



American-British rivalry in Ethiopia 1941-1945

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Abstract

The American-British competition and push during this period, especially the United States, to obtain strategic positions around the world formed an important basis in formulating the directions of American and British policy towards Ethiopia during that period, given the importance of the geopolitical position of Ethiopia and its reflection on American national security, with Ethiopia's desire to ally with The United States, to replace Britain to achieve its demands in Somalia and Eritrea, was an incentive to establish relevant political relations. Strategic dimensions between the two countries. The United States of America's preference for its relations with Ethiopia among the countries of the Horn of Africa is due to the presence of many common considerations and interests between them, as it sought to strengthen this relationship by concluding many treaties and agreements, including, for example, the Joint Defense Agreement in 1953, which allowed the United States of America used Eritrea's bases, in exchange for its commitment to providing the necessary military assistance to the Ethiopian Armed Forces. Ethiopia gradually moved away from Britain.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, Red Sea, Italian invasion.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Question of the Research

1. Was the United States of America able to achieve its goals in this vital region of East Africa?
- 2- What methods did the United States of America use to gain independence in Ethiopia?
- 3- Did Ethiopia succeed by providing facilities to the United States in obtaining aid from the United States?
4. Why did Britain abandon Ethiopia despite the efforts it made to liberate Ethiopia from Italian occupation?

1.2 Method of the Research

The researcher used the descriptive analytical method, where appropriate explanations and results can be extracted. Through the concept of the descriptive analytical method, the scientific researcher can also place different phenomena in comparisons between similar phenomena so that various data can

be collected about the differences and similarities between events regarding the American-British rivalry.

1.3 The scope of the study

The study's time frame was set from 1941, considering that this year, Ethiopia was able to liberate itself from the Italian invasion. The end of the research was set in 1945, considering that it represents the end of World War II and the beginning of a new phase in the international conflict, represented by the Cold War.

1.4 The procedures of the study

1. Explaining the importance of Ethiopia's location and its role in the conflict
2. Clarifying the methods used by the United States to influence Ethiopia.
3. Explaining the repercussions of this competition on the Ethiopian reality

2.2 Historical background

Ethiopia is located within the Horn of Africa region of strategic importance. Its population is a mixture of different nationalities, speaking approximately seventy languages and two hundred dialects. Its area is (1.22) million square kilometers, covering different geographical regions and climates, including high mountains and deep depressions, forests, plains, and deserts. Great diversity of animal and plant life (Berket H. S.1980:22).

Ethiopia was subjected to the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, who ascended to the throne amidst sharp political and religious divisions. Through his courage and strength of character, he was able to overcome and eliminate his opponents one after another, especially the old, influential military leaders in remote areas of the country (mumtaz. A,1975:465).

Haile Selassie seized power in his country with an iron hand. He ruled the country with a dictatorial rule for fifty-seven years, including thirteen years as regent during the rule of Empress Zauditu and forty-four years after his inauguration as her successor after her death. His rule was very strict and his dominance extended. Until it included every spot and village in his country, despite its vast area and rugged nature, no matter was implemented, throughout the long period of his rule, except with his personal consent and approval (1975:465).

Haile Selassie drafted the first constitution for Ethiopia in 1931, and he is credited with fighting the slave trade in Ethiopia. He led his country's army to confront the Italian invasion of his country in 1935, but he was defeated in the face of the superiority of the enemy's armies, so he took refuge in Britain in 1936, and stayed there until 1941 when he returned and began to mobilize the Ethiopians. He urges them against the Italian enemy until he is finally able to regain his throne with the help of the British (1988).

After his return to power in May 1941, Emperor Haile Selassie sought diligent courtship from the American political decision-making establishment, seeking to attract the support of the United States of America for him in all fields. Thus, Ethiopia became a scene of the struggle for hegemony between Britain and the United States of America. Emperor Haile Selassie tried Following a policy of holding the stick from the middle towards them and allowing them to invade the country politically and economically and then integrate Ethiopia into global capitalism (Haitham, 2019).

3. The beginning of American-British interest in Ethiopia

After six years of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941), Emperor Haile Selassie was able to liberate his country in March 1941, thanks to the support of the British forces, who were responsible for the largest part of the liberation process (Mahmoud.S:23).

British support was not for the sake of justice for the cause of the Ethiopian people who fell victim to the fascist aggression, but rather, it came as a result of purely colonial aspirations. Britain did not want to abandon Ethiopia during the war for fear of the occurrence of a political vacuum in it. In addition, it wanted to maintain its transportation route with India and the Far East via the Red Sea route (Harold. M:1994:98); on the other hand, the emperor's government did not have an interest in the disappearance of the British military administration, because it needed the support of major powers as a result of its unstable political, military and financial situation, even though the emperor doubted the British colonial intentions (1975:295).

After the liberation process, Britain became the supreme authority in the country, and this was confirmed through the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement concluded on January 31, 1942. Although it recognized that Ethiopia was an independent state, it gave the British a free hand in Ethiopian affairs, so they penetrated into the country. All aspects of the state, most of the advisors to the Ethiopian ministries were British, and all means of communication became under their control, even those of the emperor, as well as air and land transportation and no other airlines, were allowed to operate in Ethiopia except British Airways (Bahru. Z:2001:13).

The British consul in Ethiopia had special importance and was superior to the rest of the consuls from other countries. Despite all these privileges that took away the will of the Ethiopians to manage the affairs of their state, Britain considered it a legitimate entitlement due to its contribution to the war, and therefore, from its point of view, it did not represent... In violation of Ethiopian sovereignty, John Spencer (John. S:13-14).

The privileges that Britain maintained in Ethiopia constituted restrictions on the Ethiopian government, but in return, Britain played a major role in rehabilitating the country in all areas of infrastructure, training the army, reforming the monetary system, and financial aid. This assistance led to the Ethiopian government regaining its ability to control. On the state (Tekle. A:1994:170).

In the military field, the British government pledged to reorganize and train the Ethiopian army, at its expense, and the emperor was forced to agree to Britain retaining the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Ethiopian Armed Forces temporarily, but on the other hand, he worked to reduce his military dependence on Britain, as he revived the Imperial Guard, which are the units which continued to train according to the French method, unlike the rest of the army units, and had no relationship with the army that was trained by Britain, and had chosen most of its men from the aristocratic families that allied with it. In addition to that, there were local paramilitary units that were subject to the supervision of the regional governors. different (Keller E:1985,79).

While Emperor Haile Selassie accepted British support, he was at the same time afraid of the British colonial intentions. Many incidents occurred between the Ethiopians and the British army, especially on the border areas between Ethiopia and the Somali border areas controlled by Britain. In addition, the emperor felt that Britain represents an obstacle to his ambitions to control the regions surrounding Ethiopia, especially with Britain's great interest in Ethiopia, which is represented in the waters of the

Nile River, 85% of which comes from Ethiopia to reach Sudan and Egypt, which are under British occupation (Perham. M,1948:396).

As a result, Emperor Haile Selassie sought to get rid of the iron grip of the British, by expanding his circle of relations with the countries of the outside world. He tried to strengthen his relations with the United States of America. The emperor was not afraid of the colonial ambitions of the United States, which had no precedents in this field, as mentioned above. Rather, he was attracted to its continuous calls for a commitment to supporting the colonized peoples and granting them the right to self-determination, although these slogans were unrealistic and came in order to beautify the image of the United States of America in the mirror of the outside world.

4. The American-Ethiopian alliance

As for the United States of America, after entering World War II, strategic necessities dictated the foundations of its foreign policy towards the Horn of Africa region in general, to confront the military expansion of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The Roosevelt administration announced that Ethiopia was eligible to be included in the military aid program. Known as "Lend and Lease" in March 1941, in order to strengthen the British forces present in the region, and also those present in North Africa, specifically in Libya and Egypt, against the German forces, so the Horn of Africa region, including Ethiopia, entered this equation as a collection point and distribution center. American aid(John. R,1973:22).

The focal point of the loan-lease effort was Eritrea, adjacent to the Red Sea, which housed the communications station in Asmara, used by Italian forces, called Radio Marina, which proved important in World War II. As a result of this importance, the United States cooperated with Britain began developing the communications station in Asmara, and it began to receive messages in six or more languages related to military correspondence between the allied forces. An American company also implemented a series of military projects in Eritrea, so a factory was established in the area. Gura, and workshops for repairing military equipment in Asmara, and the port of Massawa was paved to become a base for repairing Allied warships (1973:28), and the distinctive coastal location of Eritrea gave the ability to continue opening sea lanes to Europe and North America with East Africa and the Arabian Gulf through the Suez Canal (1973:29).

American interest in Eritrea increased. By August 1942, there were more than three thousand American soldiers and civilians stationed in Eritrea, and the American army had employed more than thirteen thousand local residents to work in the service of the forces stationed there. The American Consulate was also opened in Asmara(1994:12).

The United States of America became more interested in Ethiopia as the importance of the Radio Marina station became clear. The US State Department prepared a report stating that Emperor Haile Selassie should be supported regarding Eritrea or part of it. The head of the US Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Wallace Murray, also sent a report to US Undersecretary of State Sumner Wells. The report included details about the British-Ethiopian agreement of 1942, the status of British control in Ethiopia, and stressed the need for Washington to reopen its consulate in Ethiopia (Wayne. A:2010:16), Emperor Haile Selassie also sent his personal representative, Ato Tesfaye Tegagn, To the headquarters of the American Consulate in Asmara, to inquire whether the United States was considering restoring its diplomatic relations with Ethiopia, and communications continued between the two sides, as Talbot Simth, head of the American Consulate in Asmara, visited Emperor Haile Selassie and prepared a report on the situation in Ethiopia, and via Haile Selassie He expressed his annoyance at the tyrannical British

encroachments on his country's sovereignty, and presented him with a detailed memorandum explaining that (2010:17).

There is a problem related to relations between Washington and Addis Ababa, many difficulties on the part of the British, and the only channel of communication with the Ethiopians was through the British Peninsula in Ethiopia, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Liberty is preparing, for the European Commission, to provide the official communication mission to the Ethiopian officials in Addis Ababa, and this means The notification should be issued through the British Consulate, which delayed issuing the notification, and in the end the Administrative Commission was opened in Addis Ababa on August 31, 1943 (2010:117).

Emperor Haile Selassie began his quest to balance the British presence by establishing strong relations with the United States of America. He sent a letter to US President Franklin Roosevelt in 1943 assuring him that Ethiopia would do anything in its power to support the Allied efforts. Roosevelt responded to him with a letter in which he assured Haile Selassie of his sympathy with Ethiopia. Which met a ruthless enemy (Italy)(Pull. B,2000,235), although a few years ago he rejected Haile Selassie's request for asylum in the United States, as we mentioned before, when he was residing in Britain.

Emperor Haile Selassie took another initiative to contact the United States of America. He took advantage of the opportunity of holding the World Food Conference in Virginia in May 1943, so he sent Finance Minister Yilma Deressa as his representative to request American support in several matters, including: concluding a new agreement with Britain replaced the 1942 agreement, which he complained had turned Ethiopia into a British colony, and sent an American expert in legal affairs to help draft the new treaty(Gohn:17).

In October 1943, the United States of America returned John Spencer to Ethiopia to be an advisor to the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Holcomb and Ibssa,1990:220), who had previously worked as an advisor to the emperor before the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and his personal companion while he was in London and the writer of his memoirs and letters (1990:222), The delegation also requested experts in financial affairs, so the United States sent George Blowers as director of the Ethiopian Bank, in order to organize financial matters. Yilma also requested American experts to train his citizens on the use of abandoned Italian agricultural machinery, and medical missions to train Ethiopian women, In this field, also establishing industrial and mineral exploitation projects, and obtaining access to the Red Sea via Eritrea(1994:19)

In May 1944, the United States sent the Perry Fellows mission to Ethiopia to study its economic, agricultural, and mineral potential, which laid the foundation for American intervention in Ethiopia, which published its observations on the Ethiopian economy in 1947, and these observations were the basis for the Fourth Point Agreement that was signed between the United States. And Ethiopia in 1951 (2001:184).

Despite the difficult financial situation facing the Ethiopian government, in September 1944, Haile Selassie presented a group of buildings and facilities requested by the United States to its legation in Addis Ababa as a gift. These buildings were imperial property. In addition, he presented another gift to the American administration, which was a huge list of Movable and antiques (1975:66).

One of the goals that the emperor sought to achieve in his relations with the United States of America was to increase the size and efficiency of his armed forces. The number of the Ethiopian army at that time was approximately twenty-seven thousand soldiers, most of whom were irregular, but he was

planning to have sufficient forces to achieve his expansionist ambitions. To ensure the internal security of his country(1985:87).

The United States of America exerted pressure on the British government to amend the terms of the 1942 agreement, on the basis that the dangers of war had moved away from that region, and these American measures were only the beginning of its attempt to obtain for itself rights and privileges to become the most favored nation in Ethiopia (2001:70).

Britain resisted initial attempts to renegotiate the 1942 agreement, and the main factor for this rejection was Ethiopia's desire to obtain the Ogaden region, which represents a third of Ethiopia's area, matched by British insistence on keeping it under the pretext that this region is necessary for the needs of the war against Japan, and to support the United States, which It conducts major military operations in the Pacific, but as a result of pressure from the United States, Britain recognizes its military administration for that region without having an impact on the rights related to the exploitation of the mineral wealth and groundwater sources present in this region, which will become Ethiopian ownership. This British recognition had removed the obstacles in front of American companies to operate in this region, and Britain and the Allies also reserved the right to use their air forces in Airspace in Ethiopia regardless of Ethiopian instructions (1985:132).

Britain was forced to sign a new agreement on January 1, 1944, and it seemed to be more suitable for Ethiopian sovereignty, as it declared diplomatic equality between London and Addis Ababa. The British military mission even signed under the authority of the Ethiopian Minister of Defense, and liberated Ethiopia from any form of dependency. Britain's political policy, and restored the situation in Ethiopia to what it was before the Italian invasion in 1935 (1994:54).

In the military field, the United States of America agreed to Haile Selassie's request to provide him with weapons, despite Britain's strong objection on the grounds that this constitutes a threat to the security and safety of the British in East Africa. It provided an arms shipment that included five thousand rifles, five military vehicles, and twelve 37 mm cannons. And four 75 mm cannons, machine guns, as well as a quantity of ammunition. All of this military equipment arrived in Ethiopia in January 1945 through the port of Djibouti (1985:76).

At the beginning of 1945, Emperor Haile Selassie asked to meet with US President Roosevelt during his return from the Yalta Conference. Roosevelt suggested to him that the meeting take place in Egypt. Accordingly, the emperor left on board an American military plane (DC-3), and Haile Selassie met with him. On February 13, 1945, on board the American destroyer Quincy, in the Bitter Lakes of the Suez Canal(1990:123).

Emperor Haile Selassie submitted a memorandum to President Roosevelt in which he focused on six topics that represented the core of Ethiopia's strategic goals. John Spencer, the American advisor to the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was the one who prepared it. Among his demands was that Ethiopia play a role in drafting the Charter of the United Nations and participate in The peace conference in Paris, which was decided to be held to establish final settlements for the war, also requested the support of the United States of America for the rapid return to the Ogaden region, which was subject to British military administration. He also requested US support to obtain concessions from France regarding the joint railway line between Ethiopia and French Somalia (1975:59), and presented a new list of requests for weapons, communications and transportation equipment, and finally He informed Roosevelt of Ethiopia's need for access to the sea, and when Roosevelt inquired about which ports would serve this Ethiopian demand, Haile Selassie replied that Djibouti was the best port, because of

its connection to Ethiopia by railway, but Ethiopia's main interest would be to claim the ports of Eritrea, but the emperor found it difficult. In claiming Djibouti, which is occupied by France, one of the victorious countries in the war, he transferred his demands to Eritrea. He also tried to prove Ethiopia's right to the Ogaden region by granting the American company Senclair the rights to explore it, but the president The American Roosevelt was not enthusiastic at that time about the demands for Ethiopian military assistance or diplomatic support, as the war had not yet ended in Europe or the Far East, despite the clear decline of German forces in Europe and the war approaching its end there (2000:45).

It can be said that Ethiopia began to gain increasing interest from the United States of America after it became clear the importance of its strategic location during the period of World War II. This is evident through the American role in removing the British presence from Ethiopia in a way that ensures the achievement of its interests. On the other hand, Emperor Haile Selassie sought to strengthen He maintained his relationship with the United States, especially since he was aware that it would be the dominant global power in the post-war period, in order to achieve his goals.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The study of the foreign policy of great countries, such as the United States of America and Britain, has gained special importance in the field of historical studies, especially since it is considered one of the global policies with unique characteristics due to its ramifications and extension to various parts of the world, as it has multiple visions and considerations, some of which are constant and some of which are variable. It is worth Noting that the American and British foreign policy towards any country in the world must always stem from their global interests and goals on the one hand and the importance of the country concerned with that policy on the other hand. Therefore, the features of the American and British policy towards Ethiopia were determined based on the importance of its geopolitical location, which has become a vital matter from American national security's perspective, especially after World War II's end and the emergence of signs of war.

5.2 Suggestion for Further Studies

1. Developing countries like Ethiopia should establish relationships on a peer-to-peer basis.
2. There are no permanent friendships between countries, but rather interests. Therefore, countries must rely on their internal resources
3. Relations between countries shall be based on mutual respect and consideration of the interests of their people.
4. Reduce military spending and use it in economic projects and development instead of shedding more blood.

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