRegime.pdf, p. 5, accessed on 6/20/2017.

¹⁵ Dessalegn Nagari, *ibid.*

Addis Ababa University demonstrated the big rift between the Oromo students and the regime.¹⁶ The resistance of Oromo students to the burning of Bale and Borana forests and the changing of the Oromia's capital city from Finfinnee to Adama helped these students learn about the importance of collective struggle and action. The OLF also learned from its trial and error how to build secret activist cells or nucleus through which it disseminated its directives and policies among Oromo students in colleges and high schools.¹⁷ In 2005, it declared what it called *Fincila Diddaa Garbummaa* (resistance to slavery) to invite all Oromo students and others to peacefully and clandestinely participate in the Oromo national struggle.¹⁸ Consequently, Oromo students expanded their political knowledge and developed their Oromo nationalism. As a result, the broadening of Oromo political consciousness among the Oromo youth and other sectors of Oromo society made young Oromo to be bold and fearless.¹⁹ This factor facilitated the further development of the Oromo national movement, which has been fighting against the genocidal policies and practices of the regime and the continuous humiliation of the Oromo people.

At the same time, the government claimed the policies of equality, federalism, and democracy, but it practiced "violent development" through impoverishing the Oromo and enriching Tigrayans and their collaborators. The practices of state terrorism, genocide, and political repression; the regime's lies about political and economic progress; rampant unemployment; and fake elections clearly convinced the Oromo in general and the students in particular that the Ethiopian state has been colonial, terrorist, and illegitimate. As legally recognized civic and political organizations, the MTA, the Oromo National Congress, and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (later both of them merged and called the Oromo Federalist Congress) tacitly became political platforms for Oromo students and other activists during the dark time for the Oromo people.²⁰ Falsely accusing that they broke anti-terrorist laws by associating them with the OLF, the regime imprisoned the top leaders and other activists of the MTA and the Oromo Federalist Congress. The so-called master plan was intended to expand Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) to 1.5 million hectares of surrounding Oromo lands by evicting Oromo farmers and by destroying Oromo identity, culture, and history (Thomson and López, 2015), and by replacing Oromos by Tigrayans and their collaborators. The Oromo have interpreted this policy as the replication of the policy of the Amhara-led government that uprooted and destroyed the Oromo in Finfinnee and replaced them by Amhara colonial settlers and their collaborators during the formation and development of Addis Ababa as the capital city of the Ethiopian Empire. Through the accumulated experiences of the past two and a half decades, the Oromo people realized that the Tigrayan colonial elites had been expropriating Oromo lands and other resources and transferring to themselves and their domestic and global supporters.

In the process, the regime merchandized the Oromo lands in order to enrich Tigrayan elites and their supporters.²¹ The Oromo who had been forcefully evicted have become daily laborers or beggars.²² Furthermore, the Tigrayan colonial elites had dominated commerce, sold fertilizers in high prices to farmers, and directly or indirectly forced the Oromo farmers to sell their animals and grains in cheap price to pay their debts and taxes, and other expenses.²³ In these ways, the Oromo people had become alien in their own country, and Oromia had been owned by Tigrayans. At the same time, the Oromo national struggle that emerged in the 1960s has been penetrating the psyche of the Oromo people. The more the OLF, other Oromo political organizations and civic institutions challenged the legitimacy of

¹⁶ <https://dandi4130.wordpress.com/2013/02/26/oromo-students-expelled-from-aau/>, accessed on 06/24/2017.

¹⁷ Abbaa Caalaa Lataa, *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Telephone interview with Diribi Demissie Boku, President of MTA, on August 20, 2016, Greenbelt Station, Maryland.

²⁰ Abbaa Caalaa, *ibid.*

²¹ Telephone interview with Dessalegn Nagari on June 18, 2017.

²² Telephone interview with Abbaa Biqila (Lagasse Deti), Secretary of the Board of MTA and the secretary of the Cultural, History and Religion of the MTA, on June 21, 2017.

²³ Telephone interview with Dessalegn Nagari on June 18, 2017.

the colonial regime clandestinely and openly by opposing its policies, the more the regime intensified its racism, terrorism, and repression.²⁴ In order to increase its surveillance, the government had engaged in the expansion of technology of communications such as mobile phones, internet, Facebook, TVs, and radios. However, these innovations started to have unintended consequences during the Oromo protest movement. The Oromo youth had effectively used these innovations to communicate among themselves and to expose the propaganda of the government. Through daily slogans or chants, the *Qeerroo/Qarree* had clearly articulated that the OLF should replace the Tigrayan-led regime and recognized the front as the origin of Oromo nationalism. The government reactions to the *Qeerroo/Qarree* protests had been violent and suppressive. Despite the fact that Oromia is the largest regional state in Ethiopia,²⁵ it had been under martial law²⁶ since the protests began. The government used this law to kill or detain thousands of Oromo, holding them in prisons and concentration camps.²⁷

The government also implemented security structures called *tokkoo-shane* (one-to-five), *garee* and *gott*;²⁸ their responsibilities included spying, identifying, exposing, imprisoning, torturing, and killing Oromo who were not interested in serving the regime. There had been deaths and reports of thousands of Oromo who had been maimed or blinded as a result of torture, beatings, or deaths during the suppression of protests.²⁹ For example, during the Oromia-wide day of peaceful protest on July 6, 2016, the regime's army known as *Agazi* massacred nearly 100 Oromo.³⁰ According to *Amnesty International*, 400 Oromo were killed before July 6, 2016.³¹ The Tigrayan state elites and their Oromo collaborators who used to think that the Oromo people were collections of "tribes" who could be used as raw materials and firewood could not understand the essence of the Oromo protest movement. For sometimes, the Ethiopian criminal elites had believed that by beating, torturing, castrating, decapitating, raping, and murdering Oromo students, farmers, educators, and merchants, they could stop the Oromo struggle for statehood, sovereignty, and egalitarian democracy.³² The protests had gained further traction as the state's reaction became violent. For example, in early October 2016 when millions of Oromo gathered at Hora Arsadi, south east of Finfinnee, for *Irreechaa* celebration, the government's army killed more than 700 Oromo and injured or imprisoned thousands.³³ This was sparked by peaceful, anti-government chants by young Oromos.³⁴ After the massacre, Oromo protesters burned properties, both locally and internationally owned businesses that had been built on the lands seized from the Oromo by Tigrayans and other business elites.³⁵ The Ethiopian government's response was to declare the state of emergency.³⁶ Set to six months, and later extended

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/21/ethiopia-no-letcrackdown-protests, accessed on 06/09/2017.

²⁶ Oromianeconomist.com/2016/03/23/martial-law-in-Oromia-the-stat-is-now-under-8-military-divisions-controlled-by-fascist-tplf-warlords-from-tigray/, accessed on 06/09/2017.

²⁷ www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/16/such-brutal-crackdown/killings-and-arrests-response-ethiopias-Oromo-protestsholding-them-in-prisons-and-concentration-camps, accessed on 06/09/2017.

²⁸ www.hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0505/2.html, accessed on 06/09/2017.

²⁹ www.hrw.org/reports/2016/06/16/such-brutal-crackdwon/killings-and-arrests-response-ethiopias-oromo-protests, accessed on 06/09/2017.

³⁰ www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37015055, accessed on 06/09/2017.

³¹ www.newsweek.com/ethiopia-hundreds-killed-excessive-force-oromo-protests-says-hrw-470800, accessed on 6/10/2017.

³² <http://amharic.voanews.com/a/what-is-the-current-situation-in-oromia-region/3331322.html>, accessed on 05/17/2016.

³³ www.opride.com/2016/10/02/irreecha-massacre-several-dozens-feared-dead-bishoftu/, accessed on 06/09/2017.

³⁴ www.opride.com/2016/10/02/irreecha-massacre-several-dozens-feared-dead-bishoftu/, accessed on 06/09/2017.

³⁵ <http://nazret.com/blog/index.php/2016/02/14/ethiopia-oromo-protests-burned-down>, accessed on 06/09/2017.

³⁶ www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/ethiopia-declares-state-emergency-protests-161009110506730.html, accessed on 06/09/2017.

by three months, its aim was to curb the growing anti-government protest movement. The state of emergency was the last attempt by the government to stop the Oromo protests and to stay in power.

Ethiopian soldiers were enforcing the emergency rules and were seizing or breaking satellite dishes. The emergency rules also prevented citizens from associating with political organizations that the regime had branded as “terrorist.” One of these organizations was the OLF, which was established in 1973-74 by Oromo nationalists to promote the principles of national self-determination and democracy. For several years, the Oromia Region had been under a crackdown enforced by special police groups and the army known as “Agazi.”³⁷ After the protest movement started, according to rights organizations, more than 2000 Oromo were killed in eleven months.³⁸ Several thousand more had been imprisoned, tortured, blinded, and raped. The government had stated that 11,000 people were imprisoned. To hide its crimes from the international community, the regime had blocked the Internet and collected phones from thousands of Oromo.³⁹ The Oromo protest movement had a positive impact on the entire Oromo in general and the Oromo diaspora in particular. It had revitalized the Oromo national culture, history, and identity. The movement had influenced the Oromo diaspora through various radios and satellite TVs and Facebook, and the Oromo diaspora had communicated with their people in their homeland. The Oromo diaspora had been learning about national *Oromummaa* and rallying behind the Oromo national struggle in Oromia. It had showed solidarity with the Oromo protesters by demonstrating and financially and diplomatically supporting them. In these processes, Oromo nationalism has become a global phenomenon and the previous isolation of the Oromo diaspora had been reduced. The more the regime had brutalized the Oromo in different parts of Oromia, the more the crimes of the regime had been reported and exposed. Overall, such events had angered the Oromo and increased their determination to engage in collective actions. Gradually, the Oromo protest movement had opened a new chapter in the history of Oromia and Ethiopia.

This history has been written by Oromo blood, and the relationship between the Oromo and their colonizers has been changed forever. The final chapter of this history is not yet written, however. Many things have changed as the result of the Oromo protest movement. The cost the Oromo have paid in lives and suffering is very high. According to different reports, between 2014 and 2018, more than 5000 Oromo including school children, pregnant women, and elderly people were massacred, and tens of thousands of Oromo were imprisoned, kicked, beaten, tortured, and decapitated. In fact, at this time, we do not have enough data on the killings, imprisonments, and other crimes on the Oromo. Despite all these tragedies, the Oromo people have restored their national pride, patriotism, and bravery that they enjoyed prior to mid-19th century. As one of the phases of the Oromo national struggle, the Oromo youth movement emerged as a formidable political force between 2014 and 2018 and shook the foundation of the Tigrayan-led racist and terrorist minority government of Ethiopia. The brain of this government was the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), which organized and led the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) for almost twenty-seven years. As the result of the popular struggle of the *Qeerroo/Qarree* and other movements, the ruling party, the EPRDF, was reorganized in April 2018 and Abiy Ahmed, who was trained in the Ethiopian army and politics under the leadership of the TPLF emerged as Prime Minister by replacing Haile Mariam Desalegn. Until the EPRDF or the neo-*nafxanya* regime of Abiy Ahmed is overthrown, the Oromo will continue to suffer immensely. They are denied state support in relation to protection, food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and other necessary services.⁴⁰

³⁷ www.ayyaantuu.net/ethiopia-romia-regional-state-under-siege/, accessed on 06/10/2017.

³⁸ www.hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0505/, accessed 06/10/2017.

³⁹ <http://ecadforum.com/2016/10/06/internet.blocked-in-ethiopia/>, accessed on 06/10/2017.

⁴⁰ <http://agensir.it/mondo/2016/10/12/ethiopia-state-of-emergency-the-repression-of-the-Oromo-people-in-broad-daylight/>, accessed on 06/10/2017.

Because the regime fears the size of the Oromo population, it attempts to reduce their influence through hidden policies and war.⁴¹ The regime has already prevented genuine Oromo representatives from coming into political power through systematic killings, imprisonment, or exile.⁴² For these reasons, the Oromo are very concerned about their future. In addition, little looks set to change as a result of external pressure because international powers such as the United States⁴³ as well as organizations such as USAID have a close relationship with the government.⁴⁴ This gives rise to concerns within the Oromo community that their grievances are not heard and that they are not given support. Nevertheless, recently the Oromo people are determined to change their status quo and better their future. That is why they are continuing with their movement, despite massive incidents of deaths and imprisonments. However, the Ethiopian regime has demonstrated that it will dictate everything to the Oromo people and its leadership through the barrel of the gun. The Oromo are rejecting this heavy-handed approach. Therefore, in this conflict, there are two options—either the Ethiopian government must go, and the Oromo be victorious, or the Oromo people must be destroyed to serve the interest of the government. Despite the fact that the government has intensified its terrorism and genocide, the Oromo protest movement has started to change the political landscape of Oromia and Ethiopia. The protest movement has brought about fundamental changes in Oromo society. Young Oromo protesters are equipped with the ideology of national *Oromummaa*, which has uprooted the divisions that the enemies of the Oromo created among different Oromo branches.

The Oromo protesters have practically demonstrated that they struggle to establish a democratic system that will exercise the principles of national self-determination and egalitarian democracy, which are in line with their democratic tradition. Globally and diplomatically, the Oromo protest movement has won world attention because of its political maturity, determination, inclusiveness, and for totally disproving the ideology and political program of the Tigrayan-led minority government or the Abiy-led regime. For the first time in Oromo history, the world media outlets such as Washington Post, BBC, Al Jazeera, Newsweek, AFP, the Guardian, and others have reported on the Oromo protest movement and its brutal crackdown by the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government and the Abiy regime. This peaceful movement for a limited degree has broken international silence on the Oromo struggle. For instance, on January 21, 2015, the European Parliament condemned the violent crackdown on Oromo protesters and called for the establishment of a credible, transparent, and independent body for investigating the murdering and imprisoning thousands of protesters in Oromia.⁴⁵ Similarly, the UN Human Rights Experts demanded the Ethiopian authorities to stop the violent crackdown on Oromo peaceful protesters.⁴⁶ The US Department of State vaguely expressed its concern about the violence associated with the protest movement. Nevertheless, expressing its firm support for the regime, the United States signed security partnership with the Ethiopian government to exchange “logistics, services, and supplies” and planned “for a future security cooperation activity designed to meet mutual defense priorities.”⁴⁷

As the consequences of the recent Oromo protests, politically conscious Oromo and others have realized that it is only a matter of time for the Oromo nation to achieve its political objectives for national self-determination and democracy by establishing a democratic government on the grave of

⁴¹ www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/006/2014/en/, accessed on 06/10/2017.

⁴² www.change.org/p/united-nations-human-rights-committee-human-riths-campaign-stop-massacre-of-oromo-people-and-suppression-of-human-rights-in-ethiopia, accessed on 06/10/2017.

⁴³ www.voanews.com/a/us-ethiopia-relationship-strong-but-complicated-2880154.html, accessed on 06/10/2017.

⁴⁴ www.usaid.gov/ethiopia, accessed on 06/10/2017.

⁴⁵ See “European Parliament resolution on the situation in Ethiopia,” www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+P8-RC-2016-0082+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN, accessed on 04/14/2016.

⁴⁶ See “UN experts urge Ethiopia to stop violent crackdown on Oromia protesters,” www.somalistate.com/un-experts-urge-ethiopia-to-stop-violent-crack-down-on-oromia-protesters/, accessed on 4/14/2016.

⁴⁷ See “US, Ethiopia sign new agreement, enhance security partnership,” www.hiiraan.com/news4/2016/Apr/104913/us_ethiopia_sign_new_agreement_to_enhance_defense_and_security_partnership.aspx, accessed on /14/2016.

the colonial state. Farsighted political activists, serious nationalists, and organic intellectuals have realized that without building strong national civic institutions and organizations protests or revolts alone may not empower the Oromo nation. Developing new political strategies, building broad-based alliances, and working on building strong national civic institutions and political organizations are absolutely necessary to finalize the Oromo national struggle for self-determination and egalitarian democracy. The Oromo youth protest movement has created conducive conditions for restoring the Oromo democratic tradition and for building strong national civic institutions and political organizations, which are required to establish a genuine democracy in Oromia and beyond. To support the Oromo youth movement in their struggle for self-determination and democracy and to restore indigenous Oromo democratic traditions and wisdom, Oromo nationalists and various organizations in the diaspora created the Global *Gumii* Oromia (GGO) and the Oromia Global Forum (OGF).

3.3. The Establishment of GGO and OGF

Oromo civic institutions, political organizations, religious organizations, professional associations, women's organizations, youth organizations, and individuals all over the world came together to help organize the GGO in the diaspora in order to rally behind the *Qeerroo/Qarree*-led protest movement and to free the Oromo people from oppression and exploitation. Disorganized or decentralized Oromo forces, civic, professional and political organizations, and religious institutions are incapable of effectively and efficiently fulfilling the objectives of the Oromo national struggle through rebuilding their unity and empowering them. The GGO was organized to support the Oromo protest movement in Oromia ideologically and financially and to build Oromo national organizational capacity in collaboration with other progressive forces in order to sustain the momentum of the national struggle. There were seven objectives for establishing GGO. The first objective of forming GGO was to financially, ideologically, politically, and diplomatically support the Oromo protest movement in particular and the Oromo national struggle in general. The second objective was to further understand and confront the Oromo ideological, leadership and organizational deficits and to develop central organizing strategic plans at the grassroots level for the Oromo national struggle. The third objective was to implement the tactics and strategies of Oromo national movement at the grassroots level through short and long-term goals. The fourth objective was to help identify and channel the talents and energies of Oromo networks effectively and efficiently. The fifth objective was to recruit more members and mobilize their expertise and their economic resources for building Oromo national institutions and organizations. The sixth objective was to engage in *gadaa/siiqqee* renaissance to build an Oromo national organization capacity, which will be the foundation of an Oromia democratic state. The final objective was to further develop Oromo nationalism and consolidate the unity of the Oromo people in Oromia and the diaspora.

GGO's main objective was to gradually establish a federation of Oromo religious institutions, professional civic organizations, human rights and advocacy agencies, even political organizations to establish a national platform to debate, deliberate, and develop policies in order to advance the Oromo national interest through building national institutional or organizational capacity. Within three years, GGO initiated and facilitated the formation of Oromia Global Forum (OGF), which was founded by forty associations such as civic groups, advocacy and human rights organizations, and religious institutions in March 2020. Today, OGF members are forty-five entities or organizations or institutions. OGF is an organization of organizations, and it has three committees, namely Human Rights Advocacy Committee, Information Collection Committee, and Resource Mobilization and Organization Committee. OGF has also created the Global Oromo Interfaith Council (GOIC) to establish solidarity and consensus among the followers of the three Oromo religions, namely *Waqeeffannaa*, Christianity, and Islam, in order to defend and protect Oromo human rights and to promote the Oromo national interest. The leaders and members of OGF and GOIC are planning to establish their branches in Oromia, when the political condition will be conducive. The Oromo people must stop to wait for some entities to liberate them, and they need to organize themselves wherever

they are and unite on local, regional, national, and global levels to take their national destiny in their own hands.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The major political problem facing Oromo society at this historical juncture is the lack of national institutional or organizational capacity that has the ability to mobilize all Oromo human and material resources under national leadership to confront and defeat both the internal and external enemies of the Oromo nation. The major step in dealing with Oromo organizational deficits is to develop and unleash the power of Oromo individuals on both personal and collective levels by clearly understanding the concepts of national *Oromummaa* (Oromo national culture, identity and nationalism) and diversity. By openly and honestly addressing the issues that Oromo individuals and groups discuss in informal settings like the issues of religious plurality and/or regional difference and nature of Oromia when it will achieve national self-determination, the Oromo will transform *Oromummaa* from an intellectual concept to a uniting force for liberation and justice. This discussion should be based on a single standard for all Oromo and all people and should include the principles of *safuu* (ethical and moral order), human decency, and the democratic rule of law. If Oromo nationalists honestly and courageously recognize their strengths and weaknesses as individuals, groups, organizations, and society and build upon their strengths while reducing or eliminating their weaknesses, they can emerge victorious from the destructive alien cultural, ideological, and political nightmares they have faced in the past and the present.

The Oromo leadership needs to recognize the inadequacies of existing institutions, organizations, visions, and strategies and need to plan and develop new strategies and approaches that will unleash the potential of an Oromo society based on national *Oromummaa*. The Oromo cannot liberate themselves without overcoming their institutional and organizational deficiencies and leadership problems that emerged prior to and after their colonization. While recognizing the negative legacy of portions of historical Oromo political systems, the Oromo political leadership should practically incorporate the positive aspects of *gadaa/siiqqee* (Oromo democracy) into their institutional and organizational norms and culture. Furthermore, the improved *gadaa/siiqqee* system must allow girls and women to equally participate in the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of the government. Oromo organizational culture and norms cannot be changed without transforming Oromo self-concepts at the individual, interpersonal and collective levels. The Oromo leadership as well as the population as a whole must adopt these changes. Members of the Oromo political leadership need to be effective leaders who can engage in the processes of cognitive liberation and self-emancipation; they must struggle to develop in themselves and their followers' personal leadership skills, such as self-control, discipline, ability to communicate, and a deep sense of social obligation or commitment. Effective leaders have the capacity to understand that the oppressed are capable of self-change through educational and popular participation in struggle. They need to believe in a democratic conversation by recognizing that both leaders and followers possess both "leading" and "led" selves.

A combination of the processes of cognitive liberation and self-emancipation along with liberation knowledge or expertise, technological capability or skills, modern organizational rules and codes, and courage and determination are needed to build an effective and strong leadership. The Oromo leadership cannot find all these qualities from a few individuals. Therefore, the leadership needs to blend the experiences of political leadership and public intellectuals with the knowledge and commitment of the general populace to develop a liberated society based on national *Oromummaa* principles. Leadership networks and chains should engage in a conversation with the Oromo people to develop a new organizational culture that facilitates the institutionalization of Oromo democratic experiences in ways that are compatible with contemporary technological and political conditions. Oromo nationalists, public intellectuals, and the Oromo people as a whole must challenge the tendency of exclusivist leadership and political anarchism and fragmentation and reinvent the Oromo national political leadership that is anchored in national *Oromummaa* and *gadaa/siiqqee* principles.

Building national civic institutions such as GGO, OGF, and GOIC is essential to prepare a way for liberating Oromo society from all forms of oppression and exploitation through forming an Oromia democratic state, which can be a part of multinational federation or confederation or a sovereign state.

5. References

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