Regional Integration for Peace and Development In the Horn of Africa

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Definition of Terms:
Federation can be defined as a system of government that is based on the sharing of power at the central, provincial, and the local level, each of which retains control of its own internal affairs. The federal government has exclusive control over such responsibilities as foreign affairs, national security, defense, foreign trade, currency and banking, federal transport and communications, education, public health and environmental affairs. The signing of internationally binding agreements is usually the responsibility of the federal government. To that end, essential revenue would be made available to the federal government to discharge its share of duties.

Confederation is an association of sovereign states, which surrender specific powers for specific purposes. Otherwise, all powers are retained by member states, which enjoy relative independence. They usually cooperate in matter of defence and foreign affairs and enjoy the advantage of free trade and economic cooperation in a wide area. The forum for addressing the causes of conflicts and resolving them peacefully is usually provided. Confederation is a step towards a higher level of political and economic integration, including federation. It would be easier to withdraw from a confederation than from a federation.

Growth entails an increase in output, or a net addition to the existing stock of capital or labour. But you can have growth without development.

Development implies, in addition to growth, improvement in the social, political and human condition in society. It means increasing possibilities in education, public health, housing, transport, and employment opportunities for the population. Respecting the rights of women is critical. Children too have rights. Reversing environmental degradation has also become an integral part of the development scenario. In the context of the Horn of Africa, development implies settlement of nomads; afforestation and reforestation of the land; substantial decrease in the number of internally displaced persons as well as of refugees; acquiring food security; provision of water supply, electricity, and housing; transport expansion; including educational and health facilities. A fair regional allocation of development funds is a must for a leadership to acquire legitimacy. In the case of Ethiopia, however, in the last 26 years, by breaking the principle of what economists recommend as ‘regional balance’, some 32% of all new industries have been opened in what is called Oromia, and only 4% in what is referred to as Amhara. In the same way, some 15 hospitals were opened in Tigray, whereas in the Gondar region, which has a higher population than Tigray, only one referral hospital has been built for a population of seven million.

Cooperation should be understood to mean coordination, harmonization and institutionalization of inter-state activities for the purpose of facilitating integration.

Integration stands for closely knit political and economic relationships. In its political sense, it means strong cohesiveness within a social group, and political integration is present when a governmental unit of some sort is cohesive. On the other hand, economic integration is a process by which discrimination along existing national borders is progressively removed between two or
more countries. Confederation, federation, free trade area, customs unions, common market, and so on, are all means of integration.\textsuperscript{vi}

**Synopsis**

Integration at the sub-regional or regional level can contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability. It can also promote the mobilization of resources for growth and development over a wide area. Moreover, it can contribute to the reduction of external interference in what a sub-region/region considers an internal affair. Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia which make-up the Horn of Africa sub-region, have a combined area of some 2 million square kms and a total population that is slightly over 100 million. Apart from geographic proximity, these countries have also very close cultural and historical affinity, as well as economic interdependence. Any serious development in any one of them, will have grave consequences for the peace and stability of the others. They belong to the category of what the United Nations identifies as the “Least Developed” of the developing world. They are all confronted with the same problems of growth and development, same challenges in fighting poverty, illiteracy, hunger, mass displacement and technical backwardness.

Based on some exploratory research done, this paper proposes that the four countries of the sub-region give priority to carrying out fundamental structural changes in all sectors in order to promote stability, development and viability. The provinces in each country should have the power of legislation that is relevant to their needs. Moreover, the creation of a federal system of government embracing the four countries will go a long way in addressing long standing problems. Such a federation should have a federal assembly, integration of the armed forces, amalgamation of diplomatic services, the use of a common currency, and the management of federal roads, railways, ports, airports, and the like by a central authority. Experts from the four countries can do the technical aspects of the job. In this regard, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, for example, shares this view. He says that in a sub-region that is dogged in poverty, there is no need to have different armies and embassies for Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti. [Somalia’s internal conditions being understandable.]

The four countries can jointly request the International Monetary Fund [ IMF] to establish a currency clearing mechanism allowing businesses to pay for goods in either country’s local currency or medium of exchange.\textsuperscript{vii} Integration will relieve resources and make it possible for them to finance other critically important sectors that would have multiplier effects. One may argue that the use of local currency does not mean that it can buy goods and services abroad. True, but it can also finance many projects that do not need foreign currency for implementation. Besides, the sub-region will continue to participate in international trade. In that way, it would be fully engaging in long term growth and development efforts.

**Ethiopia’s Potential:**

According to the late Professor Said Samatar, “When the mother goose of Japan took off economically in the post-war era, the goslings of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, and may be even Malaysia, woke up to fly to the honking of mother goose, Japan. Naturally, Ethiopia is the great Mother Goose of the Horn for the reasons sketched in this study. Therefore, the proposition considers Ethiopia as the primary country in the sub-region, around which hangs the destiny of the rest. Given appropriate leadership, Ethiopia can be nudged into an economic liftoff, perhaps the goslings of Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia may be stimulated into following its lead. But Ethiopia would have to earn it by proving [ itself]. This view, therefore, calls on the international community to make Ethiopia’s economic transformation the priority global agenda.”\textsuperscript{viii}
Djibouti and Ethiopia have road, railway and electricity links. Both strongly believe in integration. Djibouti makes some $1 billion in revenue from rental and port service payments. It is expanding its facilities and is building new ports to meet Ethiopia’s growing needs. Ethiopia is to take a stake on Djibouti port, and Djibouti is to invest in any sector of the Ethiopian economy. Somaliland stresses the importance of economic integration with Ethiopia. To that end, the Togo Wuchale – Berbera road is being built by the UAE at the cost of some $90 million. DP WORLD has 51% of the ownership of the shares of the port of Berbera, while Somaliland will own 30% of the shares, and Ethiopia will have 19%. Before 1998, Ethiopia and Eritrea enjoyed a common market. However, because of a protracted dispute that led to war, they had cut off relations. Now, at long last, relations have improved. The leaders have come to an agreement to work for the integration of the sub-region. This, by itself, is very positive and encouraging because it opens several avenues for cooperation for mutual benefit. In that context, access to the ports of Massawa and Assab would be cost effective for Ethiopia because of competition from other ports. As we will see later, a series of agreements have, likewise, been signed between Somalia and Ethiopia.

By virtue of its geographic location, physical size, and the complementary nature of its resources, no doubt, Ethiopia could have played, as Professor Samatar postulates, a highly significant role as a lynchpin of integration and transformation of the sub-region. But unfortunately, it lacks the required leadership that is equal to the challenges that lie ahead. The country is being beset with ethnic tension. It is being wrecked by violence, terror, death by the thousands and destruction of property. The single cause of all this tragedy happens to be the policy of ethnicity that has become the modus operandi of the state. It was copied blindly from some European countries by thoughtless and unimaginative leaders and political activists. In Ethiopia itself, ethnicity continues to impede the optimum harnessing of human and non-human resources. It fosters parochial relationships and encourages nepotism and corruption. It lingers to slow down the development of rational and efficient forms of political and economic administration. It has also become a serious barrier to factor mobility. The Horn of Africa is also a sub-region where common population groups straddle across common boundaries and spill over across international borders. As Sarah Vaughan [Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia {2003}, p.15], views it correctly, Ethiopia’s ethnic policy which bases legal, political, economic and administrative issues with enflaming passions, is to say the least, irresponsible and reckless. Its neighbours have publicly expressed their serious concerns.

Until and unless the existing constitution, as well as the apartheid system is revoked, and ethnicity stamped out as the ideology of the state, there will never be peace in Ethiopia. Global actors with divergent interests, who have an axe to grind, and who have planted their local agents, are busy adding fuel to the flame. The Ethiopian people should close ranks to resist the encroachments and come out intact. Provincialism than ethnicity has been the dominant feature of identity in Ethiopian history. In fact, most Ethiopians being products of mixed marriages, identify with their lands of birth. Multi-ethnic provincial identities were affirmative. Even in more modern times, uprisings against governments were not ethnic based. The rebellions in such provinces as Tigray, Gondar, Wollo, Gojjam, Bale, Sidamo, or the Ogaden, were based on a combination of various factors, but not ethnic. Today, however, provincialism is being attacked by warlike ethnocentric individuals and groups, who play the ‘tribal’ game to use it as a short-cut to power. At the end of the day, restoring Ethiopia’s historic provinces and administering them on democratic basis, no doubt, will be in the best interest of the people, and promotes the peace and stability of the country.

The 1974 Manifesto of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), claimed that the organization’s first task was to establish an independent Democratic Republic of Tigray. What was to be the financial basis of the proposed state is still quite a mystery. Some 75% of the
province’s budget is still covered by Addis Ababa. The TPLF also announced that it will support the struggle of all “nationalities” in Ethiopia to have the right to self-determination, including secession. It did so not to promote the well-being of the common man, but for self-serving ends. First, to weaken Pan-Ethiopian nationalism, and secondly, to recruit ethicized militants from other provinces who could easily be manipulated to do its bidding, and lastly, in the interest of the Machiavellian dictum of divide and rule. When the TPLF insisted that the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front [EPLF] should permit Eritreans the right to self-determination, in effect disintegration, the EPLF leadership was simply pissed off. It retaliated by cutting off its relations with the TPLF and blocked all its passage to the outside world through Eritrea. Bewildered and desperate, while looking for alternative outlets to the Sudan, the TPLF entered Wolkait by accident and occupied it by force - killing, or evicting, or imprisoning some 70, 000 of the inhabitants, and then settling 500,000 peasant farmers from Tigray, its own refugees from the Sudan, and TPLF soldiers. The irony of it all is that despite the available historical evidence, the TPLF leaders still claim that Wolkait has been a territory of Tigray. This is being pronounced even when the inhabitants themselves are saying that they are not Tigreans and have never been part of Tigray.

The America Way of Integration:

Let us briefly examine American and European methods of integration to see if there is anything that could be applicable to the Horn of Africa. To begin with, the Americans gave priority to political and administrative union, and on the umbrella of that union, to promote industrialization and economic integration. Hence, after gaining their independence from colonial Britain in 1776, the 13 former colonies ratified the current constitution in 1788, and ultimately, they came to be inspired by a vision of ‘Divine Providence’, called “manifest destiny,” which triggered the right to expand from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. To that end, westward, expansion was to result in the creation of states like Wisconsin and Illinois. The entire area from North Dakota to Louisiana was bought from France in 1803 for some $15 million. War with Mexico (1846-1848), and the annexation of Texas (1865) was to lead to the creation of more new states like California, Utah and Nevada. Finally, Alaska was purchased (1867) from the Russians for $7.5 million. At the end of the Civil War (1860-1865), and Re-construction [ 1865-1879], spurred by incredible determination, industrialization continued. The process took place in a system resembling autarchy, which imposed huge tariffs on imports to protect domestic industry. When, in 1853, the USA sent, the naval commander, Commodore Perry to Japan on an “open door policy,“ it was not difficult to see that America was already flexing its muscles.

The European Way of Integration:

European integration gave priority to economic integration first. Once that was achieved, to go into political union. If we limit the discussion to economics, there is what David Ricardo termed as ‘comparative advantage” – the ability to produce a given commodity at lower cost when compared to others. There are also what economists call ‘economies of scale’ -that is- the need for a larger market which permits mass production of goods than is possible within a limited domestic market. In a free trade area, internal tariffs are either considerably reduced or completely abolished. Each member state keeps its own tariffs when it comes to third parties. A customs union abolishes internal tariffs and uses a common external tariff based on arithmetic average. On the other hand, in a common market, there is the use of a common currency, and mobility of capital and labour. Economic union implies a single market, a common currency, free movement of capital and labour, as well as harmonization of monetary and fiscal policies. The establishment of European Coal and Steel Community (1950), the European Parliament (1952), the creation of the European Economic Community (1957), the European Customs Union (1968),
the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) which established the European Union as well as the Euro, are all
watersheds in the economic and political integration of Europe.\textsuperscript{xiv}

Calls for Federation / Confederation of the Horn of Africa:

Emperor Haile Selassie was among the first to describe the sub-region as a natural economic unit.
In fact, as early as 1958, he proposed a federation between Ethiopia and Somaliland. A year later,
he requested the USA to support an association of Ethiopia, Sudan and Somaliland. \textsuperscript{v} In 1961,
the President of Somalia, Aden Abdullah Osman had expressed his willingness to join Ethiopia in
a federation, if the Ogaden were made available to Somalia.\textsuperscript{xxi}

A decade later, President Fidel Castro, who chaired a meeting in Aden between Ethiopia,
Somalia and South Yemen in March 1977, had proposed a federation between the three countries
– a proposal that Ethiopia and Yemen accepted, but which Siad Barre, the President of Somalia,
flatly rejected, and launched an unprovoked and pre-mediated aggression against Ethiopia, in
order to annex the Ogaden province. However, the irony of it all is that, in a meeting which took
place in Djibouti in March 1988, the same Siad Barre, renounced all of Somalia’s territorial
claims against Ethiopia and agreed to cooperate in the demarcation of that section of the common
border that had not been demarcated.\textsuperscript{xvii} The Eritrean leader, Isaias Afeworki, too, did propose a
confederation with Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia. \textsuperscript{xxii} The leaders of the Djibouti Movement
Populaire de Liberation, which changed its name to Front Democratique de Liberation de
Djibouti, look at their country’s future in relation to the federation of the countries of the Horn of
Africa.\textsuperscript{xxii}

The Scholars:

According to Tom Farer, the political divisions of the Horn of Africa are potentially symbiotic.
Therefore, some form of confederation between Ethiopia and Somalia should be worked out. \textsuperscript{xx}
For Roy Pateman, there are strong enough political and economic imperatives that make a North
East African Common Market the long- term future of the region. A stable Ethiopia would bring
stability to the whole region. A voluntary federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea seems likely. \textsuperscript{xxi}
Likewise, I.M. Lewis believes that the most viable long - term solution would seem to lie in some
form of a federation between Somalia and Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{xxii}

Sub-Regional Cooperation/ Integration:

A Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Cooperation between Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea was
signed in Asmara, Eritrea on September 5, 2018. The Declaration affirms that the three countries
shall build closely political, economic, social, and security ties, and promote regional peace and
security. To that end, they established a joint High-Level committee to coordinate their efforts.
The second meeting of the three leaders took place in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, (November 9-10,
2018), where they agreed to work for peace and the integration of the Horn of Africa. The
question of respecting the territorial integrity of Somalia and the lifting of sanctions against
Eritrea was also discussed. Their third meeting was in Mogadishu, Somalia, where the need for
building the common infrastructure was, among other things, considered. The conflict between
Eritrea and Djibouti was resolved in a meeting in Jeddah, chaired by King Salman of Saudi
Arabia. \textsuperscript{xxiii}

At the political level, as we have seen, there are agreements between the leaders which indicate
their willingness to work for sub-regional integration. That, by itself, is indeed very encouraging
– a cause for cautious optimism. If the policy declarations were to be backed with action, political
ties can be strengthened, and the required institutional structures could be created for coordination
and harmonization of policies.
Should the process of integration in the Horn of Africa go the European way, or the American way? Or should it be a combination of both? The truth is, foreign models should not be copied blindly because they will not work. At this stage, creativity and innovation would be more appropriate and commendable in order to respond to objective conditions. The different ways and methods with which each country approaches its problems lead inevitably to the development of a vast array of methods and techniques which would enable them to learn from one another. In that context, sub-regional cooperation should be considered as a means for a higher degree of national development and as a stepping stone to sub-regional integration.

For Meles Zenawi, the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, there is no connection between development and democracy. Indeed, “development is a political process first and an economic and social process later. It is the creation of a political set-up that is conducive to accelerate development that sets the ball of development rolling”. The new Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, seems liberal minded. It appears that he supports free enterprise and free competition in the market place of ideas. Nevertheless, these two differing approaches to development need to be debated.

Infrastructural Cooperation:

The United Nations as well as the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), have recommended regional cooperation and integration in order to overcome underdevelopment. The boosting of regional integration to encourage sustainable development happens to be one of the World Bank’s strategies. In this connection, let us raise the following questions: will OECD member countries provide technical assistance to the Horn of Africa sub-regional group in the various fields in which it may be desired? Could some of the accepted rules of international trade be adjusted in favour of such groups? Would they provide financial assistance at strategic points to ease the difficulties that may arise in the extension of the economy? If the response is yes, perhaps, the Secretary General of the United Nations could take the initiative to help raise funds to finance some of the projects that have been identified. He could also appoint one of the specialized agencies of the U.N., such as the UNDP, as a coordinating and implementing agency.

Infrastructural cooperation is a preliminary necessity for any effective cooperation between these countries with the view to promote trade and development. For example, Somalia exports livestock, sorghum, corn, bananas, fish and so on. Eritrea exports livestock, sorghum, fish, textiles, and so on. Djibouti’s exports are mostly Ethiopian products. Ethiopia exports diverse products, but it is not something based on which one would want to propose sub-regional trade. Their national economies [Ethiopia excepted] are small. They are not being helped by the diminutive size of their populations and internal markets. Each country differs in its capacities, in its endowment of resources, in the scale of its internal market and its export possibilities. Nevertheless, lack of factor endowments can be compensated for by some commonly acceptable arrangements.

Construction of the infrastructure will make little sense if there is limited trade amongst the countries themselves. The more so, when these countries have more contact with the outside world, than with themselves. Since our objective is to reverse the situation, the ubiquitous role of trade in virtually all cooperative efforts should not be minimized. Consequently, we should not view the importance of trade in separation from the other sectors of the economy, be it industry, agriculture, energy, transport, or human resources. Trade is being stressed here not because trade by itself can create the necessary environment for accelerated growth and development, but because it is an indispensable instrument in virtually all programmes of cooperation for development. There may be articles of which there is surplus production over and above domestic needs of a given country, but which are being imported from outside the sub-region. There may
also be articles of which production in one of the countries of the sub-region, small at present, because of the small domestic market, but which would increase in proportion to the expansion of the sub-regional market. Effects from economies of scale can be expected and larger markets created.

We will shortly view some vitally important projects, for the realization of which, cooperation between these countries, as well as the international community would be needed. They are identified for pre-feasibility studies. Project cooperation is for future output. It does require time to mature. Its initial impact is, in fact, in arousing expectations regarding future opportunities, rather than on immediate returns.

**Proposals for Co-operation and Co-operation**

1. Ethiopia’s electricity production potential is as follows: hydro-electric [50,000 MW]; geo-thermal [10,000 MW], wind [800 MW], and solar energy [100 MW]. Its current electricity installed capacity production is 4, 280 MW. In 2019-2020, this is to be raised to 17, 561 MW. By then, Ethiopia should have the capacity to provide electricity to all its neighbours including Eritrea and Somalia that had not been included in the establishment of grid links for power export. While total consumption was 315.30 million kWh for Somalia, it was 353.90 million kWh for Eritrea, 377.10 million kWh for Djibouti, and 9.05 billion kWh for Ethiopia.[WorldData.info]

2. Every year Ethiopia loses some $300 million through un-official border crossing trade. However, given collaborative efforts by its neighbours, such an amount could be recovered to help finance some projects of a sub-regional nature.

3. Ethiopia currently spends 80% of its hard currency earnings for importing oil. But now, thanks to the discovery of substantial deposits of gas [7-8 billion cubic feet] as well as 2.7 billion barrels of oil in one area alone, the situation is being reversed. While a 767km gas pipeline is being constructed to the port of Djibouti, the proposed construction of a pipeline linking Assab with Addis Ababa has been unveiled with the assistance of the United Arab Emirates. Because of all this, some of the gas and oil may be exported to Ethiopia’s neighbours at favourable terms. Gas pipelines can also be used for transporting oil.

4. The European Union is paying over $22 million to help re-furbish roads that connect Ethiopia and Eritrea. While the generosity of the EU is highly commendable, it should also be kept in mind that the Ports of Massawa and Assab need expansion—a task that requires the collaboration of both countries. Ethiopia may then be able to divert some 5% of its foreign trade to Massawa and 30% to Assab.

5. The Italian built 280 kms Massawa-Agordat railway has a narrow gauge of 950 mm, as opposed to the standard gauge of 1,435mm. Perhaps Eritrea and Ethiopia could cooperate in the standardization of the gauge and in extending the railway to Tesenai and Metema as the Italians had planned in 1939-1940. Italy has also recently agreed to help finance the carrying out of feasibility studies for the construction of a railway line linking Massawa with Addis Ababa. The electrification of both railways will go a long way in advancing trade and communication links between the two countries.

6. Djibouti, which shares 65% of its frontier with Ethiopia, handles 95% of Ethiopia’s foreign trade, and in the process, makes some one billion dollars a year. There is the 750 kms electrified railway that has brought considerable advantages to both countries. The 220kms Dewole-Djibouti road that serves as an alternative to the railway, has also made it possible for trucks to reach Djibouti in just 3 hours. Additionally, the 767km gas pipeline for exporting gas from Ethiopia is under construction. The potash region of Dallo is being linked to the port of Tadjourah by railway for exporting some 4 million tons of potash annually. All this may look rosy, but there is always danger in putting all of one’s
eggs in one basket. Since Ethiopia has more options now, it should break-down its heavy
dependence on Djibouti and reduce the centrality of Djibouti for its foreign trade. Freight
costs can be driven down through increased competition with other ports. Ethiopia’s use
of Djibouti should be reduced to 60%.

7. With increased supply of electricity from Ethiopia, Djibouti may be able to establish a
chemical industry based on its huge salt deposits. It may also develop processing plants
for plastic goods and aluminium thanks to its bauxite deposits.

8. The port of Berbera has the capacity to handle 150,000 containers and can be expanded to
1 million units. DP World of the UAE has taken 51% of the shares of the port,
Somaliland will own 30%, and Ethiopia will have 19% of the shares. The completion of
the construction of the 72 kms Togo-Wuchale – Berbera road is crucial. At the cost of
$90 million, its construction is being financed by the UAE. Ethiopia could shift to start
with at least 5% of its foreign trade and use Berbera.

9. As part of the effort to create a single market in the sub-region, the leaders of Somalia and
Ethiopia have agreed to develop jointly four ports. While Ethiopia gets access to the ports,
Somalia too will benefit by improving its trade options through supply routes from Ethiopian
markets and from port service revenues. However, creating ports in Somalia and building the
necessary infrastructure is costly without the corresponding development of the Ethiopian
hinterland. The solution to this problem lies in exploiting the potential of the two rivers – the
Wabi Shibele and the Juba, which have their sources in Ethiopia, but are also vital to
Somalia. Both rivers have an estimated total of 500,000 hectares of irrigable land. Such cash
crops as sugar cane, cotton, wheat, barley, coffee, ground nuts, and a variety of fruits and
vegetables can grow. It is also ideal for cattle raising. The land between the two rivers in
Somalia itself has an irrigable potential of 18.5 million acres [7.5 million hectares]. The Wabi
Shibele alone has the potential to generate 9 billion kw of electricity. For topographic and
ecological reasons, it would be beneficial for both countries to finance jointly the
construction of four multi-purpose dams within Ethiopia on the two rivers, for several
reasons: The destructive river basin flooding can be controlled. Somalia could get electricity.
It will attain self-sufficiency in food. Ethiopia will use the ports to export the basin’s
products. That means jobs and increased revenue for the benefit of both countries.

Given Ethiopia’s growth potential, projections done by the South African research firm,
World Wealth, predicts that, “Ethiopia’s future is bright.” Given the reality of the
situation, let alone paint such a rosy picture, one cannot even be sanguine about it. The
anarchy, the death of innocent citizens and the daily destruction of property is simply
unbelievable. To begin with, to bring an end to the catastrophe, the apartheid system and the
policy of ethnicity that has become the modus operandi of the state would have to be
abolished. Scrupulous adherence to the rule of law, stamping out corruption, restoration of
the country’s historic provinces and organizing them on a federal basis, and legalization of
political parties of the right, left and centre, would go a long way in restoring the country’s
image. When that happens, Samatar’s vision for the transformation of the Horn of Africa
could be realized.

END NOTES:

i Encyclopedia Princeton
ii Encyclopaedia Britannica
iii Arthur Lewis [1966], Development Planning, George &Unwin, London and New York. See section on
capital accumulation.

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