**THE PARADOXES OF STATE-LED TRANSNATIONALISM:
CAPTURING CONTINUITY, CHANGE AND RUPTURE IN THE ERITREAN
TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELD**

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REPORT OF A MAJOR PORTFOLIO SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
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PORTFOLIO ABSTRACT

Processes of domination and conflict have historically influenced and continue to influence patterns of mass migration; in some cases, over time shaping the formation of diasporas. These processes have contributed to a rapidly growing body of literature exploring various aspects of what has been termed the migration-development nexus. Contrary to early arguments suggesting that migrants assimilate fully into the societies in which they settle, it is largely observed today that migrants inhabit transnational spaces where they varyingly maintain ties with their 'home countries'. More recently, literature has acknowledged the ways subsequent generations raised outside the 'homeland' are socialized into transnational social fields and thus also lead transnational lives. A range of local, national and global actors have recognized the importance and potential of emigrant populations to transnational processes. Specifically, the 'sending state' has been an integral actor in the cultivation and mobilization of its dispersed populations. Relying on a host of mechanisms to 'court' their dispersed populations, states adopt policies in an attempt to institutionalize relationships with their diasporas.

This portfolio situates itself within this relatively recent, yet quickly growing body of literature on the role of the state in transnational processes. Grounding my analysis in the Eritrean transnational social field, this portfolio locates the role of the Liberation Front-turned-State in engaging its dispersed populations over time. I emphasize the continuities, changes and ruptures that have highlighted and arise from Eritrean state-diaspora relationships since the formation of the Eritrean diaspora. In the face of significant legitimacy loss, relationships between the state and its local and dispersed populations have increasingly become marked by control and coercion aimed at ideologically and physically disciplining citizens. While my analysis is contextually situated within the Eritrean transnational social field, I acknowledge that the issues I explore are located within broader global processes. Thus, my analysis fluidly shifts between individual, national and global levels of analysis to highlight the differing and competing political considerations at play at each level.

FOREWORD

This portfolio explores the issues outlined in my Plan of Study (POS) entitled "Migration, Transnational Nation-Building and Civil Society in Africa." The objectives established in the four components of my POS 1) States, Transnationalism and Nation-Building 2) Migration-Development-Remittance Nexus 3) (Transnational) Civil Society and 4) Skill Building are fulfilled by the contents of this portfolio. This portfolio sets out to 1) draw linkages between historical processes that have facilitated migratory patterns, structured the formation of diasporas and the politics surrounding contemporary diasporas 2) explore the varying mechanisms 'emigration states' employ to engage their dispersed populations towards differing ends and at varying junctures and 3) bring to the forefront the challenging, contentious and inherently incomplete nature of the nationalist hegemonic project. The focus on the current Eritrean State, and its earlier incarnation of a Liberation Front, remains constant throughout my analysis of transnational processes. This focus however is not to be interpreted as a claim to exclusivity, but rather the opposite; by introducing clarity and specificity, Eritrean state-led transnationalism in many ways proves to be a microcosm indicative of broader transnationalism debates.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my uncle, **Mussie Tesfay.**

April 29 1983 – November 5 2010

You would have never imagined how much I was able to learn from you or the many ways you have forever impacted me. In time, I have come to appreciate why you came into my life for the brief moment that you did. Your life serves for me as a real reminder of the Lord's sovereignty and of the fleeting nature of this life.

I find rest in knowing that you are *finally* resting.

2 Samuel 12:22-23

While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

መዘከርታ

ንዝከበረ ኣኮይ ሙሴ ተስፋይ

ሚያዝያ 29 1983 - ሕዳር 5 2010

ኩሉ ካባኻ ዝተማሃርኩዎን፡ ብቡዙሕ መገዲ ከሳብ ክንድምንታይ ንዘልኣለም ከምዝጸለኻንን ንምግማት ከቢድ እዩ። ምስ ግዜ፡ ነታ ኣብ ሂወተይ ዝኣተኻላ ሓጻር እዋን ከም ዓቢ ጸጋየ ዝርኣያ። ጉዕዞ ሂወትካ ንዓይ፡ እግዚኣብሄር ዝመደቦ ዘበለ ኩሉ ብእግዚኣብሄር በይኑ ጥራይ ከምዝፍጸምን ፡ ሂወት ኣብዚ ምድሪ ከ ሓላፌት ምኻንን ንኩሉ ግዜ ከም መዘከርታ ኮይኑኒ ኣሎ።

ኣብ ናይ ዘልኣለም ዕረፍቲ ምህላውካ ንዓይ መንፈሳዊ ዕረፍቲ እዩ።

2ይ መጽሓፍ ሳሙኤል 12:22-23

ንሱ ኸኣ፡ መን ይፈልጥ እግዚኣብሄር እንተ መሓረኒ፡ እቲ ህጻን ድማ እንተ ሓወየ፡ ኢለ ነበርኩ እሞ፡ ስለዚ እቲ ህጻን ገና ብህይወቱ ኸሎ፡ ጾምኩን በኼኹን። ሕጂ ኸኣ ንሱ ሞይቱ፡ ንምንታይ ኢለ እጸውም፡ ደጊምዶ ከመልሶ ይከኣለኒ እዩ፡ ኣነ ናብኡ እኸይድ እምበር፡ ንሱስ ናባይ ኣይኪምለስን እዩ፡ በለ።

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INTRODUCTION

Ain't No Place Like *Home*

Growing up, it seemed I was always in one way or another reminded of my Eritrean*ness*. From the people who regularly frequented my family home to the Saturday morning Tigrinya language classes I attended to the Sunday afternoon Eritrean sports leagues I was a member of, my experiences were profoundly shaped by the close-knit Eritrean population in Toronto. The family functions and communal activities I participated in were strongly informed by ideas, ideals and practices from Eritrea. Take for instance the local *ekub* - an indigenous community-based investment institution - that my family was a part of. Although never having travelled to Eritrea as an adolescent, from a very young age my life could attest to the "power of being raised in a transnational social field" (Levitt 2009, p. 1225).

The 1998-2000 war between Eritrea and Ethiopia brought this interconnectedness to a new level of understanding and reality for me. Without delving into the politics surrounding the war, it is safe to say that it caught most by surprise. On a world atlas I could locate Eritrea with my eyes closed, after all I had mastered drawing its silhouette all throughout my grade school years because it never appeared on (outdated) maps. What I could not wrap my brain around was how something that was happening so far away from 'home' in Toronto could affect my parents – and what seemed like the entire Eritrean community – so intimately. I vividly recall being irritated by my mother who, only visiting Eritrea once after leaving at the age of 19, *allowed* the war situation to paralyze her. Had I not known otherwise, I would have been convinced the war was taking place in our backyard. By the war's end there was an estimated 70,000 casualties[1] for

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[1] Definite figures are not available, however estimates range from 70,000 to 100,000. This is in part due to the political incentive to downplay and/or inaccurately report on the number of casualties of war.

both sides combined, deeming it the continent's deadliest interstate war. My mother lost two brothers both under the age of 25 to this war.

Reflecting back much later, I learned two profound things at a very young age from this turbulent period; firstly, of the 'uprootedness' of Eritrean societies and secondly of the fluid boundaries of Eritrea. Eritrea and things 'Eritrean' were not confined to its territorial boundaries. The war's end ironically did not usher in with it peace – mental or physical - for Eritrea's dispersed communities. The family and communal activities I was raised into all crumbled before my eyes, as charged, deeply rooted political arguments took the place of any- and everything that existed prior.

Diaspora and Transnationalism Literature

This portfolio is found at the intersection of two bodies of literature that have developed closely alongside one another – Diaspora and Transnationalism Studies. The boundaries between the two remain so blurred that they are often used interchangeably. Faist (2010) calling the two 'awkward dance partners,' acknowledges both literatures' reference to cross-border processes, but notes of slight distinctions between the two (p. 9). While the emergence of both fields is relatively new, considerable scholarly debate has been attributed to conceptualizing these broad concepts. The term 'diaspora' has gained much prominence since being initially used to describe the dispersion of Jewish people. Flourishing in usage and meaning, the concept has become fashionable not only within scholarly circles but also among states, multilateral organizations and even in daily conversation. So much so that Brubaker (2005) has noted of "the 'diaspora' diaspora". Faist (2010) writes,

> diaspora has been often used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland, whereas transnationalism is often used both more narrowly – to refer to migrants' durable ties across countries – and, more

widely, to capture not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organizations (p. 9).

The context of a concept's usage can provide insight into the interpretation being inferred (Wittgenstein 2009 as cited in Faist 2010).

There is an impetus to maintain national culture across borders by mobilizing around cultural distinctiveness and collective identity of diaspora groups. Faist (2010) continues "…transnationalism – and transnational spaces, fields and formations – refer to processes that transcend international borders and therefore appear to describe more abstract phenomena in a social science language. By transnational spaces we mean relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across borders of sovereign states" (p. 13). Within these spaces, the state has remained an influential actor in the transnational ties developed and maintained by emigrants even after their resettlement. A large subset of literature on transnationalism, referred to generally as 'state-led transnationalism,' has devoted itself to determining when, how and why states develop transnational policies and in doing so explores the causes of dispersal and conditions of reception in settlement countries. Expressing interest in dispersed populations, transnational states have varyingly sought to engage their respective diasporas in national developments for a range of purposes. Recognizing the potential benefits realized from the production of emigrants, Gammage (2006) has argued the El Salvadoran state has encouraged 'exporting people to recruit remittances.' Similarly in 2003, the African Union recognized the diaspora as the sixth 'region' of the organizational structure acknowledging the developmental role diasporas can potentially play in homeland development (Davies 2007).

The Horn of Africa nation of Eritrea gained *de jure* sovereignty in 1993. Owing in part to the relatively recent formation of its diaspora, state-led transnationalism literature in the Eritrean context remains largely underexplored. This portfolio devotes itself to highlighting important

factors in understanding the motivation behind the state's strong dedication to forge relationships with its diaspora. Also explored is the impact of the state's active involvement within the Eritrean transnational social field. By transnational social field, I refer to the "set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, p. 1009). Migrants who settle in a country and participate in social relations that transcend nation-state borders operate within a transnational social field.

Rationale for the Portfolio

As a child I had always been fascinated by the collective efforts of the Eritrean diaspora to support the 'national cause'. The enthusiasm, dedication and willingness exerted surpassed understanding on my part. Failure to display the 'unrelenting, never back down' Eritrean spirit was never a question of concern. I occasionally pondered the source driving such passion, but more often than not attributed the dedication of the diaspora to its sheer size vis-à-vis the national population. Perhaps it was my understanding of the diaspora's financial role in funding the isolated liberation movement that satisfied my quest to determine the strong sense of pride, patriotism and orientation of the Eritrean diaspora. After all it is not uncommon to hear anecdotes of the diaspora's integral role in the Revolution and subsequent wars. The human and financial burden of independence was shared by Eritreans everywhere. Thus, the role of the Eritrean diaspora was largely accepted to have played an overwhelmingly positive one.

As situations steadily deteriorated in Eritrea however and fragmentation became more visible after the 1998-2000 war, I began to interrogate the overwhelming unity and assumed positive role that the Eritrean diaspora had played in national developments. I became critical of the analytical tendency in literature to celebrate 'Eritrea's remarkable sense of unity' (Al-Ali et

al 2001, p. 594) at the expense of highlighting difference and disunity that has for long marked the Eritrean transnational social field. This personal inquiry led me to the issues explored in this portfolio. Particularly, I became interested in the historical role played by the Eritrean state and its earlier incarnation in forging relationships with its diaspora. Exploring this has allowed me to recognize ruptures present within the Eritrean transnational social field not addressed in existing literature. Aside from divisions between two liberation fronts, much of the existing literature has taken the Eritrean diaspora as homogenous choosing to emphasize the historical unity of the diaspora. Eritrean "communities are themselves far from homogenous and conflict permeates its rich diversity" (Kumsa 2006, p. 231). This critique is one more generally of literature on African diasporas that tends to group diverse populations and lived experiences together (Koser 2003).

> …African diasporas are global and multilayered, composed of multiple communities, different waves of migration and diasporization…and no adequate attention is paid to the historical conditions and experiences that produce diasporic communities and consciousness, or lack thereof.
>
> (Zeleza 2008, p. 6-7)

Adopting and making specific this explanation to the context of the Eritrean diaspora, I attempt to complicate static, uniform and celebrated understandings of Eritrean state-diaspora relationships within changing patterns of engagement. Over the last decade, Eritrea has steadily remained one of the top ten refugee-producing countries per capita (UNHCR Statistical Yearbooks). The causes of dispersal, contexts of reception, and subjectivities of those fleeing Eritrea today however differ vastly from the refugee flows of earlier decades. Thus, there is a certain level of specificity required when referring to the 'Eritrean diaspora' and the state's role in engaging its different segments.

Noting the policies adopted by the Eritrean state in engaging its dispersed populations entails studying the changes and continuities that have characterized the Eritrean transnational

social field. For example, it was determined at the time of independence that any person born to one or two Eritrean parents anywhere in the world is considered an Eritrean citizen by the state. One obligation expected of an Eritrean citizen residing outside Eritrea is that he/she pay 2% of his/her annual income to the Eritrean state. While many scholars acknowledge the existence of this policy, it is usually mentioned in passing or relegated to footnote status. To date, few scholars have considered the mechanisms used to structure compliance to this policy. Attempts to institutionalize members of the Eritrean diaspora by the state have also contributed to conflicting relationships between segments of the diaspora, necessitating recognition of the many layered differences that pervade Eritrean transnational spaces. Theorizing what has and is taking place today means revisiting historical Eritreanist literature that has idealized the Liberation Movement(s) of Eritrea and the current state at the time of independence. The state's exertion of control in transnational spaces however places significant challenges on the methodological approach this type of research can adopt.

Methodology

The contemporary challenges to conducting research in Eritrea are significant. No independent media, as understood in any conventional way, exists in Eritrea today. Taking turns with North Korea, Eritrea tops the list of being the most closed society with extensive censorship (Committee to Protect Journalists 2012). In addition, independent researchers or organizations are unable to obtain research permits in Eritrea and relying on informants for clandestine data collection under strict state security presents serious ethical dilemmas (Tronvoll 2009). National budgetary information or census statistics information has not been made public by the state since 2004. Challenges to primary data collection also permeate Eritrean transnational social spaces where state surveillance has been able to monitor transnational communities. As this

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transnational terrain becomes increasingly polarized – politically and socially – gaining access to conduct research has become more challenging.

The unstructured nature of this portfolio research design reflects the difficulties of conducting research in Eritrea, with or on Eritrean communities, as well as the inherent exploratory nature of this research. Thus, my portfolio is inevitably literature based. Drawing on existing theory allows me to place this portfolio in conversation with empirical findings from similar transnational social fields. In addition, I utilize government documents, non-governmental organization (NGO) publications and online editorials and commentary. While I recognize the potential biases of these research sources, such as the Eritrean state and multilateral organizations, I draw on them because they provide some of the only available data on Eritrea. Much of the research available has either been collected prior to the introduction of research restrictions in Eritrea or conducted with Eritrean refugees and emigrants. The two major components comprising this portfolio enclose their respective methods section, as the sources used and approach adopted differ slightly from one another.

I am of the belief that constraints to conducting research should not prevent investigation, but rather makes it essential that academics develop creative ways of collecting and analysing data. Throughout therefore, I draw on my own lived experience and personal narration as well as the voices of other Eritreans as a means of offsetting some of the research restrictions in place. By observing and recording the voices of Eritreans, I am able to employ qualitative content analysis of these narrations to better understand the experiences and subjectivities of Eritreans through their own words and connect them to the broader themes of my research goals.

Personal and Resesarcher Positionality

The questions I ask as a scholar throughout this portfolio stem directly from my positioning as an individual. Born to two former Eritrean liberation fighters in Canada, my lived

experience strongly informs how I position myself as a scholar. And so, like Kumsa (2006), I too "disclaim the neutral observer status" (p. 232). This work is a product of many years of reflecting, learning and unlearning, first-hand observations, and informal conversations with Eritreans situated all over the world. Thus, the issues found within this portfolio are not simply questions I interrogate theoretically, but processes that I am deeply implicated in. As I tread back and forth between the multiple roles of subject and researcher, the personal aspects of my research objectives command that I continually engage in self-reflexivity (Kleinsasser 2000). In doing so, I challenge my own theoretical predispositions, experiences and biases in order to provide the most accurate account of the issues I inquire into.

Limitations of the Portfolio

As this work is limited by its scope, the contents of this portfolio are not without its shortcomings. Since each portfolio component outlines its own limitations, I will only here outline the overarching limitations of the portfolio. One of the major underlying arguments put forth by this portfolio is that the nation-state should not be taken as the fixed unit of analysis; instead as this portfolio illustrates, these 'containers' and the relationships embodied within them are far from stable over time. While arguing against methodological nationalism, I too am limited by and employ the discourses bound up in this critique. Thus, I constantly, but problematically, refer to Eritrea, the Eritrean diaspora, diasporan, *warsai*, etc. The people I prescribe these labels to may not identify with them. Some may not even identify with the colonial geography of Eritrea. As this portfolio demonstrates, employing such language tends to mask difference. For example, the Eritrean diaspora I speak of in this portfolio is mainly comprised of people from the Tigrinya subnational group; this is done so with little attention to other subnational groups. Much of the existing literature on Eritrea (this work is no exception),

speaks to the Eritrean diaspora without accounting for the historical and contemporary privilege and political dominance of Tigrinya people.

In addition, by drawing on examples from varied geographical locations, I conflate Eritrean transnational communities in different contexts without paying much specific attention to local country or city context which significantly affects the maintenance of transnational ties. While local context is indeed important, it remains beyond the limited scope of this project. Instead I choose to focus on the constant in this equation which is the Eritrean transnational party-state.

Part of analysing the political discourse of the Eritrean state and drawing on the narratives of Eritreans in their own words includes deconstructing meanings behind symbolically weighty Tigrinya words and phrases commonly used. Tigrinya is one of Eritrea's two official languages and is the most widely spoken language in Eritrea and throughout the diaspora. Though much is lost in translation and by virtue of putting it down on paper, throughout this portfolio I attempt to capture the nuances and meanings implied by Tigrinya political discourse.

Mapping the Portfolio

This portfolio is comprised of two stand-alone components. The first, entitled *The Paradox of Remittances in the Eritrean Transnational Party-State: (Re)visiting Citizenship and Governance in the Diaspora*, illustrates how the politicized context of the liberation struggle has shaped the transnational ties subsequently formed. The paper examines shifting state-diaspora relationships by tracing the continuity of financial contributions of Eritrean migrants to the liberation struggle and into the independence period. I argue the Eritrean state has employed various governance mechanisms to coerce compliance to an expatriate tax policy adopted at the

time of independence. The paper is foregrounded by a discussion of the strength and resurgence of nationalism in the diaspora to explain the continuity of financial support.

For the exiles produced through the initial mass refugee exodus of the 1980's, their subjectivities and commitments were firmly rooted in the cause of dispersal, the struggle for Eritrean sovereignty. For subsequent generations however, the same cannot be said. The second component, *Generation Beles: Culture, Politics and Intra-Generational Conflict in 'Model Eritrea,'* calls attention to the subjectivities of second-generation Eritreans situated in the diaspora and the Eritrean state's efforts to institutionalize belonging among this segment of the population. I argue efforts to institutionalize belonging among young Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora, who I refer to as *Beles*, by the current Eritrean state have exacerbated intra-generational conflict with their homeland born counterparts. The contrived version of the state presented for consumption by *Beles*, differs significantly from the state young homeland born Eritreans experience daily.

Taken together, these components relate directly to my Plan of Study (POS) entitled *Migration, Transnational Nation-Building, and Civil Society in Africa.* My POS is grounded in the global historical processes of domination where the contemporary African state finds its origin. Failing to provide the enabling environment for development, the African state continues to pursue politics of repression. Compounded with imminent conflict, mass migration has remained a long-time characteristic of the African continent and in particular the Horn region. In the case of Eritrea for example, where dispersal has led to the formation of a diaspora, I am interested in the ways transnational states have maintained interest in their emigrant populations and the effects of state-led engagement.

The portfolio concludes with a brief review of the two components to argue critical analysis of contemporary developments in Eritrea must be understood within historical context. To this end, I complete the portfolio by way of briefly examining the colonial origins of the Eritrean (African) state and highlighting some of the direct continuities and effects of this period on contemporary developments.

Politics and Emotion

With the turn of every page, it becomes clearer that that which is political is also deeply cultural and thus emotional – and vice versa. Eritrea's historical trajectory has worked to politicize knowledge about the country (Bernal 2004). Rightfully so, the essence of these debates conjures deeply emotional reactions. After all, politics – and political success – is hinged upon the successful employment of symbolism and ritual (Kertzer 1988). Thus, in order to theorize what has and is taking place today, there is an imperative to step back from the blinders of national pride. Acknowledging this, I too have to remember to distinguish and keep distinct emotions from facts and critical analysis.

In a September 2011 interview with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, interviewer Peter Clottey asked the President for his thoughts on human rights abuse claims launched against the state. Deflecting the interviewer's question, the President instead invited Clottey to 'come see Eritrea to judge for [him]self'. I have taken up the President on his advice. In what follows, I attempt to present the most honest account of my research findings. As Goldring (2008) expressively points out though, "finding appropriate ways to frame critical comments may not always be easy" (p. 17).

habae kuslus, habae fewsu
(s)he who conceals his/her wounds, finds no cure
(as translated in Kibreab 2009, p. xvi)

THE PARADOX OF REMITTANCES IN THE ERITREAN TRANSNATIONAL PARTY-STATE: (RE)VISITING CITIZENSHIP AND GOVERNANCE IN THE DIASPORA

ABSTRACT

For decades now mass outward migration has become a defining characteristic of Eritrea. Experienced in the midst of its struggle for liberation (1961-1991), the country's first major refugee crisis occurred in the early 1980's and proved to be the foundation of its diaspora in the industrialized world. Upon gaining resettlement, Eritreans overwhelming continued their support of the liberation war, both financially and politically. Since independence, the current government has, with strong commitment, adopted policies to ensure the diaspora's continued financial engagement. In this article, I examine the Eritrean state's relationship with members of its dispersed population through an expatriate tax (*2% Income Tax on Eritreans Working Abroad*) levied on all emigrant Eritreans. I draw attention to the state's articulation of this policy as a national development imperative and the various governance mechanisms employed to ensure compliance. The state's exertion of coercive control to ensure financial mobilization is augmented by the presence of political institutions located throughout the Eritrean transnational social field. Further, by honing in on the state's instrumentalization and politicization of the diaspora's financial involvement, my analysis reveals the ways in which citizenship and membership are continually being (re)configured. I build my argument on an historical discussion of the strength and resurgence of nationalism in the diaspora at varying junctures to explain the continuity of financial support. In doing so, I emphasize the legacies of a colonial state and the political context from which the formation of the Eritrean diaspora was born.

KEYWORDS: migration; expatriate tax; governance; citizenship (documentation); Eritrea

THE PARADOX OF REMITTANCES IN THE ERITREAN TRANSNATIONAL PARTY-STATE: (RE)VISITING CITIZENSHIP AND GOVERNANCE IN THE DIASPORA

INTRODUCTION

Initiating much vibrant scholarly debate over the last few decades, the relationship between migration and development has remained a critical area of research (e.g. Newland 2007; Castles 2008; Faist 2008). At the heart of these debates usually lies a discussion of remittances, attesting to the pervasive role migrant remittances are playing in countries of origin. Earlier debates foregrounded the role of remittances in contributing to development in sending states (e.g. Maimbo and Ratha 2005). These interpretations were challenged by various emergent perspectives that suggested that contexts differ and change over time and thus so do the effects of remittances. Nonetheless, a general consensus exists that emigrants remain important actors to the 'home country' even after migrating – for more reasons beyond the evident economic explanation.

A subset of analyses within the literature has addressed the role of states in courting migrant remittances in crisis-situations of various kinds, for example natural disasters, elections and war. This literature also examines the role that migrants play in such contexts. Collier (2000) posits that remittances in the context of war have the tendency to fuel conflict and in some cases cause a country to relapse into conflict. Conversely, Lindley (2007) demonstrates that remittances, even in 'fragile settings' like war, play an integral role in the coping strategies adopted by households. In conflict-affected settings migrants have resourcefully developed intricate transnational practices of sending remittances to home countries (Horst 2006). Cautioning against celebratory understandings of migrant agency, Koser (2007) argues that

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transnationalism can in many ways also reinforce state power. Underpinning these varied analyses is the idea that the contexts in which remittances circulate determine the forms and characteristics they will assume. The potential of migration therefore, and specifically migrant remittances, is largely contingent on the type and duration of migration and more generally the broader political and social context in sending countries and regions (de Haas 2005). What this literature points to is the fact that the impact of migration and remittance effects is highly context-sensitive.

To contribute to this debate, this paper - grounded in the context of Eritrea – develops firstly, how remittances are located within broader shifting social, political and historical contextual environments. I then analyse the state apparatus of the current Eritrean state, as well as its earlier incarnation of a Liberation Front, and its ability to construct a form of transnational governance that operates to extract hard currency from Eritrean emigrants in the diaspora. Emphasizing the legacies of a colonial state and the geopolitical context from which the formation of the Eritrean diaspora was born, I trace the historical (dis)continuity of remittance-sending by Eritrean emigrants to the liberation movement, a practice institutionalized upon independence in the form of an expatriate tax. Not to be viewed as abnormal (Gamlen 2008), states with high emigration employ a diverse range of institutions and practices to 'court' their diasporas for financial extraction (Itzigsohn 2000; Goldring 2003; Levitt and de la Dehesa 2003; Hernandez and Coutin 2006). Here however, I pay particular attention to the state's spatial reach by relying on transnational political institutions to exert a high level of control and regulation over its diaspora, in effect, coercing compliance.

As exemplified by this paper, the relationship between the Eritrean state and its diaspora has been marked by both change and continuity; this highlights the need for a historically

contextual understanding of the Eritrean liberation war. Through an examination of the state's instrumentalization, institutionalization and politicization of the diaspora's financial involvement, my analysis tells of the configuration of citizenship at independence and the function citizenship fulfills in the state's transnational governance framework. By inserting history and politics 'back into' the discussion on diaspora engagement in development (Goldring 2008; McGregor 2009), and specifically this form of economic transnationalism, this paper illustrates how the relationship between the 'political' and 'economic' are not always so easily distinct as is sometimes portrayed in existing transnationalism literature (Itgizsohn 2000; Al-Ali et al 2001; Koser 2003). Rather, the relationship between the political and economic at times can be very fluid and negotiable.[2] Enmeshed in a hegemonic (trans)nationalist project, the expatriate tax is anchored upon shifting but timely national justifications.

METHODS

Methodological challenges involving research on Eritrea are numerous because of the restrictions to data collection inside the country as well as the state's tight control over information. These challenges are amplified when it comes to inquiries like this one. Available data on remittances is replete with shortcomings: firstly, the reliability of remittance data is always questionable because of the differing ways states and multilateral organizations quantify and classify remittances, and secondly the context in which remittance data is collected bears significance (Bracking 2003; Hammond 2010). Further, since data collection and recordkeeping in areas and periods of conflict is never a primary concern (Lindley 2007), available data

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[2] For instance, upon settling in industrialized countries, ex-Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) fighters largely did not support the Eritrean Liberation Peoples Front (EPLF) financially, but overwhelmingly participated in the referendum to decide Eritrea's independence. This is evidenced by high voter registration numbers for the referendum and its final outcome.

collected from conflict areas understandably tends to be incomplete (Van Hear 2003; Fagen 2006).

Given this and the level of secrecy under which the Eritrean state operates,[3] I use available statistical data with caution. Further, the validity of statistics in Eritrea is questionable because much of what exists was inherited at independence gathered through referendum statistics or approximation (Sutton 1994). This paper adopts a 'retrospective approach' (Goldring 2008), allowing me to treat the transnational links between the Eritrean state and its diaspora as an, 'unstable and fluid' relation (McGregor 2009). To this end, I utilize an analysis of secondary qualitative sources and existing literature. In addition, background knowledge based on numerous informal conversations with Eritreans and being a participant observer in the Eritrean diaspora helps to further my analysis. By situating my study within the broader literature on economic transnationalism and analyzing available empirical evidence, I offer a way of interpreting the meanings associated with the 2% tax policy as well as subjecting national claims of exclusivity to empirical testing.[4]

While available literature acknowledges the existence of the 2% tax, few studies to date have examined the state apparatus and mechanisms utilized to coerce compliance and the ways the policy is implicated in a national hegemonic project. The justification for this paper is thus twofold 1) current literature does not recognize this type of cross-border financial transfer, and because 2) it is believed that finances collected through the 2% tax policy comprise a large portion of the country's GDP.

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[3]The government possesses de facto control of the national economy. All banks in Eritrea are government-owned. In addition, bank rates are less than half the black market rates, thus further complicating any interpretation of data pertaining to the national economy (Styan 2007).

[4] It is common to hear statements such as 'the diaspora funded the liberation war making independence possible' or 'Eritrea is debt-free because of the financial support of the diaspora'. Such statements have acquired the status of truth without empirical interrogation. While literature on state-led economic transnationalism flourishes, the 2% tax has yet to be fully analyzed in its own right apart from telegraphic mentions.

ERITREA

For several decades, mass outward migration has remained a defining characteristic of Eritrea, one of the world's newest countries. The country's first major refugee crisis occurring in the early 1980s proved to be the foundation of its conflict-induced diaspora in the industrialized West. [5] While in the context of war people flee to preserve their lives rather than with the intention to remit (Lindley 2007), Eritrean migrants proved to be of significant political and economic importance to the country's anticolonial struggle. Waging a liberation war (1961-1991) financially and ideologically unsupported against the 'regional hegemon' (Iyob 1997) of Greater Ethiopia necessitated the mobilization of Eritrea's de-territorialized populations for finances to fund the cause.

On April 27 1993 throughout Eritrea and the world, Eritreans participated in a referendum for independence in which 99.8% voted in favour of independence (Wise 1993; Iyob 2000). After several arrangements and periods of foreign rule and a three-decade liberation war with high human sacrifices, sovereign statehood under the provisional government of the *Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front* (EPLF), later renaming itself the *People's Front for Democracy and Justice* (PFDJ), was largely welcomed by Eritreans (Connell 1993). Then US President Bill Clinton hailed EPLF/PDFJ leader Isaias Afwerki as one of the "continental leaders at the forefront of the African dawn" (Kibreab 2009, p. 58). In a region characterized by endemic conflict, Eritrea was to be a model for African development. The socio-economic challenges facing the newly independent country however, were immense.

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[5] The first Eritrean refugee crisis arguably begins in the 1960s into Sudan as Haile Sellassie's forces started to "put down" the *shiftanet* in the Eritrean lowlands with the emergence of the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) and Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) (Kibreab 1987; Reid 2011). Here however, my focus is on migration to industrialized countries leading to the formation of the diaspora in the West and thus the periodization is from the 1980s.

Acknowledging the essential role of the diaspora in the achievement of independence, post-independence development was to follow a similar path. The transnational practice of 'giving to the nation' was institutionalized in the form of the *2% Income Tax on Eritreans Working Abroad*[6] policy, that I will refer to in short as *2% tax (kilte kab mi'e'tee)*. This legislation decreed that every Eritrean living abroad would be required to pay 2% of their annual income to the Eritrean state.[7] While there were notable critics of EPLF/PFDJ rule at the time, most were willing to continue their financial contributions.[8] Political support at the dawn of independence was relatively high as family reunification and trips to the country provided an impetus for continued financial support. Today, Eritrea's economy is considered 'remittance-based' with funds collected through the 2% tax believed to comprise an estimated 30-35% of the country's GDP (Fessehatzion 2005).

FROM ERITREA TO THE DIASPORA

Eritrea has a relatively short and recent, albeit politicized, migratory history. Historical and political background is critical to an understanding of the transnational relations of contemporary diasporas (Waldinger 2006 as cited in McGregor 2009). Al-Ali, Black and Koser (2001) posit "an appreciation of the historical emergence of migratory patterns is crucial in understanding the form that transnational activities will take" (p. 580). Though theorizations of diaspora have flourished over the past few decades (Butler 2001; Brubaker 2005) to account for the diversification of human migration flows (Werbner 2002), Eritrea's diaspora fits the first

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[6] The policy's name as stated in governmental documents in Tigrinya, one of Eritrea's official languages, is *Mehway Gibri,* loosely translated to 'healing taxes' in English. The weighty choice of words has instrumental value given the politicized context.

[7] Payments are expected in the currency of the country the national resides in (i.e. a Canadian citizen would pay in Canadian Dollars and a British citizen would pay in British Pounds).

[8] One of the first notable instances of opposition was on May 20 1993, when a group of EPLF fighters held a protest in Asmara, seizing control of various government offices and the airport, after hearing of the government's decision to extend their unpaid service for an additional two years. The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) which defected to the diaspora also largely opposed EPLF/PFDJ rule.

conceptualization of diaspora used to explain the classical Jewish dispersal (Cohen 1997; Vertovec 1999), which is one emanating from conflict.

Since the 1960s and 70s, Eritrea's migratory patterns have been shaped by intensified periods of conflict and war. With the onset of the liberation movement in 1961, Haile Selassie's government in Ethiopia started with putdowns toward the *shiftanet* in the lowlands area of Eritrea (e.g. Bariagaber 2006; Kibreab 1985; Murtaza 1998). This led to mass movements of Eritreans into Sudan in the early-mid 1960's. The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution and the unleashing of Derg's 1977 violent political *Red Terror Campaign* dramatically shifted the course of the Eritrean liberation movement. At the time anyone suspected of counter-revolutionary acts was deemed an enemy.

In a unexpected turn of events, two Eritrean liberation movements – Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and EPLF – fought an internecine war (1979-81), resulting in the former being pushed into Sudan and the latter taking complete leadership of the movement, and subsequently taking office at independence (e.g. Sorenson 1990; Kibreab 1995, 1999, 2002). It was during this period that significant numbers of Eritreans moved into Sudan and subsequently to various industrialized countries (Koehn 1991).

These developments can be directly linked to broader colonial and Cold War geopolitics. A 'pawn in world politics' (Okbazghi 1991), Eritrea's liberation movement against the US/USSR-backed Ethiopia was largely ignored by the world, including the UN General Assembly and the Organization of African Union (OAU), as OAU conventions stated colonial borders could not be re-drawn (Pool 2001). The war's ideological and financial isolation necessitated a reliance on the remittances of Eritrean emigrants and equally the recognition of the important role fulfilled by Eritrean migrants in the establishment of a sovereign Eritrea.

Shared memories of Ethiopian colonial repression, war, and displacement thus remained written large on the Eritrean imaginary (Iyob 1997). A political identity largely informed by this history (Hepner 2009) and its 'culture of war and exile' (Conrad 2006) fuelled efforts to mobilize in the diaspora in hopes of one day returning to a sovereign Eritrea. Diasporas have "shared memory, vision and myth of the homeland, alienation from home country and permanence of 'myth of return'" (Safran 1999 in Weinar 2010, p. 75).[9] From its origin, the Eritrean diaspora retained a close connection to national developments, so much so that the 'state' and 'diaspora' cannot be thought of to exist as two functionally and categorically exclusive compartments (see Hammond 2011 on 'part-time' Somalia diaspora).

The financial requirement of the liberation movement did not leave new Eritrean migrants much time to get settled before starting to remit to help the cause for which they were essentially 'uprooted' (Cohen 1997). Remittances were needed by, not the family 'left behind' (Bracking 2003), but the *qalsi* – struggle for liberation - left behind. While those arriving to countries like Canada, the US, England, and Germany in the 1980s did so mainly as landed immigrants under government resettlement programs, access barriers like language and the difficulties of gaining employment in harsh market conditions made integration challenging (see Scott 2001).

Throughout the course of the 30 year liberation movement, over 1 million Eritreans are estimated to have relocated to the diaspora (UNICEF 1994); a significant number considering Eritrea's population was roughly three million at independence. The legacy of dispersal and human sacrifice left by the struggle, irrespective of political partisanship, has remained an important mobilizing factor. Since 2001 Eritrea has remained one of the top per capita refugee-

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[9] Few people returned upon independence. In Germany, less than 50 people returned to Eritrea but many held and lived with the 'dream of return' (see Al-Ali et al 2001, p. 583-4).

producing countries in the world due to intensified political repression and militarization. In 2011 Eritrea ranked ninth.[10] The circumstances of, and reasons for migration differ significantly as do the contexts of immigration policy in Western countries. While this is largely beyond the scope of this project, the people in these migration flows also become entangled in the state apparatus seeking to extract hard currency.

FROM 'REMITTANCE' TO 'TAX'

"The problem is that opinions about remittances are made as if these were and meant the same thing in different places and over time" (Durand as cited in Goldring 2004, p. 804).

For decades now, scholars have theorized around the developmental potential of remittances (e.g. Maimbo and Ratha 2005; de Haas 2005; Kapur 2009). Cautioning against the assumption that all remittances lead toward development, Goldring (2004) argues, "…different types of remittances have specific qualities and require specific interventions, and may not be very fungible or amenable to re-classification" (p.800). More importantly, remittances and related forms of financial transfers assume different meanings and/or usages depending on the contexts they enter and in which they circulate. Bracking (2003) asserts,

> in times of economic and political crisis the effects of remittance transfers have a critical importance in…supporting or undermining a regime….the socio-political context is as, if not more, important to understanding the contribution of migration and remittances to development outcomes than economic analysis alone suggests (p. 641-2).

As discussed above, the isolation of the Eritrean liberation movement necessitated the mobilization of Eritrean migrants toward the nationalist cause. The diaspora effectively mobilized during the war for independence with many individuals contributing some of their most prized personal possessions (ie. salaries, jewellery, service) (Killion 1999; Clapham 1996; Reuters 31.8.1991; AFP 21.10.1999 cited in Iyob 2000). Throughout the 1980s the EPLF

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[10] Derived from UNHCR 2011 Statistical Database "Refugee Statistics Database by Country"

operated and mobilized in several industrialized countries through their mass organizations, namely the *National Union of Eritrean Workers (NUEW)*, *National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWn)* and the *National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS).* In Germany for example, these organizations, part and parcel of the liberation movement, maintained central offices in the German cities of Frankfurt and Main where they oversaw the activities in Germany and other parts of Europe (Turner 2008). The mass organizations established local chapters in places of significant Eritrean settlement. Building state-like institutions and operating much like a state would (Connell 2004) the EPLF's ability to invoke the imperative for independence to receive financial backing is not novel. Countless examples illustrate of cross-border financial transfers from emigrants to fund overtly political anti-state campaigns (Cohen 1997; Wahlbeck 1999; Turner 2008; Shayne 2009).

In addition to donations made throughout the liberation movement, the EPLF's ideology centered on massive annual festivals as a huge attraction for Eritreans (Turner 2008; Arnone 2010). The largest, occurring biennially alongside the EPLF congress, was the *Bologna Festival* in Bologna, Italy. Making periodical trips to the diaspora, for example during this event, EPLF political representatives were central in communicating the suffering and sacrifices of Eritreans in war zones. Turner (2008) notes "…the political part of the event was accompanied by a cultural program which included the selling of traditional Eritrean food, music shows and plays. The festivals afforded the opportunity for large scale [monetary] collection campaign" (p.10). Since the liberation movement preceded the proliferation of internet usage (Bernal 2006) and other forms of deterritorialized media (Appadurai 1990), the role played by the student-led group, *Eritreans for Liberation in North America (EFLNA),* was significant in raising the profile

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of the movement among scholars and joining forces with other anticolonial movements (see Hepner 2005).

The financial contributions of the Eritrean diaspora to the liberation movement proved decisive to the outcome of independence (Kibreab 2007). Evidence of sustained level of cross-border engagement existed and proved influential to the Eritrean transnational institutional structure (Portes et al 1999; Itgizsohn 2000). A 'culture of giving' became entrenched in the national sensibilities of Eritreans (Koser 2007). Gamlen (2008) argues states, by way of "celebrating the role of expatriates, […] instil or capitalise on feelings of responsibility, loyalty or obligation in their diasporas" (p. 843, 850). The EPLF maintains it received little foreign support from non-Eritreans sources throughout the liberation war and thus the mythology of social transformation through 'self-reliance' remains an anchor of Eritrean nationalist discourse (Sorenson 1991). This self-reliance approach, stemming from the war's ideological and financial isolation, was to sustain the country into its independence era.

The unfavourable integration of developing countries into the global economy (Basch et al 1994; Popkin 2003) influences the imperative for states to adopt emigrant integration policies following the logic of a remittance-led development strategy (Gammage 2006). As independence dawned, the EPLF-turned-PFDJ institutionalized the practice of remittance-giving to the national cause through the *2% Income Tax on Eritreans Working Abroad* stating that every Eritrean living abroad would be required to pay 2% of his/her annual income to the Eritrean state. It is important to note that members of the diaspora were directly involved in the drafting of the 1992 National Constitution, where details of this expatriate tax are outlined. At times working drafts were circulated transnationally for approval; arguably, an indication that at a juncture in time a general

sense of approval surrounded the *2% Tax*.[11] While an expatriate tax can be a viable way of ensuring diasporic rights are balanced by obligations (Bhagwati cited by Gamlen 2008), the impetus for the Eritrean tax was driven by the overwhelming reconstruction tasks at hand. Further, unlike other forms of expatriate taxes levied on migrants (e.g. US Taxation on Americans Living Abroad), the 2% tax neither operates as an income tax nor is it governed by bilateral tax treaties. Nationalizing the personal contributions of Eritrean emigrants closely resembles the Salvadoran state's treatment of remittances as a 'national resource and cost-free income' (Hernandez and Coutin 2006), an effort to 'developmentalize the diaspora' (Goldring 2008).

Since 2004 the Eritrean government has not provided international reporting of its budgetary information. Thus, there are no government reports to indicate the amount of money collected through the policy or of its uses.[12] In 2003 however 20.9% of Eritrea's GDP was spent on the military (World Bank 2003). Popular understandings posit that the funds collected through the 2% tax are allocated to payments for war veterans, war injured and to families of martyrs of the 1998-2000 war. A more recent government document notes that funds collected through the 2% tax are being used on food security measures, education, health care and (re)building infrastructure (PFDJ 2011). Leaving aside the amount of money channelled to the Eritrean state through the 2% tax policy, more interesting for my purpose here is an exploration of the transnational governance mechanisms employed to ensure adherence to the tax policy. For this, I turn to a discussion of citizenship and transnational political institutions, key components comprising the state apparatus, and their role in coercing members of the diaspora.

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[11] At the inception of the 2% tax policy, no clause existed for the policy's length of implementation.
[12] Styan (2007) provides a hypothetical equation to guestimate the figures drawn in to the state through the *2% Tax*. He puts forth if 10,000 Eritreans living abroad earned $50,000 (US) each their combined total income would be $500,000,000. 2% of this total would be $10 million (US).

(RE)DEFINING CITIZENRY: DIASPORIC MEMBERSHIP

With the establishment of *de facto* sovereignty on May 24 1991 fighting officially halted. This signalled the onset of preparations for a referendum to establish *de jure* sovereignty in April 1993. One of the major tasks facing the provisional government in the two year period of de facto sovereignty was to devise citizenship and nationality laws since none existed prior to independence. Considering the centrality of citizenship to sovereignty and its legitimizing aspect (Bosniak 2000; Sassen 2005), the task of defining Eritrean citizenship, and essentially who would be able to vote in the 1993 referendum, was no easy task. Given the integral role Eritrean migrants played throughout the liberation movement and the large portion of Eritrea's population that was by then dispersed, it only seemed fitting that the citizenship definition adopted would encompass those dispersed.

The Eritrean Nationality Proclamation No. 21/1992 containing the citizenship clause elaborated, states "any person born to a father or mother of Eritrean origin in Eritrea or abroad is an Eritrean national by birth". This broad, wide-ranging definition of citizenship, "invested [the country's] dispersed population with a pan-Eritrean identity through matrilineal as well as patrilineal descent or naturalisation" (Iyob 2000, p. 663). In Eritrea and throughout the diaspora, Eritreans who partook in the registration process received Eritrean Identity Cards called *Eritrawi Men'net* allowing registered voters to participate in the UN sponsored referendum. As a holder of the Identity Card, one is subject to all privileges, rights and obligations of resident citizens.[13] In addition, several substantial legal institutional strides were taken in 1991 (see Iyob 1997).[14]

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[13] This includes national service and conscription. If a diasporan Eritrean returns to Eritrea and remains for a period of more than one year, he or she is subject to enlist in the national service program.

[14] Of the seven Iyob (1997) describes in detail, the most relevant to the discussion here are the following 1) state ownership of all land 2) supporting families of deceased veterans and impoverished citizens and 3) introduction of the National Service Programme containing 6 months of military training and 12 months of national productive activities.

Today it is common for extra-territorialized nation-states to re-define and extend citizenship to emigrant populations e.g. Haiti, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Colombia, Philippines (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001; Popkin 2003; Waterbury 2010). Sometimes conditions of political crisis or changes in national interest necessitate shifts in state policy towards its dispersed populations (Sherman 1999). For newly independent Eritrea, conditions dictated that citizenship be defined as opposed to redefined. The processes taken to devise national policy on citizenship were ad hoc in nature and to date have yet to be adequately delineated; this has been the source of many ills (see Iyob 2000; Riggans 2011).

Considering the integral role of the diaspora to the liberation movement, the encompassing citizenship adopted at independence carried significant symbolic value for diasporan Eritreans. It carried great functional value as well. For example, the ID card replaced visas for returning and visiting nationals.[15] This was instrumental for the large number of Eritreans travelling back immediately following the declaration of independence. Torpey (2000) argues ID cards are important governance mechanisms utilized by state authorities to regulate, control access, and enforce checks on movement. More importantly here, Eritrean citizenship as articulated by the state's *Nationality Proclamation*, binds Eritreans located anywhere to the responsibility of paying the 2% tax and by extension to the consequences of non-adherence. To recall, citizenship is important in outlining not only the rights of citizens but of responsibilities as well. The direct efforts of the Eritrean state to engage and incorporate its emigrant populations into the definition of the national polity at independence is critical for appreciating the role that transnational political institutions hold to this end.

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[15] Eritreans over the age of 18 are expected to enter Eritrea using their ID Cards as opposed to a foreign passport alone. Failure to show an ID card can at times be interpreted as suspicious and used to gauge compliance.

TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS: CULTIVATING AND GOVERNING THE DIASPORA

Since independence, the commitment of the Eritrean Diaspora to their homeland has been no less significant. They are contributing to nation building and the reconstruction and development of the economy…

(PFDJ 2011, p. 26)

The density, diversity, and power of these institutions, and the ways they are structured, exert a tremendous influence over the volume and impact of transnational practices…

(Levitt 2001, p. 204)

As these quotes illustrate, a state's institutional complex, governing not only its territory but its extra-territorial diaspora (Gamlen 2008), bears great significance on the state-diaspora relationships formed. Governing the Eritrean 'diasporic state' at independence (Iyob 2000), the PFDJ made the decision to dissolve the diaspora chapters of its mass organizations as they were deemed unnecessary. After remaining closed for some years, the diaspora chapters were reopened by the government to assert its official presence and to increase political campaigning among Eritrean communities in the diaspora. These political institutions, whether consular or embassy offices, are responsible for providing Eritreans with ID cards similar to the ones distributed to local Eritreans in Eritrea.

Upon reaching the age of maturity (18) an Eritrean citizen, as defined by the Citizenship Proclamation, is expected to make contact with a consular office in the diaspora to begin the process of obtaining his/her *Eritawi Men'net* ID card. Because the basis for citizenship is either matrilineal or patrilineal descent, the citizenship seeker is required to present their parents *Men'net* ID cards as proof. An Eritrean person interested in travelling to Eritrea is expected to do so not with a foreigner's visa, but rather with his/her ID card. Disregarding birthplace or interest, the totalizing citizenship adopted at independence did not leave much option for those not interested in obtaining Eritrean citizenship. Entry into Eritrea with a visa is considered to be

reserved solely for non-Eritreans. PFDJ transnational political institutions have been able to utilize ID cards to monitor compliance for those who abstain from obtaining an ID card or to monitor those who do not keep up to date with their 2% tax payments.

As stated above, the responsibilities associated with Eritrean citizenship includes adherence to the 2% tax. Regardless of the age that one decides to make 'initial contact' or (re)engage with the state after an extended absence, he/she is required to back-pay for the years missed. This back payment for the tax policy is charged from the year an individual reaches the age of maturity or from 1992, depending on one's date of birth. Although formal statehood was achieved in 1993, Eritreans adhere to the 1991 date. Thus, payments are required starting from the first full year of Eritrean sovereignty (1992). Similar to the tax filing that occurs annually in other countries, Eritreans are expected to ensure they are up-to-date with their annual tax payments. The amount collected is calculated based on an individual's annual income which is determined only after the individual presents annual government statements of remuneration. As the form (see Appendix A) outlines, cheques are to be made payable to the Embassy of Eritrea and sent to the address of the nearest consular office. Upon doing such, one receives *state clearance* and is afforded the benefits attached to Eritrean citizenship.

Citizens in the diaspora receive a host of incentives for 'state clearance,' including: participation in national elections,[16] having their name drawn in free land lotteries, obtaining exit visas for elderly relatives to visit family abroad, purchasing and owning land, and operating a business in Eritrea − not to mention the symbolism and pride of holding citizenship to one's country of origin. Because "migrants want a place where they can rest and retire" (Goldring 1992 as cited in Levitt 2001), the incentives are luring. The presence of the Eritrean state in the

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[16] The first national-level elections scheduled for 2001 to be held in Eritrea since receiving independence was postponed and to date has yet to be held.

diaspora and incentives afforded with Eritrean citizenship can be interpreted as sending a symbolic message to its emigrants of the state's concern about their well-being in the diaspora, and its interest in preparing them for their eventual return (see Iyob 2000). The state successfully organizes abroad to gain political and economic clout from its migrants through their contributions to home country developments. While permanent repatriation remains unlikely for most migrants, it remains in the imaginary of many.

Unlike the periodical tax audits of citizenry conducted in countries like Canada and the United States of America, the Eritrean state does not conduct this type of inspection. Relying instead on the sustained desires of Eritrean emigrants, the PFDJ utilizes its transnational state apparatus to ensure citizens requiring any type of service will be required to pay 2% tax. In this way, adherence to the 2% tax by citizens "oblige[s] them to comply unwillingly" (Bozzini 2011, p. 95). By linking compliance to the tax with loyalty to, and membership in, the party-state, the government is able to "monitor the degree of compliance with official nationalism and state-led development by keeping tabs on those who express political loyalty through such contributions versus those who do not. Finally, they increase the centralized power of the party-state by establishing leverage over, and instilling fear in, potentially noncompliant exiles" (Hepner 2009, p. 118).

In his stellar analysis of low-tech state surveillance in Eritrea, Bozzini (2011) illustrates how the use of checkpoints dispersed throughout the country contributes to the high visibility of the state essentially extending its spatial reach. The state apparatus functions in a way that,

> contributes almost on a daily basis to (re)producing various uncertainties, fears, beliefs and expectations that are the core of relative coercion…. representations, fears and uncertainties are not related to the apparatus of surveillance but are related to broader perceptions and experiences of the violence, arbitrariness, unpredictability and unaccountability of Eritrean political authorities (p. 94).

Extrapolating Bozzini's findings to a transnational level, I argue that the transnational political institutions of the party-state operate transnationally to the same effect. The ability of the state 'to check' and 'to verify' one's status with state clearance, influences the decisions people make. Thus, in an attempt to avoid all potential risk, travellers to Eritrea 'check in' and (many times) pay-up with the nearest consular office to obtain state clearance.

In light of authoritarian developments in Eritrea, a "climate of fear" deeply permeates the Eritrean transnational social field to "paralyze migrant communities" (Popkin 2003, p. 369). Political institutions of the state, acting as transnational extensions of the party-state, contribute to the functioning of this 'despotic modality of governance' (Bozzini 2011). Considering the characteristics that mark the Eritrean transnational social sphere, a context where reliable information is scarce and difficult to verify, accurate narratives and rumours circulate simultaneously. These circumstances have contributed to the flourishing of online Eritrean diaspora communities and an increased reliance on cyberspace spaces for information collection and verification (Bernal 2005, 2006). Disregarding the potential fabrication of stories, the possibility of narratives becoming reality contributes to the reproduction of fear among Eritrean emigrants and also coerces the compliance of emigrants so as to minimize potential problems. The knowledge that control can be implemented at any time produces 'uncertainties, suspicions and insecurity' (Bozzini 2011).

A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP: FINANCES, NATION-BUILDING, CONFLICT AND RECONSTRUCTION

Migrant political transnationalism and engagement in development schemes can never rightfully be depoliticized (Goldring 2008). This reality holds true for Eritrea, a country that has

experienced several wars and thus several reconstructions periods since its independence.[17] These circumstances have intensified the state's reliance on hard foreign currency. Adopting 'war as its foreign policy' (International Crisis Group 2010) coupled with the need for foreign currency, the Eritrean party-state retains near total control over money in the country. There is no private economy in Eritrea as understood in any conventional sense, and the banking sector is under complete government control with no private banks currently operating in the country. All travellers to Eritrea are required to declare the amount of money they enter the country with, while the only available options for currency exchange are government banks and the black market.[18] Money therefore becomes tightly enmeshed within a context of recurring conflict in turn fuelling the continued imperative for nationalist reconstruction and/or development. In twenty years of independence nationalist surges in times of crisis have continued to influence the political and economic commitment and engagement of Eritrean emigrants. There is *always* seemingly an urgent imperative to continue fundraising and this influences ideas about what is considered the 'ideal Eritrean citizen'. For example, when asked whether they ever thought of missing a 2% payment, a respondent replied, "No, because then I would be declaring that I am not an Eritrean" (Koser 2003, p. 114).

Such social mechanisms are employed to manipulate the 'national identity' into a moral duty and an economic relationship between Eritreans and the state (Turner 2008). For example, the 1998-2000 war fundraising campaigns in Berlin, Germany, made public the extra war payments made to the consular offices by posting the names of contributors and amounts contributed on notice boards in Eritrean community centres (Al-Ali et al 2001). Driven by social

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[17] Since 1991 Eritrea has either engaged in or nearly gone to war with all neighbouring countries (Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen, Djibouti and Sudan).

[18] Exchange rates at government banks are less than half the black market rates. In July 2012, $1 USD was being exchanged at 15.2 Nakfa while $1USD in the black market was being exchanged for 45.5 Nakfa.

pressure to give or 'out-do' another, those who did not contribute were humiliated. As Turner (2008) points out,

> ….the exploitation of the moral economy of the diaspora takes place mainly by means of organizing collection campaigns in the course of festivals and events. The festivals create the public sphere necessary for the informal sanctioning system of honour and shame that is typical for the moral economy. When facing other members of the community it is impossible to shirk from the moral duty of supporting the "cause" of the group (p. 14).

Eliciting emotional reactions, the moral economy of the diaspora is politicized through orchestrated celebration of symbols and rituals (see Kertzer 1988).

Here, I draw on the 1998-2000 war-time fundraising campaigns that took place throughout the diaspora to illustrate this in the Eritrean context. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea ended what former US President Clinton called an "African Renaissance". While little scholarly attention has been dedicated to explanations and interpretations of the war (Negash and Kjenvol 2000), Eritrean communities largely believed it concerned the sovereignty of Eritrea. Given the historical formation and institutional backdrop of the Eritrean transnational social field, events from this period illustrate that finances at varying junctures became centrally entangled in nation-building and development projects. In similar fashion to the liberation war, top state officials visited cities with consular offices to address Eritrean communities. Drawing on the powerful concept of historical betrayal (Reid 2005) and institutionalized memory (Conrad 2006), interpretations of the war were relayed to Eritreans throughout the diaspora.

With old wounds becoming fresh again, Eritreans were asked to mobilize, fundraise and contribute to the war cause. The government introduced diaspora treasury bonds, which in less than one year raised a total of $30USD million from the United States, $20USD million from Europe, and $15-20USD million form the Middle East (Koser 2007). Customized fundraising campaigns were adopted by different national consular offices; for example in Germany

Eritreans were asked to increase the 2% tax to 10% for one month and make an additional one-off payment and in England, a 'One Pound a Day Keeps the Woyane[19] Away" campaign was instituted. In one online chat room, pledges totalling over $55,000USD were raised in two hours including $15,000USD paid immediately (Bernal 2006). Financial contributions from the diaspora were described by the governor of the Bank of Eritrea as being "beyond anybody's imagination" (Voice of America June 24 1998 as cited in Bernal 2006).

With heavy human and material loss on both sides, the outcome of this war with Ethiopia was devastating to say the least. For Eritrea however, the outcome proved more detrimental as Ethiopia was its number one exporting partner providing a huge source of money through its use of the Eritrean Assab port. This loss of transport, trade and tourism provided yet again the impetus for the continued financial contributions of Eritrean migrants. The pattern of heightened mobilizing and fundraising in times of political and economic instability was evident. Furthermore, the economic imperative became entrenched in nationalist terms[20] and mediated by historical, national and regional level dynamics.

State institutions play a critical role in keeping emigrants integrated even while abroad (Sherman 1999) to ensure the continuing in-flux of foreign currency (Van Hear 2003). Transnational state institutions organize a host of cultural festivals for Eritreans in the diaspora. For example, drawing on the tradition of the Bologna Festivals, in every city where Eritrean

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[19] Popularized name for the current Ethiopian government (Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's regime, formerly the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front) bearing great historical, political and social connotations. I would argue the names for these war-time fundraising campaigns were adopted with the political intention of igniting emotional reactions among Eritreans in hopes of boosting financial contributions.

[20] The PFDJ has been able to exploit compliance with the 2% tax by entrenching it within transnational family relations as well. For example, as specific land lotteries are allocated for diaspora members. One cannot obtain the land without receiving state clearance. Land in one's father's place of origin is a sign of social status and pride. Thus, there is much family pressure to pay the 2% to be able to become eligible for these land lotteries. Another example is the fee (estimated at up to $3,500 US) levied on remaining family members of deserted and/or defected escapees. The large sum of money indicates the assumption that remittances from family members abroad will cover the cost.

consular offices are located, an Independence Party, New Year's party and long weekend summer cultural festivals are held annually. Averaging $40-$50 per person and usually very well-attended, these festivals are believed to be a huge source of financial revenue for the Eritrean government, independent of the 2% tax.[21]

In this entanglement of sustained economic extraction through a range of evolving methods, state institutions "identify migrants as 'clients' and thus [recognize] a need to develop state policy that offers consular activities and assistance to the diaspora population that are informed by a 'spirit of service'" (Gammage 2006, p. 89). Capitalizing on the current border stalemate between Eritrea-Ethiopia, the PFDJ effectively draws upon its history of being isolated to employ a 'crisis-driven discourse' (Mountz 2010) to frame financial contributions as being imperative to national development and existence.

DEMYSTIFYING LINKS TO TERRORISM

While the 2% tax has been instituted for nearly two decades now, it has recently received increased publicity due to claims linking money collected through the policy to harbouring terrorist activity.[22] While PFDJ's rule is indeed illegitimate, foreign policy toward Eritrea has consistently remained incoherent and deeply ineffective. In similar fashion to the geopolitics of the Cold War period, the Horn of Africa region has become a battle-front for the 'War on Terror'. Ethiopia remains the regional hegemon, the diplomatic capital for East Africa and a top

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[21] While state-sponsored activities are generally well-attended, there is a general sense that participation has dwindled over the past few years. Possible explanations include: 1) decline in interest 2)popular country-based artists whom used to travel for the events has been restricted as they tend to seek asylum once abroad and not return 3) political fall-out

[22] The UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea July 2011 report reads "…the Monitoring Group is able to conclude that covert financial activities [of the Eritrean regime] in support of armed embargo violations are financed principally through this extensive, offshore and largely illicit financial apparatus, controlled and operated by intelligence, military and party officials, many of them operating in an 'unofficial' capacity." A UN sanctions monitoring team determined in July that both Somalia and Eritrea were serving "as platforms for foreign armed groups that represent a grave and increasingly urgent threat to peace and security in the Horn and East Africa region"

recipient of international aid. Acting with complete backing from the US, Ethiopia has at-will entered Somalia on several occasions and most recently bombed Eritrean soil in March 2012 for its (suspected) role in destabilizing the region by funding terrorist organizations. Despite the backing of multilateral organizations to leverage diaspora financial engagement in countries of origin, the 2% tax policy is not celebrated in the same way. The securitization of development discourse has framed conflict-generated migration to appear to be as posing a security risk to the West (Cooper 2006).

In December 2011 the UN declared that money generated through the 2% policy is being used to fund terrorist organizations operating in the Horn of Africa region, mainly Somalia. In fact, this tax policy is currently under review by the United Nations Security Council as part of the 2009 sanctions looming against Eritrea. This is similar to the highly effective and intricate *Xawhala* Somali global money sending system that was targeted for closure in 2001 after claims that Al-Qaeda agents were using it as a means to efficiently transfer money (Horst and Van Hear 2002). An investigation by the Ministry of Justice in Netherlands concluded that informal value transfer systems "are by no means infested or controlled by criminals, but rather they are one of numerous alternatives available to criminal organizations" (Horst and Van Hear 2002, p. 3). Just as a city map can be used by a city planner for one purpose, it can also be used by a house robber for a very different one (Amoore 2006).

The surge in attention received by the 2% tax has prompted Eritrean activists critical of PFDJ rule to strategically and pragmatically adopt this particular angle of interpretation. It has been successfully utilized to launch activist campaigns against the 2% tax and more broadly to counter the PFDJ's (trans)nationalist hegemonic project.[23] While seemingly strategic to talk the

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[23] Increased awareness is evidenced by the splurge of media coverage the 2% tax policy has received. "*Eritreans pressured to pay "diaspora tax" to Eritrean diplomats and agents in Canada to finance terrorist groups to attack*

language of the 'War on Terror' this approach is deeply problematic. By hinging arguments on the link between the money collected and terrorist groups in Somalia, this framing mystifies the origins and meanings of the tax as well as the structures that govern how it is collected. Further, if this approach is to be adopted and consistently applied in its totality, it would entail considering veterans of the Eritrean liberation movement(s) to be terrorists. Framing the policy practice in narrow understandings sets the agenda for misguided action in addition to clouding potentially critical analysis of the 2% tax. Broad-sweeping claims like this reduce remittances debates into 'good' and 'bad' dichotomous understandings.

CONCLUSION

Much scholarly attention has been paid to 'remittance debates' with scholars reminding us that an analysis of context can help move debates beyond dichotomous understandings of the contribution of remittances to development. This paper illustrates that reasons and conditions for dispersal are key in shaping the transnational links built between states and emigrants. I have argued that states are interested in incorporating their emigrant populations many times for financial extraction. By tracing the evolution of the 2% tax through the Eritrean liberation movement and into the independence era, I have illustrated how the state apparatus, relying on coercive governance mechanisms, has been effective in making emigrants adhere to the 2% tax policy. I have paid particular attention to the shifting (geo)political context in which this remittance is located to illustrate that remittances and state-diaspora relations are found within particular social and national contexts. In this case, war(s), ideas of nationalism, development

us" The Canadian Immigration Report Nov. 6 2011 http://www.cireport.ca/2011/11/eritrean-in-canada-pressured-to-give-2-of-their-earnings-to-eritrean-diplomats-and-agents-in-canada-allegedly-to-finance-armed-groups-including-the-al-qaeda-affiliate-al-shabab.html*"Eritrea raising money in Canada, financing terrorists to attack Canada"* The National Post Nov. 5 2011 http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/11/05/eritrea-is-raising-money-in-canada-and-financing-terrorists-that-want-to-attack-canada/*"Swedish Parliament Debates Po op's Tax on Exiles"* http://www.ethiopianreview.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=36225.

and citizenship have been integral to the relationship between the Eritrean state and the diaspora. The common threads of economic need and increasing coercion mark developments in post-independent Eritrea; the 2% tax is inextricably linked to the continuance of the transnational social field and its coercive characteristics. In light of the ongoing refugee crisis, 'exporting people' is increasingly being adopted as the most viable economic strategy through which hard currency is being channelled into the country (Gammage 2006).

With over a quarter of Eritrea's population living outside geographically demarcated Eritrea and being deemed one of the most militarized countries in the world, the 2% tax indeed raises many questions. While the policy's future remains unpredictable, the Eritrean government continues to re-work its strategies of financial extraction to adapt to changing circumstances – albeit in often authoritarian ways. With the latest Ethiopian attacks on Eritrean soil in March 2012, peace remains elusive even today. What can be expected however is the state's continued cultivation and mobilization of its diaspora for hard currency.

መሕወይ ግብሪ 2% ፎርም አዋጅ ቁ 17/1991ን 67/1995

2% Tax Form Proclamation No 17/1991& 67/1995

ስም _____   ቁ.መንነት _____
Name   ER ID #

ስም አቦ _____   ዕለት ልደት _____
Fathers' Name   Date of Birth

ስም አባ ሓጎ _____   ዓይነት ስራሕ _____
Grandfathers' Name   Occupatione

ቑስልኪ ገዛ _____   ቁ ስልኪ ስራሕ _____
Home Phone   Work Phone

አድራሻ(ናይገዛ)_____
City _____   State _____ Zip _____

ዓመት Year	ጽሩይ ወርሓዊ እቶት Net Monthly Income	ዝተሰርሓ አዋርሕ Months Worked	ጽሩይ ዓመታዊ እቶት Net Annual Income	2% ግብሪ 2%Tax	ተወሳኺ ሓበሬታ Remark
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እዚ አብ ላዕሊ ተዘርዚሩ ዘሎ ሓበሬታ ሓቀኛ ምዃኑ አረጋግጽ። ግጉይ ሓበሬታ ምሃብ ብሕጊ ዘሕትት ምዃኑ እርዳእ።

Under Penalties of perjury,I declare that I have examined this return and accpmpaying document,and to the best of my knowledge and belief,they are true, correct, and complete.

ክታም _____   ዕለት _____
Your Signature   Date

Please make check payable to Embassy of Eritrea And send to the Above address:

ንቤት ጽሕፈት ዝምልከት   For office use only

Appendix A. 2% Tax Form Proclamation No 17/1991 & 67/1995

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GENERATION *BELES*: CULTURE, CELEBRATION AND INTRA-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT IN 'MODEL ERITREA'

ABSTRACT

While predictions of the longevity and intensity of second-generation transnational engagement remain unreliable, emerging literature has acknowledged the ways in which second-generation people are being incorporated into the 'homeland' and leading transnational lives. In this paper, I argue that efforts to institutionalize belonging among young Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora (*Beles*) by the current Eritrean state have exacerbated intra-generational conflict between them and their homeland born counterparts. I pay particular attention to state-sponsored activities offered in Eritrea and throughout the diaspora by the Young-Peoples Front for Democracy and Change (YPFDJ). Relying upon hegemonic understandings of nationalism, duty and sacrifice, the state has successfully mobilized diasporan Eritreans for the 'nation.' In these spaces, the state has managed to control its own projection. The contrived version of the state presented for consumption by *Beles*, differs significantly from the version experienced daily by young, homeland born Eritreans. Drawing on several sources, this paper attempts to situate young Eritreans and their subjectivities in time and place to acknowledge the variables structuring intra-generational conflict. Special attention is paid to the narratives of young Eritreans, including myself, through which perceptions of, and relations with, the state can be gauged. My analysis reveals the way culture is utilized as a flexible medium through which political messages are transmitted. In addition to suggesting potential areas for further research, I conclude by suggesting that understandings of rupture in transnational social fields should acknowledge that difference can exist for people of the same cohort.

KEYWORDS: second generation people; intra-generational conflict; state projection; Eritrea

GENERATION *BELES*:[24]
CULTURE, POLITICS, AND INTRA-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT IN 'MODEL ERITREA'

INTRODUCTION

This article is about state efforts to institutionalize belonging among young Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora. I argue that state-sponsored efforts to engage second-generation people have exacerbated intra-generational conflict between homeland-born and diaspora-born and/or raised Eritreans. I illustrate how the Eritrean state has administered these two youth populations differently, resulting in contrasting perceptions held by these populations. Specifically, I draw attention to the rise of the government's youth oriented diasporic political institution, the Young-People's Front for Democracy and Change (YPFJ) since 2004 and the articulation of its manifesto at a contentious juncture of the country's early independence history. Hinged upon hegemonic nationalist discourses of belonging, state-sponsored celebrations and activities have been successful in mobilizing well-meaning young diasporan Eritreans rightly concerned with Eritrea's future, to stand patriotically aligned with the Eritrean government. This, in cooperation with the government's official highly critical leftist narrative, has garnered support to fuel political organizing among young diasporans despite the government's negative human rights record.

The transnational spaces created by the state, both in Eritrea and throughout the diaspora, have offered young diasporans spaces of resistance to turbulent integration processes in countries where their parents have settled, as well as an avenue to develop strong forms of national identity based on the ways they have been socialized and integrated in national activities (Levitt 2009).

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[24] I owe thanks to Dr. Tricia Hepner who suggested the use of Generation Beles for the title, a spin-off of her own forthcoming work entitled *Generation Asylum: New Eritrean Refugees and the Politics of Human Rights*.

This is not to suggest that processes of assimilation and transnationalism are mutually exclusive, in fact they overlap and co-exist (Levitt and Waters 2002; Jones-Correa 2002). As a consequence, young diasporan Eritreans through YPFDJ imagine their role as key transnational citizens of Eritrea seeking to 'defend a nation under attack'. Strictly tethered to Eritrea, YPFDJ activities have become important transnational spaces where hegemonic understandings about culture and history are (re)produced and transmitted. Here, culture acts as a flexible, but vital medium in communicating political ideas, shaping behaviours and influencing actions. As avenues for engagement with Eritrea remain restricted to state-sponsored means, the political and cultural become even more so intricately entangled in this context. Whether acknowledged or not, young diasporans engage with the Eritrean state in highly political and rigid terms, while seemingly appearing to engage culturally. 'Matters of the state' thus are at the center of this paper (Zolberg 1999).

The people I refer to as 'second-generation' or 'young diasporans' in the paper are Eritreans either born and/or raised in the diaspora. Young diasporan Eritreans are popularly referred to as *beles* by their homeland born, young counterparts; the local vernacular is used to affectionately, but mockingly refer to young diasporan Eritreans. *Beles,* a widely-eaten, locally grown cactus pear, is harvested during the local winter season coinciding directly with the months young diasporans mainly travel to Eritrea (June-August). The young travellers, like the adored fruit, are only around for a season each year. I refer to young homeland born Eritreans as *Warsai,* a term depicting the 'young fighter' derived from state discourse used to reference the generation born and/or raised in independent Eritrea (1991 onwards). While the argument has been made for youth in the homeland and diaspora to be encompassed under the singular-term 'second-generation' (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2002), this paper illustrates serious

discontinuities in the subjectivities and experiences of the same cohort of people inhabiting one transnational social field. The manifestation of two different states - the militaristic one *Warsai* flee and the inclusive, welcoming one projected to *Beles* – call for a reconsideration of this argument. Documenting the rupture existing within the same cohort of people inhabiting one interconnected transnational social field firstly reminds us of the inevitably incomplete nature of the hegemonic nation-building project, and secondly advances our understandings of differences and discontinuities that exist in transnational spaces.

Many of the arguments and insights presented in this paper were not collected with the intent of investigating 'intra-generational' conflict, rather my initial research questions were centered around emergent civil society and political organizing taking place in the Eritrean transnational social field, and the increased participation of young Eritreans fleeing the country. This research I assumed would essentially be situated in literature on transnational civil society. However, in the course of being a participant observer in Eritrean communities in the diaspora as well as taking several visits to Eritrea and neighbouring countries, I began to observe patterns previously unexplored. While generational conflict has been explored to some extent among second-generation and their parents (Smith 2002; Wolf 2002), and even more specifically in the Eritrean context (Scott 2001; Reid 2005; Hepner 2011c), intra-generational conflict has yet to be unravelled. Thus, the observations I draw on are highly interpretive, but analysed in relation to current theoretical debates. I draw on scholarly work, informal conversations, participant observation and content analysis of news articles/media reports and (Y)PFDJ publications. In addition, noting the centrality of the internet as a key arena for dialogue for the Eritrean diaspora, I utilize content from two Facebook groups as data to interpret youth relations to the state and

divisions among youth. This content is used to illustrate how state projection serves to further drive a wedge between young Eritreans, making dialogue difficult.

This paper has several components; the first traces the trajectory of political developments in Eritrea leading to the current refugee crisis. I then shift to trace the historical formation of the Eritrean diaspora, highlight (re)settlement challenges faced and the societal positioning of second-generation Eritreans in the diaspora. The section that follows examines the Eritrean state's efforts to 'court' or institutionalize second-generation Eritreans and the various ways through which the state is able to aggressively project a fictitious character to this segment of its dispersed population. Finally, I focus on cyberspace as a medium of dialogue in the Eritrean transnational social field.

I begin however with a personal narrative of a trip to Asmara, Eritrea, as my entry point to this discussion.

INTO ERITREA: AN UNCOMFORTABLE FUSION OF MOURNING AND CELEBRATION

Asmera Shikor, Asmera Bella, Asmera men kwedadira!
Sweet Asmera, Beautiful Asmera, Asmera what can compare to her!
  - the hook to Aron Abraham's popular song *Asmera Shikor* (2008)

These words replayed in my head as the medium-range Airbus I was aboard touched ground in Asmara, Eritrea on the evening of April 6th 2011. Traveling alone in what was only my second trip to Eritrea, nothing could have prepared me for what was to await me during my 5-week stay. I awoke the next morning to news that two boats carrying nearly 400 Eritreans and about a dozen other Ethiopians and Somalis that left Tripoli, Libya bound for Lampedusa, Italy had capsized in the Mediterranean Sea.[25] All but five passengers were pronounced missing - and presumed dead. Almost immediately, the bulletin boards on the walls of famous *Godena Harinet*

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[25] Wallis, E. "Scores of migrants missing as boat capsizes off Italy." BBC News Europe, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12982923.

(Liberation Avenue) became cluttered with *melkes* (obituaries)[26] of those who had perished in the tragedy. A list of passengers' names generated prior to the boats' departure from Libya made the process of informing loved ones speedy. And just like that, Asmara transformed into a large house of mourning. One could not walk more than a handful of steps before halting to read another board filled with obituaries. Becoming the site of much jostling, the bulletins drew crowds of people as they politely either maneuvered around or hovered over one another to catch view of the obituaries. Despite the range of emotions people experienced, they mourned in silence. The mood in Asmara remained sombre as the tragedy served as yet another unfortunate reminder of the fate facing Eritrea's young *Warsai.*

If this wasn't enough, weeks later the notorious military round-ups began, *gffa* as it is locally referred to in Tigrinya. Bursting onto the streets of Asmara without notice, Military Police (MP) surrounded and patrolled the city hunting young military draft evaders and deserters. In anticipation for the round-ups, young Eritreans responded instantly by going 'under the radar.' In apologetic form, young relatives and friends informed me that they would no longer be able to freely host me around Asmara, because *jemirom* – they had started. Again, was always implied. The (internet) cafes along *Godena Harinet*, which on any given day after 6pm would be bustling with youngsters, remained deserted. While the steps to *Cathedra'le*, well-known by young diasporans like myself as *the* place to be, remained unusually empty. I had read extensively about *gffa* and previously heard countless first-person narrations, but I could not fathom the fear the military presence, patrolling and sweeping the streets heavily during the day and conducting nightly door-to-door raids, incited within me. Despite not being threatened by the round-ups

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[26] There are two commonly used types of obituaries in Eritrea. One being *merd'e*, an indication that a proper burial will take place in Eritrea and the other *melkes* to indicate a burial will not take place, either because the body of the deceased cannot be located or is being buried abroad.

myself (due to my possession of a foreign passport), I began experiencing 'sleepless anxiety' (EYGM 2011).

I recall one day witnessing a group of MPs violently interrogate a couple of young men, asking them to present documentation shortly before flinging them into a military vehicle. Frustrated that onlookers remained silent, I blurted out, "What is this I'm witnessing?" Hearing me, a lady turned to me, and instantly recognizing that I was a foreigner, replied nonchalantly as if to comfort me, "Don't be startled. May is soon approaching, so it's normal." If this was the first and last time I was to hear this 'explanation,' I would have not thought much of it. However, it wasn't, in fact it was the most common. The normalization of militarization and generalized fear was tangible, and it irked me. What equally struck me, was the simultaneous unleashing of *Warsai's* own *bado seleste*, an informal communication mill initially exploited by the EPLF during the Revolution. Giving a heads-up to one another, young Eritreans could be heard sharing intelligence with one another. "Word is they [MPs] will raid this neighbourhood tonight, *hadera* – take care." Entering their 'hiding places' early into the evening, young Eritreans re-emerged at the crack of dawn to update one another on the neighbourhood targeted the night before, the number of people caught and the latest word on where the next nightly round-up was scheduled to take place.[27] I quickly learned that rumours were a very important, albeit sometimes not credible, source of information in Asmara.

One evening, at the *Blocko Godaif* bus terminal, located at the southern perimeter of Asmara, I took a moment to note the dramatic transformation of this space throughout the duration of my stay. Towards the end of April, the space symbolized a heavily policed military

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[27] During the height of the military round-ups, I received an online instant message from a friend, also a young recent army deserter and refugee in Sudan, warning me of the severity of the year's round-ups. Relaying information he himself had heard with me, he warned me to be sure to keep possession of my Canadian passport at all times to avoid any unwarranted hassle from MPs. The message ended with the same plea frequently heard in Asmara during *gffa*, *hadera hadera*.

checkpoint more than it did a bus terminal. Could it be, perhaps, because there was a military sleeping base located a few miles south of the bus terminal? As I tried to rationalize, even justify, the situation, I forced myself into a deep trance-like state so as not to let the military presence completely unnerve me, until I heard something that caught my attention: "Have you heard my friend? Over 10,000 [Eritreans] are said to be arriving in the coming weeks to observe the Independence Day activities". Gazing casually to see who was boasting this statement amidst such disorder, my eyes met the mouth from which the words were flowing. I realized it was an elderly man speaking to a fellow compatriot of more of less the same age. Inciting anger in a young male bystander, who was obviously eavesdropping on the same conversation, he mumbled under his breath just loud enough for me to hear, "He's right, and over 10,000 of us [locals] will forcibly be rounded up – *haqom, l'e'li 10,000 kea kin'gifef ena*!" Itching to spark a conversation with this young man, I abandoned the thought, choosing instead to catch my bus home. This encounter however, kept me pondering for a long time.[28]

As abruptly as the round-ups began, in the same fashion they ended. The shift was in exchange for something less violent, yet more ideological – preparations for the 20th Independence Day anniversary celebrations.[29] The swift 'mask-change' coincided with the arrival of diasporan Eritreans, most visibly however of young *beles*. Being a relatively small city and not densely populated, the arrival of foreign travelers into Asmara is always easily recognizable. Only then, with the atmosphere change, was the enticing *Welcome to the land of Eritrea* tourist advertisement frequently screened on state-owned *Eri-TV* beginning to bear some

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[28] Reid (2005, p. 473) has a good discussion of inter-generational conflict in Eritrea between the older 'fighter' generation and what he calls the 'next' post-liberation generation and their respective contending viewpoints on the trajectory development has taken post-1993.
[29] April 23 2011 marked the 18th year of formal Eritrean statehood, Eritreans however observe the liberation date of May 24 1991. Thus, making 2011 the 20th anniversary of Eritrean independence.

likeness to Asmara. Commenting on the festive atmosphere in Asmara, the following excerpt is taken from a news story written a week prior to Independence Day:

> …all streets and businesses of Asmara have been bedecked with different decorations, adding color to the festivities. Upright banners uttering "I am Eritrean, I'm proud!" have been erected. Along Asmara's main streets, while big fluorescent billboards have been set up on top of different buildings offering a spectacular view of the city. The billboards all depict illustrations of Eritrean unity, beauty, development and diverse cultures…While it is common for people to celebrate and participate in their Independence Day anniversary year after year, this year is more important as it marks two decades of peace.
>
> (Abraha 2011)

Interesting was the seemingly sudden, amnesia-like erasure of the events marking the previous few weeks. Gone and forgotten, left without a trace like it had always been this lovely, cheery way. *Out of sight, out of mind.* I however, could not shake the vivid memories of witnessing firstly, the aftermath of a 'human tsunami' (Hepner 2011a), the calculated precision like erection of barricades of military personnel lurking the city each with an 'official gaze' (Aretxaga 2003, p. 404) and the determination of young local Eritreans to avoid all contact with Military Police. I could not deny the many sleepless nights I experienced in fear that on any given night the neighbourhood I was staying in could be raided and close relatives evading military conscription would be forcibly taken before my eyes.

I had trouble making sense of the dramatic series of events I found myself encircled by. At once I thought about: the attack on asylum in Western countries that encourages people to make dangerous treks across seas; how tragedies like these continue without receiving substantial media coverage, much less prompt investigations; the male-dominated, urban composition of Eritrea's refugee crisis and its future implications, and the night-and-day contrast of mourning and celebration that took place in the capital city. The state had participated in two seemingly paradoxical processes, the violent, forced removal of one group of Eritreans and the

celebrated invitation of another group of Eritreans. The state had changed into its best attire in preparation to 'host' its esteemed 'guests'. Ironically, as the date for my return to Toronto neared, I grew more relaxed as the military round-ups ended and foreign languages like English were more widely spoken in the city by young diasporans. Having always been critical of tourists, usually from Western countries, who oddly manage to make a lovely vacation spot out of some of the grimmest situations in many parts of the world, only to leave not ever understanding or attempting to, what life in these heaven-like vacation spots is for the average local, I began to question my position. Was I, a true *beles*, born and raised in Canada to two Eritrean parents, somehow assuming this role of the oblivious, foreign vacationer? Based on the security my Canadian passport offered me from *gffa*, I was sure starting to feel like one, strangely insulated from the fears faced by young locally-born Eritreans. Just days before the official kick-off to Independence Day celebrations, I left Eritrea perplexed with far more questions than I had answers to.

ERITREA POST-2001

On May 24th 1991 EPLF soldiers marched into Eritrea's capital marking the end of a 30 year anticolonial war. There are arguably few Eritreans who would not be able to identify scenes from the first ever, spontaneous Independence Day celebrations that day as soldiers entering liberated Asmara were greeted by overjoyed Eritreans. Achieving independence 'against all odds' (Connell 1993), Eritrea was hailed as the 'beacon of hope' for the Horn of Africa. The euphoria of independence and praise for Eritrea however proved to be short-lived as war with Ethiopia renewed in 1998. The string of events following the end of war in 2000 is nothing short of dismaying.

Asmara University student council President Semere Kesete was arrested after making a critical speech at a graduation ceremony on July 31st 2001. University students protested at his court appearance on August 10th 2001 that resulted in the arrest of 400 students who were afterwards forcibly sent to a work-study program in a desert camp. There has not been another protest held in Eritrea since. Following the May 2001 release of a public letter from 15 of the President's closest advisors (G-15) criticizing the President's conduct, 11 signatories were arrested in September 2001 and have not been heard from since (Connell 2004). The closure of all independent media followed (Bandow 2010). 2002 witnessed the introduction of the government's *Warsai-Yikealo Development Campaign* in effect forcing all men aged 18-55 and women aged 18-45 to remain enlisted indefinitely in national service. In 2003 the final year of high school was moved to the distant Sawa military training camps, far removed from any urban centre, namely the capital, in essence representing the militarization of education. After several years of gradually phasing out programs, in 2006 the only existing university in the country was closed and replaced by makeshift technical colleges dispersed throughout the country. Implementation of the National Constitution was suspended in 2007 and remains so today. Widespread religious persecution intensified.

On the brink of celebrating 20 years of independence, Eritrea houses the largest army in Africa (Bozzini 2011; Reid 2011), has consistently ranked among the top-ten military spenders of the world in GDP per capita, and is the number nine refugee-producing country in the world with over 2,000 Eritreans registering monthly as refugees in neighbouring countries (UNHCR 2011). The political culture of Eritrea is marked by militarism and increasing authoritarianism, a 'siege state' (International Crisis Group 2010) that turns its young people into 'indefinite conscripts' (Human Rights Watch 2009).

The state's monopoly of violent force has shaped a repressive environment, severely restricting the ability of, and options available for, people to challenge from inside Eritrea. Given this, the role of Eritreans in the diaspora has been critical in voicing homeland developments. In a plea to Eritreans in the diaspora, Eritrean scholar Okbazghi Yohannes wrote in an online-post entitled 'Lessons Still Unlearned':

> When all this [political repression] happened, we either kept quiet or became committed apologists and drummers for the leader….So directly or indirectly we all have contributed to the present plight of our people…Those of us in the Diaspora have remained silent for too long. Now is the time that we must raise our voices loudly…
>
> (as quoted in Conrad 2005, p. 216-7).

In spite of the threat of repression facing dissidents, people have imagined 'new ways of resisting' (Scott 1979). Reflected in the body of literature that has emerged post-2001 on the development of Eritrean transnational civil society activity and political organizing in the diaspora (e.g. Hepner 2003, 2004; Bernal 2004, 2005, 2006; Connell 2011; Conrad 2005, 2006; Koser 2001, 2002; Bereketeab 2007; Mekonnen and Alem 2011), is the evidence of heightened activism of many young Eritreans who have fled Eritrea either shortly before or after the 2001 political meltdown. Activities have been broad-ranging, spanning from the use of online social networking sites for public education and engagement to demonstrations organized by refugees in Tel Aviv, Israel, protesting against a proposed Israeli detention plan, and 'torture and persecution in Eritrea' (Lior 2011). Hepner (2011b) further highlights the emergence of rights-based initiatives among Eritrean refugees, asylees and exiles in the United States, Germany and South Africa illustrating the way these groups have varyingly vernacularized human rights concepts as their basis for organising (see Mekonnen and Abraha 2004). In part owing to the recent Arab Spring, 2011 has witnessed heightened involvement of Eritrean-born young people, organising around the slogan *y'akil* – it's enough. In 2011 protests, well attended by young

homeland born Eritreans, have been held in cities of significant Eritrean settlement across the United States, Germany, England, and Sweden. Despite limited signs of political instability inside Eritrea, the visibility of armed opposition groups in neighbouring countries and heightened organizing of political opposition in the diaspora suggests the country may be in political transition (Connell 2011).

While appearing as though most are aware of the harsh realities of life for Eritrea's *Warsai*, reality does not lend itself neatly to this assumption. Eritreans mainly in the diaspora, remain starkly polarized in response to homeland developments. Some mourn what has come of the country while others celebrate blissfully.[30] The 2011 United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) activities highlight the intricate discontinuities of this transnational terrain. On September 16th 2012 the Office of the Eritrean President announced that President Isaias Afwerki would be travelling to New York City to make an address at the 66th UNGA after a four year absence. In his address, the President ironically highlighted the frustration of people with their governments evidenced by the wave of protests in North Africa and the Middle East and warned that "it is not a time for complacency or arrogance". In addition, a public seminar for diasporan Eritreans was organized where the President would address attending Eritreans. The result - over 5500 Eritreans from across North America travelled to attend the seminar filling the Manhattan Centre to capacity. The images and video footage gathered from the event – of people screaming and cheering uncontrollably, flag-waving, t-shirts and portraits adorning the President's face - bore a strange resemblance with the scenic images of soldiers marching into Asmara in May of 1991. Putting aside momentarily the commitment expressed on the part of thousands of Eritreans to travel to NYC on short notice, the positive response received by the public seminar is

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[30] It is also widely believed that many Eritreans protest in silence or support state-sponsored activities out of fear of the repercussions of not doing so (i.e. not being able to visit Eritrea).

significant in light of the negative national developments over the last decade. Although the seminar dominated Eritrean news headlines, hundreds protested the government sponsored event. Demographic analysis of particularly young Eritreans who observed the event is reflective of an increasingly visible trend, not only evident at the public seminar but characteristic of any Eritrean state-sponsored event. There exists a notable rift in perception of the state between homeland born young Eritreans and their diaspora born and/or raised counterparts.

FORMATION OF THE ERITREAN DIASPORA: TRENDS IN MIGRATION

Without reciting the entire history on Eritrean migration here, I provide a brief historical overview of Eritrea's contemporary migration flows as is necessary for understanding the locations and subjectivities of young diasporan Eritreans. The formation of the Eritrean diaspora is closely linked to its colonial past and struggle for nation-statehood (Bernal 2004) as the country is a product of colonial portioning (Pateman 1997). Malkki (1995) argues "involuntary or forced movements of people are always only one aspect of much larger constellations of socio-political and cultural processes and practices" (p. 496). Thus, it is imperative to understand dispersal in historical context and the profound ways it shapes the transnational (political) ties formed post emigration (Al-Ali et al 2001). Fuelled by its annexation to Ethiopia in 1951, Eritrea waged a 30-year anticolonial war employing guerrilla warfare tactics (1961-91) that produced several periods of mass migration. Two political developments, first the intensification of Ethiopian militaristic suppression in the 1970's and a subsequent war between Eritrea's two liberation movements (1974-81), spurred massive civilian migration into Sudan. The war between the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and its socialist successor the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) resulted in the ELF being pushed-out into Sudan (e.g. Legum 1978; Makinda 1982; Markakis 1990; Bereketeab 2007). A lasting memory of the liberation movement

for many ex-ELF fighters is an understanding that the EPLF (today the ruling PFDJ) is responsible for grave historical grievances. The ELF has since over the decades reconstituted themselves and continued their fight against the EPLF from the diaspora, although still always supporting Eritrean sovereignty.

Though common to speak of the overwhelming unity among Eritrean people, a great source of pride for Eritreans, it is highly misrepresentative of the divergent experiences of social groups comprising the diaspora. Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002) argue methodological nationalism, by conflating 'nation' with 'society,' acts as a conceptual blinder in masking political, religious, and ethnic heterogeneity. Though usually overlooked, fragmentation has characterized the Eritrean diaspora from its early formation. Social and political interconnections developed between the Eritrean state and its diasporas have produced very divergent experiences for Eritreans.

Over the course of the liberation struggle, an estimated 1 million people left Eritrea (UNICEF 1994 as cited in Bernal 2004); many moved to Sudan and remained there and a significant number gained resettlement in a third country. Policies of Western countries favouring the resettlement of Christians over Muslims (Koehn 1996) help explain the dominance and visibility of Christian Eritreans in the United States (Woldemikael 1996) and throughout much of the Western world.

Eckstein (2002) argues generational experiences of (refugee) parents are very much shaped by the historical context in which they live and therefore "…political generational experiences are not entirely left behind with emigration" (p. 212). The (political) identity of first-generation Eritreans was deeply grounded in the liberation war as emigration occurred during the period where Eritrean sovereignty had yet to be internationally recognized. Upon resettling in the

diaspora Eritreans, with the exception of most ELF members, remained largely committed to contributing to the now EPLF-led liberation struggle. Integrated through the establishment of EPLF branches in the diaspora, the political and economic transnational activities of first-generation Eritreans to the liberation war are well noted in existing literature, from organizing protests to raising funds for the war (see Hepner 2005, 2009; Fessahatzion 2005; Al-Ali et al 2001). Other diasporas emanating from conflict and exile have developed transnational ties similar to those observable in the Eritrean transnational social field (e.g. El Salvador, Chile, Ireland, Guatemala, Haiti).

The 'context of reception' in receiving countries significantly shapes the patterns of transnational engagement (Goldring 2008, p.9) and is an important factor in explaining the Eritrean diaspora's strong orientation and continued dedication to the liberation movement from abroad. Settling mainly in large, urban cities in Western countries like Canada, the US, Germany, and England, and taking up low-income jobs in regions with inclement weather, Eritreans for long romanticized the idea of returning to Eritrea upon its independence. Despite migrating at a time where socio-political environments were beginning to embrace multiculturalism, Matsuoka and Sorenson (2005) illustrate through interviews with first generation Eritreans in Canada that Eritreans distanced themselves from the Canadian state and other resettlement agencies because of their refusal to recognize Eritrea's struggle for sovereignty. State agencies' reference to Eritreans as Ethiopians was highly problematic for Eritreans as they considered Ethiopia(ns) responsible for their dispersal, thus further "increasing the desire to protect and safeguard this identity and to relocate it in a distinct territory" (Lachenicht and Heinsohn 2009, p.13). Again, this is illustrative of the way methodological nationalism, taking the 'nation' as the basis of analysis, masks social differences that exist.

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'Haunted by the ghosts of war' (Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001), shared feelings of socio-political turmoil, up-rootedness, and exile bound people together in the diaspora. Many Eritreans believed their time outside Eritrea was temporary and the majority felt they would return once independence was achieved.

At independence some Eritreans repatriated but most did not. As Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) point out, "return remain[s] mythical rather than practical". The development of transnational ties throughout the liberation movement meant that the front-turned-state operated as a transnational nation-state prior to taking office in 1991. Immediately following independence, the PFDJ in its *1992 Eritrean Nationality Proclamation* outlined that any person born to one Eritrean parent anywhere in the world would be considered an Eritrean citizen. This practice, an attempt to incorporate nationals beyond territorial boundaries through the extension of nationality and citizenship, is a growing trend among many migrant and refugee producing countries (e.g. Bauböck 1995; Itzigsohn 2000; Fitzgerald 2006; Gamlen 2008).

It remains difficult to determine the size of the Eritrean population located in Eritrea and the diaspora, because national census data has either not been conducted or made public by the Eritrean state. Moreover, the categorical nature of census data collection in settlement countries means that Eritreans can fall under various census classifications (African, Black, Ethiopian, Eritrean, etc.). Despite these difficulties, population estimates hover at 5 million nationally (World Bank 2010) and 1.5-2 million in the diaspora, with the largest concentration of Eritreans outside Sudan residing in the US (Bernal 2004).

The ongoing refugee exodus of young Eritreans after the 2001 political meltdown in Eritrea and the increasingly precarious routes being travelled by refugees has made the Eritrean diaspora even more heterogeneous and has further complicated the formation of reliable

estimates on the size of the diaspora. Large refugee populations, mainly concentrated in countries surrounding Eritrea but also abroad, enter into an established Eritrean transnational social field with very different political subjectivities than those who migrated decades before them as well as with their diaspora-born and raised compatriots. The role of the Eritrean diaspora, as an entity that maintains significant leverage in homeland politics, remains as critical today as it did throughout the liberation movement.

The political context from which the Eritrean diaspora was formed, its continued involvement in homeland developments coupled with the politicized environments in settlement countries meant that the diaspora remained dually, an integral part of the anticolonial struggle and post-1991 era but also a key site of political contestation of power and legitimacy. First generation Eritreans, many of whom have had direct personal experience with some aspect of the liberation war have raised children abroad.

TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE SECOND-GENERATION

Contrary to earlier statements about the 'decline of the nation-state' (e.g. Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller 1999; Guarnizo 1997, 1998; Mahler 1998; Smith 1998; Smith and Guarnizo 1998), much more attention is being paid to the sustained role of the nation-sate in transnational processes and the various ways states cultivate the loyalties of their citizens abroad and mobilize them on behalf of the 'homeland' (Goldring 1998; Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001). Transnational ties sustained by migrants with their ancestral homelands have remained prevalent in scholarly debates over the past few decades. Whether through the sending of remittances (e.g. Goldring 2004; Wong 2006; Hernandez and Coutin 2006) or involvement in home-town associations (Portes et al 1999; Levitt 2001), considerable evidence suggests that migrants retain ties to their homeland countries after dislocation. Increasingly, 'sending states' view their

migrant populations as valuable assets in advocating particular agendas in host societies and thus seek the maintenance of their integration even after their emigration (Itzigsohn 2000; Waterbury 2010; Miller 2011). In some cases, increased calls by states for the engagement of emigrant populations are triggered by crises in the country of origin (e.g. DeConde 1992; Mahler 2000).

The variation and unevenness of transnational activity and intensity among different migrant populations and home country situations however necessitates close case-by-case analysis; leading some scholars to distinguish between 'broad' and 'narrow' transnational practices (Itzigsohn et al 1999) and 'strong' and weak' transnational ties (Portes et al 1999). This body of literature on transnational spaces and daily life activities initially remained squarely centered on first-generation migrants, while the assumption remained that children of migrants would be fully integrated into the societies their parents have settled in (see Zhou 1997; Portes 2001) and that transnationalism would not be a central feature of their lives (Kasinitz et al 2002). Existing literature has evolved to demonstrate that second-generation people lead very transnational lives engaging in various transnational activities and at different intensities (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2002; Levitt 2009; Liempt 2011). However, predications about the longevity of second-generation transnational engagement, sustainability, and level of engagement should be made with caution (e.g. Rumbaut 2000; Levitt and Waters 2002). Even within this emerging body of literature however, the relationships forged between states and their second-generation populations has remained significantly underexplored.

While high levels of transnational engagement and the strong orientation of first-generation Eritrean migrants to the homeland and liberation movement have been noted (Woldemikael 1996; Al-Ali et al 2001; Koser 2003; Bernal 2004; Matsuoka and Sorenson 2005), this alone does not ensure the continuation of this trend into the second-generation. Many factors

account for the degree and type of transnational ties maintained by second-generation people. Some include: reasons for dispersal, a group's societal location, the location and size of population in the diaspora and its geographical proximity to home country (ie. frequent visits) to varying degrees will shape the transnational ties maintained by second-generation people (Rumbaut 2002). In a study highlighting variation in second-generation experiences, an Irish second-generation adult respondent recalled his parents' reluctance to share stories of the community they had migrated from to avoid relaying traumatic stories to their children. This reluctance resulted in him knowing very little about the context from which his parents migrated (Levitt 2002). Contrary to this narrative, the sacrifices and struggles of the liberation war form the cornerstone of 'Eritrean national identity' as well as the initial reason for dispersal and thus are repeatedly transmitted to subsequent generations. Despite fragmentation, most parents remained strongly oriented toward people and the struggle left behind and this stimulated parental interest in the maintenance of cultural practices and identities.

There is parental pressure to identify as distinctively 'Eritrean' and by doing so resist the impetus to becoming assimilated into larger societal classifications. In a study of settlement experiences of Eritrean parents in Toronto, one Eritrean parent commented on the desire for cultural retention and challenges associated with parenting in a new social context, "I wish there was a place where our children and teenagers could go to learn about our culture. It is too expensive to send them back home each summer" (Scott 2001, p. 43). While true that trips, for example from Toronto to Eritrea are very costly, Levitt (2009) argues that for second generation people being raised in a transnational social field, parents act as key socializing agents in homes; the significant influence of people, objects and practices from ancestral homelands cannot be overlooked. She notes that in the home, children are "active witnesses to their parents" and

become socialized into norms. Even for one who has never seen Eritrea, the homeland and a common history can be "invoked as a resource youth use to create and navigate space, identity and friendships" (Dlamini et al 2009, p. 415).

Located between differing reference points, second-generation people possess subjectivities and enact upon them differently than their parents (Reitz and Somerville 2004). Diasporic identity is fragmented and thus always in the process of being constructed (Hall 1990). Despite either being born and/or raised in Western countries, second-generation people are reminded that they are (im)migrants, even if they are not. This often is a source of turbulence for second-generation people more so than parents who more comfortably and readily identify with their homeland. With Western nationalist discourses built on notions of 'whiteness' (Lieberson 1980; Bannerji 2000; Li 2002), these young people, who are constructed as black, are seen as not belonging. A young Somali woman who had recently relocated to London, England recalls her experiences of being raised in Holland,

> The compliments how great my Dutch was never sat comfortable with me. Why would you have to compliment me with something that was normal? […] Another thing that was really very unique to a kind of Dutch mentality was the question, where do you come from? So the assumption would be you would have to come from somewhere else, you could not have been from here, you know even my brother who was born in Holland, nobody thought he could be from there, the thought of taking people in, there is always this talking about integration but there is a kind of hesitation as well, because they don't want you to integrate, because you clearly don't look Dutch.
>
> (Liempt 2011, p. 575)

It is important here to acknowledge how this 'discontinuous state of being' (Said 1990) pushes second-generation people toward identification with their homeland (Waters 2000) and state-sponsored activities geared toward young diasporans. In a rare ethnography of young diasporan Eritreans in Germany, Conrad (2005) found that the 'hyphenated identity' was a source of conflict as "they (diasporans) feel the subtleties of rejection more acutely than their elders" (p.

248). She notes ironically that it was an insult to be called 'too German' for second-generation Eritreans in Germany. Similarly, Itzigsohn (2009) observed that second-generation Dominican people used the term 'American' when referring to White people, even though they were born and raised in America. This illustrates the ways in which young people negotiate their identity and relationship to blackness and racism.

Close interrogation of a constellation of factors that shape identity help illuminate why migrant groups "might be more or less inclined to embrace transnational citizenship" (Bloemraad et al 2008, p. 167) and engagement with their ancestral homelands. This should however not be mistakenly assumed as proof of the inability or unwillingness to integrate, since processes of assimilation and transnationalism can exist simultaneously (Fitzgerald 2004; Miller 2011). While state-sponsored transnational policies targeting the incorporation of migrants have been explored in the literature on transnationalism, and recent literature has begun to account for the ways second-generation people are leading transnational lives, existing literature has remained silent on differences among a cohort. For example, as stated earlier, under the 1992 Nationality Proclamation, second-generation Eritreans are considered citizens of Eritrea. The considerable steps taken by the Eritrean state to recognize, draw upon and respond to the unique experiences of second-generation nationals abroad is worthy of exploration. While it can be argued that transnational activism among second-generation people is of little importance because they do not plan on returning to live (Levitt 2009), I would argue that the Eritrean state's relationship forged with second-generation members in the diaspora provides rich insight into some of the ways this cohort is being, and will likely remain, integrated in homeland affairs.

THE YOUNG-PFDJ: INSTITUTIONALIZING YOUNG DIASPORAN ERITREANS

> …transnationalism can be a type of consciousness, a mode of cultural reproduction, an avenue of capital, a site of political engagement, and/or a (re)construction of place or locality.
>
> (Al-Ali et al 2001, p. 581)

Given the size, location and organization of the Eritrean diaspora vis-à-vis the country (Levitt and de la Dehesa 2003) and the state's active incorporation of its first-generation migrants, it comes as little surprise that second-generation Eritreans have been courted by the state through the development of a transnational youth political institution. Recognizing the diaspora as a key site for the reproduction of nationalism and national identity, states with high emigration maintain interest in ensuring the homeland remains a strong uniting element among emigrants. For example, the Dominican government sponsors the promotion of national culture abroad (Levitt and de la Dehesa 2003). Young diasporan Eritreans, as a pool of people educated and trained in foreign institutions, with access to foreign hard currency and spread across multiple borders, serve as an important citizenry for the Eritrean state. In a 'top-down' effort to institutionalize belonging among youth in the diaspora, the Eritrean government in May 2004 announced the creation of its youth political diaspora wing symbolically naming it the Young-People's Front for Democracy and Change (YPFDJ).[31] The existence of the YPFDJ was made tangible by the establishment of numerous institutional chapters throughout 12 Western countries and one office to administer the Middle East region. While variation among local country (and city) environments are important, I choose here to focus on the way strategies and activities are uniformly adopted by YPFDJ. The reference point of all (Y)PFDJ activities is usually the homeland of Eritrea and not home country-based diasporas. While it is difficult to know without

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[31] YPFDJ is not the first state-initiated youth organization to appear in the diaspora. However I argue the creation of YPFDJ reflected the universal institutionalization and homogenization of all youth groups located in the diaspora under the one label of YPFDJ.

systematic study the numbers of young diasporan Eritreans actively engaged in YPFDJ activities and the varying degrees to which people remain involved, it is significant enough to warrant analysis.

Expansions of political membership and creation of transnational political institutions are never arbitrary, but rather are driven by specific strategies and interests at particular times (Waterbury 2010). Said to be the culmination of years of planning, the YPFDJ was tactically created at a time when the first group of Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora were entering adulthood and thus arguably becoming independent from the direct influence of their parents. At the time of Eritrean independence, in Germany for example, a third of the entire Eritrean population was under 16 years of age (Schröder 1992 in Conrad 2006). This statistic can be loosely extended to the Eritrean diaspora globally given the timing of migration phases outlined earlier. Thus, it was a critical time for young diasporan Eritreans, who were at a stage to be able to contribute to Eritrean affairs in meaningful ways and to be integrated into the state beyond the involvement and influence of their parents. Further, considering factors mentioned in the previous section with marginalization in the West, involvement in homeland-state activities and opportunities to build transnational ties with the country provides a viable alternative to everyday discrimination faced by racialized young Eritreans.

Coming into fruition a few years after the indefinite extension of the *Warsai-Yikealo* program, the institutionalized incorporation of second-generation Eritreans through YPFDJ came in the midst of a very politically volatile period in the Eritrean transnational social field. In the face of diminishing legitimacy at home migrants abroad can serve as important sources of legitimacy. Taken together therefore, these developments can be interpreted as the state exploiting the marginalization of young diasporan Eritreans abroad and courting this population

by providing an alternative space of belonging; in doing so, filling a void in its legitimacy at home.

Extending Breton's (1964) concept of 'institutional completeness' transnationally, Levitt (2002) suggests that communities can have complete institutions across borders and utilize platforms created by their home-country states to express their 'transnational allegiances'. She notes further that "[second-generation people] are also exposed to a broad range of elements from which to construct livelihood strategies and sources of social and cultural capital." The greater the number of transnational institutional opportunities available to second generation people to become involved the more likely it is that the second generation will be socialized into and engage in transnational activity (p.136). Through the YPFDJ, young diasporan Eritreans are afforded the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities where they can gain sources of social and cultural capital and can in return assert Eritrean*ness*, as rigidly projected by YPFDJ. This space is thus perceived as welcoming.

An analysis of the YPFDJ's mandate, its articulation of history, practices and the spaces it occupies, provides evidence of its purpose. The mandate, entitled *The Why's, What's Where's, How's and Who's of YPFDJ: Building a Strong, Conscious and Patriotic Youth Movement,* disseminated at the time of its inauguration, articulates the historical role young Eritreans played in the creation and existence of Eritrea. The mandate makes the *call to national duty* for young diasporan Eritreans to do 'their share' as previous generations of young people have. It states,

> We – the youth – have to foster the national 'Shaebia' consciousness in order to make positive contribution to our country. We have to encourage the youth in the Diaspora to form connections with our brothers and sisters at home and around the world. We have to instil the vision and ideals of the PFDJ in the youth of the Diaspora.
>
> (YPFDJ 2004, p.3)

Aligning itself politically with *Shaebia*, the popularized nickname of PFDJ and meaning 'of the people' in Arabic, the YPFDJ seeks to carve out a unique space where young Eritreans can partake in Eritrea's national history and development through the promotion of a particular understanding of duty and sacrifice (Anderson 2006). The state's governance reach is expanded through the transmission of this 'Shaebia consciousness' (p.3). YPFDJ is presented as the historical extension of courageous Eritrean youth in the diaspora, integral actors in the (trans)national citizenry. The mandate continues,

> It was these youth under the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) who played the decisive role in defining the ideas and strategies for independent nation characterized by dedication, critical and open minded outlook….EPLF is with few equals in the history of national liberation movements…EPLF is an organization that made the impossible possible.
>
> (YPFDJ 2004, p. 4-5)

The mandate relays to young diasporans Eritrea's history, albeit a specific version of it. In some ways, it is expected that "history is (always) harvested and collected, to be assembled, made to speak, re-membered, re-read and re-written…[and] to refer to history…is always to speak of the incomplete, the never fully decipherable. It is to betray any hope of transparency" (Chambers 1994, p. 3). By eliminating important historical content from Eritrea's liberation war, the mandate's writings make large populations unworthy of mention and thus present a false, unblemished record of history. Eritrean history, as outlined by YPFDJ makes no mention of the existence of liberation movements prior to the creation of EPLF. From this account, the history of Eritrea is conflated as the history of EPLF (see Connell 2004 on the People's Party). Eritrean nationalism has always remained a contested arena, especially for the leadership of its liberation movements. Commenting on the formation of the EPLF, Hoyle (1999) argues that the diversity of Eritrea provided the immediate need for the creation of a 'nation' and 'national identity'. This, she continues, resulted in values comprising the national identity as those being idealized by the

community. Under these circumstances, nationalism becomes the veil behind which hegemonic rule flourishes. Reid (2011) offering a slightly different analysis, argues the EPLF liberation movement was the manifestation of 'Tigrinya militancy' (p.193), despite its claim to inclusive plurality. The state's hegemonic ability to construct public discourse on its own terms leads to the transmission of 'PFDJ nationalism,' a militant form of patriotism that idealizes the role of the EPLF and elevates the status and legitimacy of the EPLF-turned-PFDJ among its young diasporans.

I argue the YPFDJ and its activities are a continuation and transmission of not only this Tigrinya domination, but the state's claim to speak authoritatively for Eritrea(ns). The entitlement derived from the understanding that EPLF is solely responsible for Eritrea's independence operates as a seemingly legitimate counter to criticisms against the government. "It was EPLF who cooked this meal, why do the others come to eat it now?" one Eritrean respondent questioned (as quoted in Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2005, p. 111). This narrow articulation and transmission of history and the conflation of the PFDJ state with the country is manipulated to facilitate the understanding that criticisms posed of the ruling government are a contestation of Eritrea's sovereignty. Individuals or groups critical of developments in Eritrea therefore are placed outside the nation and constructed as having turned their backs on a 'great history'.

In a similar process among mainly second generation Indians in California, "Yankee Hindutva" was able to garner widespread support for its fascist agenda by seeking to bury its conservative Hindu religious tendencies in national and cultural terms (Bose 2008; Prasad 2007). Writing about Hindutva, educators Sunaina and Swamy (2006) write, "By reducing the study of history to a matter of cheery representations of the past, we fail to provide students with the

critical tools necessary to recognize and act upon various forms of oppression in the present". The version of Eritrean history dictated by the PFDJ and transmitted to young diasporans requires revisiting and (re)learning as it narrates a falsified image of Eritrean history and of its present conditions. And history, however ugly it may be, is an important pedagogical tool (Bose 2008). In her discussion of the shifting meanings of national pride in the context of historical events and political change in Germany, Miller-Idriss (2009) observes that many youth adopted the trappings of right-wing interpretations resulting in generational conflict. By disguising itself as a 'youth movement' (p. 1), the (Y)PFDJ supports the reproduction of a violent state as repression remains hidden. While state repression is common knowledge at home, for the second-generation with little first-hand experience with and/or alternative knowledge of Eritrea, this sanitized version of history and recent developments can be mistakenly ingested as the only, authentic version.

YPFDJ members represent the cultural reproduction of Eritrean*ness,* as membership and participation in activities act as mobilizing forces defending against assimilation into a unifying Black or African diasporic identity. Parental pressure to identify as distinctively Eritrean coupled with continual host-country state surveillance lead young diasporan Eritreans to use YPFDJ platforms to respond to the array of messages received, and practice *being* Eritrean. Hernandez-Ramdwar (2006) in her study of second-generation Trinidadian people found the space created by 'soca fetes,' carrying a distinct Trini origin, were utilized as a site of identity and cultural resistance to stereotypes of Caribbean and/or black diasporic communities and as a way to counter the dominance of Jamaican culture. Similarly, YPDFJ's assertion of an Eritrean identity is aligned with its point of remaining distinct from Ethiopia, a longstanding battle that comes up against the threat posed by historically hegemonic Abyssinian nationalism. As Hernandez-

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Ramdwar warns however, such assertions can reproduce neo-colonial articulations. YPFDJ's mandate reproduces incomplete histories and invites young diasporans to do the same.

The history of Eritrea's liberation struggle is a source of great pride among Eritreans and is aggressively promoted by the state as something to latch onto. Having won independence from Ethiopia under what were highly unfavourable circumstances, national understandings boast that Eritreans possess a tenacious, never-back-down mentality. Arguably, this is highly attractive for Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora who constantly confront reminders of their 'outsider' status in the Western societies where they reside. This type of nationalist discourse is not unique by any standards. For second-generation Haitians in the US, for example, "to be Haitian is defined as being proud" (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2002, p. 181) as it meant a connection to the historical first slave movement to defeat a white colonialist power. With the exception of the Republic of South Sudan's independence in 2011, Eritrea was the only African country to gain its independence from another African state.

Rallying around national articulations of a proud history, Eritreans in the diaspora are constructed by the state through YPFDJ as individuals who would forever be attached to a great history and thus carry a duty in the country's contemporary nation-building processes. This is where the YPFDJ breaks radically from other forms of second-generation organising among diasporas. YPFDJ's referent is always, and narrowly so, Eritrea. It articulates a specific duty, so to speak, to serve the country as it provides a means of acting upon one's Eritrean subjectivity and citizenship. Further, it invites involvement in a seemingly horizontal comradeship, an inviting alternative to the vertical organization of Western societies. There is much evidence to suggest that the EPLF, while calling itself a Front, operated much like a political party did with significant efforts to mask this (see Iyob 1997; Connell 2004). Despite its independence era

closely mirroring the fate of other African countries, the Eritrean state's repeated articulation of its historical uniqueness, its anticolonial struggle, and its alternative developmental path is attractive to young Eritreans.

As Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora come of age and are being afforded opportunities not as readily available to their parents to pursue higher education, second-generation Eritreans have the potential to play important roles in the political legitimization of the PFDJ transnationally. The YPFDJ acts as an avenue for the PFDJ to reassert its acceptability as disapproval and opposition increases. Unlike their parents, YPFDJ members raised and educated in Western societies are socially and institutionally well-trained to act as diplomats of the Eritrean state in the diaspora. For example, when the threat of United Nations sanctions was placed on Eritrea, YPFDJ (2009) released a statement, facilitated petition-writing to governments and global institutions and was instrumental in organizing a large protest in New York City. This illustrates that second-generation Eritreans are involved in transnational activism relating to their parental country of origin. Because of their ability to act as informal state diplomats, states are interested in mobilizing their migrant populations to achieve diplomatic ends, even if done so unintentionally or without direct orders. At times assuming the role of state diplomats, migrants play influential roles in shaping the social, political and economic landscape for their home-country states and the relationships it builds with other states (Mahler 2000). This was witnessed throughout the liberation movement where Eritrean students sent abroad on scholarships were able to advocate for Eritrean sovereignty because of the greater freedoms afforded to them in the transnational space. It is therefore in the state's interest to incorporate but keep abroad these second-generation nationals as a "component of broader strategies to resolve specific challenges to its legitimacy" (Sherman 1999, p. 846).

The institutionalization of second-generation Eritreans through YPFDJ can also be expected to have financial benefits. Given the state's expatriate tax policy, stating that every Eritrean living abroad is required to pay 2% of their annual income to the Eritrean state, it is anticipated that expectations to adhere to this policy will be increased among second-generation Eritreans as they gain stable employment. Currently, students are required to pay a set fee of $65 annually rather than the standard 2% of one's annual income to the Eritrean state. The 'call to duty' in state-sponsored activities coupled with the state's continual drumming up of nationalist sentiment during times of political instability will likely increase the motivation and compulsion among young diasporans to continue financially supporting the state, as many members of the first-generation did. As the next section will illustrate, involvement in state-sponsored events - such as parties marking national celebrations and country-tours - in addition to being a key avenue through which political messages are transmitted, have for long now been huge sources of revenue for the government with the assumption that parents cover the cost of their children's involvement.

(RE)PRESENTING ERITREA: PFDJ STATE PROJECTION

Owing to its transnational character, the Eritrean state maintains tangible relations with its second-generation population through its interactions in the diaspora and in Eritrea. The transnational spatial element of institutional opportunities created is significant for the ways the state manages to project a positive image of itself to young diasporan Eritreans. Because diasporan Eritreans have interactions with the state in the diaspora and are socialized through YPFDJ activities in the diaspora, there is a sense of familiarity with activities that take place in Eritrea. Drawing on Begona Aretxaga's paper *Maddening States* (2003) I argue that the Eritrean state becomes 'reproduced in sites of everyday life' in a highly fictional yet dominant manner.

According to Aretxaga (2003), inquiring into the ways states become a social subject of everyday life means,

> … asking about performances and public representations of statehood; and about discourses, narratives, and fantasies generated around the idea of the state. The state cannot exist without this subjective component, which links its form to the dynamics of people and movements (p. 395).

Ritualized ceremony and national celebration thus become important sites for the reproduction of state discourse of power and culture.

State-sponsored Independence Day celebrations, both at home and in the diaspora, are the most famous illustration of national celebrations filled with public representations of state-character. Culture becomes a useful and flexible medium for conveying political messages as the two become suffused (e.g. Aretxaga 1997). In one year, dragons were used in a dance-skit to symbolize the country's many 'lurking enemies' (Reid 2005). The real intentions of ritualized ceremony, like the May 24th celebrations and related social events marking national holidays, remain hidden and construed by proceedings such as Presidential addresses. President Isaias symbolically opened his address for the 20th Anniversary of Independence celebrations by paying homage to Eritrea's diaspora, addressing them this way, "Dear compatriots inside the country and abroad." He continued, "My heartfelt appreciation also goes to […] especially those nationals from the Diaspora who came to the Homeland to add colour to the celebrations" (May 24th 2011). Seemingly saving the nation, President Isaias is seen as a 'nationalising elite' solely responsible for successfully recreating Eritrea (Waterbury 2010, p. 140). As participants became 'intoxicated by political messages' people were invited to 'worship the nation' (Woldemikael 2009, p. 15). Young diasporan Eritreans are occasionally lured into identifying with snippets of the President's speeches and interviews which usually include highly critical reflections of Western democracy and problematic Western involvement in African development and affairs.

While Independence Day parties play a vital role in the representation of Eritrea's president, they also represent the ever-growing divide between its own rhetoric and the reality on the ground. This binary produces polarized perception of either state disapproval or approval as is witnessed among homeland and diaspora born and/or raised Eritreans.

More squarely focused on presenting its fictional character of the Eritrean state is the *Sawa Festival* and the accompanying *Zura N'Hagerka* (country tours).[32] Second-generation people visit their parental homeland because of strong kinship relationships, cultural attachment and affiliation to their parental homelands (e.g. Duval, 2002; Plaza 2006; Bauer & Thompson 2006; Potter and Phillips 2006; Olwig 2007). Second-generation people are invited to enjoy the homeland through state-coordinated activities; trips to the homeland have significant bearing on the type of transnational relationships developed after returning from visits.

The structured and institutionalized visits to Eritrea have an element of tourism to them (Arnone 2011). Occurring biennially and coinciding with the *beles* season, the state takes considerable measures to build anticipation among young diasporan Eritreans to partake in these highly orchestrated, fashionable, state-sponsored events. Organized entirely by the state for diasporans aged 16-35, country-tours take place both before and after the Sawa festival, and visit famous battlefield sites and places of patriotism. Promising to take visitors on a tour to "see different historical and developmental sites across Eritrea and learn more about [Eritrea's] heritage, history and people" (NUEY 2010), the country-tours are used to display the state's character to its returning/visiting young diasporans. Country-tours are not offered at any other

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[32] (Y)PFDJ publications refer to the *Zura n'Hagerka* program as "Know Your Country Tours." More directly in line with the terminology used in existing literature and more familiar to an English-speaking ear, I refer to the program in-short as 'country-tour.'

time during the year. Country-tours and Sawa festivals are very much policed inclusion as the state controls much of the details of the tours and their content.

The Eritrean state's generation of a fictional version of itself to be displayed to young diasporans through a country-tour is not a new phenomenon. 'Model villages' in post-revolutionary governments in Latin America, in particular Guatemala and Nicaragua, were used to portray security and stability to foreign visitors. As foreign visitors were guided along a tour of manufactured sites, the state was able to control what was observed as well as what was hidden. Writing on the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, Babb (2004) illustrates how changes in the 'tourist gaze' dictate what is emphasized by the state in its tourist economy and concludes that the tourism industry is intricately connected to discourses of global politics. More recently, the Irish state has created a 'heritage industry' that is located along tourist trails where thousands of Irish visit annually. Such institutional arrangements encourage diasporans to (re)connect with and celebrate their heritage (Levitt 2002). In a country-tour geared towards second-generation people, Taiwan and the People's Republic have annual programs of cultural awareness that centers on cultural transmission (Kasinitz et al 2002).

Similar to the use of model villages in Latin America, country-tours in Eritrea arise from deeply political motivations but remained masked in cultural terms. Further, because the PFDJ remains in total control of public discourse, nationally at least, what is presented to participants in the country-tours is usually portrayed as *the* story, and the only credible one. Likening the Zura N'Hagerka tours to the Israeli pilgrimage to the promise land (Conrad 2006), young diasporans travel to Eritrea usually to have fun while meeting other fellow diasporans, but also to learn more about Eritrea, a *home* that is usually idealized. The contrived version of Eritrea presented to the YPFDJ is very welcoming as it hides what is undesirable, choosing instead to

present the unblemished. For young diasporan Eritreans then, the negative human rights record of the Eritrean state and militarization of the country is contrasted with the fictional character projected to its diasporan citizens. How could a seemingly self-sufficient state, so welcoming and successful in its national human development be guilty of grave human rights abuses? Arextaga (2003) argues that the projection of a fictional character of a state is socially very powerful and effective, despite being tension-ridden, because it relies on *multiple personifications*.

Made 'other' in Western societies, diaspora-born Eritreans embrace inclusion in YPFDJ. Alternatively, homeland born Eritreans are excluded from participation in state-sponsored YPFDJ activities. On the same grounds where local Eritreans are subjected to harsh military training, young diasporan Eritreans are invited to partake in a biennial festival. The Sawa military training grounds are located in the far west region of the country relatively close to the border with Sudan. The required three-month military training - *t'alim* – takes place yearly for every incoming cohort of students/conscripts between the most humid months of March-June while the Sawa Festival for diasporan Eritreans takes place during July when the temperature in the region of the country is much more bearable. Clearly then, the experiences of young Eritreans on Sawa grounds are markedly different depending on whether one is a local or diasporan.

PFDJ's discourse presents the state as being (forcibly) isolated and under threat from multiple enemies. Justifiably then, it calls upon its 'loyal citizens' to come to its defense. Relying on its own voice, the state repeatedly reminds its citizenry of its 'historical betrayal' (Reid 2005, p. 483), of being denied international assistance throughout its liberation movement and its

continued victimization since then.[33] YPFDJ is never far behind in its reiteration of the official party line. For example at the YPFDJ European Annual Conference held in Berlin, Germany, top Presidential Advisor Yemane Ghebreab relayed the message that Eritrea is threatened by its US-backed, rival, neighbouring state of Ethiopia, amongst many others, and stressed the need for young Eritreans to do their part to defend Eritrea's sovereignty (YPFDJ 2010). The fact that young homeland born Eritreans are never invited to address diasporan Eritreans at gatherings like these suggest the state's desire to maintain tight control over public discourse, especially in relation to communication between young Eritreans.

The crafting of Eritrea to always appear at risk contributes to the development of an increasingly militant patriotism among young diasporan Eritreans as they seek to defend their country. "Discourses of patriotism and practices of war against a magnified enemy such as terrorism disguise differences in power and the internal violence of the nation around a national unity to combat a common enemy" (Aretxaga 2003, p. 397). Since the sovereignty of Eritrea is presented to always be at risk, its defense is always equally necessary. This is not to suggest that Ethiopia does not present a real 'threat' to Eritrea's sovereignty, instead as Reid (2011) argues "the EPLF(PFDJ) has not yet developed a coherent or persuasive strategy – either at home or abroad – which is not at heart anti-Ethiopian" (p. 234).

Further, the articulation of Eritrea as a country under constant threat is politically operationalized in a way that rigidly informs who is an insider and who is an outsider. Anyone critical of the (Y)PFDJ becomes an outsider thus justifying the state's deflection of human rights abuses and militarization. Similar to the way the Terror Scale is used in the USA and the broader global discourse around human rights emerging post 9/11, human rights discussions are deflected by arguments of protecting a country's sovereignty. The postponing of democratic discussions in

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[33] See most recently Foreign Affairs Office response to Somalia October 17th 2011, p. 25-26.

the battle fields during the liberation movement for the greater cause of independence bears similarity to the current situation. Young diasporan Eritreans have taken the YPFDJ at face value, suspending important discussions of human rights and development in the present to once again defend its sovereignty. In 2001 members of the G-15 were criticized for raising issues of development and democracy in Eritrea while a war lurked. Over ten years later, the same justification is used. The 'no war, no peace' stalemate has justified the indefinitely postponed discussion on human rights, democracy and development. The YPFDJ spends its energies voicing its discontent with the sanctions imposed against Eritrea in language that replicates almost exactly PFDJ's of being threatened (see YPFDJ 2009). Arextaga (2003) maintains,

> 'The People' is invoked and torn apart through the creation of ever-present enemies…There is an uncanny quality to the production of the state through the production of an enemy because often the criminal or terrorist or threatening Other is a familiar face, familiar but strange, strange in its familiarity (p. 397-403).

The (Y)PFDJ's ability to construct insiders and outsiders and friends and enemies, is increasingly becoming unsustainable as a growing majority of the people being excluded are young Eritreans themselves, namely the *Warsai*. The reality is growing increasingly distant from the state projection of being under the threat of external and foriegn enemies. Thus, "…the violence of security apparatuses can also turn into the homeland policing of the state's own citizens that curtails civil rights" (Arextaga 2003, p. 397). This is evident in Eritrea through the state's increased surveillance of homeland born young Eritreans which relies on unpredictable methods to produce fear (Bozzini 2011). Since diasporan Eritreans are exempt from military service they are largely detached from the surveillance threats of Military Police, further causing a rift between their perceptions and experiences with the Eritrean state.

As young *Warsai* flee Eritrea in record numbers with having real interactions with the brutality of the Eritrean state, they are often met by their diaspora born Eritrean counterparts who hold an idealized perception of the state, and this is a cause of great turmoil. The (Y)PFDJ's treatment of deserting homeland born young Eritreans is similar to the EPLF's treatment of the ELF, constructing them as traitors of the 'Eritrean cause'. This dynamic bears close resemblance to the reception the ELF received in North America by the EPLF-aligned Eritreans for Liberation in North America (EFLNA),[34] who had been integrated into the liberation movement after being outside Eritrea but had been active in reproducing EPLF rhetoric, just as the YPFDJ in the diaspora today draws from PFDJ. While domination is never complete it is not "always about the past and change, but also about duration" (Ortner 2006, p.34); an important element of rule. Whether under the guise of EPLF, ELFNA, Y/PFDJ, the multiple incarnations of the Eritrean state has unfailingly drawn upon similar mechanisms in different ways to keep segments of the Eritrean population uninformed about national developments.

YOUNG ERITREANS IN *VIRTUAL* DIALOGUE: THE 'GOOD' PFDJ AND THE 'BAD' PFDJ

In this section of the paper I illustrate how state projection plays out to result in two divergent perceptions. Young Eritreans, both *Warsai* and *Beles* web users, have utilized cyberspace mediums to boldly voice their opinions, albeit in very separate but parallel fashion. As a medium, cyberspace provides an arena where territorially and socially dispersed people have the opportunity to converge, bridging spatial and temporal divides. Given the limitations on independent media in Eritrea, cyberspace has remained a critical arena for debate and information dissemination in the diaspora. Further, electronic media among refugee populations is important as it recognizes the agency of refugees (Horst 2006). Conceptualizing online arenas

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[34] For an in-depth exploration into the encounter between ELF/ELFNA in the United States and Canada in the 1970's/80's, see Hepner 2009, in particular chapters 3-5 and Hepner 2005.

as a "site of cultural production" (Bernal 2005, 2006), the internet is especially important to the Eritrean diaspora because it has been using the medium for similar national purposes before the widespread usage of internet. While a host of vibrant Eritrean media have flourished (see Connell 2010), I survey and analyze material taken from two Facebook groups between the months of September 2011 and November 2011. I use this data to interpret youth relations to the state and resulting divisions among youth. Examinations of other online medium and face-to-face interactions are necessary but lie beyond the scope of this paper.

It should also be cautioned that the majority of young Eritreans inside the country are scattered throughout the country in remote areas as part of military conscription duties and therefore in most cases do not have access to the internet. When they do, it is sporadic and people are usually fearful of expressing themselves openly on public forums such as Facebook. This is the same for young (refugee) Eritreans in neighbouring countries in close geographical proximity to Eritrea. The state's surveillance structures have proved enough to deter people from becoming vocally and politically active, especially given that Facebook protocol encourages users to use legal names if they want to be found by friends. With the PFDJ's surveillance structure geographically spread across Eritrea (Bozzini 2011), and I would extend this transnationally, the threat of deportation to Eritrea is being extended to neighbouring countries housing large Eritrean refugee populations.[35]

Both Facebook groups were created during a politically charged period globally given the Arab Spring, but even more so specifically for Eritrea as the President attended the UN General Assembly Meetings after an extended absence, UN sanctions loomed, famine ravaged the region,

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[35] The months of September and October 2011 witnessed the capture of several Eritrean activists in Sudan as well as the deportation of hundreds of refugees back to Eritrea from Sudan. "Sudan: End Mass Summary Deportations of Eritreans" Human Rights Watch press release, October 2011. http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/25/sudan-end-mass-summary-deportations-eritreans.

and the regional and global economic crisis hardened. Thus, this period that I scan witnessed

heightened political activity in the Eritrean transnational social field, both in real-time and in

cyberspace. Eritrean Youth Solidarity for Change (EYSC) was created in March 2011, after

Eritrean youth witnessed the benefits of cyberspace activism in relation to the Arab Spring. Its

mission statement read,

> Our purpose is to organize a cyber-demonstration […]. Our people inside the
> country can't demonstrate openly as of now so we need to speak on behalf of
> our people to say Enough. The cyber-demonstration will help us to mobilize the
> youth inside Eritrea to rise up against the one-man rule of Isaias Afeworki and
> bring in the long-awaited democratic rule.
>
> (EYSC 2011)

The second and opposing cyber group, We Are All Isayas Afwerki (WIA), was created in mid-

September shortly before the official mention of the President's trip to New York. Symbolically

titled after its popular Tigrinya slogan, the group's mission states

> We are all Isaias Afewerki! Why? President Isaias Afewerki is one of the
> greatest leaders on the planet. Eritrean people are lucky to have Isaias Afewerki
> as their first President. With such great leader we are building our nation on
> solid foundations. The main purpose of this group is to defend and promote
> Eritrean national interest. We encourage all members to share information and
> opinions that benefit our country.
>
> (WIA 2011)

Throughout the period under study, both groups maintained membership of roughly 8,000-9,000

members each. Due to the relatively high number of online membership in the groups and

widespread frequent usage of FB, there is a high level of traffic in the groups with responses and

subsequent back-and-forths to posts occurring within minutes and then usually dying off within a

day or two as other posts take the place.

In what follows we see the crystallization of divergent perceptions of the state by

homeland born and diaspora born and/or raised Eritreans in very emotionally charged

conversations. The first conversation, initiated by a question posed by a member to the WIA group, contextualizes the following posts nicely.

PFDJ Nationalism

> why are eritreans so hagerawiyan[36] (*nationalist*)

Among the over 50 responses posted within less than 24 hours were the following:

> Eplf
>
> It has to be our course of history, and ultimatley our existence against all odds! EPLF/PFDJ is the highest organisational expression of th eEritreans peoples strugle..........So im with [the previous respondent]
>
> Bcs it's in our blood!
>
> Coz we ar unique Nikid nikid deki adey, (*let's go let's go my country people*)[37]
>
> cos like any african country nobady give us our FREEDOM in the plate we share our blood to find ERI for ERI that why we r the only country in africa made our flag
>
> cos of our long history.
>
> Deqi Erey (*children of Eritrea*), allmost all African countries got their independence from white clonialisation in the 1960es but Eritrea had been denied its freedom by the US/UN. The struggle for independence, freedom, natinal and individual identity was the bloodiest and most desructive. To be Eritrean is a national and at the same time an individual IDENTITY. That is why we LOVE erey above all.

Fraught with nationalist discourses, this discussion closely mirrors the official state narrative of Eritrea that equates Eritrean history with EPLF history and Eritrean independence with the PFDJ. These posts illustrate how transnational citizens identify with and draw pride from the 'unique,' but specific version of Eritrean history. The user

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[36] All posts have been transcribed verbatim without correcting grammar or spelling and grouped in some cases by themes I have identified. I have removed usernames to protect the identity of the user.

[37] This phrase is drawn from the popular patriotic song *Kedamo (2010)* by singer Frehiwet Berhu. While the phrase *nikid nikid* is a commonly used military phrase and carries its own symbolic meaning in the context of war, here I want to draw attention to the way PFDJ's control of public discourse has entailed popular culture to become submersed in 'PFDJ nationalism.' Music, along with other forms and mediums of popular culture (ERI-TV), are central to the transmission of political ideas.

who initially posed the question, 'closed' the conversation with "thanks for sharing your idea deki erey *(children of Eritrea)* I understand now why we are patriotic".

Experiencing Eritrea

Worth quoting at length, the next selection is also taken from the WIA group:

> I came back from Eritrea 2 days ago & was impressed with the beauty of it. It was my first time ever visiting my homeland. The food was amazing. I went with an open mind expecting some early development at its early stage. I was pleased with my findings; there is no shortage of food. You don't see or hear anyone starving as the media would like us to believe. Another impressive place I visited was the university of Mai Nefhi, which is large and located in the outskirt of Asmara purposefully to help students focus on their studies. I spoke to a parent whose son attends the school and he shared with me that students complete their 5 years studies while housing and food is provided to them for free. No student loans to worry about. Also Elementary & middle schools are being built in remote villages so students don't have to take long walks to nearby Asmara or nearby cities. Education is a top priority of the government. Water supply is not an issue. Asmara has very clean drinking water. I visited the palce where the water supplies Asmara gets cleaned and pumped. I haven't seen a safe place as Eritrea; you can walk downtown Asmara and other nearby towns 24/7. No one bothers you. One needs to realize that it is very naïve to think we should be as developed as the west without giving the government as much time as it took the west to be where it is today. I do not expect development over night, I can say with confidence that we are doing darn good for being the second newest third world country. I have a good feeling that 2 generation from now will have a better future as a result of the hard work today. I give thumbs up to the development and hard work being done in Eritrea in order to help future generations & we should support the effort and not be selfish

It can be assumed from this post that this diasporan went to Eritrea with the conscious intention of looking for indicators of development, determined to assess the post-independent period, and came away content with her findings. Much of her assessment of Eritrea is framed in relation to her experiences and concerns as a young citizen of a Western country; for example drawing upon the safety of Asmara's streets where 'no one bothers you,' and free education and housing. She concludes that this is the reflection of the goodwill of the Eritrean government. It should be recalled that as a racialized person in the diaspora she is constructed as black and therefore a

target of racial profiling. Furthermore, with parents usually employed in low-paying jobs, high tuition fees are a serious impediment to pursuing post-secondary education. Incorrectly referring to the Mai Nefhi technical school as a university, her interpretation of the building of schools in remote areas removed from urban centers shows that she has witnessed little to make her critical of development in Eritrea. Her assessment also reflects how the left-leaning projection of the PFDJ lures racialized young diasporan Eritreans. In reality however, the closure of Eritrea's only university and more broadly the militarization of education has been a strategy to prevent the creation of a civil society in Eritrea (Hepner 2009). While the low crime rate of Asmara (Doombos and Alemseged 1999; Iyob 1995, 1997) compared on any standard is a welcoming feature of Eritrea, this is not the case if you are a target of military conscription and round-ups, essentially any homeland born young Eritrean.

Another FB user, a member of both groups, copied and pasted this testimony into the EYSC group with a provocative caption that read, "Post from WE are all XXX group. What do you have to say?" The existence of members holding membership in both groups is interesting and indeed can be interpreted in several ways: perhaps, this person is assuming the role of instigator to provoke people or he may not necessarily fall so neatly into either group. While the post spurred celebratory comments, nationalist boasting and similar reflections of personal trips to Eritrea in the WIA group, the same post conjured quite different responses in the EYSC group. The following are a few:

> No student loans to worry about, lol! when all your life is held hostage... pathetic!.. this is what I call dead conscience-- I know she would never swap her life for those in Mai Nefhi-- even under gun point... hypocrites! what's better? Being given student loan and freely pursuing ur career.. or being covered for ur education and serve as a slave all ur life?

> Ok. Another letter written by PFDJ and post by McDonald eater! Who is going to learn from you about Eritrea and Eritreans?

First and foremost, these damb goons need to straighten up their head and try to help the people instead of being a puppet if a failed administration. Then they always claim that to protect, fight, defend the country bksh blah. Blah .....I wonedr how they r gonna do that. If it is by dancing & clapping in the grave of their heroes ok I don't believe that is possible in case that's their plan. Or if they still think warsai & yike'alo are gonna defend & protect yea I can agree with that though he got only a bread a day………

From these very emotionally charged responses, the differing realities and experiences of nationality and citizenship of young diasporan and homeland Eritreans is made evident. From the first post, we see that the person does a cost-benefit analysis to conclude that the demands of 'serving as a slave' are not worth free education. Aside from the fact that a small percentage of students are admitted annually to technical colleges, the advantages of higher education are limited when a country's economy and infrastructure does not support the application of education. The posts also reflect a growing sense of resentment towards young diasporan Eritreans who speak positively of an environment which has become unbearable in many ways for homeland born Eritreans; they express anger and frustration for the inability to empathize with their experiences or even acknowledge the validity of their experiences. This I interpret is due in part to the success of PFDJ's projection of itself to its young diasporans that makes dialogue difficult. Real interactions and bridges built between young homeland and diaspora Eritreans would potentially lead to the sharing of personal narratives of experiences in Eritrea that would disrupt the clean official discourse the state projects.

'Diasporic Tourism' and *Hademti*

The format of the FB groups has allowed for the creative expressions of perspectives through the use of illustrative photographs. One picture entitled "The tale of two Eritreas…Its slaves and its tourists…." featured a collage of two sets of images, the first of young Eritrean military conscripts performing demanding labour in what looks like desert conditions and the

other of young diasporan Eritreans dancing and flag-waving on stages at national celebratory

gatherings (*guwayla*). The collage of images embodies the conflictual integration of young

Eritreans into the nation-state. It is these tensions and contradictions in state perception among

diaspora born and homeland born young Eritreans that the state continues to exploit to keep the

two groups socially isolated from one another.[38] While both *warsai* and *beles* possess nationality,

the formal legal status of state membership, citizenship is what delineates the character of

member rights and duties within the national polity. It is this contentious relationship between

citizenship and nationality that becomes more obscured and less easily delineated (Sassen 2005;

Coutin 2000). Responses to the images included the following:

> endless fun (YPFDJ) vrs. Endless (military) service
>
> I hate these stupid dictator-loving, blood-sucking, mcdonalds eating diaspora kids.
>
> […]..we can say so many things about PFDJ but those ppl have been good to give the YPFDJ a very strong nationalist identity
>
> I am working on some of this young ppl. The problem is with theire parents, I have cousins brain washed and I am working on theme by showing them the truth..each person should take the time without getting upset with them to rieducathem, believe me many will open theire eyes and come with the ppl [...]

These comments illustrate not only the growing awareness of the divide between homeland and

diasporan born young Eritreans, but also of an attempt to locate the positioning of young

diasporan Eritreans within the pressures of broader processes. While not excusing their

involvement and/or support of state-sponsored activities, these interpretations help explain why

diasporan Eritreans are drawn to involvement with (Y)PFDJ and the sources encouraging their

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[38] Eritrean Youth Global Movement's (EYGM) *Haddish Harinet* manifesto illustrates that young homeland born Eritreans recognize and are critical of the state's fictional projection of itself. *Haddish Harinet,* translated as New Freedom, reads, "...instead of transmitting true world developments [in reference to Egypt and Tunisia uproars] and analysis of the horn of Africa, they didn't cover existing situation of the world and transmitted musical shows (guwayla) and empty slogans" (2011 p. 17). In the manifesto, EYGM refers to PFDJ ritualized celebration as "one of the languages the PFDJ speaks" (2011, p. 26).

involvement. For racialized people constantly made 'other,' the YPFDJ nationalism offers a welcoming safe-haven and sense of community.

This also illuminates the conceputalization of space as social reality. (Y)PFDJ space is interpreted and perceived differently according to the way it is experienced (Hebert et al 2009) and thus carries different meanings for the two cohorts. Conceptualizing space as social reality, youth are invited to partake in a 'youth-friendly' deemed space (Smith 2002, p. 145). The result is, "the state is split into good and bad state […] (Arextaga 2003, p. 407)." As diasporan Eritreans engage in 'diasporic tourism,' Eritrea is imagined as a place for leisure and tourism (Arnone 2011). This creates tensions between young homeland born and diasporan Eritreans in Asmara, also supporting the arguments that integration/assimilation and transnationalism need to be balanced in light of differing lived experiences. Conrad (2006) notes that during the 2001 'beles season,' while families were awaiting notification on whether children who had not returned from the war (1998-2000) had indeed perished, the oblivious "happy-go-lucky lifestyle" of young diasporan Eritreans in Asmara aroused a lot of tension and resentment among the local youth population.

The following comment, made in response to the collage, is interesting in light of the above comments criticising second-generation Eritreans:

> True but what about us who are trying to do the right thing by our enslaved brothers & sisters.

Seemingly a second-generation Eritrean attempting to show that not all second-generation Eritreans are unaware of local realities, this post illustrates that hegemony is never complete and official narratives can be disrupted (see Gramsci 1971). In fact, given PFDJ control of public discourse and its projection through YPFDJ, lack of knowledge on the situation in Eritrea can rightfully be a reason for the continued successful mobilization of diaspora youth. Increasingly

however, civil communication between the 'two camps' is prevented by efforts to institutionalize belonging in the nation-state in two very different ways and with accompanying discourses. For example, state discourses construct young homeland born Eritreans who evade conscription and/or have fled the country or those unhappy with their situation at home and thus dream of flight, as selfish traitors abandoning the national cause. It is a reflection of the resurgence of discourse evident during the liberation movement that crafts exiles as traitors - or *hademti* (Conrad 2005). The post below illustrates how these discourses are mediated through human interactions.

> No one forced them to flee from their country, they did flee for some selfishness reasons, so stop blaming the gov't for everythings.
>
> Can u imaged some one who grow up in dispora and to call us by such silly names like hadami? *(traitor)*
>
> I agree with you...For just matter of discussion we need to respect each other to arrive to a conclusion, but in reality it is the supporters of the regime who disrespect the others.. You will just experience it as I did.
>
> They don't want to hear others points of views..if do not say you love the dictator..then a full assolt start from left and right
>
> Hezbi Eritra…U r not harmin our government u do it to our Hezbi *(people)*

This last post, in response to a string of protests held at PFDJ public seminars throughout the diaspora, conflates the Eritrean state and its entire population. Thus, an assault against either the state or the people of Eritrea is an assault against the other. This replicates state rhetoric of Eritrea being built historically on a horizontal comradeship (see Anderson 2006) and it also helps explain how this understanding, the inability to separate state from people, draws backing from well-meaning Eritreans.

The certainty, or denial, by some that Eritrea is progressing along a healthy developmental path has spurred another type of response:

If you don't like Sweden, go back to Eritrea They keep telling us over and over "Eritrea is on the right track" why don't they go home then?

This comment was in response to a protest held by pro-government Eritreans in Stockholm against Swedish media critical of the situation in Eritrea.[39] While Western countries like Sweden have become places of refuge for exiled communities like the Eritrean one, these communities are constructed as racialized subjects. As such, the same immigration policies that make it possible for Eritreans to settle in countries like Sweden are the ones that continue to construct them 'others'. In fact, it is the same interests driving immigration policies of Western countries today that are making it more difficult for young Eritreans fleeing repression in Eritrea to seek refuge in Western countries. That this reflects is the level of intricacy and complexity of global processes today. It is also indicative of the level of desperation of Eritrean activists to have their perspectives voiced in a transnational social field dominated by Eritrean state-discourses and how this can unfortunately lead to increased uncivil and uncritical discourse, the same type it sets out to dismantle.

Analysis

The previous section illustrates the way cyberspace has been utilized to debate a range of issues. I showed that young Eritreans use Facebook in meaningful ways. The gap between 'virtuality and reality' however should not be overlooked (Horst 2006, p. 56). Contrary to Bernal's (2006) suggestion that the internet "may act in mending ruptures in the social body and in individual subjectivity" (p.168), the dialogues taking place virtually have remained reflective of real-time interactions between young homeland born and diasporan Eritreans. Membership

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[39] Swedish-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak (*Setit* newspaper) was arrested on September 19th 2001 in Asmara, Eritrea after the government withdrew licenses for all independently operating newspapers. He has since been held incommunicado. His arrest in particular has garnered relatively significant global attention because of his Swedish citizenship as many Eritrean activist groups leveraged this to lobby the Swedish government and the European Union. Isaak has since been awarded and nominated for several internationally acclaimed journalist prizes. "Committee to Protect Journalists, Annual Prison Census 2011 (Eritrea)" http://cpj.org/imprisoned/2011.php

and online activism within the two Facebook groups increasingly imitates the composition of people along the same political divisions I comment on earlier. In fact, given the frequency of posts and interaction, I would argue that cyberspace interactions have further exacerbated the divide as people who voice their opinions benefit from territorial distance and the option of anonymity if desired. Further, considering the role played by social media in the Arab Spring, this virtual dialogue challenges the often assumed positive correlation between cyberspace activism and democracy, as the EYSC and WIA groups utilize the same medium in ways that perpetuate divergent views. Matsuoka and Sorenson (2001) argue that while theorists of transnationalism "consider the Internet a site for new forms of communication and community…[they] detect not a new creolized discourse but a ghostly repetition of old views".

"DOES ERITREA HAVE A DICTATOR"

On August 3rd 2011 Al Jazeera's new social-media powered programme, *The Stream,* featured a segment entitled "Does Eritrea have a Dictator?" Among other guests, featured were President of the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NEUYS) Rahel Weldeab based in Asmara and Mussie Zena, a young Eritrean-born activist now living in the United States of America and Chairman of the Indiana chapter of the Eritrean National Democratic Commission for Change (ENDCC). The ongoing polarized debate, as illustrated in the preceding section, was brought to the attention of the programme by Eritrean activists via the online social networking service Twitter. The purpose was to engage the show's guests in a rare dialogue on the source of disunity among the Eritrean diaspora in relation to government policies and homeland developments. A former military conscript himself, Zena drew specifically on his experience of having to flee Eritrea, seek refuge and more generally on the realities facing young homeland born Eritreans. He added, "Even knowing of all the dangers facing [those seeking to flee], they

leave making the choice that dying hoping for a better life is better than staying in Eritrea"
(17:05). When asked by the host "why so many are trying to escape?" Weldeab responded, "I
think we should keep in mind that youth, not only youth in Eritrea […] do have dreams of seeing
the West […] we all like our iPads and iPods and Air Jordans [...] the reason why people,
Eritrean youth seek to leave have to do with economic countries" (Weldeab, 19:45).

The state's ability to control public discourse has allowed construed understandings of
national duty to flourish. The prevailing construction of homeland born young Eritreans who flee
Eritrea is that they have abandoned the sacrifice of their forefathers for personal gain, a deeply
treacherous act. Upon hearing the interview shortly after its release, one young refugee wrote to
me in an email, "I didn't leave Eritrea for no stupid ipad. These beles ppl actually believe we r
traitors. They r kids who's never been to Eritrea […] and just coz their dumb parents think we
are traitors they think they rightfully Eritreans and we r traitors". The successful reception of the
official state discourse of fleeing Eritreans by diaspora youth (re)produce, support and identify
homeland born Eritreans as traitors, thus posing a serious challenge to the facilitation of
dialogue. In more cases than not, general dialogue between the 'two camps' mirrors closely the
frustrated one between Zena and Weldeab.

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION: "THE LESSONS *STILL* UNLEARNED"

Extant literature overwhelmingly suggests that 'sending states' make efforts to engage
their dispersed populations - albeit to varying degrees, utilizing a range of policy mechanisms, at
different times and for different reasons. Despite the adverse developments in Eritrea over the
last decade, the party-state has continued to derive significant ideological and financial
legitimacy from segments of its dispersed populations. I have shown how the formation of the
Eritrean diaspora originates from its deeply politicized liberation war, which has often been, in

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addition to integration challenges in settlement contexts, a central mobilizing cause in the diaspora. Rejecting claims to the uniformity of the Eritrean diaspora, I have honed in on young Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora to capture how the state has institutionalized belonging among this group through the state-sponsored YPFDJ. The militarized Eritrea lived and experienced by local *Warsai* differs drastically from the 'model Eritrea' projected and offered for consumption by young diasporan Eritreans. This differential integration has facilitated intra-generational conflict between second-generation Eritreans and their homeland born counterparts. By presenting stark differences for a cohort of Eritreans inhabiting the same, interconnected transnational social space, I have introduced a layer of complexity that challenges existing literature that usually portrays transnational actors to be well-informed on homeland developments. In doing so, I hope to have contributed to the literature on second-generation transnationalism and relations with their parents' state of origin.

In addition to work on the role of the state in promoting itself among the diaspora, systematic research needs to be conducted to account for variable levels of engagement. This would mean studying factors that influence involvement in state-sponsored activities such as age of migration and time of departure to account for experiences prior to departing (Jones-Correa 2002); variation in settlement countries (e.g. Ostergaard-Neilson 2001) how political organizing is carried out in varying contexts; parents' political engagement and partisanship; those living outside urban concentrations of Eritrean populations; and the involvement of young diasporan Muslim Eritreans and more generally non-Tigrinya people of Eritrea. Isolating and studying these factors in greater detail may provide insight into why the homeland and diaspora born youth who remain actively involved do so, and account for variation in involvement.

The Eritrean public and private spheres, though both dominated by state-produced discourse, remains replete with ambiguities. As my interpretation of the unfolding intra-generational conflict has suggested, the co-existence of complex transnational processes, some operating in unison and others in contention, are much more complicated than initially acknowledged. For example, acknowledging the ways marginalization and the failure of neoliberalism in Western liberal democratic societies facilitate and even encourage involvement in homeland nationalism even when extremely authoritarian. Focusing on these factors I believe would complicate the popular and polarized assessment of the President and his party-state as being either the culprit or the hero responsible for the successes or failures of Eritrean independence. Further research in this regard could better tease out explanations as to why and how different relations to the state exist.

Lastly, this paper illustrates the continued involvement of diasporas in homeland affairs. Given Eritrea's historical trajectory, the diaspora has been and is likely to remain an important site of contestation and negotiation. It also illustrates the incomplete nature of the hegemonic project. In the face of legitimacy loss and regional instability, the latest 2011 diaspora-tour of Eritrean state diplomats invoking the continued support from emigrants can be viewed as evidence of the incomplete hegemonic project. Given racism post 9/11 in Western countries on the one hand, and the worsening human rights record of the Eritrean government on the other, this case study raises interesting questions about democracy in liberal democratic societies, as well as in countries like Eritrea.

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CONCLUSION

The two components contained within this portfolio have explored a range of topics. Forming the backdrop of both is the formation of the Eritrean diaspora in the industrialized world and efforts of the Liberation Front-turned-State to engage these dispersed peoples in homeland developments. Like many transnational states today, the Eritrean state has adopted an institutional framework that governs citizens transnationally. The portfolio has stressed the need for an understanding of contextual specificity. The first component, paying particular attention to geopolitical context, concerns the continuity of financial contributions made by Eritrean migrants over the decades. The paper captures shifting state-diaspora relationships by exploring the institutionalization of migrant remittances in the form of an expatriate tax. In addition to demonstrating the influence of transnational governance, the paper advances current theorization around remittances and related cross-border financial flows by illustrating that remittance effects are largely dependent upon context and the meanings associated. More systematic inquiry is necessary to 1) determine concrete estimates of the amount of money collected through this policy and 2) devise a sketch of the people who adhere to the policy, as well as those who do not, and associated explanations. This would advance current debates about the remittance-turned-tax beyond the level of rumours to make theoretical claims about the practice and role of the state in forging an economic transnational sphere.

The second component looks at the first generation, both local and abroad, to be raised in the era of Eritrean independence, and more specifically state efforts to institutionalize second-generation Eritreans. The article highlights how state efforts have exacerbated intra-generational conflict between young diasporan Eritreans and their homeland born counterparts. Resulting from the differences in the way the state projects itself and interacts with these two population

segments, the perceptions held by the two cohorts – the *beles* and the *warsai* – of the state differ vastly. From this account, we see how state performance and state perception work to continually complement one another. This article advances theoretical discussions of state-led transnationalism aimed at second-generation people which remains an understudied subset of the literature. In addition, it illuminates the serious ruptures that can exist between people that inhabit the same transnational space.

Fluidity in the Eritrean Transnational Social Field: Methodological and Theoretical Considerations

Diaspora engagement in Eritrea has been political from its origin and remains so today. While knowledge production generally involves the constant reassessing and revisiting of arguments previously made, this holds more necessary for research on Eritrea and thus the findings entailed in this portfolio. Perhaps through rare opportunities where access to Eritrean communities is granted, new insights and emergent data will necessitate new findings. Nonetheless, methodological challenges facing research within the Eritrean transnational social field will continue to require innovative ways of conducting research and analysing (incomplete) data. My observations of and interactions with Eritreans situated in varied geographical locations have allowed me to adhere to a wide range of opinions on the issues I have explored. I have attempted to allow for the voices of diverse Eritreans and their subjectivities to enter into my analysis. In doing so however, I have not accounted for the experiences of Eritrean subnational groups beyond that of mainly the Tigrinya people of Eritrea nor have I provided a gendered analysis of the processes or experiences I outline throughout the portfolio. While indeed important and worthy of study, I am inherently limited by data available to me, access to these communities and the scope of this project. These omissions of course limit the contradictions that potentially exist.

Underscoring the importance of the African diaspora in continental affairs, Zeleza (2008) notes of, "the awakened interest by African institutions and national governments in diasporas as a developmental asset – a remittance pipeline – and as the continent's potential global guardian" (p. 4). This emerging interest, reflected in the two components of this portfolio, however also brings to light conceptual issues pertaining to the study of African diasporas and transnationalism with respect to Africa. These areas of scholarship have developed immensely since being rigidly centered on transnationalism in the Americas and African diasporas emanating from the Black-Atlantic slave trade (e.g. Hall 1980, 1990; Gilroy 1993). Writing on the theoretical development of literature on African diasporas, Zeleza raises some important questions about this area of study; some of which are similar to the questions sustaining this portfolio and indeed important to ask of the Eritrean context. For example, when does one leave Eritrea and enter the Eritrean diaspora? Where do the boundaries lie and how does this impact how we study the Eritrean (African) diaspora(s)? In addition to state-diaspora relationships, further detailed research is needed on the linkages formed between existing transnational communities. While specificity is required to account for complexity and diversity, analyses need to be more fluid and less essentialist, keeping in mind that "the transition from dispersal to diaspora depends, in part, on the regimes of integration, representation, and repression in the host society as well as gestures and impulses of connectivity from the homeland....[as] not every migrant turns into a diasporan" (Zeleza 2008, p. 10-14).

I have endeavored to account for the various factors shaping the processes I explore throughout the portfolio to illustrate the fluid interconnectedness of national, regional and global contexts. Gripping tightly to control over movement, the national economy, popular culture and knowledge, the Eritrean state emerges from this analysis as fulfilling the role of the gatekeeper

state. Defaulting to coercive tactics of rule, the weak state continues to alienate local young Eritreans who in response are overwhelmingly choosing flight as the best coping strategy. Utilizing draconian measures of rule, Eritrea under PFDJ rule has resulted in catastrophic developments – imminent conflict, an increasingly demoralized citizenry, the complete militarization of society, a crippled economy. In an article appearing in the New York Times entitled *Recalling La Dolce Vita in Eritrea,* a recent Eritrean escapee stated, "The problem with Eritrea is that half of my friends are in prison and the other half put them there!" (Gettleman 2008). As evidenced by this quote and component two of this portfolio, PFDJ's rule has intricately pit people against each other having serious implications on the social spheres of Eritrean life, both nationally and transnationally. More immediately however for a country with such a small population and facing the challenges it does, it simply cannot afford to house such a large reserve army or allocate as much as it does to military spending. In short, the problems plaguing Eritrea today are immense and closely fit the dominant imagery usually presented of the Horn region – that of poverty, utter chaos, state failure, dysfunctional politics, war, the absence of democracy and development, violence, corruption and the list can *easily* go on. The Eritrean state appears to be failing to respond to the needs and desires of its peoples.

(Re)assessing Eritrea: Matters Concerning Eritrea, the Region and the Continent

I pose the same question many Eritreans today are asking, and that is how exactly did *we* get here? How did Eritrea manage to go from being considered the beacon of hope for the region to 'revert' into the popular characterization of the 'failed African state' in less than two decades? In light of the findings of the preceding components of this portfolio, questions like these are legitimately posed.

I had the opportunity to meet and learn from prominent Eritreanist scholars at the 2011

African Studies Association annual meeting held in Washington, DC. One professor, genuinely taking the time to learn more about me and the topic of my research, took me aside to inquire more in depth. After sharing the elevator speech version of my research, the professor responded, "Very interesting, so you are studying Eritrean history." Hesitating, slightly uncomfortable with the way she had framed my research; I begged to reason, "well…" She continued confidently, "to study transnationalism means to study history." Indeed, she was right. One cannot study the contemporary transnational without studying some aspect of history. And to this end, I conclude by looking briefly at the origins of the Eritrean state not to make a point of it, but to point toward the root causes of seemingly contemporary localized issues. To avoid important historical context would be to fall victim to the 'danger of [a] single story' (Adichie 2009).

Tactics of divide and rule that have encouraged what Osabu-Kle (2000, p. 19) calls 'pockets of nationalism' have their rooting in colonial politics. Basil Davidson (1992) in his book *The Black Man's Burden* wrote,

> ...an analysis of Africa's troubles has also to be an inquiry into the process – the process, largely, of nationalism – that has crystallized the division of Africa's many hundreds of peoples and cultures into a few dozen nation-states, each claiming sovereignty against the others, and all of them sorely in trouble (p. 13).

As this above quote reminds, Africa has been in constant transition since the arrival of Europeans. The Berlin Conference of 1884 forcibly partitioned Africa into centralized states by amalgamating different nationalities for the purpose of imperial rule. Osabu-Kle argues the centralized European state, transplanted during the colonial period and remaining today, is alien to Africa, incompatible with African indigenous political culture and thus incapable of achieving the political conditions necessary for successful development in Africa. Writing on the colonial origins of the Eritrean state Welde Giorgis (2010) writes, "the postcolonial state is an alien implantation on African soil. It is encumbered by its European origins and the weight of its

colonial legacy. Its problems are compounded by palpable failures in nation building, state construction and development" (p. 2). We are also to be reminded that the 'culture of silence' (Iyob 1997) and 'politics of silence' (Reid 2009) that characterize contemporary Eritrean political culture have their roots in the colonial period where censorship was a necessity. With the exceptions of Eritrean and South Sudan, the continental map of Africa resembles exactly the artificial borders devised at the Berlin conference. The lasting legacy of colonialism thus remains intact.

With the roots of Eritrea lying in this contested past, Eritrea is not far removed from its colonial past. At the core of Eritrea's rhetoric of the liberation struggle however was an attempt to distance itself from colonialism.

> Eritrea was throwing off its colonial past, and rejecting the legacy left it by colonial rule; but of course 'liberation' itself, the very achievement of national independence, is in fact an integral part of that legacy, within in turn an inheritance of its own to bestow in future generations.
>
> (Reid 2005, p. 472)

Despite efforts by Eritrea and Ethiopia to dispel a colonial past, recurring 'border skirmishes' are evident of the lasting effects of colonialism in the region. For example, a major point of contention during the 1998-2000 war revolved around different versions of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border drawn by different colonial powers. Further, Eritrea's colonial history and struggle for independence debunks Ethiopia's claim to have never been colonialized. Critical analysis of this colonial history would perhaps allow analysts and natives of both countries to view contemporary political and social problems in a different light. Recognition that the localized and national issues faced are very much regionally intertwined and interlocked is illustrative of the need for a comprehensive approach toward not only Eritrea, but the region. The international community continually fails to meaningfully engage in the region as policies remain deeply

ineffective and incoherent (ie. Algiers Agreement of 2000). Today, the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia increasingly hardens in ways that have serious ramifications for the lives of people on both sides of the border (e.g. Sium 2010; Riggans 2011).

Signing Out

As Eritrea marked its 20th anniversary of independence in the midst of my researching and writing, it was a time of much reflecting for me. Engaging in the difficult task of making the familiar strange, I was able to complicate the unblemished, challenge the romanticized, come to terms with the ugly and discover optimism in the mundane. And in doing so, I have come to appreciate how Eritrean state-led transnationalism, though novel in some respects, is not as distinctive as I had always thought so.

Given the volatility of the region, with the most recent Ethiopian strike on Eritrean soil in March 2012, the region remains very volatile. In this context, making predictions about the future is very difficult. Military national service and mass exodus characterize contemporary Eritrea, as people at home have lost faith in the current government. What can be expected to continue is the Eritrean government's use of national security and regional instability as justification to prolong the delay in large-scale demobilization. Amidst such unsettled chaos, I was able to appreciate the political satire of young *warsai* Eritreans that in many ways "disrupt[ed] [the] sense of the 'normal run of things'" (Amoore 2006, p.341). The laughter in the politicized personal experiences proves in many ways to be the best coping strategy (Bleiker 2000). I close with one such example.

Over the past few years I have had the opportunity to travel quite frequently to the Horn of Africa, including several trips to Eritrea and its neighbouring countries. While without doubt, my analysis has been enriched by my interactions with Eritreans situated around the world, I

have always grappled my travelling privileges with tension. One day a few years back, as I frantically prepared for my departure from Uganda, a crowd of young Eritrean refugees came to see me off. All seemingly staring at me with what looked like envious eyes; one young man verbalized what I am positive everyone else had surely been thinking. Satirically he asked, "So, where to now?" Disregarding the question until I realized I could no longer, I responded swiftly trying to conceal the details of my flight itinerary, "England, Belgium and then home (Toronto)." Being by far the most outspoken of the group, he retorted wittingly, "*nhna Paradiso nMai Temenai mkad seina, beal nisiki kea alem Paradiso Mai Temenai gerkiya; kolel tibliya aleki -* People like me aren't able to travel from Paradiso to Maitemenai, and you - you travel the world [with ease] as if you are travelling between Paradiso and Maitemenai." Referencing his own experience of being raised in *Mai Temenai*, a neighbourhood just adjacent to *Paradiso* in Asmara, this young man makes a profound statement through which one can interpret not only differences in *beles-warsai* lived experience, but more broadly of the global geographies of power that structure states and people.

This also brings to light the complexities of resistance in transnational spaces marked by unequal power relations. People find themselves in ambivalent positions, for example being a "frequent flier and immigration rights campaigner" (Amoore 2006, p. 347). This project has truly challenged me to *remain* reflexive at all times in order to recognize the multiple roles I fulfil. Owing to the fluidity of and the (unequal) power dynamics inherent in transnational spaces, I have recognized how my positioning alters depending on where I am geographically situated, who I engage with and the terms upon which I engage. "In short, one can be truly creative and transformative, if one appreciates the multiplicity of projects in which social beings are always

engaged, and the multiplicity of ways in which those projects feed on, as well as collide with,

one another" (Ortner 2005, p. 62).

GLOSSARY

bado seleste: to refer to informal and unreliable information; i.e. to hear through the grapevine

beles: widely-eaten, locally grown cactus pear harvested during the local winter season; also used to refer to young diasporan Eritreans whose travel seasons coincide with the fruit's harvest season

blocko Godaif: geographical zone located at the southern perimeter of Asmara

Cathedra'le: St. Joseph's Cathedral; a large church located in downtown Asmara built during the time of Italian colonialism

deki Erey: children of Eritrea

ekub: indigenous community-based investment institution

gffa: military round-ups

Godena Harinet: Liberation Avenue; the main downtown street in Asmara, Eritrea

guwayla: musical gatherings; a party

hadami/t (plural: hademti): fugitive; escapee; deserter; used to imply betrayal

Haddish Harinet: New Freedom

hadera: an appeal to take care

hagerawiyan: nationalist

hezbi/hezbi Ertra: people/people of Eritrea

jemirom: they have started

kilte kab mi'e'tee: the portion of two from one hundred or 2%; common name attributed to the *2% Income Tax on Eritreans Working Abroad* policy

melkes: form of obituary used to indicate of mourning but not of a burial

merd'e: form of obituary used to indicate a burial will take place in Eritrea

qalsi: struggle; used to reference the Liberation Struggle

shiftanet: bandit or rebel activities "appearing throughout the precolonial history of the Eritrean highlands, usually as political rebels who retreated to inaccessible areas and built up an armed following that lived through banditry"[40]

t'alim: military training

warsai: term depicting the 'young fighter' derived from state discourse used to reference the generation born and/or raised in independent Eritrea

y'akil: it's enough

Zura n'Hagerka: "Know Your Country Tour" the name of the state organized country-tour; more directly translated as 'tour your country'

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[40] Connell, D., and Killion, T., 2010. *Historical Dictionary of Eritrea.* Scarecrow Press, p. 469.

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