

Bridget, Conley. *Memory from the Margins: Ethiopia's Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp 255.

This book consists of six chapters. The first chapter deals with the essence of ‘Memory from the Margins’. The second chapter discussed the ‘Ethiopian revolution and the Dergue Regime’s red terror (1974-1978)’. The third and fourth chapters also discuss post-Dergue ‘Transitional influences (1991-2005)’ and ‘the shape of memory (2003-2010)’. The fifth chapter covers the ‘Tour as traumatic performance, 2010 to present)’ and the last chapter concludes ‘on the memory and future transitions’.

First, I would like to appreciate the author for presenting us her book about one of the key chapters in modern Ethiopian political history: the history of Red Terror and its legacy on memory, history and quest for democracy, torture, trauma, survivor docent/victims, reconciliation, museum and transitional justice as well as the ideals ‘reform and revolution’. This book is timely and detailed in terms of discovering the Red Terror atrocities and survivors’ trauma and capturing similar experiences in other parts of the world. It also inspires open discussion on memory of traumatized Ethiopian citizens during the reign of Dergue (1974-1991) that was a less remembered chapter of Ethiopian history; the Red Terror and lessons to deal with today’s security and political challenges facing Ethiopia. Since 2015, Ethiopians are in their heyday of debating on the role of Ethiopian history and composition of societies, fundamental contradictions of nation building projects, understanding of power and the state’s right to use coercion that has been negatively affecting the hope of citizens about the prospects for democratic Ethiopia. Furthermore, the Ethiopians are also debating on the history and intents of the Dergue’s Red Terror; the support and opposition to the memorial museum and the slogan of ‘never ever again’; the inadequate studying of the brutality of the past; the teaching of the new generation to be ethical and moral; its role in relation to the democratic culture in today’s Ethiopia; the current mantra of transition and reform; and the closure of the notorious prison centers locally known as ‘Maekelawi’ and ‘Kerchele’ in 2019.

The book also discusses the interdisciplinary nature of the field of memory studies and transitional justice, cutting across such subjects as history, literary, sociology, anthropology, psychology and political science. In the first chapter the author comprehensively assesses comparable cases of Reigns of Terror in several countries and provides a sense of the differentiation of the purposes of transitional justice, memory, museum, different reconciliation commissions, truth telling and court trials. The book is enlightening as it clarifies the major concepts including Red; terror; decentralised violence; revolution; memory; memorialisation; museum; survivors; victim; docent; trauma; truth telling; and reconciliation commission; democracy; human rights; reform; transition; and state’s pretention for legitimacy via coercion.

Furthermore, the book interestingly articulates the dynamics of Ethiopian politics across regimes: the era of Emperor Haile Selassie (1916-1974), the Dergue’s military regime (1974-1991), the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) dominated Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front-EPRDF period (1991-2018), and the post-2018 EPRDF

leadership under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also locally known as Oro-mara-EPRDF. It discusses the role of the army since the 1960 coup and its interest in state power and politics; the dichotomies of Ethiopian revolution, counter-revolution idioms and the major questions that shaped the politics of the time; Ethiopian students' activism and social activism since 1960s.

The book analyses struggles against national oppression and class questions (armed and non-armed) among the different Ethiopian liberation forces including Ethiopian people's revolutionary party (EPRP), All Ethiopian socialist movements (locally known as MEISON), Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF- aka Jebha), Eritrean people's Liberation Front (EPLF- locally known as Shaebia), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that later evolved into EPRDF after the downfall of the Military Dergue Regime in 1991, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and many others. The discussion goes over such crucial elements as the Red Terror, decentralised violence, types of torture; Dergue's challenge to the Ethiopian political culture, moral and religious values (instrumentalization of fear, terror, distrusts, disrupting social fabric); the EPRDF reform and transition: its transitional justice; democratization (definition and objectives), challenge of human rights; the hopes and fears of post 2018 "reform and transition"- changes and continuities; Ethiopia's aspiration for national equality, development and the democratisation fatigue (*aspiration and reversal*).

The book also details accounts or memories of survivors or victims; torturer and tortured relations; solidarity in prison among prisoners of Red Terror; the Red Terror survivors and their desperate migration to the United States, Canada, Europe; the survivors; disruptions of life plan (pattern of life) and challenge of employment (joblessness, most of them fated to be elementary school teachers); legal struggles against their former torturers; and political and security changes in the host countries (as the Red Terror perpetrators got citizenship mainly in USA and Canada), which in turn complicated the victims' struggle to bring about justice in Ethiopia; the struggle to build the memorial museum; survivor-docents' challenge to work in the museum, tell their memories, forget or heal their wounds and build new ethical generation; and see democratic Ethiopia. This also covers efforts to ensure that the atrocities of red terror would not recur following the post-2015 protests in Ethiopia.

More importantly, the book also analysed the contending interpretations of visitors (from religious, moral, ethical, political, historical point of views) of the Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum (RTMMM) between Ethiopians and foreigners; Ethiopian old generation and new generation; Dergue opponents and supporters; EPRP opponents and Supporters; EPRDF supporters and opponents; survivor docents' pedagogical duties (building ethical generation) *visa viz*: work "difficulty" or "hate"; promoting the motto "Never again!". Furthermore, the role of martyrs memorial museum and memory in democracy, history and politics; need for comparative study of the Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Red terror martyrs museum against Dergue and Haile Selassie monuments are also discussed.

As the author of states and in my understudying of Ethiopian political history, the Red Terror was a special chapter in this history that changed forever the relationship between the Ethiopian state and its citizens (subjects including the tortured one and their families);

political cultural (including polarized- un-Ethiopian solution, winner-losers dichotomies); the concept of state sovereignty, the use of violence and coercion to eliminate opponents in the name of “summery justice” or transitional justices; role of the army in the state; pattern of life and so on); and consensus building; moral understanding; intergeneration integration (old and new); instruments of negotiation and conflict resolution (violence, anonymous grave, and dehumanisation *visa viz*: dialogue and compromise); willingness or stubborn of the Ethiopian generation to accept their failures for the purpose of reconciliation and healing and its implications are still remaining untransformed. It also changed the relationship between urban Ethiopia and rural Ethiopia: the rural Ethiopia served as battle field/shield and hosting centers for the insurgent movements fighting the governments in Menelik palace modeling after Chinese Long march.

This book argues that the failure to fully recognise the atrocities of Red Terror, the politics of memory and the memorial museum could undermine the role of history, museum and memory and willingness to face the national reality: lack of commitments for forgiveness and reconciliation, at least negotiation. Indeed, the author argued that the Ethiopian generations are not willing to openly recognise the agony of Red terror. But they are simply focusing on the distant agony, i.e. the failures of founding fathers like emperor Menelik, Yohannes-IV and Haile Selassie. The opponents of the EPRDF are also continuing to criticise the EPRDF’s transitional justice trial, RTMMM’s and its slogan of “never again” and even closure of *Maekelawi*.

This book also criticises the Abiy Ahmed led EPRDF’s appreciation of the Dergue military regime policies, *Ethiopia- first* nationalism and its symbols. This includes flag competition and Dergue’s dehumanising tactics against its opponents like anarchist, reactionaries, Arab mercenaries, anti-Ethiopian and by the same token, Abiy Ahmed also repeating the same dehumanising labeling against the Tigrayan opponents like “day hyena”, cancer, Tigrigna speakers. The author also criticises Hailemariam Desalegn’s (former Prime Minister of Ethiopia, 2012-2018) visit to Mengistu Hailemariam (who was responsible for the Red Terror atrocities) in Zimbabwe for his insensibility to the Red Terror victims .

Based on the foregoing review, it is safe to conclude that this book on the Ethiopian Red Terror memory and history is enlightening. It has profound implications for the post-2015 emerging security and political crisis in Ethiopia. This should be understood within the context that Ethiopia is facing unprecedented political and security crisis particularly after the ascension of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to power in April 2018 as the first Oromo prime minister in modern history of Ethiopia. Since April 2018, Ethiopia continues to dominate media as a leading country in internally displaced persons (IDPs), interethnic identity and religious conflicts. Ethiopia is recently branded as “failed state” characterised by a complex web of political and socio-economic ills. According to the author, the legacy of the Red Terror atrocities are not well understood by the Ethiopian citizens and even the RTMMM is still facing contradictory interpretations. The Red Terror history was the special era in the history of modern Ethiopian politics and quest for democratization. As a result it changed the Ethiopian political discourses forever and complicated the prospects for an inclusive multinational nation building. In generally, the Red Terror changed a prior understanding of the purpose of the state, government, citizenship in Ethiopia. Lastly, but not least, it is my well-considered view that this book deserves a place in any library that

prides itself with patrons that have an interest of African affairs.

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