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# Ethnic Federalism and Democratic Developmental State in Ethiopia: Some Points of Contradiction

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The present Ethiopia was made based on ethnic based federal state structure since 1991. Recently, the Ethiopian government has explicitly declared itself as Democratic Developmental State (DDS). This study presents the assessment of building DDS with in ethnic federalism doctrine of Ethiopia by focusing on the potential contradictions between the two. The finding in this study reveals that as a result of ethnic based federalism of Ethiopia, the politics of self-determination drastically hindered elite commitment, and ethnically affiliated bureaucracy has been cultivated instead of meritocracy, all of which affect DDS. In addition, ethnic federalism has also been exacerbated ethnic conflict with the creation of new minorities at regional level which erodes national consensus, the core element for the success of democratic developmental state. Furthermore, despite the federal and decentralized structure of the Ethiopian state, development policies, targets and programmes are designed at the centre, authorizing regional and local authorities little for manoeuvre in a centralized and top-down logic. Accordingly, the ethnic based federalism of Ethiopian state seems to stand in sharp contradiction with the centralistic and top-down logics that inspired the DDS model and practices. As such, Ethiopia needs to set strong institution embedded with merit based bureaucracy. National unity and national consensus needs to precede the imposition of democratic developmental state. These help to integrate genuine Democratic Developmental State with ethnic federalism. Hence, the relevance of this study lies in making a contribution to the understanding of the challenges of building Democratic Developmental State in multi-ethnic state taking Ethiopian experience.

**Key Words:** Developmental state, Democratic Developmental State, Ethnic Federalism, EPRDF, Bureaucracy, National Consensus.

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## INTRODUCTION

In Ethiopian political history, the year of 1991 was landmark in which the long term hitherto centralized unitary system was replaced by decentralized federal system with the coming in to power of Ethiopian People

Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Barely after two months of controlling the palace, the July 1991 Peace and Democracy conference led to the establishment of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia

(TGE) and adopted a Transitional Charter.<sup>1</sup> Based on the charter, the country's internal administration was structured in 14 regions along ethno-linguistic lines in 1992 (TGE, 1992).

The transitional government established a constitutional commission to draft a constitution. The commission adopted the federal constitution, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) constitution, which was ratified by the Constituent Assembly in December 1994 and came in to force in August 1995. Accordingly, the 1995 constitution of the FDRE, Article 49, has created a federal government with nine ethnic-based regional states and two federally administered city-states (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa) (FDRE, 1995). The regional states were delimited on the basis of language, settlement pattern and ethnic identity.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the federal restructuring of the country brought several changes to ethnicity and governance. The party in power (the EPRDF) contends that ethnic federalism will be the basis for a reformed Ethiopian state structure and bring about a solution to ethno-nationalist conflict on the one hand, the self-rule through decentralization on the other hand.

With regard to economic policy orientation of the country, even though EPRDF seems to be committed to free market as a guiding economic policy since 1990s, in recent years Ethiopian government started search for alternatives and had shown its disregards for neoliberal economic principles which faced its dead-end in bringing development in the country. Nothing demonstrates this aspiration more strongly than the late Ethiopian Prime Minister's, Meles Zenawi, statement made on the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Federalism, held in Addis Ababa in which he said that "Democratic Federalism is one of the two pillars of our national renaissance. Together with the establishment and consolidation of an effective developmental state in our country, it has enabled us to begin the long road back to the frontiers of our civilization" (UNDP, 2012). In this statement, Meles spelled out the building of Democratic Developmental State (DDS) with in ethnic based federal state of Ethiopia. Indeed, Meles boldly challenged the neoliberal policy prescriptions and openly stated that Africa needs a paradigm shift away from the predatory state emerged

<sup>1</sup> According to the preamble of the Transitional Charter, 'self-determination of all the peoples shall be the governing principles of political, economic and social life'. It affirmed the right of ethnic groups to self-determination up to and including secession (Article 2).

<sup>2</sup> Like the 1991 charter, the constitution affirmed the unrestricted corporate right of all ethnic groups: "every nation, nationality and people shall have the unrestricted right to self-determination up to secession" (Article 39) with tough procedures.

under neoliberal policy to a home-grown and more progressive one that is the Democratic Developmental State (Meles, 2006).<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the simultaneous reconstitution of Ethiopia into an ethnic federalist state and DDS is the overriding doctrine of EPRDF. However, the federal and decentralized structure of the Ethiopian state seems to stand in a sharp contradiction with the centralistic and top-down logics that inspired the DS model and practices. There have been various arguments from different scholars and political commentators with regard to this ambitious move of Ethiopian government. These can be seen in two-folds. On the one hand some strongly questioned whether the current Ethiopia is really a developmental state by highlighting the persistence of deep rooted poverty in the country (see for example, Habisso, 2010; Woldegebriel, 2013; and Melke, 2013). Others agreed with the policy of the country as developmental, but strongly doubtful whether the developmental state of Ethiopia is democratic by fingering abuse of power by government officials and ignorance of basic democratic values such as freedom of press by the ruling party (Tadesse 2012; Kebede, 2011; Negash 2011; Alemayehu, 2009; Hassan, 2008; and Clapham, 2006). The latter can also be related with the unpopular vision of the ruling party to stay on power for the coming four decades at any cost.

Nevertheless, efforts and deep scientific analysis have been made neither by the Ethiopian government itself nor by researchers to see the suitability of developmental state in ethnically divided country. The experiences of developmental state as practiced by Asian countries like South Korea and Taiwan, which are seen as role model by Ethiopian government, show that this model of state can best works under unitary and centralized authoritarian system. It is new phenomenon which posed new home work for Ethiopia to embed both systems together. Therefore, there is a need to assess the compatibility of DDS in such ethnically divided state even before attempting to implement the policy. The overall objective of this paper is to examine the areas of

<sup>3</sup> In his draft PhD Thesis titled "African Development: Dead Ends and New Beginnings", Meles advocated the use of developmental state model not only in Ethiopia but also across Africa to fight against poverty which has been an existential threat to the continent. Meles stressed that it had made a compelling case for a strong government presence in the economy to correct the pervasive market inefficiencies. He cited the experience of Asian countries like Taiwan and South Korea with the same growth strategy that they implemented (Meles (2006)). According to the government's Millennium Development Goal has been achieving report, the double digit GDP growth rates which the country achieved since 2003/04 has boosted the confidence of the government in its developmental path (FDRE, 2010).

contradiction of both systems by particularly focusing the impact of pre-adopted ethnic federalism on building successful developmental state in the country. How far the emulation of DDS complements and contradicts with ethnic federalism in the country?

### The Ethiopian Ethnic Federalism

Though it remains difficult and complex to establish a federal arrangement based on ethnicity, many scholars in the field argue that one of the characteristics of federalism is its aspiration and purpose to generate and maintain both unity and diversity simultaneously (Watts, 1999). Several arguments about ethnic federalism revolve around the compartmentalization of ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup>

Right after its holding of state power in 1991, the EPRDF began its project of reconstituting the country in an ethnic federation in which regional states are created on the basis of ethno-linguistic criteria. The Ethiopian ethnic federal system is significant in that it provides for secession of any ethnic unit under tough procedures. Opponents of ethnic federalism fear that it invites ethnic conflict and risks state disintegration (Ottaway, 1995). Others, of an ethno-nationalist persuasion, doubt the government's real commitment of self-determination; they support the ethnic federal constitution *per se*, but claim that it has not been put in to practice. Supporters of ethnic federalism point out that it has maintained the unity of the Ethiopian peoples and the territorial integrity of the state, while providing full recognition to the principle of ethnic equality.

According to the 1995 Federal Democratic republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) constitution, the federal arrangement of Ethiopia had two levels of governments: The federal government at the centre and the regional governments at the state level. In their relationship, there are shared powers, exclusive powers and concurrent powers. The central government is exclusively responsible for foreign affairs, national defence, economic policy, monetary and fiscal policies, building and administering major development infrastructures and establishments. It was provided with a power for budgeting allocation to the

<sup>4</sup> For instance, scholars like Elazar (1987), argue that federal systems operate best in a society with sufficient homogeneity of fundamental interests. Others like Lijphart (2002) argue that, if ethnic groups are geographically concentrated, federalism could offer an excellent opportunity for group autonomy. Still others like Horowitz (1985) argue that federal arrangement based on homogeneity is detrimental to the creation of inter-ethnic cooperation. However, he warns that both ethnic majority rule and ethnic minority rule are very ineffective and destructive type of arrangement in ethnically divided society (see Horowitz, 1994).

regional governments. Likewise, the regional governments, who were created based on ethno-linguistic criteria, have been provided broad powers on all matters within their territorial jurisdiction except for those assigned to the federal government. Since 2003, the federal structure of the state has been implemented through a program called 'district level decentralization program' at district (*Woreda*) level.

### The Ethiopian Democratic Developmental State

The notion of a Developmental State (DS) is not entirely new to the literature in development economics and international political economy. While the term has been used to refer to state-led economic planning as experienced in the countries of East Asia and some other countries who won the label since the 1970s, serious attempt at conceptualizing it is said to have begun in recent three decades.<sup>5</sup>

Though debated in many ways among scholars as well as politicians, Ethiopia officially claims to be a democratic developmental state. It has been more than two decades since the concept and some elements of the developmental state model started to emerge in various policies of the country. However, it is about a decade since it started to be openly pronounced by the Ethiopian government and become a subject of heated discussion in academic and political forums. The emergence of the developmental state paradigm in Ethiopia has to be

<sup>5</sup> There is no one all-inclusive and all-agree-on definition of developmental state. The available alternative definitions have differences stemming from their disciplinary emphasis (i.e. economics, education, political science, public policy, sociology and so on) and the differences in the respective contexts in time and geographic coverage. However, it is possible to identify certain communalities essentially all related to the role of state in economic development. A more comprehensive definition that appears to have covered major aspects of the concept of developmental states was given by Edigheji, who sees a developmental state as one that: ...authoritatively, credibly, legitimately and in a binding manner is able to formulate and implement its policies and programs. This entails possessing a developmentalist ideology that privileges industrialization, economic growth and expansion of human capabilities. Such a state also has to be able to construct and deploy the institutional architecture within the state and mobilize society towards the realization of its developmentalist project (Edigheji, 2010, p.4). This definition incorporates ideological, political and institutional dimensions. The DS is also an emphatic state, a 'hard state,' relatively autonomous/independent, with a decidedly interventionist bent on seeking not only to regulate, guide, and shape, but also to monitor and control, the economy.

viewed with in two broad contexts: the country's successive attempt to emulate the developmental paths of different countries, and the global phenomena that led to the realization of the failure of the neoliberal paradigm in Africa.

The Ethiopian DDS can be seen as the emulated form of DS from eastern Asian countries, particularly South Korea and Taiwan. It is an ideology to design policies and strategies for both democracy and economic development by taking experiences from East Asian domesticating countries economic development model, and adopting with the situation of Ethiopia.<sup>6</sup> Ethiopia was a quasi-feudal and later one-party socialist's state with virtually no experience with representative democracy or capitalism. The coming to power of EPRDF witnessed a wide range of policy reforms in the social, economic and political spheres under the ideological guise known as 'Revolutionary Democracy'. Its preferred conception of democracy has not been the liberal bourgeoisie variety, but based on individual participation, a diversity of interests and views, and plural representation. Rather the revolutionary democracy focus on communal collective participation and individual participation as well, based on consensus forged through discussion led by the vanguard organisation (Vaughan and Trouville, 2003). The government has embarked on gradual and limited liberalisation of the economy, it retains ownership of key sectors and all land, but an embryonic independent private sector has begun to emerge.

The other and related lesson from East Asia is the strong role that the state is perceived to play in the economies. "Ethiopian elites saw East Asia as an alternative to the 'neo-liberalism' they so decried in the west and its conditionality", Elsjø (2011). State intervention in the economy is the other very visible role the government is still playing. The state needed to

intervene because it has a firm belief that market failures would make the development of rural areas unprofitable and unfeasible for the country's nascent, particularly in the sector of physical infrastructure. Thus, State intervention in the economy in Ethiopia is so pervasive to the extent that recently the government has fixed the price of certain commodities, devalued the value of the currency and manipulates exchange rate in response to the changes in the economy.

The government of Ethiopia also controlled national economy, primarily by preventing from liberalising the economy at the speed that donors would prefer. The government continues to practice import substitution, impose control on foreign exchange, and protect and promote key industries from outside competition. Key sectors such as banking and telecommunications are wholly government-owned.

The Ethiopian government overwhelming emphasis on economic growth has manifested itself in official documents and in practice as well. The government's highly ambitious five-year plans are the clearest example of this: in 2005, the plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) made 'a massive push to accelerate growth' the second of its central pillar, and aimed to achieve an annual average of 7-10% growth in real GDP for the five years to follow (MoFED, 2006). The lowest of this numbers is said to come directly from 'the best experience of Eastern and Southern Asia countries that have registered accelerated growth. The even more ambitious Growth and Transformation plan (GTP) in 2010) aims to double the country's GDP by 2015 and achieve 'middle-income status by 2025 (MoFED, 2010b). However, these development policies, programmes and strategies are designed at the centre in a centralized and top down logic.

### **Ethnic Federalism and Democratic Developmental State in Practice**

Almost all the countries known for building DS (Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, China, Taiwan etc.) are unitary in their State structure (with centralized power) and relatively homogenous in terms of ethnicity as compared to well diversified Ethiopia. On the other hand, Ethiopia, with her ethnic- based federal state structure and relatively more heterogeneous is also opting for DDS. The main reason behind the adoption of ethnic federalism in the country is to devolve power through decentralization and empower the decentralized unit to make decision in their respective spheres thereof. On the other hand, DDS opts for strong central power that can make decisions at the centre at the expense of lower tier units. In the following sections, I shall deal with the practical complementarity and contradictory nature of these two doctrines by emphasizing on the politics of self-

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<sup>6</sup> According to some scholars, the DS and DDS can be differentiated based on their focus towards economic development and balancing economic development with democratic governance respectively. While DS put economic development at the centre of their policy, DDS would like to balance economic growth with redistribution and are characterized by more inclusiveness, higher citizen's participation in decision making and having vibrant civil society ((Bagchi, 2000; Edigheji, 2005 and Gumede, 2009). "Expressing interest in democratic developmental State is one thing, however; constructing such a State is another" (Edigheji, 2010). Because, building developmental States in a democratic context brings about particular challenges, which for the most part East Asian success stories did not face (Tesfay, 2010). Now States are expected not only to be effective but also accountable and respect human and people's rights (Randall, 2007).

determination and elite commitment, bureaucracy, conflicts escalated by ethnic federalism and finally national consensus. These are principal areas whereby both DDS and ethnic federalism jointly interact.

### **The Politics of Self-determination and Elite Commitment**

Self-determination is the most celebrated pillar of ethnic federalism. However, if not effectively institutionalized, the polarization on mere ethnic identity for self-identification has a tendency towards disintegration diverting the destination. Elites are more committed to the betterment of their ethnic groups than any other group or national wellbeing. On the other hand, DDS favours for elite commitment at central (national) level who can work for the common good of all, instead of attachment to certain group.

In this regard, ethnic-based federalism becomes the most controversial EPRDF policy. It has been celebrated by some as the panacea for holding multi-ethnic Ethiopia together. It is decried by others as a dangerous concept that will eventually dismember the country. For nationalists, the policy is a deliberate ploy to undermine national identity. They see the constitutional granting of self-determination to ethnic group as deliberate step backward from the nation building process. Many describe ethnic federalism as a malicious Tigrayan People Liberation Front (TPLF), the dominant party in EPRDF, tactic to plant divisions among ethnic groups so as to facilitate rule by the Tigrayan minority.

The allegation that the TPLF manipulates ethnic identities and conflicts to stay in power is made by most opposition supporters. Critics decry worsening ethnic relations as a result of ethnic based competition. In their view, the political system divides rather than unites people, by creating mutual suspicion and rancour and instituting ethnical dynamics that could easily spiral out of control. The constitutional clause that gives nationalities the right to seceded is touted as proof of the EPRDF's anti-Ethiopian stance. Eritrea's independence, which turned Ethiopia in to a landlocked country, is viewed as evidence of a desire to dismember (Paulos, 2007).

Proponents of ethnic federalism, however, acclaim the recognition of group rights, seeing creation of ethnic-based administrative entities as the only meaningful approach for defusing ethnic discontents (Samuel, 2011). In addition to this view, as actively propagated by the ruling party and also some other opposing parties, Ethiopian's ethnic and minority groups have suffered centuries of domination by a central state that imposed Amharic language and culture up on them. Granting 'nationalities' their culture, ethnic, and political aspirations is necessary to redress historic injustice. Thus, it brought important recognition of their culture and language to

many groups.

In either case, ethnic federalism in Ethiopia affected elite commitment, which is one important element for the triumph of DDS.<sup>7</sup> Political leaders in Ethiopia, Aaron Tesfaye (2010) claims, envision a break from the past leading to rapid economic growth while guaranteeing political autonomy to ethnic regions (Aaron, 2010). As it is the case to many issues in the country, however, there are different views reflected regarding the nature of the elite. Supporting the government's position, there are some who conceive of the leaders as truly committed to the process of re-building the country with the former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi emerged as unchallenged intellectual and ideological guide of the party, and government as well. But after the death of Meles three years ago, his deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn became a Prime Minister who has no link with TPLF and barely little experience of politics in "Betemengist" government palace. Even though the power of prime minister as enshrined in the FDRE constitution is still the same, Hailemariam is not Meles. He is failing to lead the country as his predecessor under one voice, and many elites became reluctant to his humble ruling strategy. It seems that the legitimacy of both Ethiopian ethnic federalism and developmental state has been built on one man, Meles. This is the case in which the current Prime Minister and more generally the ruling class are appealing to 'the legacy of visionary leader', Meles, as a way of reinforcing legitimacy of the government and its actions. Devastative enough, even political elites with in ruling party have started to speak merely for their ethnic group.

Some political elites, like Merera Gudina from opposition political party, view the composition of elites in Ethiopia as dictators and tyrants owing to "the politics of exclusion" which the government purposefully uses. Indeed, in Ethiopia the state is used to marginalize and exclude rival elites. The practice of exclusion instead of integration or coalition denotes the lack of development-oriented elites and the preponderance of rent-seeking and predatory elites. Since the major criteria of the ruling party to incorporate elites is on the basis ethnicity, there

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<sup>7</sup>In the literature, a developmental state's leadership is strongly committed to developmental goals, and which places national development a head of personal enrichment and/or short-term political gains (Ghani et. al, 2005). The EPRDF sources stress on Taiwan and South Korea as being typical East Asian models that the government strives to emulate (EPRDF, 2011). These governments, it claims, were committed to developing their economies and took the issue as a matter of life and death. Similar to them as one feature of a DDS, the government considers itself committed to transforming the country to a middle-income country within a short period of time. Not only this, the government also views ensuring development as an issue that determines regime-survival.

is hardly enough space for multi-dimensional competent elites. In other words, the excluded elite group show little or no commitment for the realization of DDS.

In addition, there is no grand coalition in Ethiopia since TPLF holds the hegemonic position in EPRDF. This is the feature that lacked Ethiopia when the new state was formed. Failure to have consensus and 'national reconciliation' across elites that were struggling to bring the downfall of the military regime has been one factor inhibiting the success of government policies. Therefore, this impacts on the subsequent political and economic developments in the country and puts its own limit on succeeding the goal of a developmental state. With elite's commitment towards the designing and effective implementation of holistic development policies and strategies, the ideology of DDS may die soon a natural death.

### Bureaucracy

The capacity of public institutions especially the bureaucracy is crucial to economic performance in a developmental state. The bureaucracy constitutes "the soft underbelly of the state" which advises the political executive and formulates and implements public policies professionalism. Discipline and technical skills are core issues in administrative, competence and capability (UNECA, 2005).<sup>8</sup>

The Ethiopian bureaucracy is managed by civil servants, who are by and large recruited not on the basis of meritocracy but political affiliation and ethnic based quota system, are failed to serve competently. The bureaucratic institutions in which the functionaries operate are not autonomous.<sup>9</sup> They are strongly influenced by the ruling elite. The higher positions in many governmental departments are assigned according

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<sup>8</sup>Mkandawire (2001) and Evans (1995) have argued that one of the key features of developmental state is the capacity of the bureaucracy to implement the policy. Such capacity is determined by institutional, technical, administrative and political. The state must create a meritocratic bureaucracy of highly skilled people who can freely combine their close contacts with the private sector with their independent understanding of the global market to help steer economic planning in directions good for the national economy as a whole.

<sup>9</sup>Mesay (2010), in his finding echoed that the cumbersome weight of political intervention does not allow the autonomy of the bureaucratic sphere. He further stressed that, far from allowing autonomy, the bureaucracy is using an extended organ of the political machinery, thereby undermining impartiality and professionalism, and distributing favourable treatment on the basis of political patronage and, ethnic affiliation.

to an ethnic-based quota system. Thus, what must be emphasized here is that the ethnic based politics of the country, as fashioned by EPRDF, is adverse to the autonomy of the bureaucracy and structurally weaken its functions.

Notwithstanding this, though the bureaucracy might be recruited on the basis of meritocracy, due to the perception held by the public, willingly or unwillingly they are working in conformance with their ethnic affiliation rather than in pursuit of the goals of their organization. Because of this, instead of transparency, the desire to fulfil the wishes of the political agenda introduces the temptation for corruption that has become endemic in the functioning of the Ethiopian bureaucracy. Despite this, some of the government initiated development plans were very rational and if systematically implemented, they could successfully achieve their intended goals. But, many fruitful projects were unduly delayed because the functionaries lacked the professionalism and commitment needed to mobilize the limited resources of the nation for development.

Down to regional state level, ethnic groups have been encouraged for self-administration as granted by ethnic federalism constitution. However, all regions do not equally have sufficient human resource to exercise strong bureaucracy. Accordingly, the least developing regions<sup>10</sup> started to suffer from shortage of well trained and educated manpower. Even though there is a possibility to recruit well trained and professionals from other parts of the country, the indigenous ethnic communities who have no relevant knowledge of the activities controlled key political, bureaucratic and administration posts in such regions. This is further justified with the right of the ethnic self-administration discourse in Ethiopia's ethnic federal principles. In rare cases, when non-indigenous people go to another region for work they cannot succeed due to the ethnic federal principle which has drawn a dichotomy of 'insiders' and 'outsiders'; the 'insiders' may have no professional skills whereas the 'outsiders' are not happy and willing to work in the area which considers them 'outsiders'. This situation has created an opportunity for the EPRDF to play a controversial role in shaping and affecting politics in the regional state.

In such circumstances, where bureaucracy is handicapped by the wrongly interpreted division of the country based on ethnic line, the implementation of DDS is more or less rhetoric. Without competent, merit-based bureaucracy, the country will shortly face implementation failure and exposed to the danger of rent-seeking.

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<sup>10</sup>Among the nine regional states, the Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Harari and Somali regional states are categorized as developing regions. Whereas the remained four i.e. Oromiya, Amhara, Tigray and SNNP are categorized as developed regions in Ethiopia based on current government's classification.

## Ethnic Federalism and Conflicts<sup>11</sup>

Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia answered many long-held questions of ethnic tensions, ethnic domination, marginalization by one ethnic group, and particularly ended the seventeen years violent civil war. However, one of the crucial impacts of ethnic federalism was the generation and transformation of intra-regional autonomy conflicts and inter-regional conflicts. The eruption of ethnic clashes still remained intact in the country. The most noticeable change regarding ethnic conflicts after the formation of ethnic federal structure has been the emergence of localised violent conflicts involving several of the ethnically constituted regions which drastically hurt to create viable society. At the same time, there are secessionist movement's engaged in low-level armed guerrilla warfare accusing the current system as Tigrayan ethnic group domination over the other.<sup>12</sup>

The EPRDF's conception of ethnicity did not always match the multi-ethnic makeup of many cities and areas. The southern region, Gambella, Benishangul- Gumuz and Harari are inhabited by multiple ethnic groups. Tigray, Amhara, Oromo and Somali states are dominated by one ethnic group but host others. Granting self-administration to dominant ethnic groups thus created new minorities in the latest case. In certain places, these minorities didn't speak the language of the new administration. The principle was interpreted by some groups as an opportunity to claim exclusion rights over land by evicting settlers and other newcomers. These tensions have often been nurtured by politicians from local indigenous groups who can be identified as 'ethnic

activists' and 'political entrepreneurs'.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore imposing developmental state without primarily stabilizing ethnic clashes over resources and powers distribution is wastage of time. The cumulative effects of all these rivals undermine solidarity, fraternity and unity among neighbour ethnic groups, and if not managed timely, it may lead to hated civil wars which adversely affect the county's development.

## National Consensus

According to Ghaniet *al.*, (2005), one of the underlying requirements of the developmental state is the creation of nation-wide public. It has been argued that the success of the East Asian miracle is driven by nationalism. A nation-wide public need not be rooted in a unified sense of 'nation' based on cultural and linguistic unity, but may well take the form of a more civic identity. Indeed, the main force behind the developmental ideology has been nationalism which seeks to subordinate the energy of the people behind a single national goal. The assumption is that all citizens should be able to see themselves as Ethiopian rather than their ethnic and/or religious line.

Since the project of ethnic federalism in 1991, it was believed that Ethiopia's ethnic groups' right to self-determination would lead to peace and provide a new basis for the unity of the country. However, the past resentments have not been completely solved yet. 'Decentralisation and proliferation of conflicts at local and

<sup>11</sup>Though there is no necessary connection between ethnicity and conflict as Horowitz argues, the basic for confrontation may emerge due to the inclusion of two or more ethnic communities within a single or adjacent territory of a state characterized by discriminatory and uneven status and resource allocation (Horowitz, 1985). In many instances ethnic tensions and conflicts are more likely when certain groups perceive discrimination or exploitation in the context of state formation. Ethnic conflicts are usually centred on three general issues: 'the desire for 'exit' or independence from the state, the demand for greater autonomy within the state or the recognition and protection of minority interests within a plural society (Gurr, 1994). He also adds that 'ethnic identity and interests *per se* do not risk unforeseen ethnic wars' rather; the danger is hegemonic elites who use the state to promote their own people's interests at the expense of others (Gurr, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> For instance the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has been fighting since 1960 for the secession of Oromiya region so as to create independent Oromiya as 55<sup>th</sup> African state.

<sup>13</sup>Examples include the conflict between the Berta and Oromo settlers in Asosa zone the exploded during the 2000. Sometimes the conflicts take on the character of ethnic cleansing; 'non-natives' have been chased away in Arsi, Harar, Bale (Abbink, 2006) and recently in Illu Abba Bora of Oromiya region. Beginning in the first half of the 1990s, a wave of local conflicts gripped the country as groups were incited by the transitional charter to settle old disputes or claim territory they felt was rightfully theirs. Some of the most severe were between Amhara settlers and Anuak in December 2003 in Gambella. 'In Somali after 2000, several hundreds were killed in repeated fighting between the sheikash, a small clan that sought to establish its own district, and Ogaden sub-clans. A border dispute between the Guji and Gedeo exploded in to large-scale fighting in 1998 over control of Hagere Mariam district. Land disputes triggered by administrative boundary changes incited a confrontation between the Guji and Borena in June 2006, causing at least 100 deaths and massive displacement. Some 70,000 fled the border area between Oromiya and Somali after conflict erupted. By a very conservative estimate, several thousand peoples were killed in inter-ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia between 1991 and 2005' (Abbink, 2006).

regional levels accompanied the federal restructuring of the country' (Asnake, 2006). In addition, ethnic conflicts have not prevented but have been either transferred from the national to the regional or district levels. Relations between ethnic groups have become increasingly competitive as they vie for control of administrative boundaries, land and natural resources. Hence, after the introduction of this policy ethnic conflicts happened in different parts of regions which exacerbated in political difference.

The existences of chronic political differences impede the possibility of consensus on major issues. Of course one of the typical characteristics of the Ethiopian political landscape is the diametric differences on almost all important national issues that are so strong and emotionally charged that political dialogue among the elites is hardly possible. Many of the differences are fundamental to the views of different political groups on issues such as ethnic federalism as a political arrangement, the appropriateness of revolutionary democracy as an ideology, the development of democratic process in the country, conditions of human rights and political freedom, etc. Years after Ethiopia has officially claimed to have adopted the developmental state model, there is still fierce debate and disagreement continuing on such basic issues as what is a developmental state; is developmental state relevant to Ethiopia; what type of developmental state should Ethiopia follow; which country should be a model for Ethiopia to learn from; and so on.

Ethiopian ethnic federalism includes ethnically defined national citizenship, self-administration on an ethno-linguistic basis as enshrined in the constitution, ethnically defined political representation and decision making at all administrative levels. In fact, the ethnic federalism is a clear break with the past, which allows people to be involved with and understand local government. However, the lack of clarity and incompetence among the lower level hierarchy of government structure is another serious challenge. The implementation of developmental policies is undertaken by people of least competence in professional terms who work in a tense political environment. There seems to be a paucity of solidified understanding about what developmental state is and how Ethiopia is embracing it.

All of the supra discussed points show that ethnic federalism contributed a lot to the absence of national consensus in the country. As De Waal (2013) warns, that in a country as wide and diverse as Ethiopia implementing such grand policy as DDS policy without creating a common mind set first runs the risk of degenerating the principles, no matter how sophisticated the theoretical foundations are, in to a set of dogma parroted by party cadres, with hardly any understanding of the real meaning and implication of the policies and strategies.

## CONCLUSION

The Constitution adopted by ERPFD in 1995 introduced in Ethiopia a federal architecture, officially structured along ethnic lines to promote the right of self-determination of nations, nationalities and peoples' living in the country. The Ethiopian federal system grants constitutional autonomies and prerogatives to national regional states, up to the right of secession that brought structural change in the political landscape of the country suspending the hitherto centralized system. Recently, the country is committed to build democratic developmental state showing its disregard to neoliberalism so as to achieve sustainable development. As such, Ethiopia is striving to accommodate triple doctrines: Ethnic federalism, developmental state and democracy.

However, the overriding ethnic based federal and decentralized structure of the Ethiopian state seems to stand in sharp contradiction with the newly adopted centralistic and top down logics that inspired the democratic developmental state model and practices. On the one hand, the politics of ethnic federalism encourages self-determination and, in some cases, unnecessary conflicts. On the other hand, the effort to build DDS is facing serious challenges at its infant stage, which particularly emanate from the pre-adopted ethnic federalism such as weak bureaucracy (as a result of recruitment criteria on the basis of ethnic quota and political affiliation, instead of meritocracy), absence of national consensus (due to ethnically polarized politics), and ineffective elite commitment embedded in fierce debate in determining country's policy.

Confusion between political and developmental goals along with the incompetence of the bureaucracy and the growing of individual and group interests contest the effective implementation of the development policies at the grassroots level.

In spite of the ethnic federal structure, the Ethiopian developmental state tends to show significant similarity to its predecessors in terms of the top down approach of policies, public administration and development management. While popular support at the base level is a crucial determinant of success for development, in Ethiopia "wisdom about development and transformation keeps on coming from above, with little recognition for local knowledge or the autonomous aspirations of groups and individuals" (Fantini, 2013). This being so, the weakness of the opposition, the rampant corruption and rent seeking in both public and private sectors, the complete control of the media by the government all add to the concerns about the accountability and transparency of the leadership.

Even though there are certain contradictory points between the Ethiopian ethnic federalism and democratic developmental state, there is a possibility to integrate them through careful institutionalization of both. There



are two conditions that need to be considered necessary in order to fulfil this mission. First of all, political stability needs to be ensured. In this respect the developmental state offers to the EPRDF a framework to elaborate and legitimize the need for stability in order to carry out successful development. The move started by ethnic federalism plays a pivotal role for political stability through self-determination of each and every ethnic group. However, ethnic federalism alone is not a complete guarantee for the maintenance of political stability, as the case has been observed. It should be supported by strong institutions that assure the practical application of policies and national consensus as well. In addition, to overcome the risk of ethnic conflict, the preoccupation of the current government should be awareness creation among the nation so that to materialize the idea of 'Unity with in diversity'.

The second condition relates to state capacity. By adopting the international development assistance narrative on capacity building, EPRDF has put great emphasis on the need to build the capacity of a strong and effective state, and sought in the past ten years to implement different rounds of civil service reform. These highly politicised initiatives have been undertaken with the goal of reshaping and controlling the administrative machinery that EPRDF considers heavily influenced by loyalties and practices of the previous regimes, and therefore oriented by top down, conservative and autocratic logics, reputed as the main obstacle for proper implementation of EPRDF development participatory strategies. Through extensive institutional reform, merit based bureaucrats needs be recruited so that to effectively implement this golden policy of Democratic Developmental state.

Finally, taking in to consideration the fact that poverty is a deep rooted enemy of the nation, special emphasis needs to be given to integration of democratic developmental state through the creation strong institutions and competent bureaucrats so as to ensure effective functioning of development policies without undermining the democratic rights of the people to self-determination under the solid basis of nation-wide consensus. Thus, if Ethiopia desires to use the state as an important vehicle to tackle its deep-rooted developmental problems under the current disguise of DDS, it needs to improve the competence of its public bureaucracy and keep them politically neutral. Furthermore, in order to build a competent and professional bureaucracy, recruitment and promotion must be based on merit rather than on ethnic affiliation and political patronage.

## Abbreviations

DS	Developmental State
DDS	Democratic Developmental State
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF:	Tigray People Liberation Front
FDRE:	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

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