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## Operation Solomon: Mass Evacuation of Ethiopian Jews, A Constructivism Approach on International Relations

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### ABSTRACT

*This article examines Operation Solomon (1991), an intelligence operation by the Israeli government to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Ethiopian Jews are a community that has been in Ethiopia for thousands of years but maintains its religious traditions and dreams of returning to the promised land in Palestine. As a Zionist state, Israel saw the suffering of Ethiopian Jews during the Ethiopian Civil War as a reason to evacuate them to Israel. The relationship between Israel and Ethiopian Jews was strengthened by Alexander Wendt's Constructivism theory which states that intersubjective understanding is the main driving force in a country's foreign policy. Israel received support from American Jews and successfully carried out Operation Solomon after conducting negotiations with the Ethiopian government.*

**Keywords:** Israel, Ethiopian Jews, Constructivism, International Relations

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1950, the Israeli government passed a law known as the "Law of Return". A legal product that allows all Jews worldwide to become Israeli citizens if they migrate to Israel (Reich, 2022). Even before the founding of Israel, attempts by Jews to migrate to Palestine had occurred. This Jewish migration activity is known as *Aliyah*. Zionism as the basic ideology of the state of Israel has indeed inspired millions of Jews to come and live in Palestine. Zionism itself is an ideology that has a mission to create a Jewish state in the land of Palestine (Thomas, 2023)

Israel as a country whose founding process resulted in the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs needs residents to fill the abandoned houses to prevent the Palestinians from returning. Since 1967, Israel has occupied the West Bank. The territory is inhabited by the majority of Palestinians and is promoted by Palestinian leaders to be the territory for an independent Palestinian state in the future. Therefore, Israel needed Jewish settlers to inhabit the territory as Yigal Allon, Israel's Minister of Labor at the time, had advocated to strengthen Israeli control over the West Bank. (Fetouri, 2018) (Farber, 2012)

Therefore, the migration of Jews from all over the world to Israel has become a priority of the Israeli government. One of the Jewish groups that undertook *aliyah* massively was the Jewish Community of Ethiopian origin. The massive migration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel was only carried out in the early 1980s to early 1990s. In 1984, hundreds of thousands to millions of Ethiopians fled to Sudan as a result of the catastrophic famine, persecution, and civil war in Ethiopia. Along with this refugee group, thousands of people from the Ethiopian Jewish community also participated. In Sudan, they lived in

refugee camps along with other refugees in poor conditions. This situation made the Israeli government decide to bring the Ethiopian Jewish community to Israel through Sudan under *Operation Moses* and *Operation Joshua* (Katz, 2000).

Seven years later, evacuation for Ethiopian Jews was continued. In 1991, The Ethiopian government was under pressure. Eritrean and Tigriyan separatist groups waged a war against the Communist regime in Ethiopia. They continued to push government troops toward Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Amid this civil war, the Israeli government launched *Operation Solomon* and evacuated more than 14,000 people in just two days (Bard, 2002).

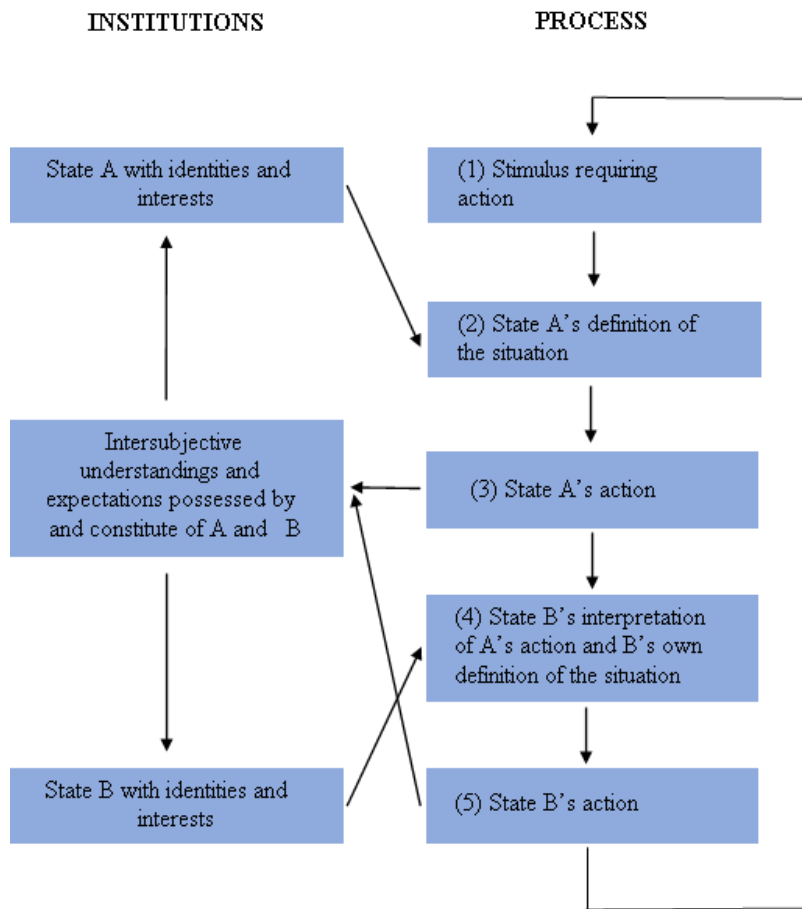
In addition to the involvement of the Israeli government, the evacuation also involved Jewish communities outside Israel and Ethiopia. One of the Jewish groups that had the biggest impact on this operation was the Jewish community in the United States. Through an organization called AAEJ (American Association of Ethiopian Jews), they used all their abilities to help the Ethiopian Jews, especially in their lobbying network in the United States Congress. From this standpoint, it raises several questions; why did the Ethiopian Jews want to migrate to Israel? why did the Israeli government decide to evacuate Ethiopian Jews to Israel? and how the Israeli government managed to accomplish its mission during *Operation Solomon*?

## **METHOD**

Alexander Wendt in 1992 developed a theory in his article *Anarchy is What State Make of It: The Social Construction of Social Politics*. Wendt emphasized that in international relations, ideas or interpretations have a more important position than material. Ideas then form interests that are realized because of a common identity. The theory he put forward is called "Wendt's theory of Constructivism".

In his writing, Wendt argues that human decisions to associate themselves with others are determined by two factors, the first is a sense of similarity because they share the same ideas. International relations according to Wendt are anarchic, the actor's behavior towards the intended object or other actors is based on how far the actor understands the object. A country will feel threatened by a state or a *non-state* actor who is perceived as an enemy even though it has only a small amount of power to threaten another country. On the other hand, a country will not feel threatened by other countries or *non-state actors* that have been constructed as friendly countries even though they have the potential to be a bigger threat. This fact can be seen, for example, in the relationship between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Iran related to the possession of nuclear weapons. Although the United Kingdom has more nuclear weapons, Iran is still considered the main threat by the United States.

The second factor is identity. Identity is not created by itself. But by the complex shared ideas. These shared ideas are not only in physical structures or empirical habits but also in interpretation and understanding. This connection happened because of their similarity in *intersubjective understandings* (Wendt, 1992). To form *intersubjective understandings*, there must be a process of attachment starting from *signaling*, *interpreting*, and *responding*. The following chart illustrates the structure of *intersubjective understandings*



*Figure 1: Institutional determination and processes in constructivism*

In this study, the author uses a historical research method with a descriptive-qualitative approach. As research that focuses on events in the past, the use of historical methods is the most appropriate way to understand and explain these events scientifically (Kuntowijoyo, 2003).

A descriptive-qualitative approach is needed to interpret a theory and connect it to historical events because the historical method only focuses on using historical sources and presenting them to the public (historiography). Furthermore, the historical method and the qualitative research method have similarities, they tend to focus on the most detailed exploitation of a case that is considered important and has an impact on the current situations (Harrison, 2007). However, the historical method has its uniqueness because it already has scientific stages in its method. In the historical method, the stages consist of heuristic, criticism, interpretation, and historiography.

Heuristics is the data collection activity, criticism is the phase to check the authenticity of the sources, interpretation is the phase to understand the contents of the sources, and historiography is a way to present the sources. For this research, the Author used documents from the AAEJ (American Association of Ethiopian Jews) archive as primary sources. Secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and validated internet content were also used as supporting references.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

#### **1.1. The Background of Ethiopian Jews**

Jews, whether as a religion, nation, or ethnicity are made up of various backgrounds. Although their population is not as many as Muslims or Christians, they are spread almost throughout the world. Data in 2017 shows that there is a total of 14,511,100 Jews on earth. Most of them live in Israel, which is 6,057,700 people. The second largest number is in the United States, which is 5,700,000 people. Of the total Jewish population of the world, 6,470,600 live in the Americas, 1,359,100 in Europe, 6,486,600 in Asia, 74,000 in Africa, and 120,800 in Australia and Oceania. (DellaPergola, 2017). Jews in Israel also consist of diverse demographic backgrounds. They come from a wide variety of countries and descendants. One of them is Ethiopian Jews who number more than 145,000 people. (Schwartz, 2018)

There is still debate regarding the origin of Ethiopian Jewry. Some opinions about the origins of this community are often mixed with myths and legends. The most well-known and believed opinion by Ethiopian Jews themselves is that they are descendants of King Solomon of the ancient kingdom of Israel. In this legend, it is explained that Queen Sheba of the kingdom of Aksum in Ethiopia came to visit King Solomon. This visit resulted in a marriage between the King and Queen. However, Queen Sheba later decided to return to her country and raise a child from the marriage. It was through the marriage of King Solomon and Queen Sheba that the Ethiopian Jewish community was born. (Kaplan, 1993)

The next opinion tells the story of the legend of the ten lost tribes. When King Solomon died, his kingdom split in two. The southern kingdom was led by one of his sons, Rehoboam, and the northern kingdom was led by his challenger, Jeroboam. The conflict between these two figures resulted in divisions among the Israelites. Ten of the twelve tribes chose to join the northern kingdom while the rest joined the south. In 722 BC. The northern kingdom was invaded by the Assyrian kingdom and its people were exiled and disappeared in history. However, legend also states that some of the ten exiled tribes were able to maintain their traditions and religion during their exile. One of them is the Dan tribe who are believed to have exiled themselves to the territory of present-day Ethiopia. (Kaplan, 2006)

In addition to the opinion that Ethiopian Jews are direct descendants of ancient Israel, some opinions doubt this claim. This opinion states that Ethiopian Jews are descendants of the Agau tribe (one of the tribes in Ethiopia) who converted to Judaism after they interacted with Jews from Yemen. (Haynes, 2009)

Ethiopian Jews call themselves *Beta Israel* (Israel House) while other Ethiopian communities call them *Falasha* (Foreigner). Ethiopian Jews inherited their religious and cultural teachings through oral traditions passed down from generation to generation and preserved for centuries. In this way, the teachings of Judaism persist among Ethiopian Jews which ultimately sets them to have a different religion from the majority of other Ethiopians. (Faitlovich, 1920)

Despite various opinions regarding the origin of Ethiopian Jews, this community has indeed been categorized as part of the Jewish community as established by Chief Sephardic Rabbi Ovadia Josef of Israel in 1973. This religious decision became the first basis for making Ethiopian Jews a legitimate community in implementing the Law of Return. (Salamon, 2011)

As a part of the religious Jewish community, Ethiopian Jews also believe in returning to the promised land in Palestine. In 1862, a religious figure respected among Ethiopian Jews, Abba Mehari, thought that the Messiah (Savior) was coming soon. The persecution perpetrated by the Ethiopian Christian rulers was an early marker of God's promise of the return of the Jews to the promised land. Abba Mehari then tried to go to Palestine. Without modern transportation, they have to walk by foot across mountains, forests, and deserts to

the north. In the end, the migration effort failed. Abba Mehari has led many of his followers to death. The long journey and the difficult route have cost many lives of his followers. Some of his followers returned to Gondar (the initial center of the Jewish community), and others stopped in the Tigriya region (Northern Ethiopia). The two regions then became the areas with the largest Jewish population in Ethiopia in the 20th century. Abba Mehari himself died and was buried in the city of Kola Agara (Leslau, 1946)

In addition to the story of Abba Mehari, evidence of the Ethiopian Jews' dream of returning to the promised land can also be found in their prayers that constantly mention the hope of returning to Jerusalem (Faitlovich, 1920, p. 82). They recited these prayers in their daily activities. Parents will repay each child's devotion not with a "thank you" but "may you reach Zion". At religious ceremonies, they always say "Next year to Jerusalem". With these traditions, the desire to return to the promised land has become a part of Ethiopian Jewish life (BenEzer, 2002, p. 61)

In 1974, there was a revolution in Ethiopia. The last emperor of Ethiopia was overthrown by the military (coup) under the leadership of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Soon after the event, Ethiopia turned into a republic. The Mengistu regime also known as Derg adhered to Marxism and made Ethiopia a Communist country. The policy of the Derg regime caused a lot of opposition. Separatism occurred in various regions of Ethiopia, especially in Eritrea and Tigray (two regions located adjacent to where the Ethiopian Jewish community lived). The Derg regime responded by declaring war against the people of those two regions. Civil War broke out and disaster struck Ethiopia. It was at this time that many Ethiopian Jews believed that God's prophecy had come true and that they had to pack up to leave Ethiopia. Urges from some Israelis began to emerge for the Israeli government to save the Ethiopian Jews and bring them to Israel (BenEzer, 2002, p. 64)

The combination of religious beliefs, political conditions, and humanitarian disasters has been a strong reason for Ethiopian Jews to migrate. It is also a manifestation of Zionism, as believed by Theodor Herzl (Founder of the international Zionist movement) that Zionism exists as an effort to save Jews from conflicts between ethnicities, races, or nations because Jews will always be judged and hated as a foreign group by non-Jews. Therefore, it is the duty of Zionists everywhere to help Jews migrate to Israel. The plight of the Jews in Ethiopia has drawn sympathy from Jewish communities around the world, including the Jewish community in the United States (Avneri, 1998).

## **1.2. Israel's Response to The Plight of Ethiopian Jews**

The problems faced by Ethiopian Jews then became Israel's responsibility to resolve. As a country founded for Jews, Israel could not just stand by and watch the oppression experienced by Jews in other parts of the world. In addition to the interest in increasing the population to strengthen the country, bringing Ethiopian Jews also became an important political agenda. In 1977 the right-wing Israeli party, Likud, began to take power. Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir became the Likud party's first and second Israeli Prime Ministers. Those two leaders would later be responsible for bringing Ethiopian Jews to Israel. For Likud, bringing Ethiopian Jews attracted sympathy from right-wing voters in Israel, most of whom were dominated by Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews, who originated from the Middle East. They are relatively more religious and have felt oppressed by the left-wing Ashkenazi Jews (Jews from Europe). Saving Ethiopian Jews was a brilliant political strategy to maintain the votes of the Mizrahi and Sephardi populations. (Bard, 2002)

The evacuation of Jewish communities on a massive scale is nothing new for the Israeli government. Since Israel was founded in 1948, there have been several intelligence operations to evacuate Jews from various countries in the Middle East such as *Operation Ezra and Nehemia* from Iraq, and *Operation Magic Carpet* from Yemen. The evacuation was carried out when the condition of the Jews in these countries worsened due to anti-Semitism that hit the Arab world after the founding of Israel (Aharoni, 2003). With those

experiences, the evacuation of Ethiopian Jews became possible for the Israeli government to carry out.

In 1984 and 1985 there was a massive migration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. The Israeli government facilitated this migration through Mossad operation, code name *Operation Moses* and *Operation Joshua* (McGarry, 1985). The operation was carried out when the famine and civil war began to hit Ethiopia. At that time, thousands of people from the Ethiopian Jewish community fled to Sudan along with millions of other refugees. About 8,000 people from Ethiopia's Jewish community have been successfully evacuated by air from Sudan to Israel. This was accomplished after the United States government asked the Sudanese government to help Mossad facilitate the operation. However, this confidential evacuation did not last long because the Sudanese government immediately banned the activity after several media outlets began to spread the news. The Sudanese government was worried that this cooperation with Israel would give Sudan a bad image among Arab and Muslim countries.

Although *Operation Moses* and *Operation Joshua* ended, efforts to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel were still ongoing. There were still thousands of Jews left in Ethiopia. The Israeli government and other institutions tried to find a solution for bringing Ethiopian Jews to Israel.

### **1.3. The Role of American Jews**

One of the institutions that participated in supporting the migration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel was the American Association of Ethiopian Jews (AAEJ). This organization was founded in 1969 by Graneum Berger, a social worker of a Jewish background from the United States. When Berger visited Ethiopia in 1965, Berger realized that the Jews there were in dire need of help. The political conditions in Ethiopia and the famine that afflicted the country led Berger to conclude that the only solution to the salvation of Ethiopian Jews was to bring them to Israel (About AAEJ, 2024). Berger then rallied support from the Jewish community in the United States. This made AAEJ have a wide network within the United States government. AAEJ began lobbying members of the United States Congress to help evacuate Jews from Ethiopia. Through Congress, the AAEJ not only urged the United States government but also the Israeli government to do more to save Ethiopian Jews. (Spector, 2005)

For example on May 22, 1986, Senator Claiborne on behalf of AAEJ, sent a letter to Israeli Prime Minister, Simon Peres. He proposed that the further migration of Ethiopian Jews be built on a family reunification scheme given that many Ethiopian Jews already in Israel had lost contact with their relatives who were still in Africa (AAEJ, Pell to Shimon Peres May 22, 1986) the same letter was sent to the U.S. State Department emphasizing that there are still 7,000-10,000 Jews left in Ethiopia and asking the U.S. executive government to cooperate with Israel on the proposed reunification program (AAEJ, Senators to Schlutz, 1986). In addition to the US executive branch, Congress was also trying to ask for help from other countries such as Italy. Italy still maintains diplomatic relations with Ethiopia and is the Western country that has donated the most economic aid to Ethiopia (AAEJ, International Parliamentary Group Kovarick to Italy, 1987). However, Mengistu saw this reunification as an attempt to interfere in Ethiopia's internal affairs so he refused to allow Ethiopian Jews into Israel for reunification (AAEJ, Sen Dole Mengistu, 1986). The US

Congress also formed a caucus that worked specifically to take care of the Ethiopian Jews' problems. The caucus initially consisted of Congressmen from 17 Senators and 33 members of the *House of Representatives* with Senator Rudy Boschwitz as its chairman. (AAEJ, Cranston Press Conference September 17, 1986)

In Ethiopia itself, there were Ethiopian Jews who were secretly actively involved in campaigning *Aliyah* to Israel. They also worked with Israel in facilitating Ethiopian Jews to migrate to Israel. Some of them were arrested by Ethiopian security forces and detained and even executed. Those who were caught were known by the nickname *Prisoners of Zion* (AAEJ, Congress to Mengistu, 1987). Amnesty International reported that at least in 1987, there were 300 people accused of *prisoners of Zion* languishing in Ethiopian prisons. (AAEJ, Prisoners Amnesty International, 1987)

Congress attempted to rescue some of these Prisoner of Zion members by sending a letter directly to the Ethiopian government. Pleaded with the Ethiopian government to release them. One example is when Senator Quintin Burdick sent a letter dated November 6, 1987, to Mengistu asking him to release some members of *Prisoner of Zion* (AAEJ, Burdick to Mengistu, 1987). The request was only granted by Mengistu in 1988. (AAEJ, Shapiro to Burdick July 22, 1988)

Mengistu knew that he needed a lot of weapons to deal with the separatist movements and he could not rely solely on the Communist bloc as a source of his weapons. Therefore, he sought to get close to the Western bloc countries to get what he needed. However, his Communist ideology and record of human rights abuses were an obstacle for his regime to establish such relationships. Mengistu realized that Israel could be an intermediary between the Ethiopian government and Western countries. In matters of relations with Israel, Mengistu relied heavily on the advice of his confidant, Kassa Kebede.

Kebede is an accomplished diplomat. In 1988 he served as Ethiopia's Ambassador to the UN mission in Geneva, Switzerland. AAEJ knew the potential for cooperation that might be possible through Kebede, so they made an effort to be able to contact him. The director of AAEJ at the time, Nathan Shapiro met Kebede during his visit to the United States. He emphasized to Kebede that American Jews were deeply concerned about the fate of their brothers in Ethiopia. If the Ethiopian government was willing to gain support from the U.S., then Ethiopia must take into account the power of the American Jewish lobby and be willing to help them in bringing the Ethiopian Jewish to Israel. (Spector, 2005, p. 33)

After the meeting, Shapiro sent a letter to Kebede and explained to him about the Ethiopian Jewish issue that was the focus of AAEJ's work. Shapiro stated that Ethiopian Jews in Israel are treated well. Their only source of suffering was because many of them had lost contact with their relatives who were still in Ethiopia. Therefore, the reunification program must be supported. The meeting would later result in the restoration of diplomatic relations between Israel and Ethiopia in 1989. (AAEJ, Shapiro to Kebede, 1988)

In 1988 there were an estimated 18,000-20,000 Jews in Ethiopia. A total of 160 people were still trapped in Sudan and 16,000 are already living in Israel (Richard Kreiger, 1988). Since the end of *Operation Joshua* from 1985 to 1988, 95% of Ethiopian Jewish

migration to Israel was facilitated by the AAEJ. The institution not only succeeded in becoming a driving force but also the executor of the evacuation of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. (AAEJ, Moshe Arad Meeting Memo, 1988)

By 1989, there were 500 Ethiopian Jews in Israel who had successfully pursued university education. 1,500 of them have also had careers in the IDF. That year the U.S. Congress also asked the U.S. State Department to reconsider plans to improve Ethiopian relations with the U.S. if Ethiopia did not take the reunification of Ethiopian Jews with their families in Israel seriously (AAEJ, Cranston Ackerman Pell to Baker, 1989). That same year, the Caucus formed by Congress to deal with Ethiopian Jewish affairs sent an official letter to George H.W. Bush, the President of the United States at that time. The caucus asked Bush to take steps to rescue the Ethiopian Jews (AAEJ, Cong Caucus Bush, 1989).

According to a letter from the US Congress to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir dated December 3, 1990, there was a meeting between the US Government represented by Herman Cohen of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Uli Lubrani representing the Israeli government, and an unnamed Ethiopian official. The meeting of the three people resulted in an agreement that the Ethiopian government agreed to allow Ethiopian Jews to migrate to Israel. A thousand Ethiopian Jews have been allowed to leave every month since December 1990. Ethiopian Airlines will provide 150 seats for them every week. (AAEJ, Cong Caucus to Shamir, 1990)

The AAEJ lobbying efforts become an additional driving force for the Israeli government to evacuate Jews from Ethiopia. Although political and religious debates regarding the presence of Ethiopian Jews in Israel are still happening, the situation of Jews in Ethiopia was also getting worse so their rescue policy has become the main agenda of the Israeli government.

#### **1.4. Operation Solomon**

In 1991, the civil war in Ethiopia was entering its final stage. The Ethiopian government had lost control over the Eritrean area. The EPLF (*Eritrean People's Liberation Front*) rebel group became the de facto ruler of Eritrea. With the loss of government control over Eritrea, Ethiopia's access to the sea was also cut. This made it difficult for Mengistu to meet his economic and military needs to maintain his power.

In addition to the EPLF, the Mengistu regime also fought against the TPLF (*Tigray People's Liberation Front*), a separatist group fighting for the independence of the Tigray region. The Tigray tribe has long been oppressed by the Derg regime under the leadership of Mengistu. Therefore, TPLF was very popular in the eyes of the people of Tigray, especially farmers who often became a victim of Ethiopian government war crimes. The TPLF worked with the EPLF to overthrow the Mengistu regime. In 1989, this cooperation resulted in the liberation of Eritrea and Tigray from the Ethiopian government.

With such conditions, the power of Mengistu Haile Mariam was just a matter of time. After taking control of the Tigray area, the TPLF moved towards Addis Adaba, the capital of Ethiopia. They formed a coalition with another rebel group called the EPDM (*Ethiopian*



*People's Democratic Movement*) a resistance group from the Amhara tribe, the same tribe as the Ethiopian ruler, Mengistu. TPLF and EPDM later merged to form EPRDF (*Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front*). The organization has several principles; restoring democracy, freeing political prisoners, overthrowing the authoritarian regime, and a referendum for Eritrea. (Spector, 2005)

Seeing the increasing strength of the rebels, Mengistu used all means to win the war. Including asking for Israel's help. Diplomatic relations were restored in 1989 (Spector, 2005, p. 24). In 1990, Mengistu allowed many Ethiopian Jews to migrate to Israel under the pretext of family reunification. At the same time, Mengistu also used them as hostages for an arms exchange with Israel. (Bard, 2002)

Ethiopia's uncertain political conditions made many AAEJ members worried. They sent their representatives to an office in Ethiopia. As soon as news of the Ethiopian army's defeat was heard, the AAEJ saw it as an opportunity to bring all Ethiopian Jews out of Ethiopia. AAEJ agents were sent to Jewish villages across Ethiopia and took them to Addis Ababa. Thousands of Jews flocked to the city. Many of those who came were only carrying clothes. They hope to be brought to Israel soon. But the reality was that they still had to wait and survive completely from donor assistance through AAEJ.

On May 21, 1991, Mengistu Haile Mariam fled to Zimbabwe. He saw defeat in his regime as inevitable. The rebel forces were only 100 miles away from the capital. Israel's prime minister at the time, Yitzhak Shamir decided to take all Jews out of Ethiopia. He negotiated a rescue operation with Tesfaye Kidane, Mengistu's replacement. With the intermediary of the United States, the Israeli government agreed to pay \$35 million to Kidane in order to be allowed to bring all Ethiopian Jews. Mengistu's successor regime then gave its blessing to bring all Ethiopian Jews to Israel (AAEJ, Cohen Recant Shapiro October 9, 1991). The United States government also contacted the EPRDF not to interfere with the evacuation process if they had already arrived in the capital (Bard, 2002).

On May 24, 1991, Operation Solomon began. Thousands of Jews were taken to Addis Ababa International Airport. The war conditions made Israel decide to carry out the evacuation as soon as possible. 200 IDF personnel (*Israel Defence Force*) were deployed in civilian clothes. A total of 41 military and civilian aircraft were prepared by Israel to transport them; 18 C-130 Hercules aircraft, 12 Boeing 707s, 3 Boeing 747s, 4 Boeing 767s, and 3 Boeing 757s. Israel threw away all the furniture on the fuselage including the seats to fit in to carry as many people as possible. The plane operates back and forth non-stop from Addis Ababa to Tel Aviv. Moreover, the Israeli government had to ask permission from Israel's Jewish religious authorities to carry out the evacuation on the Sabbath. The operation was carried out from May 24 to 25, 1991, during 34 hours Israel successfully brought 14,310 Ethiopian Jews into Israel. This evacuation is considered one of the best intelligence operations in the world. Not a single Ethiopian Jew was killed during the trip and 10 babies were born on board safely. (Spector, 2005)

This massive migration of Ethiopian Jews is one of the most important historical records of the modern century. For the first time, black people were brought out of Africa on a massive scale without chains on their necks and hands as slavery had done in the past.

## Discussion

The same *intersubjective understanding* between Israel and Ethiopian Jews makes Alexander Went's theory of Constructivism appropriate to be applied in this case as illustrated in the chart below.

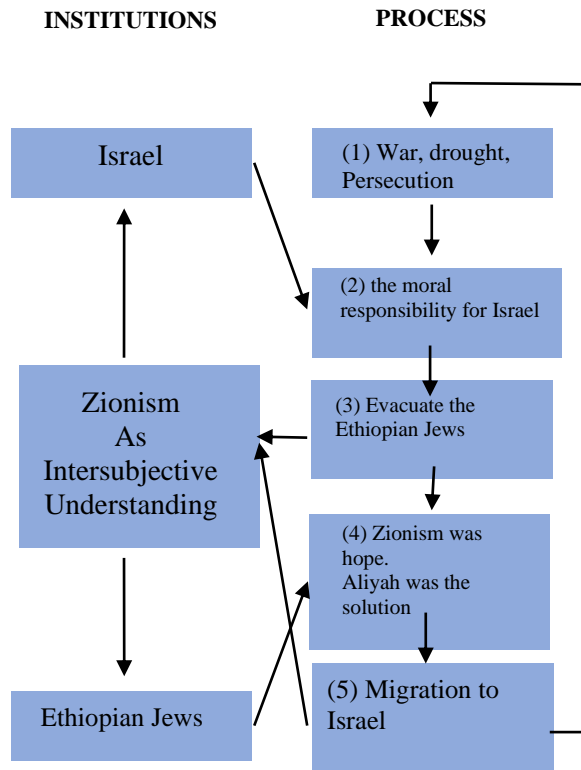


Figure 2: The application of the structure of Constructivism in Israel's relations with Ethiopian Jews

The chart above illustrates that Ethiopian Jews and Israel have the same *intersubjective understanding* regarding Judaism or Jewish identity. Israel considers the Ethiopian Jews to be one of the original Jewish tribes that have tried to maintain the teachings of Judaism for thousands of years. Both also embrace Zionism as a core Jewish political ideology. This is proven by historical records about the efforts of the Ethiopian Jews to reach the promised land as well as Israel's policy toward them and the solid lobbying support from the AAEJ to the United States government to help the evacuation process of Ethiopian Jews to Israel (Mendelson-Maoz, 2014). This common identity has become an intersubjective understanding for Israel and Ethiopian Jews. When a disaster or hostility occurred toward the Jews in Ethiopia, Israel felt a moral responsibility to save them. Under these circumstances, Israel needs to bring the Ethiopian Jewish community to Israel in Operation Solomon.

## CONCLUSION

The similar identity between Israel and Ethiopian Jews is a determining factor in Operation Solomon. Although Ethiopian Jews are physically, geographically, and culturally different from various Jewish groups in Israel, both are united by the same intersubjective

understanding, Zionism. In addition to that, Operation Solomon also illustrates that non-state actors such as AAEJ can support state actors' foreign policy. The role of AAEJ, an NGO, in urging the Israeli and American governments to save Ethiopian Jews is evidence of this hypothesis.

Ethiopian Jews have a dream to return to the promised land as part of fulfilling the teachings of their religion. Although they have lived in Ethiopia for thousands of years, the core teachings of Judaism about returning to the promised land have never disappeared from their prayers and hopes. The desire of Ethiopian Jews to return to the promised land is a manifestation of the Zionist ideology.

The Israeli government as a representative of the Jewish state has a policy of political identity to bring Ethiopian Jews. Zionism was the main reason for the government to set aside all obstacles arising from the policy of evacuating Jews from Ethiopia. The expression of Zionism also emerged from the Jewish community of the United States represented by the AAEJ. This expression was through advocacy and lobbying to the American and Israeli governments to evacuate Jews from Ethiopia.

Operation Solomon could be carried out successfully because each party involved, namely Israel, the Ethiopian government, the AAEJ, and Ethiopian Jews, had their interests met. Negotiations between Israel supported by the United States (with lobbying from the AAEJ) and the Ethiopian government were carried out comprehensively. Although the Ethiopian government under Mengistu was still defeated, the Israeli government was able to negotiate with Mengistu's replacement regime. With this connection, Operation Solomon could be carried out effectively. Because each party involved (the Israeli government, the Ethiopian government, and the AAEJ) had fulfilled their interests.

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