Narratives of Environmental Disaster in Ethiopia: The Political Ecology of Famine

By

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Abstract:

The conception and inheritance of narratives are an important component of being human. At the foundation of many societies, narratives take shape through verbal and written stories, songs, artifacts, records of events, testimonials, and even memories. These narratives are carried forward to the next generation in the hopes of remembering and educating those who look to the past to understand their present and future environments. Despite ethnic and cultural differences, groups of people find ways to preserve the narratives that can either form or unite their identities together. This statement by no means disparages the impact of historical forces, such as European colonialism, that has tampered the narratives of countless Indigenous groups in North America, the Global South and Africa. The pursuit of identifying narratives can aid in the unravelling of so-called truths of history, seeking justice for people who can no longer do so themselves, and healing generations of systematic oppression in countless broken communities. Ethiopia has spent over a century facing significant drought conditions that have rendered many of the nation's northern regions vulnerable to famine. For this reason, this paper focuses on the impacts of anthropogenic environmental disasters in Ethiopia, specifically the famine of 1983-1985. The goal of this research is to analyze the 1983-1985 famine to understand its significance in relation to contemporary Ethiopian disaster management. This analysis will take into consideration the role of colonial occupation and the transitions in Ethiopian political regimes, both of which are deeply rooted in the causal elements of this disaster. The literature reviews were used to provide a historical summary of the socio-economic and political climate during Ethiopian famines. Furthermore, it explains specific definitions and concepts relating to political ecology and disasters. The analysis section draws on the data gathered in a Pressure and Release (PAR) model of Ethiopian famine to answer this paper's research questions. The discussion and conclusion discuss the challenges in conducting this research and the future of Ethiopian disaster risk reduction.

Foreword:

I was drawn to the MES program at York University because it provided an interdisciplinary approach to research environmental issues. It allowed students to create their own syllabi and guide them in forming exciting research projects. I had completed a bachelor's degree at Carleton University with a Major in Human Rights and a Minor in Philosophy. The MES program provided me an opportunity to expand on specific socio-economic and political topics as it relates to the environment. I achieved this through the MES Plan of Study (POS) by forming three learning components: 1. Political Ecologies, 2) Environment Justice, 3) Disaster Response. Each of these components had multiple objectives and throughout my studies I was able to design and enrol in courses that allowed me to study them.

I was inspired to pursue this research topic because it gave me the opportunity to direct it towards my ethnic background. As a first-generation Canadian-Ethiopian, it is common to hear discourse that Ethiopia is a famine-stricken country. This narrative negatively impacts the relationship between Ethiopian diaspora and their ethnic identity. It preserves the notion that developing countries, such as Ethiopia, experience famines due to inadequate socio-economic and political development. Realistically, uneven development has been responsible for its deterred development. For example, current developmental problems in Africa are attributed to foreign land ownership from India and China and commercial activities that affect the livelihood of rural communities. Additionally, narratives of enviro-disasters such as famines, droughts, and floods also justify the disbursement of foreign aid; deterring African nations to focus on their own development, binding them to the will of their donors.

My area of concertation explains that environmental justice (especially in Africa) can be advanced through disaster analysis. Disaster risk reduction currently operates within a reactive model, meaning that structures of power (national or international institutions) respond to disaster injustices through their manifestation as opposed to assessing the pre-conditioned socio-economic and political processes that have contributed to specific environmental issues. In my opinion, there needs to be a shift towards a (more) preventative model, incorporating an ecological lens that analyzes histories of capitalism, primitive accumulation, exploitation, displacement and neoliberal agendas. As it stands now there is too much competition in the field

of disaster relief which detracts from effective coordinated methods of communicating with affected groups. Environmental justice entails the consultation, knowledge sets, and the participation of rural and urban populations in disaster management to be recognized, included and implemented.

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Introduction

1.1 - A Journey of Personal Inquiry

The conception and inheritance of narratives are an important component of being human. At the foundation of many societies, narratives take shape through verbal and written stories, songs, artifacts, records of events, testimonials, and even memories. These narratives are carried forward to the next generation in the hopes of remembering and educating those who look to the past to understand their present and future environments. Despite ethnic and cultural differences, groups of people find ways to preserve the narratives that can either form or unite their identities together. This statement by no means disparages the impact of historical forces, such as European colonialism, that has tampered the narratives of countless Indigenous groups in North America, the Global South and Africa. The pursuit of identifying narratives can aid in the unravelling of so-called truths of history, seeking justice for people who can no longer do so themselves, and healing generations of systematic oppression in countless broken communities.

As a first-generation Ethiopian Canadian, I had gaps and misconceptions about my own native heritage and history. The first-generation children of immigrants (from personal experience) can have a distant connection to their lineage until a later point in their lives. In my case, it was a lack of stories, pictures and access to information outside of my immediate family. When I first visited Ethiopia, I was nine years old and entering a foreign land with pre-conditioned ideas of developed and developing countries. My own ignorance questioned if my cousins living in Ethiopia would listen to the same music I did or watch the same television shows. Additionally, I questioned how beautiful homes, malls, restaurants and attractions could exist in such a country. At the end of the trip, I was hesitant to leave because I recognized that despite our different geographies, the narratives I had learned from the Canadian education system, media and testimonials of Ethiopians living in Canada were not an accurate representation of my experience. I am not denying that Ethiopia's troubling poverty level and national development were non-issues. However, my experience in the country created a new, positive internal narrative while I previously had negative connotations. To be clear, I use the word negative because African countries (in my experience) were often discussed in the context of being underdeveloped, drought-stricken, impoverished, and consistently in need of foreign

aid. There were two forms of imagery from connotations of Ethiopia - tourist destination safaris (positive) or underdeveloped impoverished nations (negative).

The education system for most of my adolescence had been predominantly from the perspective of Western and European narratives. Secondly, outside of the very few discussions with my immediate family, I had a surface-level knowledge of Ethiopian history. Over time, a dichotomy had formed between my Canadian and Ethiopian identities. I attribute this initial separation of identity to a lack of interest in my own ethnicity, mainly to conform to social norms. I initially chose to research Ethiopian environmental disasters for two reasons, the first was that it gave me a structured opportunity to inquire about modern Ethiopian history (spanning the last century and a half). The second, was a curiosity with anthropogenic environmental disasters (man-made disasters that have been labeled as natural). The combination of these two interests has formed the foundation for this research paper in the hopes of bringing new insight into the political ecology of environmental disasters in Ethiopia, specifically between the years 1983-85. Environmental hazards combined with pre-existing socio-economic and political pressures resulted in the famine's high mortality rate. Additionally, the sensationalism of the famine through international multimedia outlets contributed to its mismanagement. Environmental disasters have and continue to be a critical issue plaguing the present-day landscape. Many social and business practices around the world have converted to "green" solutions or initiatives to combat climate change and environmental degradation. Yet, without a complete understanding of past events, can humanity ever avoid repeating them in the future.

I acknowledge and appreciate the privilege of being born in a country like Canada. I seldomly question access to basic living amenities such as water, electricity, or the Internet. In January 2020, I embarked on a three-week research trip to Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. The last time I visited Ethiopia in 2007, and since then there has been a significant amount of infrastructure development. However, Ethiopia has become one of the most populous nations in Africa, exceeding a population of 100 million people. The economic disparity within the city remains very visible, unlike Canada's, where it is more difficult to see an individual's economic status based on appearance. The streets are filled with an overwhelming amount of traffic, beggars, markets, herders, and, most of all, construction. Despite all this, I found that there was

organized chaos to it all, which may be alarming to those unfamiliar to driving in streets without strict traffic laws. It was clear that the more financially secure an individual or family was, the higher likelihood that they lived outskirts of the larger Ethiopian cities. In fact, my own family (who I was staying with) described it as a way to avoid air pollution and over crowdedness of the city. Ethiopian homes, even in wealthier neighbourhoods, experience regular power blackouts and water shortages (water would be purchased in the thousands of litres approximately twice a week). This experience showed me that even the wealthy in Ethiopia could not entirely escape the shortcomings of national infrastructure.

The ability to travel to Ethiopia at an older and more educated point in my life has allowed me to recognize social, economic and political issues. I refer specifically to the privilege of being able to participate and prioritize in global and national environmental initiatives. For example, in the West, public or private groups implement initiatives that are environmentally conscious such as recycling, reducing carbon footprints, consuming green products, or conservation of spaces. This is a luxury many people who live in abject poverty do not have in geographies of uneven development due to the impacts of colonialism and capitalism. It creates a higher risk of vulnerability to environmental hazards. In addition, their governments are expected to participate in initiatives that aim to solve global environmental issues. These processes are usually at the expense of their own domestic development. There are two reasons why my personal inquiry is important within the context of this research paper. The first is that I am part of a generation that has inherited the responsibility in resolving on-going environmental neglect and degradation. A person's role in this extends to larger social agendas where the hyper awareness of an individual's contribution to environmentalism motivates their socio-economic and political decisions. Secondly, as a member of the Ethiopian diaspora, I am intrinsically mindful of Canada and Ethiopia's roles in the Anthropocene are different. The uneven power in Western-centric policies and relationships on issues of anthropogenic activities influences the perception and development of African countries.

1.2 - An Enticing Narrative of the Anthropocene?

The Anthropocene, a relatively new term coined by the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and ecologist Eugene Stoermer, explains the beginning of a new geological epoch of

human impact on the geology and ecosystems of the Earth. The emergence of this new epoch addresses the impact of humanity on global ecologies, such issues being climate change, environmental degradation, and pollution. In his book, *Environmental Transformations: A Geography of the Anthropocene*, Mark Whitehead explains how the age of Anthropocene will force humanity to change the ways in which it studies the environment. Whitehead writes that,

> "The Anthropocene is thus marked, according to Crutzen by 'greenhouse gases' reaching their highest levels for 400,000 years; the increasing power of humans to regulate and control the flow of water through dam-building and sluice constructions; global industries releasing some 160 millions tonnes of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere each year; increasing levels of oceanic exploitation by the fisheries application to soils; and the increasingly high extraction of minerals and aggregates from the Earth's crust through mining. (Whitehead 1)

Crutzen's Anthropocene is not entirely misleading because it addresses major contributing factors to many industry-related environmental issues. However, what the Anthropocene fails to address is that non-Western and European people have faced the ecological destruction of their environments countless times before Western and European acknowledgement. A failure to recognize these geographic perspectives on environmental change will undoubtedly be the erasure of historical transformations on ecology. Whitehead draws on the work of Wolfgang Sachs' book, *Planet Dialectics – Explorations in Environmental and Development*, to explain that people should be wary of unified political projects that highlight shared ecological fates (Sachs in Whitehead 7). Africa is an example of such geographies that do not share the same globalized ecological fate. The reason why African ecological fates differ from Western or European ones is that colonialism has left long lasting impacts on their socio-economic and political development. Most commonly, the impacts of colonialism are experienced through legacies of power such as coloniality and the industrial nature of capitalism. For example, some Western communities understand the significance of climate change while others deny it. Outside of predominantly racialized communities, Western communities that believe in climate change do not experience its direct and immediate environmental threats. In contrast, people living in developing countries experience issues such as forced migration and frequent environmental disasters that directly impact their livelihoods.

The Paris Agreement is an example of what Wolfgang Sachs refers to as "unified political projects." The agreement consists of many mechanisms. For instance, Independent Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs or NDCs) are a primary method of achieving

objectives in the agreement. The content of INDC's is left to the discretion of the nation state, with the purpose of disclosing actions related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. These actions provide a level of international insight and transparency into the actions of each party nation, which is then kept in a public archive upheld by the Convention secretariat (Sand & Peel 322). In conjunction with INDCs, the Paris Agreement allows its parties to voluntarily cooperate with one another, promoting sustainable development, environmental transparency and integrity (Sand & Peel 324). Through Article 6.4, voluntary cooperation between public and private sectors allows for collaboration efforts towards mitigating global emissions (Sand & Peel 324). In consideration of climate change adaptation, the Paris Agreement established two methods in addressing this, (1) a global goal to enhance adaptive capacities, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability; (2) parties of the agreement must participate in planning adaptation processes, including implementation, support needs and action plans (Sand & Peel 325). This is important as it is directly related to climate related disasters.

A 2018 article by Tadesse Weldu Teklu argued that global warming had been highly exaggerated by international institutions and industrialized countries to delay the development of developing countries. He suggests that African countries like Ethiopia should lead the continent in leaving the Paris Agreement due to its development limitations (Teklu 404). His argument is a critical component of the climate change discussion and action because it encompasses the reality that developing countries have very little contribution to total global emissions, yet possess much of the responsibility to course correct development. Teklu raises many points to support his argument, but three stand out the most. The first is that developing countries should not blindly follow developed countries. The Paris Agreement created unified goals to eventually phase out fossil fuels, yet large industrialized countries are still emitting 100 times more carbon dioxide and will continue to do so for another decade or two (Teklu 407). His second point highlights that international agreements to often destined to fail, especially the problematic Paris Agreement – considering that it is a legally non-binding tool based on the wide range of its signatories' interests (Teklu 408). Third, Teklu worries that climate change is a tool of neo-colonialism, aka neo-liberalism, where the use of capital and globalization is to gain political control (Teklu 411). In the context of Africa, neo-colonial activity contrasts Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Therefore, if the Paris Agreement is imposed in African countries like Ethiopia,

it can make them a producer of raw material goods that generate less CO2 emissions, however, this would be for the benefit of Western industries (Teklu 411).

Simon Chin-Yee's article, *Africa and the Paris Climate Change Agreement* explains the reservations of African nations at the passing of the Paris Agreement. In it, Chin-Yee writes a very concerning passage, stating that, "the UNFCCC process has no mechanism for majority decisions, which means that it is "consensus or nothing". This creates its own pressures…in the build-up to Paris, many African negotiators wondered aloud whether a bad deal was better or worse than no deal at all" (Chin-Yee 362). The plight of contemporary Africa traces back to colonial times, which have severely marginalized its nations socially, politically, economically. Shin-Yee clarifies there are reasons to be concerned in ratifying a global treaty that may be a detriment to African nations. The reason why climate change initiatives (ex. the Kyoto Protocol) have suffered in implementation is because of the pressures they placed on developing nations to account for responsibilities that they were not primarily responsible for creating.

In the West, the narrative of environmental apocalypse has become intertwined in mainstream consumption for decades. For example, movies such as 1961's *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*, 2004's *The Day After Tomorrow* and most recently 2018's *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*, display graphic scenes of environmental disaster. All these films and many more like them share similar tropes of the planet's environment if human activities remain the same. It subliminally influences our decision to be more ecologically conscious while many developing countries have been living in similar conditions portrayed in these films. The realities of the Anthropocene are not new, and rather it is acknowledged by the systems of power (i.e. governments, the scientific community, multinational corporations) that created it. In Western cases, racialized communities live in similar ecological conditions experienced by populations in geographies of uneven development.

Laura Pulido has written articles that convey the importance of geographic perspectives in relation to environmental change. In her article, *Geographies of Race Ethnicity I: White Supremacy vs White Privilege in Environmental Racism Research,* she focuses on the regulatory noncompliance of white supremacy and environmental racism. Pulido suggests the use of

intersectional theory (numerous layers of difference) to understand these social issues (Pulido 2) better analytically. She uses the example of Exide, a battery recycling facility, to illustrate her point of white supremacy and regulatory noncompliance. Exide used 88 different types of cancer-causing chemicals (ex. arsenic and lead) and polluted those chemicals into many low-income Latin communities. Additionally, they did not comply with health and environmental laws which were argued to be white supremacists (Pulido 4). In another article, *Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism*, Pulido highlights the systemic causes of the current water conditions of Flint, Michigan. She argues that the citizens of Flint (who are majority Black) have been devalued and abandoned for municipal fiscal solvency through racial capitalism. The article highlights the historical background of Flint – including when the water supply was being poisoned intentionally to save the city money. Pulido explains that racism can historically be traced past colonialism, additionally, capitalism exploits human difference (Pulido 7); "the antinomies of accumulation require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires" (Melamed in Pulido 7). Pulido's examples of Exide and Flint are acts of environmental racism in predominantly non-white communities that occur in developed countries. It is important to understand the actions (politics of abandonment) of municipal, state, or national heads towards issues of environmental racism. These actions impact white populations as well by condemning the majority of poor, non-white communities. The power in white privilege lies in their socio-economic abilities to escape those places. Therefore, acts of environmental racism are not solely inherent as an issue of race but of space as well. As Pulido explains, the small percentage of white people living in polluted non-white spaces are also devalued based on their proximity to non-white groups (Pulido 8).

I used Pulido's work, and the Paris Agreement to highlight the age of the Anthropocene can minimize the severity of pre-existing vulnerabilities in certain communities and geographies. These vulnerabilities are often steeped in historical causation, whether they be socio-economic or political. Authors such as Kathryn Yusoff and Jesse Ribot have become critical of the Anthropocene despite its enticing narrative of a shared global ecological goal for this reason. For instance, Ribot's article, *Cause and Response: Vulnerability and Climate in the Anthropocene*, seeks to understand why climate change risk assessments can trace the causality of hazards but

fails in identifying the capacity of vulnerable communities (i.e. failed social protections, inadequate assets). When disasters are framed as anthropogenic, it can normalize the pre-existing state (i.e. vulnerability, exposure, susceptibility, lack of coping capacity) of the poor, racialized, and or marginalized communities it impacts (Ribot 672). Yusoff's book, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None,* explains that the Anthropocene has conveniently packaged global environmental and climatic issues as a collective problem. This is not the first time Black and brown bodies have faced environmental destruction, where their lives and worlds have been destroyed. The problem lies in the modern homogenization of these events and how it tips the scales of power regarding the future of those communities. Yusoff writes that,

> "The histories of the Anthropocene unfold a brutal experience for much of the worlds racialized poor and without due attention to the historicity of those events (and their eventfulness); the Anthropocene simply consolidates power via this innocence in the present to affect decisions that are made about the future and its modes of survival…To be included in the "we" of the Anthropocene is to be silenced by a claims to universalism that fails to notice its subjugations, taking part in a planetary condition in which no part was accorded in terms of subjectivity. The supposed "we" further legitimates and justifies the racialized inequalities that are bound up in social geologies" (Yusoff 10)

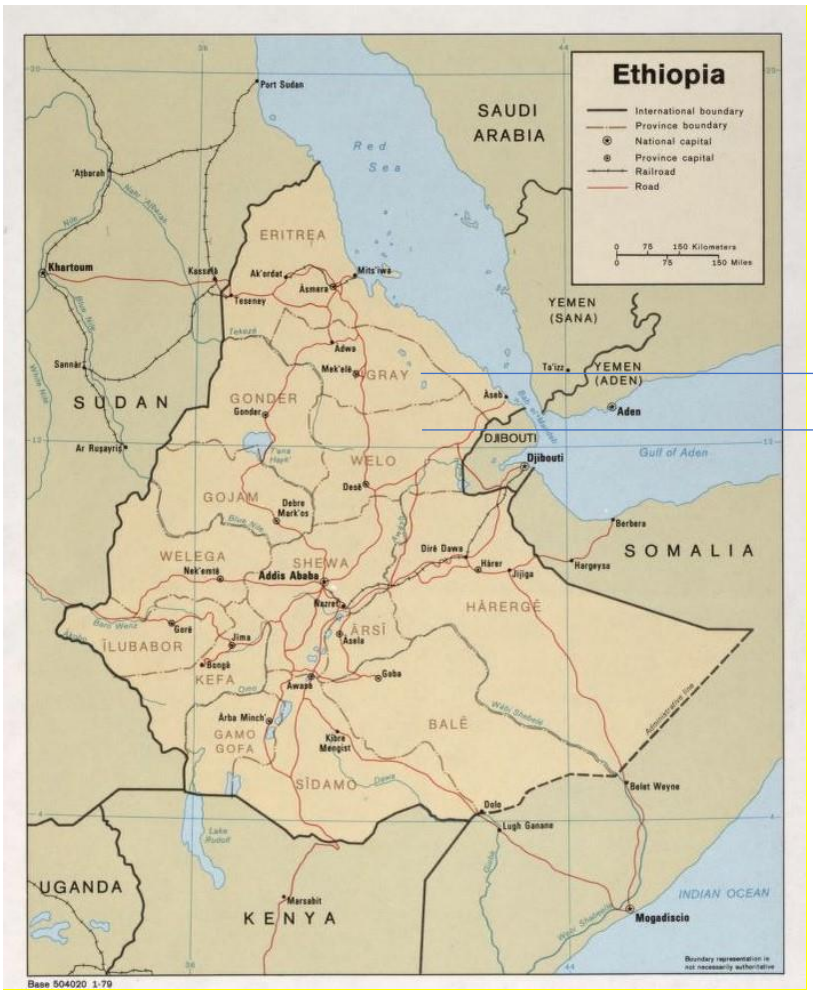
Yusoff's "we" assessment is correct in critiquing the Anthropocene's ability to conveniently packaging all people's experiences as a collective environmental struggle. The age of the Anthropocene is only meant for those living in affluent, developed nations. Even then, the experience of racialized people living in these countries is often forgotten as well. Anthropogenic activities are real threats, and I am not dismissing this fact. However, the Anthropocene paints a narrative of uniformity and should be critiqued in terms of how systems of governance (i.e. colonialism and capitalism) affect different people. This guided me in forming this paper's research questions.

1.3 - Research Questions

Colonial and capitalistic societies utilize the alarmist nature of environmental disasters to control their narrative and incite fear. One of these narratives, the age of the Anthropocene, alludes to a globally shared environmental threat. However, these narratives widen the dichotomy between developed and developing nations regarding the impact of environmental disasters. For example, millions of people living in geographies such as South Asia and Africa are more vulnerable to pollution, droughts, floods, famine, climate change and environmental degradation. Global awareness for these environmental concerns has relied on the narrative that

time is running out to reverse these issues, yet time has already run out for many developing nations. The impact of colonial histories and the legacy left behind deters socio-economic and political development in developing countries, creating uneven geographies. In addition, capitalism has caused and sped the rate at which anthropogenic environmental disasters occur. The accumulation and expansion of contemporary capitalism, such as neoliberal ideology, indicates that the same systems of power responsible for global environmental degradation can find a solution to reverse it. These realities have sparked my interest to research the political ecology (i.e. socio-political, economic) of environmental disasters, the significance of narratives (i.e. multimedia and international institutions), and its impact on uneven development (i.e. disaster resilience, risk reduction).

Ethiopia has spent over a century facing significant drought conditions that have rendered many of the nation's northern regions vulnerable to famine. For this reason, I will be focusing on the impacts of anthropogenic environmental disasters in Ethiopia, specifically the famine of 1983-1985. The goal of this research is to analyze the 1983-1985 famine to understand its significance in relation to contemporary modern Ethiopian disaster management. This analysis will take into consideration the role of colonial occupation and the transitions in Ethiopian political regimes, both of which are deeply rooted in the causal elements of this disaster. African famines are not uncommon events, especially in nations with political conflict and increased environmental hazards. However, Ethiopia interestingly gained a large global audience (i.e. food and financial aid, live aid concerts, media coverage). The following are my research questions regarding the topic: What does the political ecology reveal about the 1983-1985 Ethiopian famine, specifically in the northern regions? Do the famines of 1888-1892, and 1973-1975 present different reasons for famine vulnerability in Ethiopia? How did the narratives of institutional multimedia reporting, domestically and internationally, influence the management of the 1983-1985 famine? And have past famines changed Ethiopia's development of contemporary disaster risk reduction methods?



- **Tigray**
- **Wollo (Welo)**

Image 1: An administrative and political map of Ethiopia (1979) before the famine of 1983-1985. The map includes international and provincial boundaries, national and provincial capitals, railroads and roads. Eritrea is included as a region in this map because it was annexed to Ethiopia after World War II and would later celebrate their independence in 1991. Wollo and Tigray are pointed out in this map because they are the northern regions focused on during this famine. (Library of Congress www.loc.gov/item/84696846/)

1.4 - Ethiopian Geography

I have incorporated this brief account of Ethiopia's geographical history because it is crucial for both politics and food, as well as the probabilities of environmental shifts. Image 1 shows a map of Ethiopia and its bordering countries. Formally known as Abyssinia, the country is landlocked in Eastern Africa (the Horn of Africa) with the neighbouring nations of Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and Kenya. Nearly 70 percent of Africa's mountains are in Ethiopia. The country has a mean elevation of 1330 metres, its highest being 4559 metres in Ras Dejen and lowest in the Danakil Depression at -125 metres. Ethiopia's total surface area is 1,104,300

Square Kilometres, and in 2017 the World Bank estimated the population had reached 105 million people (according to Google). However, in 2020, the Ethiopian census and institutional estimates that the population may be nearing 110 million people. These figures vary based on institutional and census reporting in Ethiopia. There are many ethnic groups in the country such as, the Oromo at 34%, Amhara 27%, Somali 6.2%, Tigray 6.1%, Sidama 4% being the majority. There are 83 different languages and nearly 200 dialects spoken in Ethiopia. The Oromo, Amharic, Somali, and Tigrigna languages derive from the largest ethnic groups. Most of the nation's religious groups consist of Ethiopian Orthodox, Muslims and Protestants (The World Factbook: Ethiopia 2018). Notably, Ethiopia's incredible highlands have made it difficult for foreign invasions to occur. Italian colonial forces recognized this difficulty in attempts to colonize Ethiopia in the late 1890's.

Italy initiated its move to conquer Ethiopia by 1896, after participating in the 1884-1885 Conference of Berlin. This conference awarded Ethiopia to Italy (Milkias et al. 22), making Italy one of the European nations responsible for occupying, colonizing and dividing colonial spoils in what is now referred to as the "Scramble for Africa." An army of 20,000 Italian soldiers assembled to engage in war against Ethiopians, believing that their superior and modern army would take the African country without difficulty (Milkias et al. 27). However, the Italian army was ill-prepared, sporting winter garments and ineffective geographic terrain intelligence, confronting an army of 100,000 Ethiopians amassed from nearly every region and groups of the country (Milkias et al. 28). Ethiopia's victory over Italy was one of the most humiliating European colonial defeats (Milkias et al. 28). In countries such as the United States of America and South Africa, where White domination over Blacks was overt, this victory signified dignity and independence for Black people (Zewde 81). Ethiopian author, activist, and geographer, Mesfin Wolde-Mariam believes that the nation's highlands, and proximity to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden give it certain advantages. In his book, *Introductory to Geography of Ethiopia*, he writes that,

> "The Red Sea region has witnessed the rise and fall of many empires, from Egyptian to the Assyrian to the Persian to the Macedonian to the Roman to the Arab to the Turkish and the British, the French and the Italian. Ethiopia managed to remain outside these imperial domains, feeling their influences from a safe distance behind her impregnable mountains…there is more than the impregnability of the highlands; there is the desert girdle which, with its intense heat, scarcity of water and fierce inhabitants, sapped the energy of an invading force and reduced its capacity to fight."
> (Wolde-Mariam 1-2)

Ethiopia's geography, although landlocked, provides certain social protections because of its topography. For example, the Ethiopian Rift Valley connects to the largest rift valley in the world, which extends approximately 6000 kilometres from Syria through the Red Sea, East Africa (Ethiopia) to Mozambique. The Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the African Rift Valley all join to create the widest part of the Ethiopian Rift Valley shaped in the Awash Valley and Danakil Depression (Wolde-Mariam 35). Additionally, geographer Wolde-Mariam writes that, "the formation of the Rift Valley resulted in the creation of the Red Sea and the Gulf Aden and the separation of the Arabian Peninsula from the Horn of Africa as well as in dividing the Ethiopian Highlands in two" (Wolde-Mariam 35). The highlands provided Ethiopian armies strategic advantages in times of war, especially during colonial occupations in northern regions.

Ethiopia's geography has struggled with environmental issues such as deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, loss of biodiversity, water shortages, industrial pollution to air, water and soil. Environmental hazards are specifically more severe in the northern regions of the country. This paper will examine the historical intersection of environmental hazards in relation to reoccurring disasters in Ethiopia. In contemporary times, a 2015 study titled, *Environmental Issues in Ethiopia and Links to the Ethiopian Economy*, conducted and written by Dr. Ben Daley focused on three distinct objectives. The first identified key environmental issues in the country and their causes, while the second determined the importance of environmental factors and natural resources to the Ethiopian economy. The third objective presented the applicability of the determined environmental factors and natural resources to various Ethiopian ministries such as transport, water and energy, urban housing, etc. (Daley 1). Only the first objective of this study will be highlighted because of its reference to environmental issues and their causes in Ethiopia.

The study relies on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification's (UNCCD) definition that explains soil erosion as a "reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of pastoral, agricultural and wooded land due to soil erosion, soil impoverishment (such as nutrient depletion) and/or loss of natural vegetation" (UNCCD in Daley 4). Roughly 85 percent of the Ethiopian population is indicated to rely on subsistence agriculture, therefore their livelihoods are significantly affected when processes of soil erosion and land

degradation occur (Daley 4). A change in land-use such as the removal of forest cover and riparian vegetation exposes soil, which is then susceptible to factors like heavy rainfall, flooding and wind (Daley 5). Ethiopia's terrain is extremely mountainous and in the northern highlands, there have been unsustainable uses of land. This has made it vulnerable to intense rainfall, resulting in land degradation and a loss of soil due to erosion and wind (Daley 5).

In the last century, there has been a significant percentage decrease in the country's forestation, plummeting from 40 percent to around 3 percent - specifically taking place in the south-central Rift Valley of Ethiopia (Daley 6). Deforestation and forest degradation have occurred for several reasons, such as forest clearance for opening agricultural lands, and the harvesting of fuel. The commercialization and industrialization of harvested fuel wood have resulted in negative climate impacts as well (Daley 6-7). The study also expressed how water scarcity was an issue in rural areas in Ethiopia because women and children would spend hours everyday collecting it. Improvements to water security, such as micro-dams, were presented as solutions. Despite the economic benefit, micro dams can spread the rate of diseases like malaria (Daley 7-8). It is important to note that more research is being conducted into these claims, however, trading one environmental issue for another does not increase disaster resilience in affected communities. In Ethiopia, pollutants such as black carbon, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, and other particulates from industrial or transportation services are responsible for human mortality and decreased agriculture productivity (Daley 10). Daley specifies that chemical pollutants in Ethiopia are hazardous to human health because they can accumulate in damaging concentrations. For example, the release of sulphur and nitrogen compounds from poorly regulated industrial processes can generate deadly health issues (i.e. heart disease, lung cancer) in children (Daley 10). These environmental hazards are among the most concerning in modern Ethiopia, especially to rural communities which can create environmental disasters.

Literature Review

2.1 - What is Political Ecology?

Famines are not strictly the result of environmental and geographic conditions. As Daley explained, many rural Ethiopians are subsistence farmers and hazards like drought, deforestation and soil erosion can hinder their livelihoods. Environmental disasters are the result of intertwined

environmental conditions and socio-economic and political pressures. I have chosen to use a political ecologies lens in analyzing Ethiopian famines because it permits a more expansive and interconnected observation to multiple root causes of environmental disasters. Political ecology is the study of socio-economic and political relationships regarding environmental issues and changes. It is a burgeoning field, with varying schools of thought emerging on topics of environmental degradation, conservation, climate change and more. It is broadly interdisciplinary, with works coming from fields such as geography, human geography, anthropology, political economy, vulnerability studies, history, and international law to better understand changing environmental landscapes. In the last four decades prominent authors have aimed to define political ecology, each containing its own goal.

As Paul Robbins highlighted in his book, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction,* there are already a plethora of definitions within the field that it has become crowded. Instead, he suggests describing political ecology as a "community of practices united around certain kinds of text" that explores the changes and conditions of socio-environmental changes with a strong focus on power relations (Robbins 20). For example, in the 1987 book, *Land Degradation and Society*, by Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield, political ecology was described as a process that "combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and within classes and groups within society itself" (Blaikie & Brookfield in Robbins 15). Blaikie and Brookfield's goal was to establish an explanation for environmental change occurring in constrained local and regional production in global political economic forces (Robbins 15). In James B. Greenberg and Thomas K. Park work, *Political Ecology*, it is described as a mixture of, "political economy, with its insistence on the need to link the distribution of power with productive activity and ecological analysis with its broader vision of bio-environmental relationships" (Greenberg & Park 1). It intends to be a historical extension of central social science questions on the relationship between human society, bio-cultural and political complexity and humanized nature (Greenberg & Park 1).

In the 2000 article, *Political Ecology* by Michael J. Watts, political ecology seeks "to understand the complex relations between nature and society through a careful analysis of what

one might call the forms of access and control over resources and their implications for environmental health and sustainable livelihoods" (Watts in Robbins 16). The goal of Watts's definition is to explain how environmental conflict occurs through struggles over power, knowledge, politics, practice, justice and governance (Watts in Robbins 16). Lastly, Philip Stott and Sian Sullivan's definition in, *Political Ecology: Science, Myth and Power*, explained it "identified the political circumstance that forces people into activities which caused environmental degradation in the absence of alternative possibilities…involved the query and reframing of accepted environmental narratives, particularly those directed via international environmental and development discourses (Stott & Sullivan 4). The goal here is to challenge established environmental narratives and deconstruct predominate ideology promoting linear trends in environmental degradation and deterioration (Stott and Sullivan 5).

It is important that when research on Ethiopian famines was conducted for this paper, it considered several elements provided in these authors' definitions of political ecology. Extreme famines, in the case of Ethiopia, have not been caused by a lack of food but rather access to food, political conflict, civil war, institutional mismanagement and environmental narratives. Each definition contains its own value, and at its core, it's an examination of specific relationships. I strongly relate to the Robbins definition of political ecology that allows me to explore the historical distribution of power in modern Ethiopian politics. Additionally, how politics and the use of narratives (i.e. multimedia) changed the socio-economic conditions of rural peasants and exacerbated drought conditions.

The counterpart of political ecologies is apolitical ecologies. Apolitical ecologies are the processes in which environmental issues and phenomena are politicized. According to political ecologist Paul Robbins, there are currents of thought that answer political questions with apolitical answers. For example, some arguments suggest that ecological problems and events in certain areas of the world are the results of inadequate implementation of modern economic techniques (i.e. management exploitation, conservation) (Robbins 18). These apolitical arguments support the notion that all nations have the capacity to develop proportionately. However, failure in implementing modern economic techniques hinders the ability to do so. The

study of political ecology would otherwise reveal that many nations have been developing at an uneven pace due to colonial and capitalistic histories.

Neil Smith explains this process in his work, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space.* In Western and European contexts, nature is typically distinguished as a separate force, a complete contrast to human productivity. Smith's "production of nature" builds upon the work of Marx's *Capital* to explain how capital accumulation, economic development and nature's use-values originating in society have culminated in the creation of uneven development (Smith 49-50). The objective of his work is to renew the dualistic conception of nature created by bourgeois ideology, and re-shape it by explaining what happens to nature under the conditions of capitalism (Smith 50-51). Smith's work of uneven development is critical in the context of environmental disasters because it requires a necessary deconstruction of general assumptions of capitalism to occur. The dichotomy that has been constructed between nature and human beings is in fact an illusion due to the manipulation of nature through our labour. Contemporary capitalism has reinforced a separation between nature and humans where everything has been commodified (ex, material goods, intellectual thought, physical bodies, land, etc.). Many environments such as lands, bodies of water and air, in some form or another have been altered through anthropogenic activity, the author writes,

> "Under capitalism the appropriation of nature and its transformation into means of production occur for the first time at a world scale. The search for raw materials, the reproduction of labour power, the sexual division of labour, and the wage-labour relations, the production of commodities and of bourgeois consciousness, are all generalized under the capitalist mode of production" (Smith 71).

Authors like Robyn Eckersley focus on the market aspect of modern economic techniques. Eckersley's article, *Free Market Environmentalism: Friend or Foe?*, examines how relying on the market can solve environmental issues. It explains why some economists are pushing for this to be a solution in contrast to governmental regulations and market-based instruments. Free market environmentalism (FME) is a method that suggests that all environmental problems can be resolved through the creation and enforcement of tradeable property rights, such as environmental "goods" and "bads" (Eckersley 4). It does this by switching the narrative of the market from being viewed as the culprit to its saviour; claiming

that the market, due to the absence of universal, well-defined, exclusive property rights have created environmental externalities such as pollution and degradation (Eckersley 4).

FME distrusts the effectiveness of bureaucracies and their control over environmental goods such as energy, water and national parks because they are ineffective. Eckersley believes its because there are no repercussions for bureaucrats who provide advice and decision-making powers. Bureaucrats are more interested in their own self-interest and promotion than the public good (Eckersley 6). Governmental regulations and bureaucracies are largely ineffective because individual and party motivations are difficult to pinpoint. The private property rights approach that FME suggests moves in the way of depoliticizing environmental goods and services (Eckersley 6). The only concern is that it relies solely on the capitalist system, which has a history of creating uneven development and dispossession. FME's trust in market forces, which is presented as an alternative to solving environmental issues, is still flawed. Eckersley explains that its environmental orientation deserves more scrutiny as opposed to its surface level objectives. She recognizes that this closely resembles a technocentric environmental orientation (Eckersley 9). FME's flaw is that it does not account for the increased environmental risks. It assumes market forces can fix all ecological problems disregarding that the capitalist system is sustained through a continued expansion which requires increased consumption.

This section is intended to capture the essence of the field and why political ecology was an appropriate critical lens to use. The field of political ecology is not strictly reserved for academics from Western society. It comprises of a large group of people who have formed critical ideas and arguments through various mediums (i.e. research, writing, blogs, films, activism and collaborations with many NGOs) living in different geographies across the world (Robbins 21). Robbins explains that the works of all these people unite in five big themes or theses.

The first is called the degradation and marginalization thesis, it seeks to explain environmental conditions and the reasons for its change. It is significant because these changes are often blamed on marginalized groups and can be shown in the economic and political contexts (Robbins 22). The second is called the conservation and control thesis, which explains conservation outcomes. In the pursuit to preserve nature/environment, officials or global interests

take control over resources from producers (class, gender, ethnicity); disabling their livelihoods, production systems, and socio-political organizations (Robbins 21). The third of these themes is called the environmental conflict and exclusion thesis. It explains that access to the environment can be limited or denied to some groups, creating conflict over this type of exclusion. Specifically, it highlights how state authorities, private entities (individuals or firms) can appropriate or enclose resources, making them scarce and creating conflict between different social groups (class, gender, ethnicity) (Robbins 22). The fourth theme is called the environmental subjects and identity thesis, which concerns itself with the new and emerging identities of people and social groups based on contemporary institutionalized and power-driven environmental regimes. These identities form with their own self-definitions, global understanding and ecological ideologies ready to represent themselves political (Robbins 22-23). The fifth and final theme is called the political objects and actor's thesis; it seeks to explain the structured socio-political conditions of the intertwined connections between human and non-human nature (i.e. climate, refrigerators, lawn grass, soils, bacteria, etc.). The relevance of this thesis is to display how these non-human components become so entangled with everyday human lives that they begin to assume new roles and transform through interaction, making them political (Robbins 23).

2.2 - Ethiopian Famines

I have chosen to incorporate three specific famines, over others in Ethiopia, based on their significance. The first occurred in 1888-1892 during the reign of Emperor Menelik II. The second was during 1972-1975 under the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie. The third and foremost famine was in 1983-1985, during the time of the military run, Derg government, led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. These famines are significant because of their historically large mortality rates, disaster mismanagement and its manifestation during political instability and conflict. Furthermore, the famines during the reign of Emperor Menelik II and Haile Selassie had similar magnitudes to the 1983-1985 famine and made for a better comparison. This paper will use the famine of 1983-1985 to answer its research questions. It was an important phenomenon both domestically and internationally because the deaths were politically-charged. Fundamentally there were many lessons to be learned from the mismanagement of the disaster. It was important to contrast this event to previous Ethiopian famines to understand its implication

towards disaster management and global environmental narratives. Unfortunately, the country has suffered many famines within the last century, each with its own misfortunes that reveal shared commonalities.

A persisting narrative of famine is that food suddenly becomes scarce or unavailable and therefore populations starve accordingly. This narrative has particularly stigmatized developing nations in areas such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South-east and South Asia. Theories of famines suffer from two limitations, they either have a single trigger factor such as droughts, wars, or economic/market failures or they have single vulnerabilities such as population growth or diseases (i.e. HIV/AID) (Deveraux 5). Amartya Sen's entitlement approach is one of the most famous single factor theories of famines. In his 1981 book, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Sen explains that starvation and famine are not the same and the former must be distinguished in three ways. First, typical levels of food consumption must be at a low. Second, trends in food consumption begin to decline and third, food consumption levels collapse. According to Sen, famines are most commonly attributed to the third distinction (Sen 40-41). He writes that,

> "While famines involve fairly widespread acute starvation, there is no reason to think that it will affect all groups in the famine affected nation. Indeed, it is by no means clear that there has ever occurred a famine in which all groups in a country have suffered from starvation, since different groups typically do have very different commanding power over food, and overall shortage brings out the contrasting power in stark clarity" (Sen 43).

Sen's entitlement approach focuses on starvation and famines and the ability of affected populations to command food through legal means in their respective societies. This includes the use of production possibilities, trade, and state entitlements (Sen 45). The approach is mainly concerned with people who starve because they can not command food, especially when food is available but can not be accessed. His theory is critical in understanding how food relates to vulnerability, hazards, and disasters (the aftermath of hazards). Concurrently, it is crucial to understand the various levels of vulnerability and hazards resulting in disasters. In the book, *At Risk*, author's Blaike et al. (2004) deliver a detailed breakdown of vulnerability and hazard types. The authors specifically focus on the production of famine through naturally occurring hazards (which is often linked with drought) and trigger events such as policy failures and wars that often spark disasters and yet are not always applicable to famines (Blaikie et al. 76). It is specified that

much contention exists in determining the causes of famines because of its temporal and spatial variations. However, issues regarding social processes such as population pressures and environmental degradation are a major concern of contemporary famines (Blaikie et al. 76-77). The two most competing explanations of famines, as discussed by Blaikie et al. are food availability declines (FAD) which is caused by any number of natural events such as crop failures or reduced livestock and the second mechanism is Food entitlement declines (FED). A FAD mechanism determines that the total amount of available food is reduced, resulting in shortages while FED explains famine as a result of people's inability to access food because of social and political processes (Blaikie et al. 77).

It is false to assume that radical differences in access to food are exclusive to capitalist systems because they can occur in nearly all social systems. In this case, uneven development is referenced in relation to capitalism. If uneven development is produced by a predominately capitalist system's integration in social processes, it is difficult to support the idea that a lack of available food would be an issue in FAD scenarios. However, access to food has continually been an issue because of the social, economic, and political factors that have denied certain populations (usually poor, working class) access. For example, a 1990's analysis of Ethiopia showed that food provisioning was very difficult to achieve due to long-term declines in cereal production per household and hectare. As a result of these declines, food would then be purchased on the market as opposed to private cultivation. Social processes, such as high state taxes and a lack of alternative incomes, would significantly reduce the aggregate food supplies in certain areas, creating inaccessibility to food on both the markets and on lands (Blaikie et al. 83). Blaikie et al. reverberate Sen's initial thoughts on how famine affects population groups differently. They write that,

> "FED acknowledges the importance of changes in purchasing power. Secondly, it disaggregates regional food production and availability, and follows through how food is distributed to individuals…it explains why the rich never die in a famine and shows, indeed, how some classes become wealthy during a famine while others die. Thirdly, it involves the regional, national, and world economy in the analysis and draw attention to the possible prevention of famines by food imports"
> (Blaikie et al. 86).

Blaikie and his co-authors are correct in that we must look to the wealthy in times of environmental disaster to see whether they become vulnerable (in the sense that they have access to livelihood necessities such as food, water and shelter). It would then suggest that "access" is a

privilege reserved to only those who can afford it. Each famine is historically extensive, so I have organized them chronologically and highlighted their causation factors occurring primarily in northern regions. Although these famines are recorded to have spanned several years, in the north, famine reached its peak within its first year. Therefore, the following sub-sections will provide insight into the three largest Ethiopian famines by identifying specific events and institutional mismanagement that exacerbated environmental hazards.

2.2.1 - 1888 – 1892

At the turn of the 19th century, Ethiopia suffered a massive famine that is still referenced as the "Great Famine". In Amharic, it has been labelled as "Kifu Ken", which translates to "Evil Days" in English. It is estimated that approximately one-third of the Ethiopian population was killed due to this famine, including the decimation of livestock (specifically hooved mammals). Many accounts of this famine are narrative-based, researched by contemporary writers to illustrate the severity of this event because market economies did not exist at the time (Abebe 2016; Ahmad 1987; Pankhurst 1966; Tiki et al. 2009). Throughout various literature, it was apparent that famines were still prevalent in Ethiopia prior to 1888. Traditional agriculture was noted to have been enough to forward innovation provided that the soil was fertile and there were at least two good rainy seasons. However, due to multiple environmental hazards, Ethiopian society was unable to overcome food shortages during this time. Chiefs and Emperors would have likely had granaries, while peasants in rural areas were unlikely to store emergency reserves out of fear that soldiers would ravage them when passing through their villages. (Pankhurst 95-96).

The famine coincided with the death of the Ethiopian Emperor, Yohannes IV in 1889. Famine were widely considered to be acts of God because natural calamities followed the death of great rulers. This belief was especially true in the northern region of Tigre (now spelled Tigray), the Emperor's home province. Yet, the cause of this environmental disaster dates back before the death of the Emperor. The 1888-1892 famine can be attributed to a combination of hazards, including the spread of a Rinderpest epizootic (cattle plague), harvest failure, and an outbreak of caterpillars, and locusts (Pankhurst 98-99). Rinderpest is a viral disease that affects ruminants (i.e. cattle, oxen, sheep, antelopes, deer, giraffes, buffalo), it has a 100 percent

morbidity rate and a 90 percent mortality rate (Tiki et al. 479). Earlier in this paper, I discussed that in the *Scramble for Africa*, Italy had been awarded Ethiopia during the Conference of Berlin in 1884-1895. The war between Italy and Ethiopia did not begin until 1896; however, Italy had established colonies around Asmara in Northern Ethiopia and created the colony of Eritrea. Their transportation of cattle from Asia, specifically India, is widely suspected to be the initial cause of the Rinderpest epizootic spread throughout many East African countries (Milkias 2005; Pankhurst 1966; Tiki et al. 2009).

Ethiopia had effective methods in reducing the risk of spreading epidemics by denying traveller entry. There are records of foreign parties who sought to reach Ethiopia through the Port of Massawa and enter the region of Asmara but were stopped (Pankhurst 99). In many ways, these methods indicate early disaster risk reduction within the country but were disrupted by pre-existing political conflict. In the 1870's, Ethiopia had been fighting with the Egyptians, which was followed by more conflict with the Dervishes and Sudanese in the West, and the Italians in the North in the 1880's. These events required the movement of troops in and out of different regions, therefore cattle would also be transported from one area to another (Pankhurst 100). British academic, Richard Pankhurst, is among several authors revered in Ethiopia for understanding and writing about Ethiopian history. He was a professor at the University of Addis Ababa and a founding member of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. His 1966 article, *The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892: A New Assessment,* tracks the movements of Italian forces, prior to the famines accounting for the spread of Rinderpest. Pankhurst writes that,

> "The Italians, having seized the port of Massawa in February 1885, had soon begun a policy of expansion in the coastal lowlands. They suffered their first reverse at Dogali on 7 January 1887, when an invading force was annihilated by the Ethiopian commander of the north, Ras Alula. Undeterred by this event, a new Italian expedition led by General San Marzano landed at Massawa on November 8th of the same year, bringing with it 800 horses and 1000 mules specially shipped from Naples. Ethiopian tradition, as recorded by Cerulli, blames this expedition for the introduction of cattle disease and asserts that cattle, some of them infected, were imported for the troops by an Italian called Andreoli, many of the animals coming from India" (Pankhurst 100).

There are also some accounts that a soldier of Ethiopian commander, Ras Alula, had unknowingly taken infected cattle as spoils of war (Wolde-Mariam 32). Nonetheless, the spread of rinderpest annihilated cattle, jeopardizing the livelihood of many cattle populations. Testimonial records indicate that some farmers would have had hundreds to thousands of livestock dropping dead from the disease. Highland areas with an altitude of 3000 metres or

more, such as the Galla Mountains, were said to have been the least affected (Pankhurst 103). Human demography began to change, after the country's livestock had been wiped, many groups were left without food. People would skin dead animals to store the dry meat, which led to eating dried skin and hides after food ran out. Pastoral groups such as the Borana would then turn to gather plants and hunting wildlife, a form of survival unfamiliar to them (Tiki et al. 486). Furthermore, changes in predator food chains started to occur. Carnivores (i.e. hyenas, lions) that would usually prey on weaker wild animals started eating people who were becoming weakened by the famine (Tiki et al. 486).

The timeline for the spread of Rinderpest was four months, starting from November of 1887 when the Italians had entered Massawa with livestock. By February 1988, three-quarters of the cattle were estimated to have been infected in what is now Eritrea. In June 1888, the disease spread to Tigray, which is located under Eritrea, eventually reaching Shoa (now spelled Shewa), which is located in central Ethiopia (Pankhurst 105; Wolde-Mariam 32). Agriculturally, the lack of rain and heat had made the environment very dry between 1888-89, resulting in a harvest failure. This environmental hazard coincided with the spread of Rinderpest, adding to the progression of vulnerability to famine in Ethiopia. The initial harvest failure was exacerbated by the death of all the cattle, which meant that farmers and peasants could no longer plough their lands (Pankhurst 107). In addition to the epizootic and harvest failure, the arrival of locusts and caterpillars began around the same time. The caterpillars destroyed the crops and what was left was taken over by locusts, compounding the loss. Locusts were common in northern Ethiopia, but this infestation was larger than usual (Pankhurst 108). Economically, the combination of three environmental hazards, would go on to increase the price of grain, and new cattle (imported from neighbouring countries) to skyrocket. Some reports indicate that a dollar (Maria Theresa dollar) could purchase 8-9 litres of grain in 1890, a fraction of what was purchased the year before. Prices of ox went from two-three dollars to twenty-thirty dollars and cows would go as high as forty dollars (Pankhurst 110). Economically, farmers and peasants who did not die from starvation could not afford healthy cattle.

2.2.2 - 1972 – 1975

The famine of 1972-1975, has been called *Aschenikachew*, which translates to *Perturbing Them*, in English. There has been much analysis and literature written on this event and the most detailed of these was created by the Commission of Inquiry according to Mesfin Wolde-Mariam. The Commission of Inquiry report was referenced heavily in Wolde-Mariam's book, *Famine Vulnerability in Ethiopia.* He explains that mimeographed copies had been sent to all government organizations and institutions. However, the report was never published or translated into Amharic. The events of the 1972 famine are argued to have been exacerbated because of the Tigray famine of 1958, and the Wollo (Wag Lasta) famine of 1966-68. Regions such as Wollo are reported to have still been recovering from the 1966-68 famine when they were struck with famine again in 1972 (Wolde-Mariam 41).

The famine of 1972 has been attributed to high levels of political mismanagement. For instance, correspondence between affected Awraja's (county's) and the government was otherwise delayed and ignored. The Awsa county had been petitioning their Governor for food aid as early as June 1971. Letters for grain requests had also been sent from Awsa and Dessie in August and September of 1971, corresponding between various government officials such as the Ministry of Interior and the Council of Ministers (Wolde-Mariam 40). In February 1972, the branch office for the Ministry of Agriculture in Dessie had requested a loan of 400 quintals of grain from their head office. This was because 97 percent of the harvest had been destroyed in this area. The Ministry of Agriculture replied by asking how they would get their money back from the peasants. By September, the counties of Rayya and Qobbo were writing back to Dessie informing them of the dire drought situation (Wolde-Mariam 40). This sort of communication is documented to have occurred for nearly two years, which failed to resolve any drought issues arising in the counties and districts.

Many reports of famine were not answered until March and June of 1973, with some peasants beginning to leave their villages or sell their land (Vestal 192; Wolde-Mariam 41). In Wollo and Tigray, the famine had already reached its peak; by 1974, the second famine had started in the southern region of Harerghe (Sen 86). Government officials had between six months to a year to respond to famine conditions and failed (Wolde-Mariam 42). Emperor Haile

Selassie was also accused of hiding the famine from Ethiopians and the world. Political regimes and their response to famine will be discussed in the following section. As a disclaimer, this paper focuses on famines occurring in the northern regions of Ethiopia and will not be researching events in the southern region of Harerghe.

The International Disaster Database (EM-DAT) estimates that 100,000 people were killed during this famine with three million affected (EM-DAT, CRED / UCLouvain, Brussels, Belgium www.emdat.be). Subsistence farmers were severely impacted by harvest failures because of the erratic rainfall during 1971-1972. Specifically, drought conditions in Wollo worsened after the failure of a major rainy season in 72' and the spring rains in 73' (Sen 87). Populations that practice subsistence agriculture grow most of their food for their families, with little to no output on a larger scale (Vestal 191). Wolde-Mariam writes that it is essential to empathize with the damage that people affected by famine experience. Despite the quantitative figures of how many lives, livestock and property were lost, it is just as important to understand the peasant's point of view. Ethiopian farmers, working on small plots of lands, feel devastated, empty and humiliated when their harvests fail (Wolde-Mariam 55). Those who practice subsistence agriculture, use various cropping systems to avoid harvest failures, minimizing their risk. Strategies to avoid these vulnerabilities include diversifying crops or plots, practicing mixed farming, soil conservation and erosion control techniques, water harvesting, soil moisture and fertility management, or rearing animals best suited for the environment (Belay 103). Despite the implementation of these practices, subsistence agriculture farmers still experience the persistence of famine and its stigma.

Many counties and districts had reached out to government officials for assistance because it was apparent that people needed national aid. Thousands of refugees from Wollo had already begun to arrive outside the capital city, Addis Ababa. In December of 1972, the Ethiopian Red Cross had attempted to help these refugees, but by early 1973, the north-south highway of Wollo had lines of peasants stopping vehicles (i.e. cars, busses) asking for help (Holt and Seaman in Sen 87). It is believed that the Afar community, who are nomadic pastoralists, were among the first to encounter severe problems from a lack of rain. They were among the refugees who travelled to Addis Ababa for aid in 1972 and stopping vehicles for food on highway roads in 1973 (Sen 96). The Wollo famine can not be attributed to food transportation

constraints. Roads in Wollo had not expanded since the 60s (Rahmato 57), although highways did go in and out of the region. Relief camps would set-up near the highways because it was the easiest way to access supplies coming in for peasants already there seeking aid.

The government of Ethiopia was slow to respond to this famine, including the international community. According to Amartya Sen, local organizational offices such as UNICEF and the Swedish funded Ethiopian Nutrition Institute played a role in counter-famine initiatives. However, these groups were already within the country, and relief camps were mainly set-up through local town committees and public health workers. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), Ethiopia's disaster management organization, was created as a response to this famine. The RRC was involved in matters of drought and famines in the late 70's leading up to the disaster in 1983. Relief camps were reported to be over-crowded with an estimated 60,000 people, they were unsanitary and had limited resources (Sen 87-88). Among the camp population were women and children from nearby agricultural lands, men who had migrated from northern camps to southern ones, including beggars, labourers, and women in service occupations (Sen 98). Unfortunately, when regional aid arrived, the famine had already peaked, but the aid was oddly distributed to people who did not need it anymore. Sen explains this distribution process in the following passage,

> The contrast between the chronology of the famine and that of the bulk of the food is startling. Government statistics…indicate that up to November 1973 only 12,000 tonnes of grain was distributed to all areas by the government…some 6,500 tonnes only went to Wollo…In contrast between November 1973 and December 1974 Ethiopia received foreign relief grain donations of 126,000 tonnes, together with 11,000 tonnes of 'rehabitable food'. Wollo and Tigrai received 70 percent of this, despite the fact that their problems were nearly over. Harrerghe, where famine was at its height, received only 8 percent" (Sen 88).

There are concerns with the way aid was distributed amongst vulnerable populations. It is not explicitly clear why larger percentages of grains were distributed to groups leaving relief camps than those in immediate need. Arguments have been made suggesting the famine was the result of a food availability decline (FAD). A case study by Sen revealed that a detailed report created in 1973 by the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture argued this decline but failed to include any quantitative data. Instead, the report classified district agricultural production on a scale of above normal, normal, below normal, or substantially below normal (Sen 90). He concluded that there is very little evidence supporting this argument. Reports from the National Bank of

Ethiopia and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations either indicated that there had been a modest increase in production or caloric consumption had not diminished (Sen 92). At the height of the famine in 1973, food consumption per head was quite normal. Sen remarks that the Wollo famine was attributed to the inability to command food on account of low purchasing power. Despite a small increase in food prices, it had not differed from previous drought points (Sen 111). Wolde-Mariam's entitlement theory also links poverty and inequality with vulnerability to famine through his account of slow-acting responses to famine. A result of non-democratic governments that fail to share political power, decreasing equitable access to resources (Vestal 194; Wolde-Mariam 1986).

2.2.3 - 1983-1985

The Ethiopian famine of 1983-1985, has been referred to as *Aguirt*, which translates to *Goggling to Them* in English. There were many precursors to this phenomenon, beginning with the mismanagement of the 1972 famine. In 1974, Emperor Haile Selassie and his imperial regime were overthrown in a coup by the militaristic Derg government. The Derg was led by the military leader, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, who used the secrecy of the famine as a political weapon in overthrowing the Emperor to start a revolution. The extreme socio-economic and political shifts (i.e. droughts, regional conflict and civil war) following this event resulted in the 1983 famine. This last section of the literature review will mainly focus on the socio-economic shifts leading up to the famine. The following section will focus on the political shifts and climate throughout the three regimes and their reaction to famine.

Towards the end of 1975, mainly pastoral groups were still affected by famine (ex. Afar pastoralists). Northern regions such as Tigray and Wollo had already recovered (Adhana 2). However, this recovery was short lived because in 1977, Wollo succumbed to pest damage - creating another famine in 1978. Subsequently, a lack of rain caused 13 counties to experience severe food shortages. Wollo and Tigray accounted for 45.6 percent of nearly four million food vulnerable people throughout the country. (Adhana 2). In 1979, food vulnerable populations had decreased to 2,037,000, but Wollo and Tigray accounted for 93.9 percent of it (not including war-related causes). War-affected provinces, including Eritrea, accounted for 4.3 million affected by potential famine (Adhana 3). The worst-affected areas of the 1983-85 famine were primarily

Eritrea, Tigray, Wollo, North Shoa, Gondar, including small parts in the southern region of Harrarghe (Rahmato 1991).

I drew on the work of Ethiopian sociologist, Dessalegn Rahmato, who specializes in agricultural development, famine and resettlement to better understand Wollo's condition before and during the famine. His book, *Famine and Survival Strategies*, focuses on the level of famine in Wollo, their economy, and the peasant modes of production such as farming, consumption, and micro-environment control. In the 20th century, Wollo experienced six severe famines, nearly one every decade leading up to 1983. RRC documents revealed that pressure from the mid to late 70's had been pressurizing. By the end of 1982, over a million peasants in the province were facing starvation. By 1984, 7.7 million rural Ethiopians were said to be dying from starvation, including 2.6 million Wollo peasants (RRC in Rahmato 14). The International Disaster Database estimates that 300,000 people died during this famine, with 7,750,000 people affected (www.emdat.be).

Wollo had not been a food-surplus region, especially during this famine. Land transportation had not changed for nearly 20 years, which was evident in the 1972-75 famine when relief camps were set up near highways and not villages. Communication services were poor or outdated within the province. Additionally, the region was the least urbanized and among the poorest in the country. It was less integrated into the market economy, and the rugged topography made it challenging to develop serious infrastructure (Rahmato 58). The rural economy consisted of subsistence farmers (discussed earlier) and the urban economy. The latter had not been doing well because of government policies, obsolete equipment, and low productivity. Sub-sectors included urban industry, small-scale and handicraft production, and petty trade (Rahmato 59). The peasant-mode of production in Ethiopia varies by region, so far, this project has encountered subsistence and pastoral producers. The former focuses on food production for one's family, the latter encompasses livestock farming. Other modes of production include sedentary agriculturalists, who do not rotate crops on their field and shifting cultivation, which consists of razing the land by fire to cultivate new growth. Regardless of the mode of production in Ethiopia, there are four fundamental elements that apply to all. The first is that the family is an integral component of labour, production and consumption. Second, the

market plays a secondary role in the self-care of the peasant. External forces, such as the government, hold a more immediate threat or risk. Third, technical knowledge is the same for all peasant households which increased their vulnerability to environmental degradation overtime. Fourth, re-occurring food crises are inevitable for peasants because of population pressures or environmental stress (Rahmato 69-70).

In the year following the military coup, the Derg government declared a nationwide land reform, re-modelling the existing and complex land tenure system. This reform allowed peasants to completely take over land and organize into peasant associations (PA) (Belay 2004; Ottaway 1977; Rahmato 1991). PA's had the power to redistribute land among members and enter into collective agreements for land cultivation. This reform differed from the previous system because landowners used to be able to extract one to two-thirds of their tenant's product, limiting investments in modern technologies. The new reform banned private ownership, transfers of sale, exchanges, and successions of rural land (Belay 112). In the first year, there were increases in production, mainly due to good weather, nonetheless explaining why some regions were doing well during 1975. The changes came at the cost of disrupting the urban population with increases in prices, and on-farm consumption (Ottaway 79). The reform had been predicted to completely collapse the economic and social systems. Yet, it created a new network for peasants at multiple levels (i.e. grassroots, district and provincial). The PA's grew at an alarming rate; in the fall of 1975, there were about 18,000 peasant associations, increasing to 24,700 (6.7 million members) within two years (Ottaway 79). The PA spiralled out of control; thousands of people lost their lives due to the socio-economic rifts it created. In the article, *Land Reform in Ethiopia 1974-1977*, author Marina Ottaway elaborates on this process. She writes that,

> "Not only were the peasant associations too independent, but the country was threatened with the possibility of breaking up into 24,000 independent "republics" …There were many other unresolved tensions, both in the internal functioning of the peasant associations and in the relations between them and the central administration. The associations have been accused of being as authoritarian vis-à-vis their members as the landlords had been vis-à-vis their tenants. Some of them undoubtedly were. Not all government officials were willing to work through the peasant association, preferring instead the centrally administered programs of old" (Ottaway 80).

The creation of thousands of new peasant associations may have given rural communities a voice, but the collective nature of the reform was also the reason the agricultural sector performed poorly in the early 80's. For example, government policies discriminated against

smallholders and favoured co-ops. This created pressure among the farmers, and eventually, the initial optimism for land reform began to disappear (Belay 116).

I intended to include primary data gathered by the Relief and Rehabilitation Committee (RRC) on drought and famine in this paper. However, I had difficulty accessing RRC archival documents during my research trip to Ethiopia. These challenges will be discussed in the conclusion of this paper. The scholarly articles and books used for this literature review have referenced data and information gathered by the RRC. The RRC's central mission was to save lives and this was encouraged by providing at least 2 million tonnes of food to nearly 40 million people between 1974 and 1987 (Kiros 185). Yet, they did not have efficient early warning systems, which had been recommended by Western governments and donor agencies (Rahmato 119). RRC early warning systems consisted of evaluating indicators that contained potential crises (i.e. weather, crop conditions, market behaviour and rural migration). Data would be gathered from institutional sources such as the Ethiopian Meteorological Service and the Ministry of Agriculture. The RRC would send their surveillance teams to various regions to investigate environmental conditions. These teams would not consist of specialists capable of investigating issues, therefore emergency broadcasting became more bureaucratic in nature (Rahmato 119). The bureaucracy decreased the RRC's ability to effectively communicate, manage and respond to environmental disasters, which was evident in the 1983-1985 famine.

2.3 - Political Regimes & Their Reactions to Famine

The previous sub-sections emphasized the famines impact on peasant communities in Wollo and Tigray. However, politics has played a critical role in Ethiopian famines; therefore, this section will focus on the various ways that Ethiopian governments reacted to famine. Specifically, it will explain each governments role in admitting and disclosing famine, their ability to allocate relief resources and their reaction to peasant migration from rural to urban cities. This will provide a more detailed account of how complex political structures and negligence increased the impact of environmental hazards on peasant communities.

Ethiopia has had an extensive history with sporadic weather patterns affecting agricultural practices. In the three cases presented in this paper, environmental hazards such as droughts and epizootic diseases initially led to famines. However, meteorological events have

been a singular component in a list of vulnerabilities and hazards that result in a disaster. For instance, the literature review has revealed that rural peasants and farmers possessed the skills to manage their agricultural practices during severe weather conditions. It is equally essential to understand the political landscape during these periods of history. It is vital to identify government responses and management of environmental disasters, as well as the pressures leading up to them. This paper does not attempt to account for the vast socio-economic and political history of Ethiopia. This is because it would take too long and Ethiopian regions, ethnic groups, languages, and systems of powers are incredibly diverse and intersectional with one another. The political landscape during the famines of 1888-1892, 1972-1975, 1983-1985, had similar characteristics. For instance, political turmoil presented itself in shifting regimes, civil and domestic war, including a growing mistrust between the population and political leaders.

In the previous section, the state of Ethiopia's political climate at the end of the 19th century was briefly brought into context. In short, there had been conflicts waging with foreign countries prior to the spread of Rinderpest and environmental hazards in 1888. There was the war with the Egyptians in the 1870's, and conflict in the west against the Dervishes and Sudanese the following decade. Italian forces had simultaneously begun to form a colony in the northern region of Ethiopia, which is now known as the country of Eritrea. When the Italians entered the country through the Port of Massawa, they brought cattle infected with Rinderpest. Within four months (late 1887 to early 1888), many of the cattle in the northern region had contracted the disease and died. It took an additional four months to spread through southern regions. Emperor Yohannes IV was otherwise occupied with moving around his army throughout various regions because of these conflicts. The continued movement of troops spread disease through various villages. Furthermore, the combined forces of the Rinderpest, harvest failures, and locusts had coincided with the death of the Emperor in 1889. This perpetuated the belief that the famine was a result of the Emperor's death, making it an act of God.

Throughout the reign of Emperor Yohannes IV, centralized power in Ethiopia was beginning to break down and regional powers started to regain their autonomy. Despite the various political powers, the two most relevant during the famine were Yohannes IV and Menelik II. Yohannes IV was known for his diplomacy, foreign policy and his pursuit of

territorial expansion into western regions of the country from his capital in Tigray (Keller 90). For instance, within Africa, his diplomacy resulted in a peace treaty with the Egyptians. Internationally, he formed a relationship with countries like Britain, creating a trade agreement and purchasing arms from public and private European agents. His authority and army also created a climate where uncontrolled incursions into Ethiopia were prohibited by foreign threats (Keller 91). The ongoing war against the Sudanese Mahdists had become an urgent concern than the Italian colony forming in the north. The British had ceded the Port of Massawa to Italy during the Scramble for Africa. The Italian colony had not been welcome, however, both Yohannes and Menilek had treated them diplomatically leading up to and during the famine (Henze 2000; Keller 2005). The spread of Rinderpest can be attributed to a failure in recognizing the threat Italy posed and the difficulties in commanding military power on two fronts.

Emperor Yohannes IV was killed during a battle with the Sudanese Mahdists in 1889. His successor, Emperor Menelik II, had controlled the South, expanding its territory and trade routes at the time of Yohannes' rule (Henze 146). The death of Yohannes IV left the Tigrayans in disarray, particularly in finding a successor. The gap in power was filled by Menelik; several weeks after he became emperor, he signed the Treaty of Wichale with Italy in the northern region of Wollo. It represented a treaty of "perpetual peace and friendship" (Keller 91). The treaty was written in both Italian and Amharic, recognizing Menelik as the Emperor of Ethiopia. It had seemed to be mutually beneficial; the Italian colony would not expand by annexing Ethiopian territory and part of the Tigrayan highlands would be ceded to Italy for commercial and industrial purposes (Keller 91). However, the Amharic and Italian versions of the treaty differed, without the Emperor's knowledge. The Amharic text gave Menelik the option to use Italy's office as a source of contact with other countries. The Italian version obliged that all these contacts be made through Italy, making Ethiopia a protectorate of Italy (Henze 161). In the book, *A Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia,* author Paul B. Henze, traces these duplicitous events and how Italy refused to change the treaty's phrasing. Diplomatic debates between the two nations had occurred for three years (during the famine) with Italy using specific clauses to further their territory. Henze cites a passage from Menelik' treaty appeal in 1893, it states,

> "It is with much dishonesty that [the King of Italy], pretending friendship, had desired to seize my country. Because God gave the crown and the power that I should protect the land of my forefather, I terminate and nullify

this treaty. I have not, however, nullified my friendship. Know that I desire no other treaty than this. My kingdom is an independent kingdom and I seek no one's protection." (Henze 162).

Throughout Italy's colonial occupation in the north, Menelik and his government had framed the famine as an act of God. He insisted the population pray to get through it (Abebe 124). Public prayers were ordered by Menelik for the entire population and people would leave their homes at a specific time to pray (Pankhurst 282). The reaction to this famine was deeply rooted in religious connotations, despite the information currently available on the root causes of the famine and the political climate. The emperor's coronation coincided with the height of the famine; it has been said that the ceremony was very modest due to the state of the country. Menelik allocated resources to alleviate the hardships of starving peasants. He distributed grains from government granaries, encouraged peasants to hoe their lands as opposed to the regular practice of using oxen (which had died from Rinderpest). He would also engage in manual labours of digging and clearing bushes to lead by example (Abebe 128; Pankhurst 285). However, resources were not unlimited, the granaries were open to all in the first year but ran out the following year (Pankhurst 283). Attempts to import grain from abroad were made but these supplies were pillaged by Somalis and Danakils who were experiencing famine as well. Emperor Menelik had ordered his officials to confiscate grains from well-off families who were hiding grain. They were left enough to last a year, and the confiscated grain would be distributed to starving people (Pankhurst 286). In terms of peasant migration, Menelik proclaimed those who could make the journey to the capital city of Addis Ababa would be fed, and many people died on the journey from their villages (Abebe 136). Evidence has not shown that this political regime attempted to hide the reality of the famine.

Menelik's appeal of the Treaty of Wichale eventually led to the Battle of Adwa in 1986. Despite Ethiopia's victory and significance of this battle, the influence of colonialism remained well into the 20th century during the reign of Haile Selassie. Emperor Haile Selassie had sought out centralized and modern policies, such as developing secularism, professional military and bureaucracy. Some of his accomplishments in the early 1930's included modernizing the educational systems, organizing the police force and the publication of newspapers (Keller 93). In 1936, his throne was challenged by Mussolini's army, resulting in his exile. The Italian army occupied Ethiopia for five years, and eventually the emperor reclaimed his throne with the help

of allied forces from Great Britain (Keller 93). His return to power introduced three new structural reforms to the imperial system. The first was the establishment of a national army, under the control of the emperor. However, he did not want Ethiopia to become a protectorate of Great Britain for training their armies, so a land-lease agreement was signed with the United States of America in the early 50's for mutual defence and over 200 million dollars in military aid (Keller 94). The second reform involved the creation of a new fiscal system under the Ministry of Finance. It allowed for all taxes collected from civil servants to be deposited into the national treasury (Keller 94). Third, he organized provincial administration and placed it under the Ministry of Interior. This required a re-drawing of provincial boundaries, reducing regional powers that had risen to semi-autonomous power during the late 19th century (Keller 94).

Famine has been a persistent occurrence in the decades following Haile Selassie's return to the throne. Particularly during the 1960's, the increased conflict with Eritrea led to a multitude of political circumstances that would instigate the famine of 1983-85. These events have been formally organized in the Africa Watch report, *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia*, written by researcher Alex de Waal. Eritrea had been struggling to cultivate its future since it had been an Italian colony for the better part of the century. There has been a string of events that have contributed to Eritrea's struggle in achieving self-determination. For example, Eritrea was investigated for political unrest by the UN Commission of Inquiry, Eritrean elites were alienated by the Ethiopian government, and the United States of America's collaborated with Ethiopia to establish an air force site in Asmara (a region in Eritrea). All of these events increased Eritrean opposition towards the Ethiopian government. The continued dismantling of Eritrean institutions by Emperor Haile Selassie led to the creation of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in 1961 (de Waal 39-40). The ELF was mainly composed of Muslims and had adopted Marxist ideology in its earlier days. Their insurgent activity consisted of damaging government infrastructure and property (i.e. installations, bridges, conveys and trains) (de Waal 41). Haile Selassie's counter-insurgency tactics were colonial by nature because they wanted to demonstrate their strength. They would destroy crops, kill animals, prevent trade, which resulted in impoverished rural communities and famine (de Waal 42). These were the testimonials of soldiers in the Ethiopian army explaining their focus on decimating villages as opposed to targeting the ELF.

The ELF and the newly-formed Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had caused several large scale human rights violations from the late 60's to the early 70's. For example, many of these violations consisted of religious-based killings and civilian assassinations (de Waal 43-46). This had been the political climate in Ethiopia leading up to the famine of 1972-75. Wollo and Tigray peasants were put in an increased state of danger because of the on-going political conflict between the Ethiopian government and Eritrean insurgent groups. Unresponsiveness to famine had been a trend of the Haile Selassie government throughout the 50's and 60's. The emperor's ministers had hidden this famine from the country until British media reports exposed the cover-up late 1972 (discussed in the following section). The office of the Prime Minister had reacted by establishing the Food-Crops Scarcity Study Committee in November of 1971. The committee had very little support and members failed to come to an agreement in exposing the issue to the public. Arguments consisted of seeking help from the larger public, mainly urban populations, announcing the problem through Ethiopian media or keeping it hidden because it would cause a political crisis (Abebe 124-125). In terms of resource allocation, Emperor Haile Selassie's approach differed from his predecessor, Emperor Menelik.

Haile Selassie's government believed that hunger was a commonality in rural areas and those affected by famine should have been used to it. Despite committee members going to Wollo to investigate the matter, recognizing that people were dying in each parish, the government failed to send food-aid (Abebe 130). The committee was able to collect 1.2 million Ethiopian Birr, 193,000 quintals of grain, and 34,000 kilograms of powdered milk between April and September of 1973. The financial donations came from the emperor and civil servants. Yet, this was not enough and there were still difficulties with transporting services to reach famine victims (Abebe 131). The famine reached its peak in 1973, and Haile Selassie had been pre-occupied by parliamentary elections, his 42nd coronation anniversary, and his 80th birthday celebration. The migration of peasants from the north to the capital city was either restricted or denied. In addition, the creation of the RRC was able to control the Wollo famine by 1974 (Abebe 132-133), but by then, it had been too late and was affecting southern regions in the country.

In the aftermath of World War II, Emperor Haile Selassie's political goals had primarily consisted of modernizing Ethiopia through capitalist development. These new goals contradicted the reality of a previously feudalistic and agricultural focused state. Socio-economic policies had favoured specific ethnic groups such as the Amharas, Tigray and certain elites. A growing resentment began to form against the ruling class throughout the sixties. Eventually, students and intellectuals started to raise their concerns to the broader public. The urban population had been facing several social issues as well (i.e. unemployment, inflation, gas shortages and essential commodities). The discontent of the people against the imperial government, including the secrecy shrouding the 1973 famine, became a political tool used to start the 1974 revolution. In the early months of 1974, military mutinies began to arise because soldiers had been complaining about terms of services and salaries (Keller 95-100). The revolution brought about the end of the imperial government, and the military government, known as the Derg, claimed power. Derg is an Ethiopian term meaning "committee". At the helm of this political coup was Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam and a group of 100 junior officers from around Ethiopia. These officers were responsible for killing many officials from the emperor's government through a firing squad. They also killed members of their own group to eliminate rivals. Emperor Haile Selassie and the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox church were killed secretly in the months following (Human Rights Watch 1).

The years following Ethiopia's new political power had been filled with social and rebellious conflict. The Derg had attempted to quell the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, through their new declaration called the *Program for the National Democratic Revolution.* Through this new program, the government was adamant about creating a new political system based on the principle of scientific socialism (Keller 101). Scientific socialism is a method of understanding and predicting social and economic phenomena by examining historical trends and implementing scientific methodology to derive probable outcomes and developments.
In 1975, numerous insurgency groups were rebelling, especially in the northern regions. For instance, in Wollo, a feudal lord by the name of Dejazmatch Berhane Maskal started a revolt, destroying an Ethiopian airliner. A rebellion also formed in Tigray by a former governor named Ras Mengseha. He and a handful of members from the aristocracy - some being generals - had started the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU). In addition, there was the Tigrayan People's

Liberation Front (TPLF) full of left-wing students and peasants, and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). All these groups conflicted with the Derg between 1975-1978 (de Waal 60-61) and were pushed back with the help of the Soviet Union, Cuba and Yemen (Keller 102). It would take a separate report to dissect the socio-economic and political complexities of all these insurgent groups and the counter-insurgent tactics deployed against them. The most infamous of Colonel Mengistu's campaigns is what is referred to as the Red Terror. It is perhaps one of the significant factors for the creation of the Ethiopian Diaspora around the world.

Mengistu addressed the public, in the capital city of Addis Ababa, holding a bottle filled with a red substance representing the blood of his enemies. He proceeded to label these enemies as members of rival leftist groups such as the imperialists and counter-revolutionaries. The Red Terror campaign was a counterinsurgency tactic, targeting students and any suspected members of the EPRP. It was created to eliminate political dissent, lasting between 1976-1978, with an estimated death toll of 10,000 people (de Waal 101; Human Rights Watch 1). The campaign consisted of three waves; the first involved prisoners being taken out of the capital city to be executed. Civilians were shot for distributing EPRF literature during a pro-government rally. Thousands of people were detained, day-time curfews were installed with house-to-house searches, and hundreds of students were killed (de Waal 102-103). The second wave more notably targeted the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON). MEISON was one of the groups responsible for helping bring down the imperial government. The campaign killed off members of the MESION and the EPRP through a civil war (de Waal 104). The last wave took place between December of 1977 and February 1978. Defense squads would openly fire on people in mosques with machine guns, and Amnesty International estimated 30,000 prisoners detained in central prisons (de Waal 104). Furthermore, the campaign targeted grain merchants through terrifying legal precedent and action. Merchants' impact on grain markets, especially during the 1973 famine, increased market prices in urban cities like Addis Ababa. Although merchants who had large grain reserves were distributing resources during a famine, the Derg wanted to limit their economic capability (de Waal 104).

The following images (Images 2-8) were taken by me at the Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The museum was unveiled on March 7th, 2010 by

Kebebushe Admasu. The images display the initiation of the Red Terror Campaign, its impact on the population and the excavated remains of Ethiopians who were killed fighting for their rights.

Image 2. Photo of Colonel Mengistu addressing the capital city of Addis Ababa, initiating the Red Terror Campaign. (Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum; photo taken January 2020)

Image 3. Photos of the state of Ethiopian people under the rule of the Derg government. (Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum; photo taken January 2020)

Image 4: Photo taken of the personal items of victims killed during the Red Terror campaign.
(Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum; photo taken January 2020)

Image 5: Photo taken of the remains of the excavated victims of the Red Terror campaign.
(Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum; photo taken January 2020)

Image 6: Photo taken of the wall of victims from the Red Terror campaign
(Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum; photo taken January 2020)

Image 7: Photo taken of the wall of victims from the Red Terror campaign.
(Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum; photo taken January 2020)

Image 8: Photo taken of the wall of victims from the Red Terror campaign.
(Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum; photo taken January 2020)

In 1977, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam called for a war on two fronts. The first was against a Somali invasion and the second was against Eritrea. I'll be highlighting the war in Eritrea between 1978-1984 as it relates to the famine of 1983. The Ethiopian government utilized an airfield in Tigray (south of Eritrea) and began bombing offences against the ELF and EPLF in May of 1978. There had been failed attempts for concessions towards the rebels. By July, a series of offences had been ordered that would last until 1980 (de Waal 112-116). After a few years of re-strategizing failed offensives, the Red Star Campaign was initiated in 1982. The Red Star offensive deployed 120,000 troops in Eritrea, with material and logistical support provided by the USSR and Libya. It was the return of a scorched earth policy, with extreme levels of

sustained bombardment and ground attacks against Eritrean insurgent groups (de Waal 117-118). The *Evil Days* report indicates that,

> "The war in Eritrea was fought on an unprecedented scale between 1978 and 1984, with the 1982 campaign marking the worst point. The destruction and disruption caused by the war were instrumental in creating the famine which developed, though a number of aspects of the situation prevented the famine from becoming as severed as in neighboring Tigray…One of the most disruptive aspects of the war was that it caused much of the population of Eritrea to be displaced. By March 1982, there were 440,000 Eritreans in Sudan alone. In 1983/4, a further 120,000 fled to Sudan, though many later returned. The 1985 offensives caused a further 190,000 to be displaced inside Eritrea, and 30,000 to flee to Sudan"
> (de Waal 123-124).

The war in Eritrea undoubtedly affected neighbouring regions, specifically Tigray and Wollo. The Imperial and Derg government both shared similar reactions to famine; they ignored it and blamed it on the rural peasants. The irony of the Derg's destructive rise to power in the 70's and 80's was that they used the imperial government's secrecy of the famine as a political tool to overthrow them. It ultimately led to a more severe famine, with terrifying socio-economic and political outcomes. The Derg allocated resources in a similar fashion as of the previous government very poorly. They had been pre-occupied during the height of the famine in preparation for the 10th anniversary of the revolution. They had also been busy fighting recent wars with Eritrea and insurgent groups such as TPLF, ELF, and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). These wars were costly, and 46 percent of national income was spent on military expenses (Abebe 133-134). At this stage, the RRC had become more bureaucratic than intended and struggled to meet the needs of famine victims. An article written by Ethiopian scholar Dechassa Abebe provided passages of communications between Mengistu and the Vice Commissioner of the RRC on the matter of addressing the famine. The passage displays the type of attitude towards such a monumental event in Ethiopian history. Mengistu had written to the Vice Commissioner to,

> "cool down! You must remember that you are a member of the Central Committee [of our party] …you should not be immersed in such petty social problems that can be faced during a period of transition. There were frequent famines before we came to political power; it is how nature keeps its balance. Today we began interfering in this law of nature and that is why our population became more than 40 million."
> (Abebe 126).

The problem in this passage from Mengistu to the Vice Commissioner is that it normalizes the occurrence of famine. A country's history with famine should not be dismissed as a naturally occurring phenomenon that controls the growth of its population. It should be an

indication of a country's leadership, policies and management towards environmental hazards that have transitioned into disasters. Environmental narratives are important because of this reason. It can dictate how political powers understand and respond to environmental disasters. The following section will focus on the power of multimedia narratives concerning Ethiopian famines from a domestic and international perspective. It is an important component of this paper because the global dissemination of information (i.e. multimedia reporting) can influence political structures, the perception of environmental disasters and how vulnerable communities receive aid.

2.4 - Controlling the Narrative of Ethiopian Famine

Narratives are a powerful tool that has been used to pass on culture, knowledge, inform a mass audience, topple governments, and more. The relationship between a single narrative and a disaster can have a tremendous impact, and the question is to what extent? When contemporary disasters occur, many people in the West get their information from news sources (i.e. broadcasting stations, newspapers) or through the internet and social media (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, etc.). In the 21st century, the ability to hear about disastrous events is significantly faster than it has ever been. Access to numerous sources of information is a positive component of the internet and a more interconnected world. However, it makes verifying sources more challenging. It allows people to create misconceptions about people and events. Matthew Shultz, author of *Narratives of Dispossession: The Persistence of Famine in Postcolonial Ireland*, writes about various literature portrayals of the Irish Potatoes Famine. In it, he quotes Irish novelist John Banville saying, "Since I've started writing novels based in historical fact, I've realized that the past does not exist in terms of fact. It only exists in terms of the way we look at it, in the way that historians have looked at it" (Banville in Shultz 10). History is vulnerable to bias, which invites perception to play a significant role in people's conceptualization of the past.

I will not be highlighting a complete history of the Ethiopian media, rather exploring the application of foreign and domestic multimedia sources in exposing famine. The political ecology of Ethiopian famines reveals an interesting narrative. It swayed the direction of Ethiopian politics during the 1970's and 80's, affecting many people. Africa's complicated history with colonialism, racism, capitalism and most recently, neocolonialism have all played a

critical part in its global perception. Author John Sorenson has written several works on the Horn of Africa, breaking down the events of famine and the media narratives surrounding it. Sorenson explains that disasters, specifically ones that occur in developing countries, are not entertainment-worthy unless they are packaged in a simple manner.

In the case of Ethiopia, it was less so, what changed was that this specific famine was photographable – and thus entered a Western and European news stream as a cause people could rally behind. This was achieved through several media techniques. The first is called "Supraideology," entertainment designed to catch and retain an audience's attention (Sorenson 1990; Sorenson 1991). The second is what is known as, "Naturalization", a rhetorical technique that focuses on the environmental aspect entirely, instead of political causes – which can drastically sway the narrative of the situation (Sorenson 1990; Sorenson 1991). Lastly, media outlets use another rhetorical technique called the "Construction of Significant Absence" for audiences to consume content. This technique would significantly omit and transform specific details into common-sense ideological meanings (Sorenson 1990; Sorenson 1991). There are many news networks and publications that reported on stories of famine which were not included in this paper. I focused on the most iconic multimedia pieces (i.e. news reports and articles), which have primarily displayed cases of naturalization. Therefore, naturalization will be used as the sole explanation for the rhetoric of Ethiopian famine in the analysis section.

Ethiopia is one of many African countries experiencing famine by drought or political conflict. For example, there were the Sahel droughts in the early 70's involving Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso. In addition, there were also the droughts and conflicts in Uganda, Mozambique, and Sudan during the early and late 80's. Yet, Ethiopia is a media magnet regarding famine, Sorenson explains that,

> "In general, Africa receives little attention from North American mass media…Media corporations are saturated with the values of entertainment, a category which demands the transformation of disaster into spectacle and the packaging of events into an easily consumable form determined by a repeatable cycle of meanings. In this context, Africa occupies only a peripheral position and a complex, slow-onset African crisis is regarded by media worked as inherently uninteresting" (Sorenson 1991).

The famine of 1888-1892 did not occur at a time where Ethiopia had established national news reporting or journalism via newspapers. Broadcast radio would not be commercially

accessible until 1900 and broadcast television several decades later. Emperor Menelik did, however, order the creation of an Amharic newspaper in 1901, but this was nearly a decade after the famine ended. At the very least, news reports of the famine did not come up in any preliminary research for this paper. Richard Pankhurst, who has been an incredible source of information regarding this famine, did include poems (a type of media narrative) depicting the state of famine victims and the misery it brought. There were numerous poems included in Pankhurst's work, which preserves these narratives in history to portray the severity of this famine. Below I have included three poems from his work because they are important components of Ethiopian narratives of famine. The poems have been translated from Amharic to English in the table.

Table 1. Examples of Ethiopian poems depicting the impact of famine between 1888-1892

Recorded/Recalled By	***Poems***
Afererk Gabre Yesus	"While the cruel famine, like the Gallas destroys the people. There is no one who can make peace" (In Pankhurst 116).
Cerulli	"Mota and Qaranyo [two regions], why are they not ploughed? Dembecha and Debra Worq [two other places], why are they not ploughed? I came from there to here without seeing an ox" (In Pankhurst 117)
Abba Jerome	"I am Hungry, O my mother, I am thirsty, O my sister. Who knows my sufferings, Who knows about them – except my belt!" (In Pankhurst 117)

These poems are a small representation of the experience of an Ethiopian peasant during the *Great Famine.* I have included the names of the people the poems were recorded or recalled by, as they appeared in Pankhurst's work. It is difficult to predict how this famine would have been portrayed through the lens of the media during its era. Research has shown that the reaction towards famine differed between Emperor Menelik and the following government regimes.

Despite the religious beliefs connected to the cause of the famine and how it could be stopped, Menelik did not hide the existence of the famine from the public as Emperor Haile Selassie and Colonel Mengistu did.

In 1973, while the imperial government had been keeping the events of the famine from the public, a foreign media outlet had caught wind of the disaster. At this time, protesters of the government (mainly students) rallying against the elitism and policies of Haile Selassie had contacted international organizations for assistance. The famine was exposed through an investigative report released by ThamesTV, a franchise holder of the British broadcasting network, ITV television. Investigated and narrated by journalist Jonathan Dimbleby (1973), the 22-minute documentary titled, *The Unknown Famine: A Report on Famine in Ethiopia*, can be viewed today on platforms such as *YouTube* (where I was able to watch it). It begins with shots of the environment in Wollo, as the narration later describes. The land is dry from drought and images of dead animal carcasses can be seen. It then transitions to shots of one of the relief camps in Wollo, where countless Ethiopian peasants (adults and children) are shown malnourished, sitting on the ground outside and inside the relief house. Dimbleby (1973) explains the plight of the peasants who have left their homes and fields in search of food. He also interviews an Ethiopian physician, who explains the urgency for food aid amidst starving children, who are predicted to die. Shots of peasants carrying the dead are also displayed; nonetheless the video images are compelling and reveal a dire situation (ThamesTV 00:00-22:17).

The famine, initially hidden by Haile Selassie and his government, was exposed by Dimbleby's documentary. An international audience, primarily in the United Kingdom, had now seen the disaster occurring in Ethiopia. However, the original version never included images of Haile Selassie or the imperial government. It had only focused on the circumstances of the peasants in the Wollo relief camp and the environmental conditions of the drought. The original broadcast sparked an outpour of donations from international organizations such as Oxfam and the Red Cross (Cowcher 52). On September 11, 1974, the Ethiopian public was shown an edited version of the documentary called *The Hidden Hunger*. This alteration fundamentally changed the narrative of the famine. Foreign audiences had perceived the famine to be the result of

drought because the original edit *(The Unknown Famine)* never made any political connections. The edits of the *Hidden Hunger* display hunger ravaged bodies, and a collage of royal feasts enjoyed by the emperor celebrating his Birthday. It also provided the Derg military with the political edge to overthrow the emperor (Cowcher 46). Dimbleby and his crew had been given controlled access by the government to film footage of the famine in Wollo. This decision had proved to be a mistake, and Ethiopia's Ministry of Information attempted to seal this breach and stop ThamesTV from airing the footage. ThamesTV declined to oblige, and the original content was taken back to Ethiopia, and re-edited, by whom it is still not clear (Cowcher 53). Kate Cowcher, author of the article, *The Revolution Has been Televised: Fact, Fiction, and Spectacle in the 1970s and 1980s*, explains the critical role multimedia played in Ethiopia following the release of Dimbleby's original footage. She writes,

> "The military officers who seized power recognized the importance of television to disseminate seemingly indisputable images that bolstered the case for both radical political change and their leadership of it. In the years that followed they utilized screen, large and small, to propagate a version of the revolution that vindicated the military assumption of power, but also to threaten and cajole a population into submission" (Cowcher 47).

In the West, news outlets were not following Dimbleby's documentary with articles covering the mismanagement of the Ethiopian famine. For instance, a 1974 *New York Times* article titled, *Ethiopian Famine Hits Millions*, by Charles Mohr, provides a written account of the events occurring in Wollo and Tigray. The article captures the basics of the famine (i.e. who was affected, how many people died, the difficulties in distributing food-aid). The article does not explain the political causes of the famine, only that peasants affected by the famine had existed near hunger and were pushed by "natural" and "social" misfortunes (Mohr 1974). Furthermore, the publishing date of this article coincides with the beginning of the Derg revolution, completely side-stepping the critical political state of the country and focusing on a famine that had peaked the year prior. These two examples display the media technique called naturalization (Sorenson 1990; Sorenson 1991). They focus on the environmental imagery that connects droughts to famines with specifics on the people and the location of the disaster. They never address that drought can occur without resulting in a famine, losing focus on the political relationship to the famine.

The significance of Dimbleby's documentary, *The Unknown Famine,* was that it thrust Ethiopia into an international spotlight. Politically, Ethiopia has had a long history with Western and European governments both in positive and negative aspects. The social dimensions however ultimately changed after the 1972-75 famine was exposed. It created what Cowcher refers to as spectacles of starvation. In the 60's, Ethiopia was introduced to television, primarily filtered by the imperial government. It would broadcast footage at the emperor's palace and celebrations but failed to capture any of the famine (Cowcher 51). Domestic attempts in outing the cover-up were also attempted by students in Addis Ababa through organizing exhibitions. These exhibitions would be held at the Haile Selassie I University, with the purpose of exposing starving peasants under the guise of geographic information on the drought. They were suppressed by police and university guards (Cowcher 51). Additionally, short films such as *Harvest: 3000*, would become important pieces of storytelling in exposing the political conditions in Ethiopia. *Harvest:3000,* released in 1977, depicts the slow waging feud between a wealthy landlord and a protestor who believes he is mistreating his labourers. It was created by the Ethiopian film director and creator, Haile Gerima. He left the Gondar region of Ethiopia to pursue studying drama in Addis Ababa, leaving for the United States in 1967 to further his studies. In an interview, he explained that he travelled back to Ethiopia during the struggle in political power to expose the famine. Instead, he focused the film and its characters to represent the political conditions because students in the capital had already begun to leak information about the famine (Cowcher 48-49). The protests by Ethiopian students and Gerima's film were calls to action about famine in Ethiopia, as opposed to Dimbleby's *Hidden Hunger*. The original broadcast turned the famine into a spectacle, the re-edited footage sparked nearly a decade of war in Ethiopia and provided the Derg with a means of using multimedia to their political advantage.

The 1983-1985 famine multimedia portrayal followed a similar path in coverage, with an even more engaged international audience. The Derg had been so occupied by initiating death campaigns and wars that they also ignored the famine occurring in the northern regions of Ethiopia. Domestically, the first year of the famine went nearly unreported in Ethiopian media. I was able to visit the Ethiopian National Archives and Library Agency, where I would access the *Ethiopian Herald's* newspaper publishing from March – October 1983 (The only year available). Throughout eight months worth of newspaper reports, famine appeared in the headlines or

articles a handful of times after a digital word search. It would be referenced in the context of ongoing Ethiopian forest degradation, over-exaggerated reports of famine made by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (UNFAO), and famine in South Africa (Ethiopian Harald 1983). Coverage of the drought in Wollo and Tigray were referenced but in the context of the RRC seeking relief donations for the victims. For instance, a March 12th headline stated the "UNHCR Donates to RCC," the article reads that, "The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) yesterday donated ten trucks worth over 900,000 Birr to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) for use in the repatriation of Ethiopian refugees"(Ethiopian Herald 1983).

I did not have time to visit or access any archived footage from Ethiopian broadcast networks. I did inquire about the status of the *Ethiopian Herald* as a news source and was told that it was a frequently read paper. However, the paper itself was government owned, therefore it could be assumed that stories would be biased to favour the dominant regime at the time.

Internationally, the news of the famine escalated in 1984, specifically by journalist Michael Buerk of the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC). I was unable to acquire footage of his first report of the famine, but I did find the second video report on *YouTube*, exposing the starvation of Ethiopian peasants by the thousands in the small town of Korem. The report begins with a BBC anchor providing an exposition of the situation before cutting to Buerk. She explains that because of the lack of rain, the drought caused the famine. This is another example of the media technique "naturalization" being used to attribute environmental hazards as the cause of famine and not political issues. Ethiopian rural communities have experienced droughts and other environmental hazards more frequently than they do famines. The occurrence of famine in this case, has been related to socio-economic or political factors. The video focuses on the extreme starvation of the peasants and their need for food. In many aspects, it resembles Dimbleby's original video with two key differences. The first, thousands of people were captured on video struggling, showing the intensity of this famine. Korem was estimated to have around 40,000 to 60,000 people in relief camps (Müller 472). Secondly, it included a plea from a French physician, associated with Doctors Without Borders (DWB). In her interview, she explained that without food, the medicine provided would not do any good (BBC News 00:00-

7.38). In 2005, a separate report titled *Famine and Forced Relocations in Ethiopia 1984-1986,* by the Médecins Sans Frontières Speaking Out series revealed what the doctors in Korem witnessed. One of these testimonials stated that,

> "…People have described it as a camp for refugees from hunger. More than 10,000 people have been waiting just outside the village for three months, to receive a month's allocation of grain – around 21 kilos…The villages are inaccessible by road. They have come on foot, some from as far as 160 km away, to reach this distribution centre…Aid comes from the capital on trailers. The only vehicles we passed on the northern road were trucks loaded with grains, often bearing the blue logo of the United Nations. But they weren't the kind of out-of-the-ordinary convoy one would expect to see in an emergency…FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization] mission staff in Addis Ababa says the country has grain, but only 150,000 tonnes could be distributed in the affected areas for lack of logistical resources…People in Korem are suffering the consequences. The distribution centre has no grain stocks…"
>
> (Colson in Médecins Sans Frontières 11-12).

Michael Buerk's reports both lighted and re-ignited the global coverage of Ethiopian famine. There had been attempts by news agencies to reveal the issue of drought and famine prior to Buerk but they did not contain the level of impact needed to mobilize the international call to action that later became Live-Aid or Band-Aid. Suzanne Franks, the author of the article, *How Famine Captured the Headlines,* situates the video within the institute of reporting by assessing news value and the historical framework of broadcasting (Franks 292). Buerk's report had been broadcast by 425 television channels and seen by 470 million people (Franks 291; Müller 473). Franks, like Sorenson earlier, argued that news from poor developing countries rarely makes an impact on Western media. When it does, it must capture the attention of the audience, which had already occurred in 1973 when Dimbleby released his video. For instance, Mike Woolridge, BBC's East Africa Correspondent, had been trying to cover the story of famine early in 1983, before Buerk (Franks 293). In addition, film director Charles Stewart, had been in Ethiopia filming a documentary for ITV on soil erosion and drought initially called *Seeds of Hope*. The visible starvation in the country altered the goal of the documentary and the title was changed to *Seeds of Despair*, scheduled to air in July 1984. The Independent Broadcasting Association (IBA) was made aware of this film and requested it is handled by the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) (Franks 296). The BBC heard about the emergency appeal requested by the DEC and contacted their South African Correspondent, Michael Buerk, to retrieve a story of famine in Africa. Buerk's story was intended to scoop ITV's documentary (Franks 297). There had been a competition between the broadcasting companies and BBC won,

beating ITV in releasing their documentary. Franks provides several quotes of Buerk describing moments before the footage aired. In one quote, he explains that,

> "Charles Stewart…had made…a very well crafted and brilliant film…and the BBC I think felt wrongfooted about this…I wouldn't like to say that their competitive instincts were totally vainglorious, but they were challenged by this idea. So in a matter of about seven days before this appeal was about to go out I got a rather alarmed phone call from the foreign desk instructing me to find some starving African in order to actually film something to use in the appeal but also to run in parallel a piece on the BBC News,,,"
> (Buerk in Franks 297).

The BBC broadcast created a media frenzy. The Derg had forbidden foreign journalists to travel to any other region outside the city of Addis Ababa between the months of August and September (Franks 298). This made it difficult to report on the conditions of northern regions such as Wollo and Tigray. They were limiting any negative imagery of the military government during their 10-year anniversary celebrating the revolution in 1974. When journalists were able to travel again, Buerk managed to obtain a travel visa with videographer Mohammed Amin and visit the northern regions in October to shoot his second report. Newspapers such as the *New York Times* were also publishing the reports of the famine and how television had been used to expose this disastrous phenomenon. In November 1984, one article by Sally Bedell Smith, titled *Famine Reports Show Power of TV*, explains how American networks had been using BBC's images to portray the famine. The CBS Television program *60 Minutes* brought in an audience of 34 million sharing the story of starvation around the time this article was written. Furthermore, American networks were trying to figure out how they would continue to cover the story without the images of starving people and bloated bellied children, turning off their viewers (Smith 1984). Despite these concerns, Franks believes Buerk's initial report received the impact it did for seven reasons. I have summarized them, in order below,

1. The report was released during a quiet period in foreign news. Crises affecting distant countries and people are observed by audiences on a cyclical basis and can not be stomached at the same time.
2. The story coincided with another narrative angle where European grain supplies had been rotting in warehouses due to agricultural policies of the European Community. It stipulated the excess of some nations while others were starving.
3. The images captured by Mohammed Amin and the combined script writing of Buerk created an award-winning report. The problem with previous more destructive famines in other countries prior to the one in 1983-85 Ethiopia, was that there were never news pictures of the tragedy.
4. The scale and visibility of the tragedy conveyed an overwhelming image.
5. The role of senior editorial staff in the BBC making decisions to run with a foreign story at the lengths they did.
6. The pattern in news coverage regarding the famine was uncharacteristic for a long-term event. The news blackout created by the Derg government between July and October 1984, gave the famine a sense of being newly discovered when journalists began to cover the story again.

7. The resurgence of the famine in the media was in proximity to the holiday season. Although the original broadcast had aired in July, the media started to report again in October. Stories with charitable dimensions do better with public interest near holiday seasons such as Christmas.

(Franks 303-307).

The 1983-1985 Ethiopian famine was the result of a series of issues, both political and environmental. The media portrayal of the victims had shifted the narrative of the disaster as one of individual suffering due to environmental conditions. This is not a critique of multimedia institutions, their decision-making processes and the journalists that exposed the famines to a global audience. Instead, this breakdown explains how susceptible narratives are to institutional influences, conveying an alternative message to the larger public. Buerk's reports caused a global outpour of support and charitable donations for famine victims in Ethiopia. It created a unique philanthropic phenomenon known as Band-Aid, started by Bob Geldof, an Irish singer-songwriter, author, and political activist. He and several other famous musicians recorded the charity song, *Do They Know It's Christmas*, a month after Buerk's October report aired. The record made £5 million (pounds) in charitable funds for Ethiopia (Gill 12).

Tanja Müller's article, *The Long Shadow of Band-Aid Humanitarianism: Revisiting the Dynamics Between Famine and Celebrity*, describes how Geldof and other participants of Band/Live-Aid never questioned the underlying causes of the famine. The imagery of starving women and children brought in large amounts of financial donations and public aid. Charity organizations did not correct these problematic narratives out of fear donations would cease (Müller 474). Geldof has been criticized for using idealistic images of walking though groups of Ethiopian children. However, viewers were unaware that these visits to Ethiopia would be stage-managed by Ethiopian authorities to maintain supportive messages of the military regime (Müller 474). In 2010, the *Daily Mail* published an article questioning whether Band-Aid funds had been diverted to Ethiopian rebel groups. Geldof has remained firm in his belief that the funds went directly to those suffering from famine and not for the armament of rebel groups. Ethiopian rebels and Band-Aid's field director in 1985 were interviewed for the article. There is never an agreement on the exact percentage of aid diverted for purchasing weapons, but there is a consensus that money was used to arm the revels – contrary to Geldof's belief (Brennan 2010).

In this section, I have explained the role of multimedia narratives in disseminating environmental disaster information. In an increasingly globalized society, it is pertinent that people understand how environmental disasters are a created and managed. In addition, how respective governments plan on reducing their populations' risk to a disaster. In Ethiopia's case, multimedia reporting never captured the full picture of the situation. Famine was either hidden in domestic reporting or attributed to natural causes in international reporting. Therefore, it is important to have an inclusive understanding of what a disaster is, especially as it relates to broadcasted information. The following section will provide context on disasters and disaster risk to signify the importance of disaster risk reduction (DRR). The purpose of DRR is to limit the future impact of environmental hazards in vulnerable populations by considering a community's capacity and resilience to disasters.

2.5 - Disasters

Disasters are significant societal and communal disruptions that need to be sensibly defined in recognition of the various factors (i.e. hazard types, vulnerabilities, risk) that form it. Multiple examples of vulnerabilities include social (individual determinants), physical (fragility of the built environment), economic (employment opportunities), and environmental (degradation of soil, flora, and fauna). A disaster that impacts a developing country will be experienced differently than in a developed country. Furthermore, a disaster in a developed country occurring in predominantly racialized, marginalized, or resource-poor spaces will be impacted more severely. It is not enough to define a disaster solely on the hazard itself. For example, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) defines a disaster as a,

> "sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins" (www.ifrc.org).

Organizations such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) defines a disaster as a,

> "serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts"

(www.undrr.org/terminology/disaster).

The IFRC defines a disastrous event as being sudden, calamitous and disrupting. However, it fails to mention that pre-existing vulnerabilities can be hazardous and exacerbated within a community or society. As Jesse Ribot explained in his 2015 article, *Vulnerability and Climate in the Anthropocene*, environmental or climate change assessments stemming from this type of understanding can normalize the pre-existing state (vulnerabilities) of certain communities. The definition also states that disasters are often caused by nature, however natural disasters are an oxymoron because humans influence the severity of natural hazards through various land use modifications and industrial activities (i.e. mineral extractions, deep-sea drilling, pollution). The UNDRR has a better definition of a disaster because they anticipate hazardous events that will interact with existing levels of exposure, vulnerability, and capacity in affected communities. It is not my intention to critique these institutions but rather highlight the significance in their differing definitions. In the book, *Disaster Theory: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Concepts and Causes,* author David Etkin makes an important note on defining disasters. He explains that even though there are vast disagreements in finding a shared meaning of disasters, there are many commonalities within the definitions; each has a place in the field, whether it be operational, academic or theoretical (Etkin 4).

This paper and its research methodology frame the term disaster within the context of signifying the interaction between environmental hazards (i.e. droughts, famines, floods, earthquakes, storms, volcanic eruptions, etc.) and the pre-existing vulnerabilities (i.e. social, economic, and political) of hazard-exposed groups. I have drawn on the work of Ben Wisner, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon and Ian Davis in their book, *At Risk (2004),* to strengthen my understanding of natural hazards, vulnerability and disasters. In their opening chapter, the authors explain that society expects natural hazards to have large death tolls. Yet, outside of the few cases where hazards such as floods, famines, and earthquakes have killed hundreds of thousands to millions of people, society often forgets the number of people killed by other hazardous events such as political violence, epidemics, transportation and industrial accidents (Wisner et al. 4). Therefore, it is unwise to separate natural hazards and social environments because disasters include both; as the authors explain,

> "For many people, a disaster is not a single, discrete event. All over the world, but especially in LDCs, vulnerable people often suffer repeated, multiple, mutually reinforcing, and sometimes simultaneous shocks to their families, their settlements and their livelihoods. These repeated shocks erode whatever attempts have been made to accumulate resources and savings."
> (Wisner et al. 5)

2.5.1 - Disaster Risk

The next step from understanding disasters is conceptualizing the risk associated with it. Widespread agreements regarding the definition of disaster risk do not exist. However, it is imperative that there is a common agreement in how the terminology is used (Etkin 57). For example, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) website describes disaster risk as a potential loss of life, extending to the injury, destruction or damage of assets within a system (i.e. society or community). It is determined as a function of hazards, exposure, vulnerability or capacity during specific time periods (www.undrr.org/terminology/disaster-risk). The UNDRR explains that it is difficult to quantify the conditions of risk and to consider the socio-economic contexts in which it occurs. Risk perceptions and factors are not always the same and therefore they provide two sub-terms of risk for clarification. The first term is called acceptable risk, this is when disaster risk has been deemed acceptable depending on the social, economic, political, cultural, technical and environmental circumstances. The second term is referred to as residual risk, this is disaster risk that remains after active disaster risk reduction strategies have been initiated. Residual risk requires the continued need to advance and support more holistic methods in capacity building for emergency services, preparedness, response and recovery (www.undrr.org/terminology/disaster-risk). The World Risk Index is another credible source for understanding disaster risk, using the index as an instrument to assess the level of risk on a national scale with regards to natural hazards. The World Risk Index defines disaster risk as a product of the interaction between natural hazards and vulnerabilities on exposed elements (Welle and Birkmann 2).

The index is explained in the 2015 article, *The World Risk Index – An Approach to Assess Risk and Vulnerability on a Global Scale*, by Torsten Welle and Joern Birkmann. In conceptualizing the World Risk Index, the authors define vulnerability as a predisposition, fragility, weakness or a lack of capacity that intensifies the negative effects on exposed elements (i.e. people, livelihoods, environmental services and infrastructure) as illustrated in Figure 1. The

World Risk Index is then translated into a modular structure consisting of the following four components: exposure, susceptibility, coping capacity, and adaptive capacity (Welle and Birkmann 3). Exposure incorporates the natural hazard domain which seeks to identify entities (i.e. communities, resources, infrastructure, services or ecosystems, etc.) affected by hazardous events. In addition, exposure can be differentiated by spatial or temporal components based on those affected (Welle and Birkmann 3-4). The remaining three components reside within the social sphere of the index. Therefore, susceptibility refers to the condition of the exposed community and the likelihood of experiencing harm brought on by natural hazards or other environmental circumstances. Coping conditions encompass the direct response to a hazardous event's impact; it is a short-term resolution. Adaptive conditions are long-term solutions that involve capacity and transformational strategies. This allows communities to manage the consequences of natural hazards (Welle and Birkmann 4-5). The figure below is an illustration of the World Risk Index model used by the authors in the article. They have expanded on the model with sub-components and highlighted specific indicators, relating current initiatives addressing disaster risk reduction.

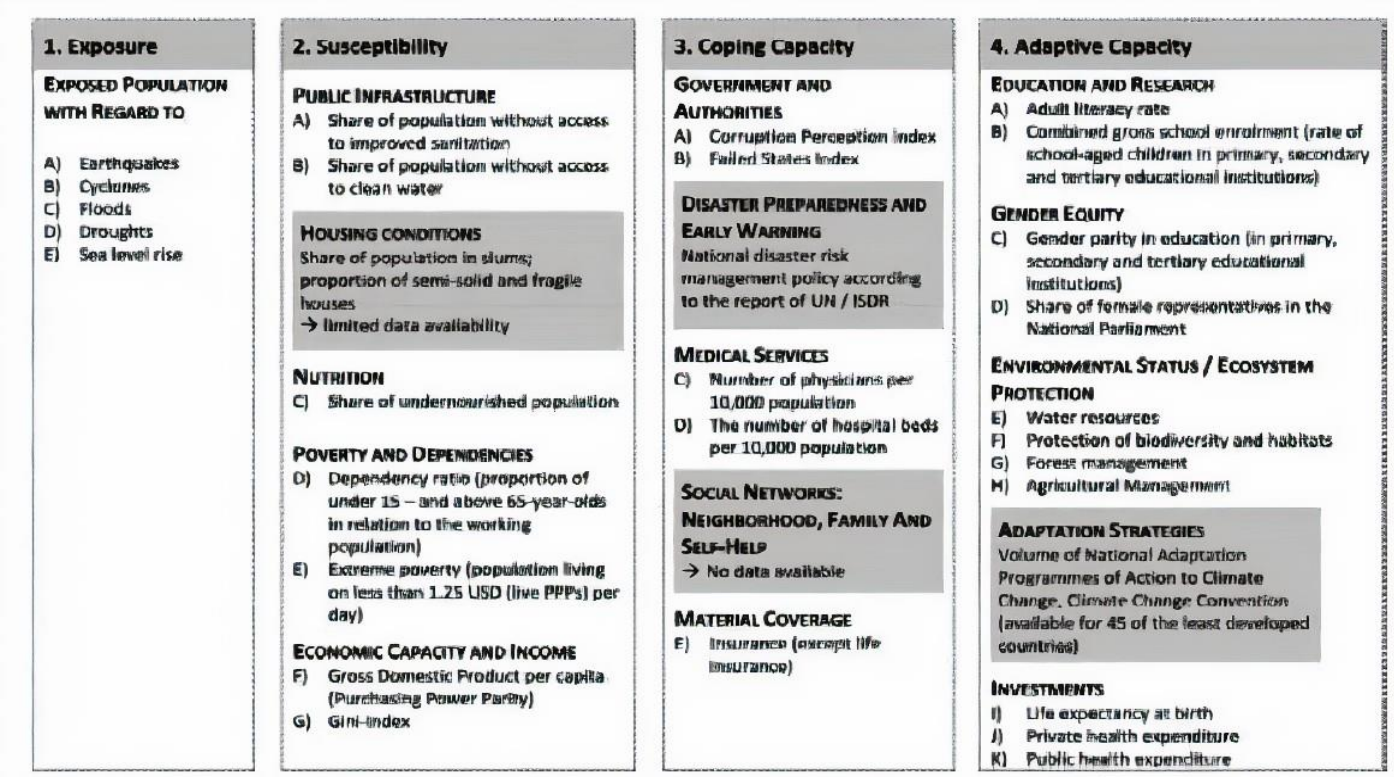


Figure 1. The framework of the World Risk Index (Welle and Birkmann 7).

2.5.2 - *Disaster Risk Reduction*

International and domestic disaster agencies respond to hazardous events through various methods (i.e. management, reduction, and mitigation). Of all these methods, disaster risk reduction (DRR) is critical in limiting the full impact of future hazards in vulnerable populations. Defining DRR can vary depending on the entity (ex. governments, institutions, organizations, communities) constructing the characteristic dimensions they wish to embody and execute. For example, in 2017, the United Nations Office of Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) defined disaster strategy as, "preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development" (UNISDR, "unisdr.org.") whereas a governmental agency such as the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) has a different definition of DRR. In one of their annual reports, the agency described DRR as,

> "the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyze and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of peoples and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse effects…" (USAID 13).

For the purpose of limiting multiple definitions of DRR, a prime objective of DRR in the UNISDR and USAID (and seemingly other definitions) is the overall reduction of disaster risk. The differences here will be in the practical application of those definitions according to each organization's unique disaster strategies.

On an international level, DRR has been implemented in two significant methods, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). In January of 2005, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction gathered in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan to adopt a then-new framework for DRR action. Their goal was to create an action plan for the next decade, 2005-2015, with the intent to reduce disaster losses by building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters; specifically, the loss of lives as it connected to social, economic, and environmental assets against hazards. The Conference concluded that the framework would consist of five priorities of action, they were.

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.
2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.

3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.
4. Reduce the underlying risk factors.
5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

(ISDR 6)

The HFA provided a working guideline for the international community, which pushed forward a revision in DRR initiatives. However, its priorities failed in recognizing the capacity level of different nations. Many of these issues focused on the social, legal, economic and political differences that make collective risk reduction frameworks challenging to implement (ISDR 2014). In 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) was created to succeed the HFA. The Sendai Framework has been set to operate between 2015-2030, building atop the HFA's successes and failures. Specifically, the Sendai Framework recognizes that in the ten years of the HFA's existence, disasters have continued to wage a heavy toll and, as a result, the well-being and safety of persons, communities and countries have been affected. Over 700,000 thousand people have lost their lives, over 1.4 million have been injured and approximately 23 million have been made homeless as a result of disasters (United Nations 10). In taking these factors into consideration, the Sendai Framework's priority actions differ slightly from the HFA, and they are as follows,

1. Understanding disaster risk.
2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk.
3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.
4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

(United Nations 14).

In 2017, a report by the UNISDR indicated its concerns and objectives for local level implementation of the Sendai Framework. On a global scale, disaster losses have reached a financial height of 250-300 billion dollars, and it's imperative that local governments cooperate in order to reduce the number of vulnerabilities faced in their respective nations (Albrito, 1). The report states that even though the Sendai framework has been implemented, the need for immediate action needs to be promoted and this new initiative still has challenges, it must overcome. These challenges include addressing specific risk drivers (ex. urban planning, development, risk and vulnerability reduction, environmental resource management, etc.), investments in infrastructure, and the position of disaster risk within real estate and construction sectors (Albrito 2). Nonetheless, the report carries a sense of urgency regarding the

implementation of the Sendai Framework while highlighting that climate change - amidst all these challenges - will be the greatest barrier to overcome.

Canada is a signatory of the Sendai Framework and has focused on improving disaster resilience as part of its emergency management strategy. In the 2020 article, *Risk Resilience: A Case of Perception versus Reality in Flood Management*, Agrawal et al. focus on the importance of risk perception regarding environmental hazards like flooding in Canada. It is critical that the development of DRR initiatives incorporate the perception of risk people have in impacted the communities. However, Agrawal et al. explain that while this has been extensively discussed in literature, it has not been practically applied in significant ways. This is because it is difficult to measure actor perceptions in communities, assessing the impact of opinion in DRR policies and gathering relevant data (Agrawal et al. 3). The authors suggest that in order to better account for community perceptions of risk, it must be integrated holistically within risk and resilience assessments that understand a community's priorities, general vulnerabilities, and geomorphology (Agrawal et al. 3). The shift in prioritizing DRR and strengthening the capacity of Canadian systems (i.e. community, society) is due to the continued vulnerability of flooding in specific regions. There was the 2011 Manitoba Floods, the 2013 floods of southern Alberta and urban Toronto, the 2014 floods of Saskatchewan and Manitoba and most recently, the recurrent spring floods of 2017-2019 in Ontario, Quebec and Toronto islands (Agrawal et al. 2). Through Public Safety Canada, federal, provincial and territorial (FTP) governments have passed five priorities in 2019's Emergency Management Strategy to strengthen Canadian's resilience to environmental hazards. They are listed below:

1. Enhance whole-of-society collaboration and governance to strengthen resilience.
2. Improve understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society.
3. Increase focus on whole-of-society disaster prevention and mitigation activities.
4. Enhance disaster response capacity and coordination and foster the development of new capabilities.
5. Strengthen recovery efforts by building back better to minimize the impacts of future disasters.

(Emergency Management Strategy for Canada 2019)

Research Methodology

This research project is presented as an analytical paper using literature from various sources, including public and private sectors, non-governmental, multinational agencies, peer-reviewed scholarly articles, media reports and/or interviews (Dumbuya and Nirupama 9). All

qualitative data has been input into NVivo software (referenced in section 3.1) for analysis and Excel software is used for quantitative data analysis. Section 3.2 will provide a table analysis of the source types taken from NVivo, presenting the most prevalent themes. I have developed a Pressure and Release (PAR) model based on the framework created by Wisner et al. (2004). It will be described in section 3.3. The framework (presented in section 3.4) is used to conduct a qualitative analysis of the root causes for the progression of vulnerability in Ethiopia. Each link of vulnerability represents the socio-economic and political pressures that have collided with hazardous pressures, resulting in famine. Some statistical information from Ethiopian relief institutions (i.e. RRC) was either unavailable or inaccessible and, therefore, not included in the model.

3.1 Data Used

Table 2: Distribution of sources reviewed for this entire research paper.

Source Type	Number of Sources
Government	8
NGO	4
Multilateral	7
Scholarly	47
Media	14
Total	80

Table 2 summarizes the sources reviewed for the paper organized according to categories. Multilateral reports were published by the International Disaster Database (EM-DAT), International Disaster Institute, the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO), the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), United Nations (UN), and the European Commission. Sources from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were drawn from reports released by Human Rights Watch and Africa Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and Oxfam. The governmental source consists of reports from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the United States Agency for International Development, policy and humanitarian documents from the government of Ethiopia.

Scholarly articles were examined from sources such as the Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Ethiopian Journal of Development Research, the Journal of Social Development in Africa, the Journal of Social Science & Medicine, the Journal of History of Medicine and Allied Sciences, Journal of Business and Administrative Studies, Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, AMBIO, the Journal of Eastern African Studies, African Studies Review, International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, Journal of Sustainable Development, Journal of Peasant Studies, African Affairs, Evidence on Demand, Environmental Management, International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment, Media History, Journal of Political Ecology, Third World Quarterly, Capitalism Nature Socialism, Progress in Human Geography, Postcolonial Text, Northeast African Studies, Discourse & Society, Energy Policy, African Centre for Disaster Studies, Politics and the Life Sciences. Scholarly books were published by the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Oxford University Press, Practical Action, Routledge, Michigan State University Press, Elsevier, Palgrave, Lynne Reinner, Algora Publishing, Wiley-Blackwell, Cambridge, the University of Georgia Press, Berhanena Salam Press.

Media-related sources were drawn from newspapers such as the Ethiopian Herald, the Daily Mail, the New York Times, the Atlantic, Thames Television, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and YouTube. Images also included were taken at the Red Terror Museum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

3.2 – *Thematic Table*

I picked 12 themes, and scanned the sources using single phrases or multiple phrases. I applied the themes to create a complete account of the sources used for the research paper. I was able to create these themes by using NVivo software, which sorted all the source materials in an organized method. NVivo is a subscription-based software that provides researchers with many options in sorting, analyzing, coding and thematizing their projects. Its online resource provides step-by-step instructions that guide its users through the program's terminology when importing, organizing and exploring their data. NVivo allows the user to import various types of the source material. This is especially useful when projects rely on mixed methodologies of both quantitative and qualitative sources (i.e. videos, scholarly articles, images, interviews, etc.). However, I did experience a few challenges in utilizing the software, primarily because I had

never used it before. I could only find written instructions on NVivo's website, as the video tutorials I found on other platforms were out of date with the current Windows version. This prolonged the time it would take to effectively familiarize myself with the program. In addition, I recognized that the various options in sorting, analyzing and displaying data could intimidate new users.

Importing research sources into NVivo would only create a large and unsorted list of files. These files had to be carefully organized into specific categories, therefore I sorted them into the following classifications: government, NGO, multilateral, media, and scholarly. These categories would eventually correlate to specific thematic groups. I utilised NVivo's autocode feature to code all the sources and create a preliminary list of themes. It was difficult to code all the sources because image-based texts were unreadable by NVivo. Some of these sources were academic books, articles and pictures of archival newspapers gathered during my research trip in Ethiopia. To remedy this situation, I utilized Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software found in Wondershare's PDFelement program, converting all non-digital texts into digital texts. I listed and cross-referenced those autocodes to decide which themes were the most relevant and could encompass sub-themes within them. Several of those sub-themes were used as a single or multiple phrase search criterion in the data table, Table 2. Exploring the themes was the most difficult stage because it required knowing what to search for. I used a matrix query which allowed me to find patterns in the data. It revealed attributes like the number of coding references, as shown in the data table earlier. Overall, the NVivo experience was beneficial to this research paper, it just took several attempts to understand its features and programmed terminology.

Table 3. A complete account of research source types and themes extracted from them with occurrences in percentage and number using NVivo qualitative software. The five source types used in this table were used in the construction of the Pressure and Release Model (PAR).

Source Type	**Multilateral Agencies**		**NGOs**		**Scholarly Article/Books**		**Media**		**Government**		**Remarks: Single or multiple phrase keywords used for scanning sources**
Themes	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	
Ethiopian	1173	4.04	2708	4.64	8524	169.26	351	7.72	441	5.43	Ethiopian, Northern Ethiopia, Wollo, Tigray, Eritrea
Government	899	2.55	1987	3.15	7943	72.24	266	5.34	559	15.14	Government, Counter Insurgent, Ministry, Political Regime
Institutions	711	3.52	1131	2.17	3021	18.03	248	2.03	211	7.13	Institutions, RRC, International Aid
Narrative	1677	5.04	1037	1.67	11466	77.36	362	66.59	454	3.96	Narrative, Story, News Reports, Poems
Relief	2860	11.63	1200	2.4	4735	63.8	175	4.91	993	24.48	Relief, Risk Reduction, Aid
Social	553	2.01	365	0.36	7176	44.04	170	3.29	559	7.2	Social, Peasant, Peasant Association, Health Coverage
Environment	228	0.69	194	0.33	3863	18.87	94	0.27	193	5.29	Environment. Agriculture, Subsistence Agriculture, Farming
Economic	464	1.5	281	0.55	7439	42.79	252	0.38	314	5.17	Economic, Entitlement, Agriculture Production, Income
Famine	173	1.06	899	1.18	4860	20.66	61	18.95	129	2.95	Famine, Famine Stricken, Famine Related Deaths
Drought	1082	3.02	301	0.78	1532	21.3	102	1.93	210	2.37	Drought, Drought Stricken, Lack of
Disaster Risk	5006	100	216	100	12319	181.31	29	100	1866	118.6	Disaster Risk, Disasters, Vulnerability, Hazards
Food	631	2.14	712	0.662	4011	16.28	82	1.94	540	3.85	Food, Food Loss, Food Shortage, Food Availability

3.3 - *Pressure & Release Model*

The Pressure & Release Model (PAR) (see figure 2) was created by Wisner et al. in their 1994 book, *At Risk*, to assess disaster vulnerability by understanding its socio-economic, political and cultural forces. The PAR model contains the following three elements; risk, vulnerability and hazards (Risk = Hazards + Vulnerability). The model and its disaster equation were updated (Risk = Hazards x Vulnerability) by the authors in 2004 for the release of the book's second edition (Figure 2). Disasters occur when vulnerable populations and natural hazards interact; one without the other would not be a disaster. Therefore, the Pressure & Release model was created to map the interaction between the two opposing forces of a disaster (the progression of vulnerability on one side and the hazard on the other) (Wisner 46). The PAR is a suitable method to be applied in this research to explain the progression of vulnerabilities over the decades, including their underlying causes and dynamic pressures, exacerbating them during the three famines discussed.

There are three links within the chain of vulnerability. the first is the most distant, root causes, which are the widespread and general processes occurring within society. They highlight the spatial distance (i.e. political and economic powers), the temporal distance (i.e. historical events), and, additionally events that have been taken for granted which are intertwined with cultural assumptions, ideologies, social relations and lived experiences (Wisner et al. 47). These economic, political and social processes create and reproduce vulnerability that severely impacts the allocation and distribution of resources to different groups of people (Wisner et al. 47). Root causes are meant to highlight the exercise and distribution of power in a society. Populations who are living in the margins (ex. rural areas, isolated, arid, flood prone environments) are a low priority for those with economic or political power, causing three sources of vulnerability (Wisner et al. 48). The first source of vulnerability is generated when populations have insecure access to livelihoods and resources. The second source of vulnerability occurs when populations become low priorities for governmental interventions managing hazards. Lastly, The third source involves the loss of local knowledge due to a lack of trust in one's own self protection (Wisner et al. 48).

The second link of vulnerability is referred to as dynamic pressures. It takes the processes and activities of root causes and translates their effects - both temporally and spatially - into the third link of vulnerability (Wisner et al. 48). Dynamic pressures are more immediate, taking place during the time of the specific hazard (i.e. epidemic disease, rapid urbanization, wars and violent conflicts) (Wisner et al. 49). A prominent example, provided by Wisner et al. is capitalism, a 500-year-old system of power that has become intertwined with social, economic and political processes. A contemporary form of capitalism is neoliberalism, which would be considered a dynamic pressure. Neoliberal agendas in marginalized communities or developing countries severely impact the level of resilience they would have during a disaster.

For example, neoliberal practices of conservation have become a contemporary effort to address issues of environmentalism such as climate change, degradation, droughts, and famines. Yet, these practices remain a component of capitalistic processes that still impact the geographies of uneven development in various ways. In the article, *Livelihood Impacts of Environmental Conservation Programmes in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia*, it argued that climate change drivers greatly influence the ability of poorer populations to utilize services of nature (food, water, health) to sustain themselves (Assan et al. 87). The author's objectives focused on the Tree Gudifecha (a tree plantation, soil and water conservation project) in two villages in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, determining the project's impact and contribution of environmental conservation on livelihood (Assan et al. 88). The study of the Tree Gudifecha project generated data on several determinants of livelihood, such as household assets, community capacity development, credit and input support, community and social networks, household income and savings (Assan et al. 2013).

PAR's third chain of vulnerability is the unsafe conditions, specific to vulnerable populations during the spatial and temporal interaction of a hazard (Wisner et al. 49). For example, unsafe conditions refer to fragile physical environments such as people living in hazardous conditions or their unsafe buildings. It also includes the fragility of a population's local economy and the ability to prepare for disasters through public actions. Wisner et al. (2004) were very specific in defining this link because they were aware that certain disaster terminology had been diluted by encompassing too much or being overused. Therefore, I will draw on the

authors directly to illustrate the strict usage of terminology when dealing with unsafe conditions. The authors write that,

> "People, as should be apparent already, are vulnerable and live in or work under unsafe conditions…a building should be regarded as unsafe, rather than vulnerable; a settlement's location is hazardous, not vulnerable. In this way, we retain the term vulnerability for people only. The reason for this straightforward: already the term vulnerability (and its associate, vulnerability analysis) has been appropriated for use in such a wide range of situations that (like 'sustainability') it is in danger of losing its significance in relation to people and hazards. If 'vulnerability' becomes a catch-all term for any aspect of conditions related to disasters, then it will lose its analytical capacity. Moreover, it will lose the focus about which we are very explicit – that it is the vulnerability of people that is crucial to understanding disasters and disaster preparedness."
> (Wisner et al. 50)

In the following section, I am presenting the PAR model developed using the data reviewed and used in this research. The model identifies the root causes, dynamic pressures, and unsafe conditions as they arose during the three famines explored in the study.

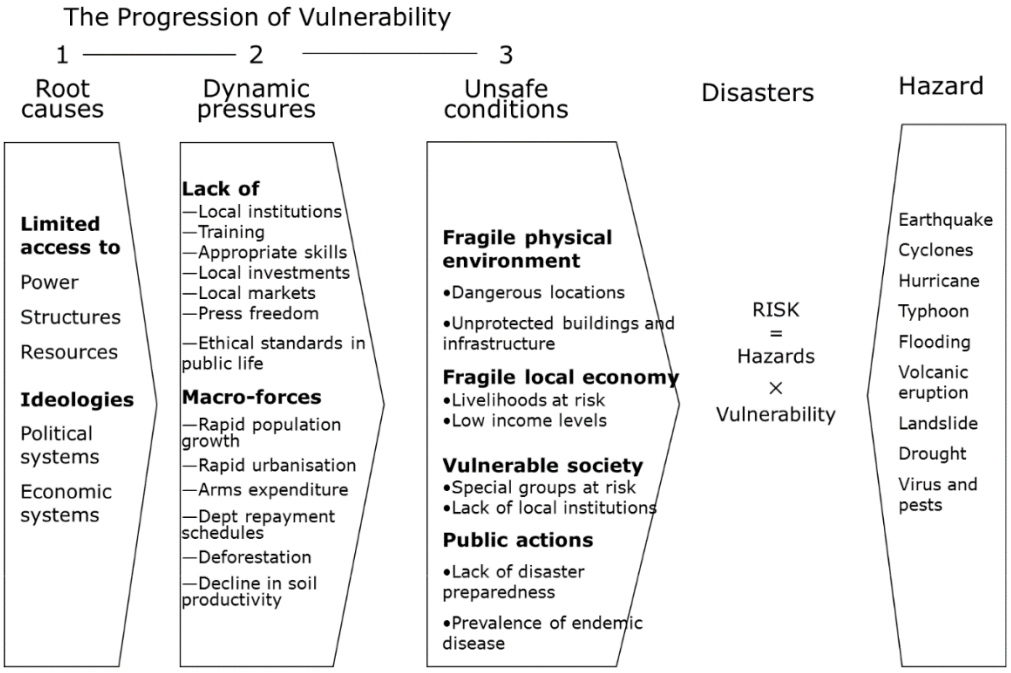


Figure 2. Pressure and Release Model (Wisner et al. 2004)

3.4 - Pressure & Release Model Developed Based on Three of the Largest Famines in Modern Ethiopian History

3.4.1 Root Causes

Limited Access To

Power

- **(1972-1975)** Improper coordination and corruption on the local level in Wollo made it difficult to distribute grains.

- The Wollo region had low purchasing power, even though food prices were relatively steady and food was available in Ethiopia.
- **(1983-1985)** Between 1955 and 1977, the Imperial government and the Derg government that succeeded it, focused on expanding the nation's agribusiness and commercialized agriculture development. This increased the number of landless peasants and reduced the number of remaining small farmers.
- The governments during the droughts in the 70's and 80's focused on assisting larger commercial agribusinesses over the peasants.
- RRC (Relief Rehabilitation Commission) overwhelmed by the number of refugees in Northern Ethiopia

Structures

- **(1888-1892)** The Emperor would feed peasants who would make it to the palace but there was a lack of food and animal transportation due to the Rinderpest. Peasants during the famine died on the way to the Emperor's palace.
- Ethiopian society would generally keep the spread of cattle infection under control by stopping baggage bullocks from travelling further through hilltops. These regulations were either inoperative or ineffective due to troop and cattle movement against the Italians in the North.
- Emperor Menelik initially told his people to pray for the famines to stop. His order were ignored, and the emperor eventually conceded his (religious) responsibility for his people after the continued progression of cattle disease, harvest failures and locusts.
- **(1972-1975)** Famine stricken populations had difficulty accessing local markets based on low income levels and unemployment.
- According to the RRC surveys, 15% of drought affected populations sold or abandoned their land and 2.6 % mortgaged it. This is significant because the connection to land is very important for Ethiopians and most of them who could not access their local markets still choose to stay in drought conditions as opposed to migrating to urban areas or neighbouring regions.
- Ethiopia was still operating under an archaic land tenure system where landowners would be able to extract upwards of two-thirds of a tenant's produce. Tenants were also discouraged from investing in modern technologies to improve land practices.
- **(1983-1985)** It became nearly impossible for peasants to rely on the social institution of borrowing cash or other forms of assistance from relatives or neighbours. They had to form (delayed) relief efforts for assistance.
- In 1975, the newly appointed Derg government created a sweeping land reform, allowing the peasants to take over land and organize into peasant associations (PA's). In the first two years of implementation, 24,7000 PA's were created.
- Low-to-mid level PA's did the bare minimum or failed to report famines to the state. Additionally, peasants still relied on the state for aid.

Resources

- **(1888-1892)** Many peasant farmers living in rural areas did not have a means of transportation because the Rinderpest had killed all cattle.
- Reports indicate that Emperor Menilek commanded his officials to take grains and cattle from richer unaffected provinces, such as Oromo, to supply the capital city of Addis Ababa - leaving other regions more vulnerable.
- The storage of grains was uncommon for farmers in rural populations because they did not know how to, and they feared that military troops would take stored reserves of food as they passed through different villages.
- Public health was at a low.
- The emperor tried to import grains from abroad, but these supplies were pillaged by Somalis and Danakils who were also affected by the famine.
- **(1972-1975)** King Haile Selassie refused to give aid to drought victims.
- Relief camps in Wollo were mainly initiated and organized by local town committees which were overcrowded and lacked resources.
- Foreign relief arrived at the camps two months too late after the starvation peak in August of 1973.
- The disbursement of food-aid was mismanaged between November 1973 and December 1974.
- For example, Northern regions such as Wollo and Tigrai received 80% of 126,000 tonnes of foreign food-aid by the end of the famine while newly affected southern regions such as Harerghe received only 8%.).

- By 1967, 191 out of 365 physicians were in Addis Ababa, with only 38 directly engaged with public health.
- There was difficulty in launching adequate health care to Ethiopians living in rural areas. The government's third attempt in a five-year plan failed in being equitable between 1968-1973.
- **(1983-1985)** Derg revolution in 74' halted the fourth five-year health care plan
- Only 6% of rural populations and 16% of urban populations had access to safe water supplies in 1984.
- Between 1953-1966, agricultural research had been transferred to three different institutions. This resulted in a waste of resources, effort duplication, and a lack of coordination. Agricultural research wasn't reorganized until 1997, under the single umbrella of the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Organization (EARO).

Ideologies

Political Systems

- **(1888-1892)** The death of Emperor Yohannes IV in 89' transitioned to an imperial government controlled by Emperor Menilik II.
- Emperor Menilik II framed the famine as an act of God, and those affected should pray. Additionally, the Tigre population believed the death of great rulers (Emperor Yohannes) coincided with the acts of God.
- **(1972-1975)** Imperial government run by King Haile Selassie I suppressed information about the famine – causing more deaths. He was unresponsive towards the famines in 1958 and 1966, and remained the same in 1972.
- The civil war that begun in the 1960's with Eritrea persisted.
- The food-Crops Scarcity Study Committee failed to come to an agreement on how to release knowledge of the famine to the greater public. The decision process was then passed to the ministers in the Ministry of Social Development.
- Bureaucracy slowed decision making on how to notify the public of drought. The delay in disseminating information left the famine unexposed to the general public.
- **(1983-1985)** Colonel Mengistu initiated a coup in the late 70's against Haile Selassie, whose government had covered up the previous famine. Mengistu used this cover-up to gain political power.
- Ethiopia ended their relationship with the United States of America and began an allegiance with the Soviet Union.
- War with Eritrea continued and civil war against the northern province, Tigray, began in 1974.
- A new power vacuum created rebel groups such as the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), Tigrayan People's Union (TPLF) and the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON).
- The Derg government initiated violent political repression called the "RED TERROR" in 1976 against political adversaries.
- Mengistu failed to listen to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission of the impending famines and focused on matters of development.
- Counter-insurgency strategies (i.e. repeated military offensives on crops, marketplaces) had been adopted which restricted drought affected populations, disturbing labour and trade.
- A two-front war began with Somalia and Eritrea in 1978

Economic Systems

- **(1888-1892)** Many rural populations used oxen to plow or trade. The Ethiopian subsistence production system was destroyed when 90% of Ethiopia's cattle were killed due to Rinderpest.
- The combination of a cattle plague and harvest failure contributed to an inactive peasant workforce who refused to work and paid taxes.
- The price of provisions and cattle increased dramatically, which became unaffordable for populations living as farmers or in rural populations
- **(1972-1975)** The markets became too expensive to purchase food or cattle for rural populations (i.e. farmers and peasants).
- **(1983-1985)** Wollo's economy is one of the least developed in all of Ethiopia's regions.
- Governments counter-insurgency tactics decimated the rural economy (ex. peasant farming) – leading to a famine.
- Wollo had stable crop and harvest assessments in 1978/9, doubling in 1979/80. There was suspicion that the Agricultural Marketing Corporations put pressure on survey estimates to identify higher surpluses. The

government published unchecked estimates afterwards to prove their success of increasing agricultural production.

3.4.2 Dynamic Pressures

Lack of

Local Institutions

- **(1888-1892)** Emperor Yohannes would usually keep soldiers and chiefs in line from looting and raiding villages. His death in 89' increased the social clash between peasants and soldiers because everyone felt the impacts of the drought.
- **(1972-1975)** Wollo famine led to the creation of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). This new institution would have little to no experience in preventing and managing famines.
- **(1983-1985)** The RRC had become overly political by the start of the drought in the 1980's. This hindered their ability to act quickly along with the government capacity to combat the drought.

Training/Appropriate Skills

- **(1983-1985)** The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) responsible for disaster preparedness was composed of non-specialists.
- County and provincial RRC offices were not capable of monitoring the agriculture and health conditions of rural communities.
- The RRC did not carry out grain or livestock surveys and crop production assessments.

Local Investments/ Local Markets

- **(1888-1892)** Multiple accounts state the price of provisions at local markets had increased by at least double the previous year due to cattle plagues and harvest failures.
- **(1983-1985)** The rugged topography of Wollo discouraged investment into the region and this limited the growth of infrastructure.
- Wollo was not a food surplus region.
- Wollo has no cash crops for the world market, no minerals, energy or economic resources in the area to attract investors both domestic and foreign.

Press Freedom

- **(1972-1975 & 1983-1985)** The public feared reporting or talking to the press about issues occurring in Ethiopia during the imperial and military governmental rule.
- Domestic media outlets inadequately reported on famine.
- Ethiopian Herald (domestic newspaper) mainly reported on drought donations as opposed to impacted groups in the first year (83') of the drought.
- Emergency broadcasting was very bureaucratic.
- False reports indicating the production of grain by rural Ethiopian's were made.

Ethical Standards in Public Life

- **(1972-1975)** Infrastructure and transport services for financial and food aid had been collected by organizations and civil servants, but there was no adequate way to distribute it.
- **(1983-1985)** The population survey in 1969 was politically manipulated to underestimate the number of Oromo and overestimate the number of Amhara people in Ethiopia. There was reason to believe that Tigray's population was reduced for political means which is why it was contested in the 80's.

Macro Forces

Rapid Populations Growth/ Rapid Urbanization

- **(1888-1892)** Emperor Menilek could only feed peasants affected by the famine if they migrated to the capital city (Addis Ababa), those who could not migrate died in their villages.
- **(1972-1975)** Migration into the capital city from drought affected areas in Tigray and Wollo was either supervised or restricted by Haile Selassie. It was assumed to display a negative image of the country.
- **(1983-1985)** Migration into the capital city during the Derg administration was like that of the imperial government. However, they believed that migrants were entering to disturb the 10th anniversary of the revolution.
- The first national census was taken in 1984. The number of Ethiopians will never be exact because some peasants remain unreached and hidden in the mountains. Enumerators identified an additional 29% (8 million people), in areas they were able to survey.
- The region of Tigray was not enumerated in the 1984 census (due to war). The government took population estimates from a 1969 national sample survey and added an additional 2.7 % per annum growth.
- The TPLF and the government had contended the size of population in Tigray.

Arms Expenditures

- Ethiopia was fighting with Egypt in the 1870's, which then led to conflict with Sudan in the West and Italians in the North during the 1880's.
- The continuation of the Eritrean War from 1961 to 1977.
- Insurgency groups formed during this war exacerbated the condition of drought affected people in the 60's,70's and the 80's.
- Counter-insurgency tactics (i.e. requisitioned food, destroyed crops, killed animals, denied trades) from the political regimes of Haile Selassie and Mengistu initiated rural impoverishment, food shortages and famines.
- Government army displayed dominance through colonial-type techniques.
- The civil war against Eritrea was a contributing factor for the revolution of 1974.
- After the 1974 coup bringing the rise of the Derg government, more insurgency groups were created in opposition of the government.

Debt Repayment schedules

- **(1972-1975)** Rural population were forced into debt when reaching the brink of starvation.
- Interest rates for money or grains would reach as high as 200%.

Deforestation/ Decline in Soil Productivity

- Personal accounts during the 1888-1892 famine indicated that a lack of rain mixed with hot and dry weather in November of 88' caused a harvest failure. In January of the following year, crops were burnt.
- In addition, there was an influx of locusts and caterpillars that destroyed crops during the 1888-1892 famine.
- There was recurrent regional drought caused by a lack of rain. Droughts become problematic and turn into famines if adequate surpluses do not exist and the economy is organized enough to transfer surpluses from other regions into deficit ones.
- Degradation of natural resources (i.e. soil that has either been eroded or contains little to no nutrients). This occurs mainly in the highlands of Ethiopia (altitude of 1500 or higher) with a larger impact on cultivated lands.
- There were environmental hazards like deforestation and the depletion of ground and surface water occurring. The cutting of trees in Ethiopia has increased in the last century to create more agricultural land, construction and fuel.
- Since the 1930's, Ethiopia's forest cover has depleted from 40% to 4 %.

3.4.3 Unsafe Conditions

Fragile Physical Environment

Dangerous Locations

- **(1983-1985)** Refugee camps located near RRC distribution centres were in danger from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) raids.
- There were low levels of rain, causing drought in many rural villages.
- UN teams could not travel to rural areas of Eritrea, Tigray and northern Wollo to conduct ground checks.

Unprotected Buildings & Infrastructure

- **(1972-1975)** Wollo has had poor land transportation since the 60's and, therefore, it has made reaching rural populations difficult in instances of food aid. Nearly two-thirds of Wollo peasants were inaccessible by road.
- **(1983-1985)** Wollo has had poor land transportation since the 60's, which has made reaching rural populations difficult in instances of food aid. Nearly two-thirds of Wollo peasants were inaccessible by road.
- Peasants had to walk to distribution centres for food and shelter.
- Communication services were poor and outdated.

Fragile Local Economy

Livelihoods at Risk

- **(1888-1892)** Peasants were instructed to use hoes to cultivate their lands as opposed to oxen (which had died due to Rinderpest), an uncommon practice at the time.
- The Italian invasion disrupted the traditional system of values regarding land ownership.
- The death of cattle was quick; estimates of 500-1000 heads of cattle would die within a 24 to 48 hours period, devastating the livelihood of rural farmers.
- **(1972-1975)** The sale or purchasing of land is prohibited in Ethiopia because it must be inherited or acquired through government grants
- The use of cash was extremely imposed on rural peasants, who were targeted and extorted by imperialists. Peasants focused on paying theses taxes and rents as opposed to their own hunger needs
- There was no reserves for grains or cash.
- Rural merchants and rich farmers decreased the market power of rural peasants purposely months before their harvest.
- **(1983-1985)** There was a higher dependence on famine foods during the 70's and 80's (i.e. barks, wild leaves, seeds and wild grass). These foods have been known to be hazardous, causing illness, abdominal pain or death.
- It was difficult to determine an accurate representation of small-scale industry in Wollo because enterprise owners fear state bureaucratic harassment.
- Population levels were affected by issues such as flock maintenance, predators and the sale of young livestock. Animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, equines in Wollo dropped during the famine because the drought is the largest threat to livestock in the area.

Low Income Levels

- **(1888-1892)** Rural farmers and peasants who lost all their cattle due to Rinderpest and their land yields to locusts experienced significant income loss. The monetary price of new, healthier cattle increased dramatically, making it impossible to afford.
- **(1972-1975)** More than 81% of rural Ethiopians live in abject poverty.
- **(1983-1985)** Wollo is densely populated with millions of peasants who practice subsistence agriculture.
- Determining unemployment rates was nearly impossible in Wollo. Realistic estimates accounting for an ILO report and Ethiopia's Ministry of Labour place unemployment in Wollo around 20% of the urban workforce.

Vulnerable Society

Special Group at Risk

- **(1888-1892)** The loss of cattle affected the entire population of Ethiopia, regardless of social class. It is estimated that rural populations would have anywhere from tens to hundreds to thousands of cattle.

Affluent populations lost 10's of thousands of cattle and the Emperor himself lost an estimated 250,000 head of cattle.

- The emergence of unnatural practices occurred during the famine, such as the eating of traditionally forbidden foods, parents abandoning or selling their children, self-enslavement, suicide, murder, and cannibalism.
- **(1972-1975)** An estimated 20,000 Afar pastoral nomads living in the Danakil desert were displaced and did not have enough drought reserves when drought struck again in 1972.
- Wollo peasants and nomads were believed to be purposely starving to shame the reputation of the Emperor, resulting in the government ignoring them.
- Groups at risk included, evicted farmers, rural labourers, small land-owning cultivators, women in service occupations, and beggars.
- **(1983-1985)** Civil Disturbances in Northern Ethiopia with the largest number of refugees in Korem (Located in Northern Wollo and just on the border of Tigray).
- Out of 28,100 receiving aid from the RRC, only 7000 would return to their villages. The rest would settle into make-shift camps around RRC food stores because they had nothing to return too (i.e. no water, crops, and animals had either been sold, died or slaughtered).
- Peasants were unwilling to divulge basic information to strangers (i.e. amount of grains in storage, number of domestic animals, etc.) because they were afraid it would be used against them.
- The government was reluctant to provide relief to groups suspected of supporting Eritrean, Tigrean, Oromo rebels or Somalia.

Public Actions

Lack of Disaster Preparedness

- **(1888-1892)** The inactivity of Ethiopian society inspecting the traveling of infected cattle due to war-like environments and constant troop movement crippled their ability to prepare for a Rinderpest epizootic.
- **(1972-1975)** The Wollo famine was the last in Ethiopia to have no functioning mechanisms for large-scaled humanitarian relief.
- **(1983-1985)** The United States of America refused to send aid to affected groups in Ethiopia because of its socialist run government (it was the height of the Cold War when Russian and American relations were poor).
- The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) did not have reliable, consistent early warning systems for peasants. Additionally, they were not equipped at the provincial levels with early warning and monitoring capabilities.
- The RRC's early warning system was based on interviews with agricultural officers and peasant association representatives reporting crop production and market prices. It failed to indicate the extent of human suffering based on loss of entitlements (i.e. low and unstable incomes and unemployment)
- Peasant leader reports on regional investigations had to be sent to the RRC head office in Addis Ababa. This delayed disaster management decisions by months mainly because reports would be filed away and never looked at.

Prevalence of Endemic Diseases

- **(1888-1892)** Italians brought over 800 infected horses from India. The Rinderpest epizootic made its way down from Eritrea, into Northern Ethiopia (Tigray) and eventually travelled southward to Shoa infecting the cattle in the country and other parts of East Africa.
- The famine left many people in Ethiopia with decreased levels of resistance to infectious diseases due to many unburied corpses, unsanitary conditions, and insects eating dead corpses and landing on the living. It resulted in cases of smallpox, typhus, cholera and dysentery.
- There was also a major influenza at the end of 89'.
- **(1972-1975)** Poor support from the imperial government during previous famines spiralled into mismanagement of this event. Committee members visited Wollo to observe and reported that 110-120 people had died in each rural parish, regardless of food aid being denied.
- Diseases like lice borne typhus became an issue in shelters located in Haik.
- **(1983-1985)** At the beginning of relief operations, there were outbreaks of communicable diseases diarrhea and measles.

DISASTER

RISK = HAZARDS x VULNERABILITY

- The Famine during 1888-1892 is estimated to have killed one third of the Ethiopian population and wiped out most of Ethiopia's cattle.

- The 1972-1975 famine was estimated to have killed 100,000 people, with 3 million people affected and $76,000 (USD) calculated in damages. The occurrence of drought in the Northern regions of Ethiopia (Tigray, Wollo, North Shoa, Tigre, and Kangra provinces) had travelled to various Southern regions (Ogaden region in Hararghe). Technically, there were two famines during this time – the one occurring in the North specifically the Wollo region and the second occurring in the South. The first was more significant.

- Between 1983-85, there were an estimated 300,000 people who died and 7,750,000 people who were affected by the famine. The drought was heavily experienced in the Northern regions of Ethiopia (Wollo, Gondar, Goe, Eritrea, Tigray) leading to a famine.

HAZARDS

Drought-Epizootic-Pests: 1888 – 1892 (Name: Kifu Ken – Evil Days/ The Great Famine) – Wiped out a majority of Ethiopia's cattle

Drought: 1972 -1975 (Name: Aschenikachew/ Perturbing them)

Drought: 1983 – 1985 (Name: Agurit/ Goggling to Them)

Analysis

4.1 – Answering the Research Questions

This analysis will answer the research questions inquired in the paper by incorporating data summarized in Table 2 and the Pressure and Release Model developed in section 3.4. To reiterate, the questions were stated as the following: What does the political ecology reveal about the 1983-1985 Ethiopian famine, specifically, in the northern regions? Do the famines of 1888-1892, and 1972-1975 present different reasons for famine vulnerability in Ethiopia? How did the narratives of institutional multimedia reporting, domestically and internationally, influence the

management of the 1983-1985 famine? And have past famines changed Ethiopia's development of contemporary disaster risk reduction methods?

The Exacerbation of Environmental Hazards

The political ecology of the 1983-1985 Ethiopian famine revealed three specific characteristics interconnected to the following research questions. First, it exposed how modern Ethiopian famine has been deeply rooted in colonialism and pre-existing political pressures. In 1888-1892, the introduction of colonialism in Ethiopia fundamentally shifted the underlying reason for famine vulnerability. The influence and impact of Italy's occupation introduced the deadly Rinderpest epizootic virus to all East Africa. The virus spread throughout northern Ethiopia and eventually the entire country, becoming the primary cause of famine. Environmental hazards like locusts and drought were additional pressures because without cattle, peasants could not rely on subsistence agriculture to feed themselves. This is not to dismiss the severity of these hazards, but they are not uncommon in rural communities who practice subsistence agriculture. In addition, subsistence farmers are also known to deploy various techniques to counteract potential harvest failures. At the rate the virus spread throughout the cattle, it was impossible to combat without taking a huge economic loss.

Colonialism also influenced the occurrence of famine by forming the Eritrean colony. This decision had a long-lasting impact on rural peasants both politically and geographically. Politically, the abuse and misrepresentation of language documented in the Treaty of Wichale can be viewed as a political distraction from the ongoing famine. The growing conflict between Italy and Ethiopia resulted in the Battle of Awa shortly after the end of the 1888-1892 famine. Ethiopia's victory did not circumvent colonial expansion, and the right to the throne would be challenged in the 1930's by Mussolini and his army. Emperor Haile Selassie's forced exile (after the occupation) brought about new policies focused on modernizing Ethiopia. This was done by allying with the United States of America and leaving Great Britain to avoid being a protectorate. If Italy had not tried to colonize Ethiopia twice, these political events could have had different outcomes. Emperor Haile Selassie's policies focused on forming a new military, creating a new fiscal system and organizing provincial administration. The process of modernizing a country is rooted in colonial histories and destroyed many Eritrean institutions. These actions formed

insurgency groups such as the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in the 1960's. The continued conflict and neglectful nature of the emperor's regime towards famine in the 50's, 60's and 70's, resulted in the revolution of 1974 where Colonel Mengistu and the Derg government would fill the power gap. It is important to note that this paper does not conflate the political structure of democratic, imperial and communist military governments. However, throughout the three different political regimes, rural populations of Wollo and Tigray suffered intensely.

The second characteristic revealed by the 1983-1985 famine was a history of manipulating multimedia reporting to control the narrative of famine. This is evident throughout the 1972-1975 famine. In the events following Emperor Haile Selassie reclaiming his throne, civil conflict still occurred in Northern regions and famines were still poorly managed. What changed was the role of multimedia and how it would impact famine vulnerability. News reporting organizations did not exist during the 1888-1892 famine and would not for another decade. Therefore, I can not compare it to the 70's and 80's famine in that respect. The 70's were a critical turning point for Ethiopia regarding institutional multimedia reporting. The imperial government had complete control over the narrative of famine by keeping it a secret. Despite aid being given by the United States and other nations, the secrecy of famine ended up being their downfall. Jonathan Dimbleby's report, *The Unknown Famine*, not only revealed the suffering of Ethiopian peasants in the north, but his report was used as a political tool by growing military opposition to overthrow Haile Selassie and his government. Doctoring the original footage and calling it, *The Hidden Hunger*, changed the landscape of how multimedia was used to increase political leverage and power. These were the seeds that would influence the disaster management of the 1983-85 famine. It started before the revolution of 1974, and Dimbleby's report was the catalyst.

The broadcast reports and published articles included in this paper predominately found instances where the media technique, naturalization, was used in famine reporting. This technique excluded any political or conflict related characteristics of the Ethiopian famines in Western reporting. John Sorenson, where the media techniques originated, drew on the works of Lou Murray and Laraine Black to explain the extent "naturalization" was utilized in media. Murray's 1986 article, *North American Perceptions of Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, revealed that out of 572 press reports, 59 percent of them focused on food and famine related issues

without engaging in political analysis or conflict occurring in the Horn of Africa. An additional 33 percent primarily focused on food and famine and referenced conflict, politics, history or military components in a cursory style (Murray in Sorenson 225-226). Laraine Black's 1986 article, *CBC Reporting of the Ethiopian Famine*, revealed a similar pattern occurring in broadcast television. The socio-economic and political factors of the famine would either be scantly mentioned or not at all (Black in Sorenson 226). This type of reporting further insinuated that the Ethiopian famines were naturally occurring disasters which nonetheless influenced how foreign populations were driven to donate to causes such as Band-Aid.

The following are quotes that were found in thematic sources pertaining to narratives. A single word or multiple phrase searches have been italicized in the quotes below. Media sources highlight articles from the New York Times in 1974 and 1984. The reports were written in a specific style stating,

"The famine, centred north of Addis Ababa in the provinces of Wallo and Tigre, was caused primarily by a prolonged and withering drought… In September, a *report* of the United Nations Children's Fund estimated that 50,000 to 100,000 had died; many more perished later in the fall. The Government insists the death toll is much smaller, but the argument seems political as well as statistical. In this semifeudal society in which the populations of districts and subdistricts are not even known, an accurate tally may never be possible". (Mohr in New York Time 1974).

"The plight of starving Africans had been recounted previously in newspapers and on television, but it was not until a film *report* by a British journalist appeared on NBC late last month that governments and individuals were galvanized to help. Catholic Relief Services has received nearly $3 million in donations and Save the Children, $1.4 million since the report, according to officials of those organizations, and other groups have *reported* a similar influx. In recent weeks, the United States has increased its food assistance to Africa, including an estimated $37.5 million worth of grain for Ethiopia and several other countries". (Smith in the New York Times 1984)

NGO sources revealed how the Ethiopian government concealed agricultural reports to hide the famine (Africa Watch). Scholarly sources (Sorenson 1990) revealed how Western reports during the 80's either focused on the environmental aspect of the famine or contained anti-Soviet discourse. Additionally, government documents (CIA 1985) expresses how the Mengistu regime played off the international community in addressing famine.

Information is power. The Imperial government withheld information about famines, and *news* about the famines in the post-revolutionary period was subject to both censorship and distortion. Similar considerations apply to basic facts about rural production, rainfall, and the human population. For many years, even rainfall data were regarded as a state secret (the logic behind this will become evident in this *report*). In addition, due to the war, many rainfall monitoring stations ceased to function.

(de Waal 32)

> Time magazine *story* in November 1984 describes Ethiopia as suffering from "a desperate thirst for water" but fails to indicate that drought frequently occurs elsewhere and is not necessarily transformed into famine. This technique of Naturalization can only be employed in complete ignorance of a body of academic work over the last two decades, which points to multiple causations of famine…An examination of the original October 1984 BBC report, which finally sparked the intense coverage of famine in the Horn of Africa, reveals that an ideological message was constructed at the very beginning of the discursive configuration….To anticipate the suggestion that the Ethiopian government did bring about famine, and that mass media simply *reported* this without ideological bias, it is necessary to remark here that, unarguably, the Mengistu regime did contribute to the famine's severity by ignoring warnings of impending disaster and concentrating on other priorities, especially its military campaigns in Eritrea and Tigray, but the economic conditions in Ethiopia were already heading toward disaster before the Derg came to power, a situation which was virtually ignored by media.
> (Sorenson 136)

> The government-controlled media occasionally *report* on efforts to combat the drought and on foreign relief contributions—particularly from the Soviet Bloc—but have not revealed the actual magnitude of the crisis. Even when government officials are pictured visiting refugee camps, the refugees themselves are never shown…The regime has established feeding centers at major cities and towns under its control in the north but has refused to authorize the movement of relief supplies to insurgent-held areas and has hindered international efforts to reach those most at risk, according to US Embassy *reporting*. We believe Addis Ababa's promise—made during the March UN Conference on the Emergency Economic Situation in Africa—to expand feeding in the north is little more than a ploy to quiet.
> (CIA 4-5)

In 2015, the Atlantic published an article titled, *The Legacy of Live Aid, 30 Years Later.* The article writes about the world if the events of Band/Live-Aid never happened. It mentions how the starving Ethiopian girl, Birhan Woldu, was cast upon the giant screens during Bob Geldof's concert, how all the famous musicians and celebrities took it upon themselves to enact change. It includes testimonies of people who were inspired to act on poverty and hunger around the world, and in a way, the naïve nature of the article is correct. Yet, it fails to spend enough time on the reality of donations and how during the 1983-85 famine, it was revealed that money had indeed been given to rebel groups to buy armaments. It is difficult to see where donation funds go, even though certain organizations do their best to make this process transparent. Band/Live-Aid emphasizes too much on Western-European hope than a more holistic approach to African problems. Additionally, the actions of Geldof are argued by some authors to have capitalized on the nature of charity donations by attaching celebrity figures to a cause, making them vital to the growth of the aid industry (Barker 97). Birhan Woldu, became the director of a local NGO in Ethiopia and wrote a foreword in the 2009 Oxfam report, *Band Aids and Beyond Tackling Disasters in Ethiopia 25 Years After the Famine*. She explains that despite being saved by the initiatives of Band-Aid, there is a better way to help. She writes that "We are a big country and when there is a famine in one part of the country, there is plenty in another…we

cannot simply rely on imported food aid. We know our vulnerability…" (Oxfam 2). The Ethiopian famine of 1983-85 changed the direction of how the world perceived African disasters. Since then, Ethiopia has made monumental strides in addressing and preparing for disasters.

The Direction of DRR in Ethiopia After the 1983- 1985 Famine

The third characteristic revealed in the political ecology of the 1983-1985 famine was a history of failed domestic famine relief strategies. Initially, I believed there would have been more primary sources from Ethiopia's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), which would have been useful. The RRC has been criticized for either not doing enough for famine-stricken populations or being too bureaucratic in disseminating information to high- level government officials (Abebe 2009; Abebe 2010). Nonetheless, the 1983-85 famine did create a change in creating a more structured approach in addressing environmental disasters in Ethiopia. Towards the end of the decade in the 80's, Mengistu's government had begun to lose its support, and by 1990, the Soviet Union ended its support for the regime.

The communist group, People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) had created *The National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Strategy for Ethiopia,* in November 1989, to address the various environmental hazards in the country. It contained three chapters addressing specific measures and justifications for the strategy, including methods in implementing the strategy. However, in 1991, Mengistu fled the country when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) advanced on the city of Addis Ababa, forcing the Derg government out. In 1993, the transitional government released a new disaster policy called the *National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management.* It intended to strengthen the economic fabric of disaster-prone regions by alleviating the hazardous pressures felt by those populations and strengthening their capacity (National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management 1). Its objective was to save lives and guide relief management policies, institutions and processes in disaster-prone areas by mobilizing efforts such as food aid (Biru et al. 3). In terms of risk reduction, the policy never mentions risk, but they do revitalize the effectiveness of the RRC by assigning specific responsibilities (i.e. structural functioning for relief management and registering international NGOs when operating within the country).

Between 1995-2008, Ethiopia's policy framework continued to develop its disaster management and prevention initiatives. The RRC was renamed the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), and legal frameworks sought out legislation that prevented disasters by building resources, managerial and institutional capabilities and preparing logistics both during and after disasters. Furthermore, the legislation also established the National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee (NDPPC), which is composed of ministers in various sectors of the Ethiopian government (i.e. Agriculture, health, finance, economic development, public and urban development) (Abebe 245). The DPPC's system developed specific measures to ensure that cooperation with international organizations occurred smoothly and that early warning systems were placed in high-risk regions. In 2007, the DPPC would be absorbed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD) to better coordinate and implement disaster risk management (Biru et al. 4). The 1995-2008 model for the National Disaster Management System was sketched and incorporated in an article by Mulageta Abebe, in the Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa.

In the last decade, greater strides have been taken to ensure that decreasing disaster risk continues to expand and protect vulnerable communities. In the 2014 article, *Farmers Prone to Drought Risk,* a study researched the cognitive perception of drought from Ethiopian farmers. Additionally, they researched how the farmers identify triggers to effectively communicate their risk of environmental hazards (Gebrehiwot et al. 2014). The authors of the research paper delve heavily into risk perception theory (which is not the intention of this paper). However, they do include socio-economic factors in their study to incorporate the experiences of the farmers to develop a well-rounded understanding of risk in smallholder Ethiopian farms in the northern highlands. It is critical that the development of disaster-centric policies align with the knowledge sets of rural populations and their understanding of vulnerability. Rural communities may have their own methods of disaster resilience that do not correspond with national and international organizations' guidelines. This was one of the largest takeaways from the Hyogo Framework because it failed to account for national and demographic capacity. The results from the Sendai Framework are yet to be assessed since it was established in 2015 and operates until 2030. However, the Ethiopian government formed the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) in 2015, focusing on Disaster Risk Reduction strategies. It was

established under the Prime Ministers' office to fortify the legal and operational frameworks for a more integrated disaster risk management system on national and local levels (Biru et al. 5). The structure of the current NDRMC is, as shown in Figure 3, taken from an ASiSt Mission Report from 2018.

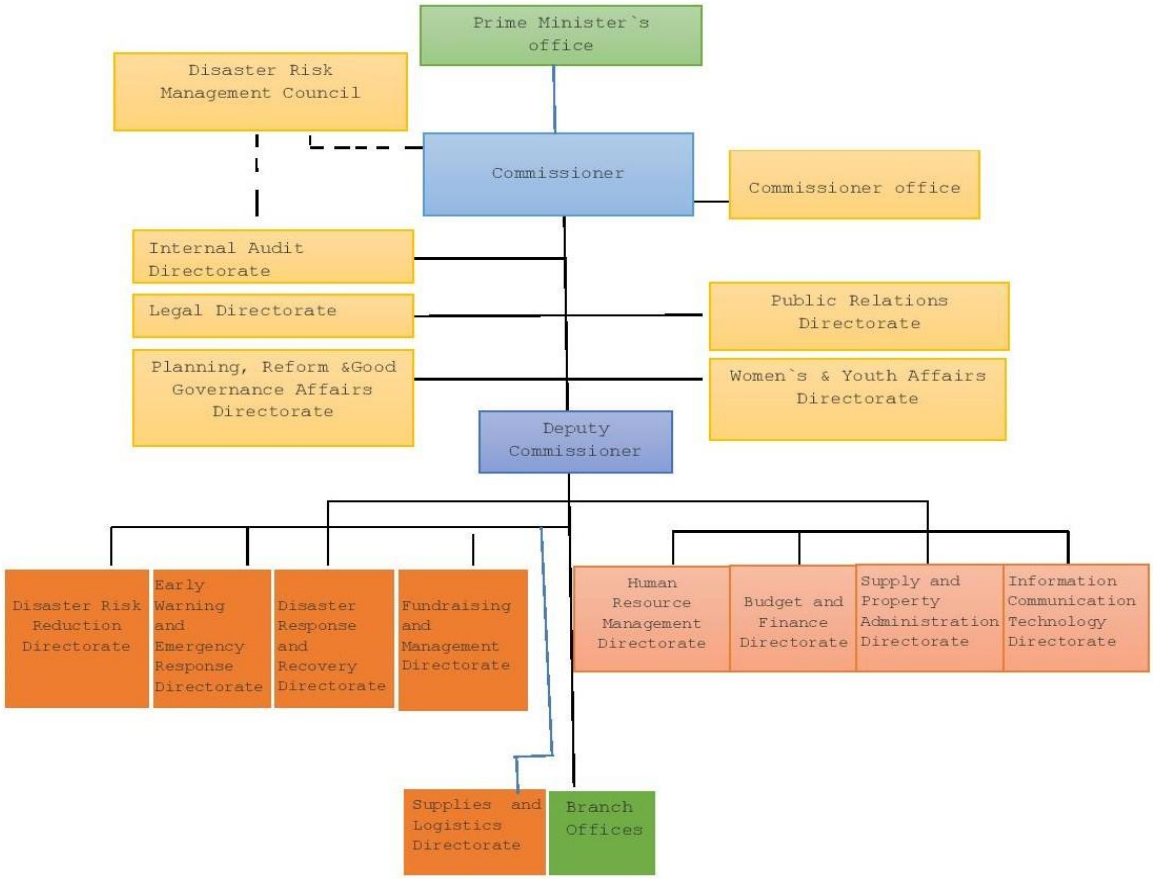


Figure 3. Structure of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission in 2015 (Biru et al. 6).

In 2018, Ethiopia released its national report titled *Ethiopia: Humanitarian and Disaster Resilience Plan* (HDRP), addressing some of the priorities of the Sendai Framework. The objective of the HDRP according to the report is,

> "to increase the quality and predictable delivery of required multi sectoral humanitarian response; mitigate future needs in areas that experience recurrent climate induced shock; support the strengthening of national service provision to address chronic and acute needs; and, the recovery of communities affected by drought and conflict." (HDRP 9)

In relation to disasters (i.e. disasters that occur due to environmental hazards and their rippling effects), the HDRP implements a three-pillar approach to address such issues. Pillar one

is concerned with prevention and mitigation, and pillar two focuses on preparedness and response, pillar three encompasses national systems strengthening recovery (HDRP 16). These pillars are then applied to sectoral response plans, specifically to eight issues affecting urban and rural communities; they are agriculture and livestock, education, emergency shelter and non-food items, food, health, nutrition, protection and lastly, water-sanitation and hygiene (HDRP 2018). In 2019, the *Humanitarian Response Plan* (HRP), indicated that Ethiopia has remained consistent in developing its disaster risk methods until 2025. It is difficult to predict how the COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly changing both national and international strategies in addressing issues of disaster resiliency. The report is built upon three objectives that would, in total, cost over a billion dollars in funding. The first, saving lives and sustaining them, second, providing protection services for affected communities and third, basic services and livelihoods are supported to strengthen resilience to shocks (HRP 15). Furthermore, the report indicates that the NDRMC with other organizations will effectively communicate with disaster affected communities by ensuring access to information, enabling feedback, conducting surveys and opening space for planning participation (HRP 17). Ethiopia has achieved positive landmarks in the field of disaster management following the events of the 1983-85 famine. Their progression in creating legislation, policy, early warning systems and more structured commissions is a testament in avoiding the re-occurrence of large-scale disasters.

Discussion & Conclusion

The research presented in this paper analyzes the three largest famines in Ethiopia through the lens of disaster risk theory and concepts. By reviewing a variety of works of literature and an appropriate disaster model, PAR, I navigated the research questions posed. The process of gathering the source materials used in this research paper was enlightening and challenging. The sources categorized and presented in Tables 2 and 3 were accessed mainly online. In doing so, it was imperative to integrate the academic works of both Western and Ethiopian authors to provide a more in-depth analysis in understanding the political ecology and narrative of the Ethiopian famine. Without these sources, my research would have leaned towards my own biases on the matter. Travelling to Ethiopia to conduct research had primary objectives - the first was to access archival information that I could not in Canada. I was introduced to authors who had previously written on Ethiopian famine, which helped me ground

the writing process. For example, authors such as, Dessalegn Rahmato, Dechassa Abebe, Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, and Richard Pankhurst were critical sources of knowledge that I would not have known about otherwise. In addition, it provided me the opportunity to reconnect with the geography, space, people and lifestyle of the people who lived in Ethiopia. It had been my third visit to the country but the first time as an adult, consciously aware of the socio-economic and political realities of Ethiopia and its complex history.

There were no interviews conducted for this research paper because I understood the reality of my time in Ethiopia and the importance of forming fair and ethical questions. There were several challenges that I initially encountered that I did not account for, which proved to be valuable research experiences. One NGO I visited was the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, like the RRC, they had been active in famine relief during the 70's and 80's. However, I learnt that their records and documents from those decades were not adequately preserved. If they had survived, they would have been in storage units, difficult for me to access. I was advised that dated documents containing famine relief records were rarely digitized as well, especially considering that both the imperial and Derg governments actively hid the existence of famine. Several of the authors I referenced in this paper did have access to institutional documents related to famine. This was clear by examining the various bibliographies from these authors works. I used theoretical and conceptual guidance to interpret the data from the sources I could gather while understanding that dated sources would be inaccessible for various reasons (i.e. documents were either poorly maintained, never translated or published).

My time visiting Addis Ababa University and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) provided an opportunity to interact with professors and access a list of academic works from Ethiopian Journals. It became apparent that despite the large amount of academic work produced by university scholars, only a small percentage would be digitally published and accessible through the internet. As a foreign student abroad, The National Archives and Library of Ethiopia became a wonderful and open resource. Archival records only required a student identification in order to be accessed and a small fee to be photographed or photocopied. This was how I was able to inquire and analyse newspaper articles in the *Ethiopian Herald* from 1983. The articles

displayed how famine was rarely discussed in state media. It additionally provided insight into the political state of Ethiopia and corresponding international events at the time.

African nations have experienced a great deal of uneven development where histories of colonialism and capitalism have manipulated socio-economic and political instability, including environmental exploitation. These types of events directly influence the resilience of vulnerable populations against environmental disasters. Ethiopia has spent over a century experiencing significant drought conditions; however, the 1983-1985 event specifically altered the nation's narrative and development. For that reason, I have focused on the impacts of anthropogenic environmental disasters in Ethiopia using the 1983-1985 famine and by analyzing the political ecology of the event and its significance to contemporary Ethiopian disaster management. This is because the famine was not an isolated phenomenon rather a culmination of previously occurring events. The literature reviewed provided a historical summary of the socio-economic and political climate during Ethiopian famines. Furthermore, it displayed the integral role of international multimedia reporting and how it impacted the power of the imperial government during the 70's.

The significance of the research paper was to create an interdisciplinary academic work that combined the fields of political ecology, environmental disasters, and disaster risk theory. The implementation of political ecology gave me the flexibility to investigate the past through a narrative based lens. This included exploring the socio-economic and political climates of northern Ethiopian regions during three distinct political decades. It revealed that Ethiopia's relationship with famine is ingrained in its complex political history, proximity to colonialism and the legacies of colonialism. If Ethiopian famines were strictly caused by environmental hazards like drought, then these historic disasters would have drastically different outcomes. In this research paper, I have attempted to highlight the relationship between politics and multimedia. Specifically, how multimedia reporting disseminates information on a global scale and how political powers use this as a tool to further their own agendas. In the 70's and 80's, media corporations such as the BBC, Thames Television, and several other Western outlets that broadcasted images of the Ethiopian famine, naturalized it within an enviro-centric narrative. Dimbleby's initial report of Ethiopian famine outed Haile Selassie's regime for covering up the plight of starving Ethiopians. However, that same report was eventually doctored and used as a

political tool by the Derg to overthrow the imperial government, starting a revolution. Narratives of famines were strategically utilized to create new forms of power not only in Ethiopia but internationally. It created a call to action by Western and European groups to raise awareness and donations against famine, effectively creating an aid industry (Band/Live Aid) supported by public donors.

Integrating the political ecology with environmental disasters and disaster risk theory is inherently complex but rewarding. It is complex because each field draws upon concepts, terminologies, and frameworks, providing insightful learning and outcomes in the process. For instance, when I included the concepts of disasters, disaster risk, and disaster risk reduction, it created a basic understanding of those concepts within the field as it related to the Ethiopian famine. More importantly, it provided an appropriate context and basis to introduce and use the Pressure and Release Model and display the socio-economic and political pressures that coincide with environmental hazards that create disasters. Furthermore, the role multimedia narratives played in the 1983-1985 Ethiopian famine revealed the origin of Band/Live Aid. It attached celebrities to a disastrous cause, becoming an effective tool in raising money for charitable organizations. It is difficult to encapsulate the significance of the Ethiopian famine and the rippling impact it had both domestically and internationally. As a researcher, the 1983-1985 famine revealed the importance of understanding disaster ecology, the significance of non-environmental pressures and narratives.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge the growth of Ethiopia's disaster response efforts. These efforts have formed reliable systems that promote disaster resilience based on regional capacity. For example, The National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) is a more streamlined and comprehensive version than the RRC was. Yet, this process took years to occur because Ethiopia's previous socio-economic and political structures undermined the effective implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies. One of the takeaways from the 2005-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action was that all nations could not be held to the same standards as the West and Europe. Histories of uneven development need to be considered before idealistic initiatives for global disaster resilience are realized. The 2015-2030 Sendai Framework embodies the reality that national capacity and resilience building need to be developed based on

individual socio-economic and political capabilities. It is still early to gauge the success of the Sendai Framework, but it is a step in the right direction. If countries like Canada still face difficulty in creating successful DRR strategies in 2020, then there is hope for Ethiopia as well. It will be crucial for the NDRMC to establish a more holistic relationship with rural communities to determine the various perceptions of risk and resilience. Rural farmers and labourers affected by environmental hazards like droughts in Ethiopia have their own practices and understanding of resilience. It is important not to forget those sets of knowledge when developing stronger DRR systems.

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