CHAPTER 2

# State and Development in Ethiopia

Late industrializers in the twentieth century usually adopted specific ideologies, or guiding principles, designed to mobilize their citizens toward industrial transformation. Depending on the state's strategic policy, some ideologies specifically targeted the business sector and disciplined other areas such as agricultural interests and labor, and others appealed to the popular masses—the working class and the peasantry. Thus, the preferences of the state and the strategic policies of the developmental elite differ from nation to nation depending on the states' histories, political systems, cultures, geographic location, and specific domestic and international conditions as well as their period of insertion into the global economy, which might favor or disfavor an industrial undertaking. In any case, the essential objective of economic development, and specifically industrialization, is the template designed to reduce the number of people engaged in subsistence agriculture by expanding national industrial output, which in the long run tends to improve livelihoods through higher wages, thereby creating a middle class and increasing the national income and enhancing the democratic process unique to each country.[1]

Ethiopia is an ancient polity which had a long and varied history. it is unique in Africa because it was never colonized--with the exception of a hoot-lived Italian occupation (1936–1941). As a crossroads and center of the Horn of Africa, for much of its time, peace has eluded Ethiopia resulting in lengthy periods of political and socioeconomic stagnation. The Ethiopian state was essentially predatory. To the extent the past

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imperial feudal state was legitimate, it constituted a rigid class—almost a caste—system in which the feudal elites were considered to embody virtues, derived from essential essences, that gave them rights to their place in the order of things. This order was reinforced by ideological power, which privileged tradition, and reified by divine powers. The emergence of this standard in Ethiopia was tied to a process of centralization of power around the figure of the sovereign. But this form of political authority was essentially unstable and dysfunctional because, although standardized, it embodied the exception at its center in the person of the maximum leader.[2] Ethiopia's social order and its power resources for millennia can thus be characterized as based on the military and the sword. That type of rule is predation.

Under predatory rule, production is non-existent. Whenever those holding economic wherewithal attempt to increase production, they are immediately preyed upon coercively, and the predation creates a disincentive for economic growth.[3] The challenges in overcoming such a situation are two: first, to replace coercive power with authoritative political power, and second, to generate the conditions and possibilities of replacing a predatory economy with a truly productive one. Major variables in such a transition are the caging of power and the containment of conflict with consensual parameters that do not entail predation or domination.[4] Consensual parameters, or norms, constitute a form of democracy—itself a contested concept—and vary from nation to nation because of many factors. The establishment of consensual parameters and the caging of conflict define political power, resulting in social action and new institutions.[5]

In Ethiopia, a new consensual parameter developed with the Ethiopian Revolution when society demanded new social actions and institutions; however, the new actions and institutions were usurped by the subsequent military regime (1974–1991). The political institutions and structures produced by the military did not cage conflict; rather, they enhanced it because the regime equated power with domination of the Ethiopian people as well as of Eritrea. The military regime was dislodged by the Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPDRF), a coalition of Ethiopian regional forces, and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1991. While supporters of the Ethiopian Revolution were divided over the "national question,"[6] they were united in wanting to restructure society within the socialist framework, believing the main contradictions of Ethiopian society had to do

with class. But their explicit differences on how to get there resulted in their doom.

The EPDRF on the other hand, at least its core, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), held the view that fundamental to establishing peace and democracy in Ethiopia was the granting of self-determination to Ethiopia's nations, nationalities, and cultural communities, thereby creating nine ethnic regional states and two chartered cities. This type of federalism has, however, been criticized for "essentializing," ethnic identities, "privileging" them over other identity types and in the process heightening ethnic tensions and conflict.[7] However, others have argued Ethiopia's federalism is a refreshing approach to governance and instead of viewing ethnicity as negative social force, it is positively creative and ethnicity has utilitarian value for democracy and development.[8] Still others claim that "the federal state, despite according nominal decentralized power to regional and local authorities, is stronger than any previous Ethiopian state and has developed structures of central control and top-down rule."[9]

The EPDRF is made of core and affiliated groups. The relationship within the front is based on degrees of power differences and the core party controls economic, political, and technical resources. It defines the organization of state structures and its coexistence with its field of operations involves networks of reciprocity that includes material benefits, status, protection, and authority, which are exchanged for personal loyalty and obedience. The system is based on elite pact within the core and affiliated groups of the front and to a commitment to an ideology of development and broad agreements on distribution of resources guided by a political-machine-type dominant coalition party at the center. It is also based on the establishment and maintenance of the ground rules that conflict is confined mostly to smaller parties, that may not be ideological committed and are essential in governed, but can disagree over control of state resources which is maintained through a patron–client relationship (Table 2.1).

In order to understand this self-determination or decentralization, it is crucial to look at the intraparty relations of the EPDRF—namely the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SPDM) , and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) as well as its five regional affiliate parties. While an adequate analysis of the relationships among these groups is discussed

**Table 2.1** Composition of Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPDRF) . Compiled from Paulos Chanie, "Clientelism and Ethiopia's Post-1991 Decentralization", The Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 455, No.3 (Sept., 2007) pp. 361–367

| *Group* | *Acronym* |
|---|---|
| *Core groups* | |
| Tigrayan Liberation Front | TPLF |
| Amhara National Democratic Movement | ANDM |
| Oromo People's Democratic Organization | OPDO |
| Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples | SNNP |
| *Affiliated groups* | |
| Afar National Democratic Movement | ANDM |
| Somali People's Democratic Party | SPDP |
| Harari National League | HNL |
| Benishangul-Gumuz Democratic Unity Front | BGPDUF |
| Gambella People's Democratic Party | GPDP |

elsewhere,[10] the consensus seems to be that the EPDRF's centralized party structure holds a tight grip on national politics and its practice of democratic centralism weakens decentralization.[11] Furthermore, the practice of democratic centralism is enhanced through the mechanism of fiscal decentralization with the center allocating itself lucrative sources of revenue, thereby making regions dependent on the national government. It is thus germane to revisit the evolution of the Ethiopian state, the politics of the period of the establishment of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991–1994), and the re-ordering of state society in order to understand the ruling party's decentralization policy. But first a background on the evolution of the Ethiopia state and its early modernizers is in order.

## The State and Modernization

The modern Ethiopian state, unlike most African states, is an indigenous institution that goes back centuries. This institution, after emerging in the highlands of Axum, disintegrated into a dark-age period (1769–1855) known as *Zemene Mesafint* or the Era of the Princes. In the late nineteenth century, a series of emperors—Tewodros I, Yohannes IV, and Menelik II—made efforts to reconstruct the state, culminating in the modern state and consolidation of power under Emperor Haile Selassie (1930–1974), who was overthrown during the Ethiopian Revolution (1974–1977). However, state power was usurped by the military, which allied itself with the Soviet Union and ruled Ethiopia with an iron fist (1977–1991). This regime did not solve Ethiopia's

multifaceted economic, national, and regional problems, but exacerbated them. In 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPDRF), an umbrella group composed of many nationalities, and its ally the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) defeated the regime. Subsequently, Eritrea declared its independence in 1993 and in 1995 the EPDRF established in Ethiopia a federal form of governance based on ethnicity.

The modern nation-state of Ethiopia was partly realized under Emperor Menelik (1889–1913) at substantial cost to the inhabitants. The cost came from forays into the empire subsequent to the colonization of Eritrea by the Italians circa 1882 as well as the conquest or reconquest of the southern and western parts of the country. These southern and western marches of Emperor Menelik resulted in considerable costs to budding states, kingdoms, and indigenous peoples. The penetration of state power in the conquered regions was facilitated by three instruments. The first was the *rist*, a lineage system of land ownership that allowed highland Abyssinian soldiers to settle on land grants. The second was the Amharic language, *Lisane Negus* (the king's language), which was adopted by indigenous peoples because it afforded protection in claiming rights that others enjoyed in core areas. The third was Christianity, which was spread throughout the country by the Coptic Church, which ministered to the needs of the settlers and converted the indigenous peoples.[12] In the nineteenth century, with the introduction of firearms, the balance of forces favored Menelik who emerged as the victor and proceeded to assimilate—often through force or intermarriages—various cultural groups, creating in the process a multi-ethnic nation. Menelik was the architect of the centralized Ethiopian state. He ended the tradition of past emperors of having roving capitals as a means of disciplining and rewarding the subaltern in the periphery; instead, he founded a center in Addis Ababa. To consolidate state power, he created a strong monarchical administrative system by appointing governors who were mostly, but not always, highland Shoan Amhara. Thus, by the time the Emperor Haile Selassie arrived on the scene, cultural categories had gelled, more or less, and the empire had been centralized.

After the defeat of Italian imperialism at Adowa (1895), the Emperor Menelik turned in the direction of the south to reclaim or expand Ethiopian frontiers in reaction to European encroachment on its peripheries. After establishing Ethiopia's sovereignty, the emperor, although well aware of the benefits of modernity, did not emulate the Japanese

state but nevertheless led Ethiopia in social and economic development. However, before delving into this particular issue, it might be beneficial to trace the development ideas espoused by Ethiopian intellectuals of the nineteenth century.

It is important at this juncture to note that the terms "Young Egyptians" and "Young Turks" were used by some observers to describe sectors of society that embarked on projects of modernization and development. These sectors included various strata of society including intellectuals who had been exposed to modernity, understood the economic and social backwardness of their societies, and chaffed at the status quo. The terms "Young Ethiopian" and "Japanizers" were coined to describe a specific generation of educated Ethiopians living at the turn of the nineteenth century who wanted to solve the problems of underdevelopment by emulating the Japanese model of industrialization because it had provided its people peace, prosperity, and independence, while Ethiopia's backwardness had produced the opposite.[13] This miniscule number of educated Ethiopians—their influence peaking in the 1920s and 1930s—advocated a non-western model of economic development based on Japan's Meiji Transformation.[14] Prominent among these were *Blattengetta* Hiruy Welde Selassie (1878–1939), *Negadras* Gebra-Heywat Baykedan (1986–1919), and *Blatta* Dressa Amante (1887–1952).

*Blattengetta* Hiruy was an early modernizer and influential Japanizer. Among his positions, he was secretary to Emperor Menelik and later served as foreign minister in many diplomatic missions around the world, including in Japan, and was acutely aware of similarities between Ethiopia and Japan in terms of dynasties and state structures.[15] In 1931, he helped *Bajerond* Takle-Hawaryat Tekle-Mariam and others who, under the command of the Emperor Haile Sellassie, drafted a modern constitution modeled on Japan's Meiji Constitution of 1889. Although there are some differences, the similarities in the important articles of the two constitutions are striking.[16]

The most important of the Young Ethiopians of the period, with significant original insight in terms of political economy and development, was Gebra-Heywat Baykadan, who wrote a seminal book of the period, *Government and Governance*, which dealt with the theory and practice of economic development. He explored the challenges faced by nineteenth-century Ethiopia that then was mired in ignorance and backwardness and prescribed a policy of development facilitated by visionary and

accountable leadership, an educated population, and a skilled labor force. He was an early promoter of the abandonment of the predatory patrimonial state, unjust taxation, and rent-seeking by the traditional elite. He advocated "higher taxes on speculators, breaking of state-sanctioned monopolies, tariffs aimed at balancing trade, advancement of education and creation of a modern bureaucracy and work ethic rewarding manual labor and trades."[17]

In addition, Gebra-Heywat Baykedan advocated a model of development based on a distinct national culture and developmental elite aware of its mission. He envisioned implementation of his model as the only way Ethiopia could ensure its independence and sovereignty and at the same time catch up with the developed world. While Gebra-Heywat Baykedan has been criticized by some scholars as not being authentically African in his thinking because he was imbued with Eurocentricity,[18] this view is countered by others with a more sympathetic and nuanced analysis. The latter argue that his "ideas were more than simple mimicry of European capitalist modernity but offered a modern take on the challenges that Ethiopia was facing" as part of its incorporation into the capitalist world economy; those who hold this view maintain that he wanted to see his country turn modern but at the same time maintain its cultural and political independence.[19] In a similar fashion, *Blatta* Dressa Amante was a formidable thinker, an Oromo oral historian, and a development economist who "wrote on the importance of Japan's experiences as a model for Ethiopia's development,"[20] recognizing the role and significance of institutions in such an endeavor.

The ideas of the early Young Ethiopians about developing the nation did not take root during the period of Emperor Menelik II and the reasons may be many. As Harold Marcus noted, Menelik "saw [the Ethiopian empire] as an effective social and economic formula"[21] and instead of adopting the mode of production of industrialized nations such as Japan, along with their social structures, he eschewed industrial modernization. Marcus elaborated on the reasons: "The empire was newly established, its administration still rudimentary… its communication primitive and its population heterogeneous; there was no insular cultural homogeneity to exploit and reshape."[22] Moreover, the empire lacked capital resources, revenue from trade, and a skilled labor force. In addition, the Ethiopian elite, instead of being engaged in economic activity, were ruthlessly exploiting an impoverished warrior class and the peasantry.

In the interwar years, some of the modernizers helped germinate ideas of progress, and then most of those ideas were decimated by the Italian invasion (1935–1941). After Emperor Haile Selassie's return from exile and consolidation and centralization of power surrounded by a coterie of landed aristocracy, the ideas of the Young Ethiopians were buried and forgotten, not to surface again until the 1960s, when a number of new scholars emerged who advocated reform and westernization, or *me' erabawi seletane*, but with a caveat and called for an "*appropriate appropriation* [italics author's] of Western Modernity on Ethiopian grounds."[23] While among this group were prominent scholars such as Haddis Alemayehu, Makonen Endalkachew, Taklasadik Makuria, and others, the premier Japanizer was Kebede Mikael who wrote an important book on how Japan transformed itself during the Meiji Dynasty.[24]

Emperor Haile Selassie (1930–1974) was a cautious modernizer, not a visionary leader. The twin ideologies of the state that were prominent under his rule were citizen loyalty to the crown and recognition of absolute rule and divine power. These ideologies were buttressed by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that was protected by the emperor and preached that he was the elect of God and defender of the faith. It is true, of course, that this *ancien regime* introduced a modicum of higher education beginning in the 1930s and resulting in a nascent modern bureaucracy. However, the bureaucracy was not as much engaged in development planning as in the implementation of the centralization of imperial powers, the collection of revenue, and the division of the country into thirty-two g*hizats* or provinces. In any case, the emperor's political agenda and dubious economic policy were interrupted by the Italian occupation of Ethiopia.

The colonizing attempt by Italy, as reprehensible as it was, laid the groundwork for communication and transport in the regions and created links to the outside world. The link to the global economy in the post-war years had two consequences. First, because of the Addis-Djibouti railway, built in the 1920s by the French, the highland region experienced a boom in the development at the expense of other regions and ethnic groups. Second, whereas connection with the world economy helped to modernize the state apparatus and had an influence on social formation that was the evolution of a nascent bourgeoisie, it also unveiled emerging regional disparities in endowments. The post-World War II years, saw the return of the emperor from exile in the UK and was a period of unrest because the state openly discriminated against

some rebellious regions, leading to constant strife and at times to open peasant revolts. In time, beginning in the 1950s, a flicker of industry began in textiles, shoes, and beverages, usually around or just outside of Addis Ababa. The ownership of these enterprises was, for the most part, in the hands of foreigners, "hidden" investors within the aristocracy, or other important personages, but the capacity of the enterprises to employ industrial workers was for the most part negligible.

After Haile Selassie was deposed by the Ethiopian Revolution, the military regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974–1991) tried to strengthen the industrial sector. First, it nationalized the economy, creating state enterprises; the number of enterprises increased substantially but they were highly inefficient. The regime continued the practice of its predecessor of concentrating enterprises either around Addis Ababa or in the central highlands to the detriment of other regions. Nevertheless, the regime had two important socioeconomic achievements: land reform and mass literacy.[25] The first made extinct the entire aristocracy of the *ancien regime*, whose political base was land ownership; the second allowed for a modicum of written communication, via Amharic, in the national language by the nation's diverse cultural communities.

The land reform began in haphazard fashion because of political uncertainties and included the organization of peasant associations, created to undertake new land redistributions. The area under each peasant association was legally determined to be 800 ha; thus, peasants were incorporated into vast networks of regionally defined and distinct communities.[26] The military regime did not have a coherent industrial policy to speak of or the economic foundation to consolidate the revolution or to develop and transform the nation. It was committed to the territorial integrity of the ancient polity via centralization. The regime put the nation on a war economy footing; conducted a ferocious campaign against urban Marxist guerrillas; and pursued an equally brutal war against Eritrean, Tigrayan, and Oromo nationalists and Somali irredentists who either were against central rule or wanted outright independence.[27]

## The Emergence of The Federal State

The Ethiopian developmental state emerged soon after the end of the transition period (1991–1994) with the consolidation of power by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front (EPDRF), which overthrew

the military regime and the establishment of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia.[28] The Republic is composed of nine ethnically based and politically autonomous regional states and the two chartered cities of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The regions are subdivided into sixty-eight zones, and further divided into 550 *woredas* (local units) and several special *woredas.*

The definition of a developmental state is simply a state "whose ideological underpinnings are developmental and one that seriously *attempts* [italic author's] to deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development."[29] This definition, with variations, also fits many African states that were developmental soon after gaining independence in the 1960s and 1970s but whose efforts were derailed from their developmental goals during the "lost decade" of the 1980s.[30] But other scholars who gave a more nuanced definition of the developmental state and the prerequisite are as follows:

> political stability and insulted bureaucracy…independent from political pressure…extensive and continuous investment in education…the promotion of market enhancing rather than market repressing economic policies [and finally] a clear division of labor between the state and the private sector under the overall guidance of a super ministry or pilot agency.[31]

Is the Ethiopian state developmental? To the extent that its political elite are ideologically committed to development and have created organizational complexes in which expert and improving bureaucratic agencies collaborate with organized private sectors to spur national economic transformation and in recent years, such efforts and implementation, however, haphazardly have been implemented and empirically documented it is developmental.[32] The developmental ideology was established through the leadership of the late Prime Minster Meles Zenawi who made the case for limitation of the neo-liberal model of economic growth, favoring instead state intervention in economy and society or a "revolution from above" to transform the economy.[33] Thus, since the founding of the federal republic, the state ideologically has promoted development as well as economic growth and has conceived its mission as ensuring high rates of capital accumulation and industrialization.[34] However to the extent of political stability, market enhancing mechanisms, an insulated efficient bureaucracy and most significantly the creation of supranational pilot agency to guide development and sanction other laggard institutions, the result has been mixed.

Besides ideology, the other important variable in terms of the developmental state, discussed in Chap 4, is the presence of efficient state structures. In other words, the state's legitimacy lies in its ability and capacity to bring about high rates of economic growth and implement structural changes in the production system both at the domestic level. The Ethiopian state, although improving, has limitations in its ability in fulfilling the second requirement of the developmental state, namely establishing the capacity to implement economic policies effectively, which requires coherence of political, administrative, and technical institutions. Buttressing such capacity is state autonomy which is a main characteristic of a state and is sine qua non to development because it allows the state to plan and implement long-term economic policies unencumbered by social forces. But such objectives are hampered, by the "capture" of the state by corporate ethnic elite interests who check and prevent it from using its autonomy in a predatory manner and enable it to gain adhesion of key cultural and social actors.[35]

These cultural and social forces in Ethiopia make up and are part and parcel of the building blocks of the state and the ruling party that guides it. Scholars of contemporary Africa describe Ethiopia's political system as dominated by a strong state. Indeed, the state now and historically, as it expanded its hegemonic rule from the highland core and absorbed other groups or acted in the national interest to defend the nation from external threats, has been a strong a state, but it has not practiced absolute autonomy. Even in the heydays of empire, Ethiopian rulers were bound by traditional norms and the indigenous state has always been penetrated by regional, ethnic, and to some extent religious elites who mastered the intricacies of shifting alliances and the games of political power.[36] It was evident that the centralization efforts of the state under past emperors and those of the subsequent militarized state achieved at considerable cost to diverse inhabitants and in the end were just chimera, ending in collapse of the unitary state due to onslaught of Ethiopia's strong societies.

The contemporary Ethiopian state has been described in many ways depending on the commentator's discipline and political proclivities. Several scholars have pointed out that although the political system is federal and regional autonomy is granted by the constitution, in practice, political autonomy is restrained because the regions are dependent on the state for their fiscal provision.[37] The reasons for this dependence are the inadequacy of revenue sources allocated to regions compared to

expenditures and the poor revenue-raising capacity of regions. That is, centrifugal tendencies are checked by a strong centralizing state under the leadership of the EPDRF. This strong leadership has been characterized as "semi-authoritarian" with nominal autonomy given to regional groups. One scholar, Lovise Aalen, explained despite:

> the extensive constitutional devolution of power to ethnic groups in Ethiopia, the ruling government holds a firm grip on political affairs in the country. Through the centralized party organization… regional and local autonomy is undermined and opposition party activities are severely restricted…. So Ethiopia falls clearly into the category of semi authoritarian states: the rulers accept liberal democracy rhetorically, but the system has apparent illiberal or authoritarian traits.[38]

However, there is another view regarding the re-ordering of the traditional unitary state and the creation of ethnic federalism based on self-determination of groups in Ethiopia, which harkens back to an older Ethiopian nationalism based on the instrumentality of assimilation into a pan-Ethiopian identity and indicates concern that the federal compact may in the future might unravel, giving way to the balkanization of the ancient polity. This analysis asserts that the "recitation of divisive counter narratives on the history of the Ethiopian state by ethnically inspired governing and non-governing political elites has minimized the collective identity of Ethiopians,"[39] and might lead perhaps to the disintegration of the federal republic. This is countered by another scholar who is sanguine, noting that Ethiopia is finding "new idioms of nationhood redefining [its] identity to deal with the challenges of ethnic federalism and to accommodate its diversity… to the existing outdated metaphors of nationhood rooted in Semitic culture and orthodox Christianity"[40] and the current political system empowered previously marginalized groups.

But suffice it to point out that historically Ethiopian leaders have tackled the issues of accommodation of diversity in different ways. When the Shoan Amhara controlled the levers of state power, the policy was that of assimilation, clearly was an arrangement that did not did work but led to the secession of Eritrea and rebellion by other groups that conducted armed rebellion against the centralizing strong state. The second path undertaken, this time by the EPDRF since it assumed power in 1990, was to be creative in tackling the challenges of diversity by crafting

a constitution that allowed for regional autonomy but was checked by fiscal controls. As noted by one scholar, the "accommodationist" path

> despite its serious flaws, has effectively discredited both the assimilationist and secessionist options. Ethiopia's current constitution may contain amendable articles. It's very accommodationist character, however, seems to make such amendment difficult, given the highly politicized nature of ethnicity in the country. In this sense, Ethiopia is permanently changed and the accommodationist formula is unavoidable in the process of state-building.[41]

As the above critique of the power of the developmental state makes clear, scholars have different views on the conundrum presented by diversity and the implications of political power. The question remains how this strong state will manage to control its diverse groups and forge forward with its development agenda, gaining in the process impressive economic growth.

The engine of the developmental state is the EPDRF party, which controls, directly or indirectly, all the regional governments through an intricate pyramidal structure and web that reaches all the way to the *kebelle* (neighborhood) level. While control is accomplished primarily by central dominance of the lucrative sources of revenue that determine the largess of regional state leaders, some scholars have characterized the dependence of regions on the center as based on a patron–client relationship. Although the concept of clientelism is broad and several scholars have explained its traditional and modern versions, it is a complex set of relationships, based on strong inequality and power differences, between actors in political society involving reciprocities. Thus, an argument is made that clientele-like relationships between the patron (the EPDRF) and clients (regional governments) weakened the devolution of power and the ability of regional states to actively participate in setting national objectives. In other words, per this view:

> creating and sustaining upward accountability through patron-client relationships allows the central political leadership to dominate political power and resources throughout the society by positioning loyal clients at sub-national levels [who] benefit because they have access to rewarding positions in the sub-national government structures.[42]

The argument is, first, that the state, far from being interested in the instrumentality of decentralization to increase productivity and bring local government closer to the people, is mostly interested in centralization of power and rules through either its core or affiliated groups. Second, such arrangements are buttressed by the principle of democratic centralism, which governs the power relations between the ruling party and regional members who are "obliged to implement, unquestioned, decisions from higher bodies which have the right to cancel, amend, and change decisions made by lower bodies."[43]

Thus, whatever the shortcomings of decentralization and devolution of power to regional states, one can surmise from the above discussions that the contemporary Ethiopian state is a strong state with relative autonomy and has achieved political insulation or buffering of its economic policymakers from societal penetration and can make and implement its development objectives. The state still faces challenges in the implementation of its developmental policy in relation to state capacity and human capital. However, its ability to rapidly grow the moribund economy it inherited runs counter to the occult-like demonization by some scholars that the African state is simply as prone to disorder as order and is incapable of macroeconomic management.[44]

At the developmental level, the Ethiopian transformation process has to do with many factors. The first is the Ethiopian leaders' embrace of and commitment to the ideology of development, reinforced by relative peace in the region, which has freed resources for development. Second is the collapse of the anti-statist and neo-liberal paradigm globally as well as in the key funding institutions in the donor countries that had spilled over into the aid business. While a change in the international environment is a factor in the emergence of the developmental state in Ethiopia, the nation's ideology and its relative autonomy are pluses in the pursuit of its projects. However, the state still faces the twin challenges of dependence on resources from bilateral agencies and donor institutions and the need to strengthen its technical and analytical capacity as it pursues its development objectives.

Besides ideology, discussed subsequently in this chapter, and autonomy of the state to make and implement policy, the third requirement that anchors a state's developmental objective is civil society. Civil society consists of organizations that receive financial support from external international development agencies and at times receive substantial support from their own citizens and the state. As these non-governmental

agencies have grown in number and importance, they have begun to play increasingly important roles in the social, economic, and political affairs of their countries. While past developmental states, particularly in Asia, did not look to civil society to implement their development projects, the twenty-first-century developmental state must be able to effect state–society linkages, and such linkages could be facilitated through civil society. Peter Evans explained:

> Civil society is a complicated beast, full of conflicting interests and rife with individuals and organizations claiming to represent the general interest. Still, shared interests in capability expansion are broad and deep. In addition, since capture is less of a danger in building ties with non-elites, the public institutions can concentrate on the positive side of this political project.[45]

The engagement of civil society and other societal actors is premised on the logic of synergy. That is, engagement with non-governmental organizations creates the capability of enhancing the provision of such services as education and health, which are co-produced by individuals and families, and the state needs their active engagement in the delivery of those services in order to realize optimal return on investment.[46] Clearly in Ethiopia as elsewhere, economic growth depends on political and societal institutions and the capacity to set collective goals, meaning that only public interchange and open deliberation can effectively define development goals and elaborate the means for attaining them.

Although Ethiopia has a long tradition of informal community-based organizations such the *idir* and the *iqub*, which are self-help associations that operate at the local level and offer mutual socioeconomic support to their members, civil society organizations with legal personality are a recent development.[47] Such organizations were slow to develop in the past and were severely restricted under the military regime. While modern civil society organizations, mostly faith-based, came about as a result of the 1973–1974 and 1984–1985 famines, many more non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emerged with a focus on relief and humanitarian services. In 2009, after the establishment of the Federal Republic, the state adopted a controversial law governing the registration and regulation of NGOs.[48] The law, among other things, restricted NGOs that received more than 10 percent of their financing from foreign sources from engaging in essentially all human rights and advocacy

activities.[49] Civil society organizations have become important contributors to Ethiopia's political and economic revitalization. Major achievements of NGOs can be seen in the areas of health, food security, human rights, and poverty alleviation, to name just a few. Most recently, during the 2005 elections, NGOs supported voter education and monitored and observed the election process. The extent to which the law will affect civil society in Ethiopia and its contribution to state-led development is still being gauged; the overall impact of civil society on development is yet to be seen.

## The State and Revolutionary Democracy

The genesis of the developmental state can be traced to the New Economic Policy of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991–1994). As soon as the EPDRF assumed political power, in 1991, it published the Program of Revolutionary Democracy (*YeEhadig Abyotawi Democracy Program*) outlining the political ideology that defended democratic centralism and its objectives of state-led economic development in order to transform the nation.[50] Such ideology was re-empathized again and re-activated through *Tahadiso* (renewal program) following the party's crisis in the aftermath of the war in Eritrea (1998–2000), discussed below; it has since then been its central guide through thick and thin as well as the twists and turns of several national elections.

The ideological argument by supporters of revolutionary democracy is as follows: liberal democracy seems to work best in a well-developed market economy with a solid capitalist class aware of its historic role. But revolutionary democracy is focused on practical social and economic rights of people rather than on abstract rights of liberal democracy. Revolutionary democracy is designed to empower not only individuals, but groups as well by recognizing and giving rights to nationalities, ethnic groups, and cultural communities and encouraging their free expression as well as political and economic participation. In practice, this means a people-oriented legislature and devolution of power to rural areas that make, at least in theory, local governments responsible and responsive to their communities.

In other words, the ideology of revolutionary democracy asserts that as rural Ethiopian peasants prosper, agriculture, which is the mainstay of the economy, will develop and lead to the deepening of the industrial sector and whereby facilitate the maturing of a national bourgeoisie and

development of a market economy.[51] According to the EPDRF's party program, this transformation can be accomplished in Ethiopia through only one organization, and the goals can be met in the long run only if the nations, nationalities, ethnic groups, women, and youth groups join and accept the party's national objectives.[52] Thus, the ideology of revolutionary democracy holds that social democracy rather than liberal democracy guarantees the group rights of Ethiopia's diverse nationalities. Liberal democracy is eschewed because it is based on interest group competition influencing policy in a highly industrialized society in which the individual is a supplicant for favorable policy outcomes. As one party stalwart noted,

> A country that badly needs a collective effort for its political economic development should not subscribe to an impractical and hypothetical worldview of liberalism that demeans and rejects the collective rights of people. For Ethiopia—a country of diverse nations and nationalities—this type of unmitigated individualism is a recipe for disaster.[53]

In a similar vein, proponents of revolutionary democracy put forward a formidable argument explaining why land in Ethiopia, addressed in Chap. 5, cannot be privatized or sold. Agriculture is the mainstay of the Ethiopian economy, and a demand for a social revolution in the ownership of land was expressed in the slogan "Land to the Tiller" that was popular during the height of the student movement in Ethiopia in the 1960s and the popular uprisings of the 1970s. The socialist leaning military regime that ousted Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 nationalized land as a means of getting popular support.[54] When the EPDRF defeated the military regime and assumed political power in 1991, it did not privatize land but continued the old policy because its political power lay in rural support among the peasantry. Thus, while a liberal may argue that land should be privatized, rented, sold or should be given to those who live on it in order that they can make a living, adherents of revolutionary democracy argue that "Ethiopia's land is not a social product and cannot be claimed as an absolute property by any individual anywhere anytime. In fact, even a given social product with a clear rightful owner cannot for that matter be claimed as an absolute property."[55] At the same time, revolutionary democracy is not against most of the theories of liberal democracy as both ideologies envision developing Ethiopia into a middle-income nation. According to one proponent of such view,

> revolutionary democrats believe in democracy—government of the people, by the people, for the people, convinced in the ability of nations and nationalities of Ethiopia to self-govern themselves as they see it fit. In fact, it is the revolutionary democrats that have given in practice the real, true and essential meaning of what democracy is.[56]

Thus, while one can surmise that revolutionary democracy is an ideology that espouses, as far as economy is concerned, a state-guided managed capitalism that aims to transform the nation, other scholars claim that revolutionary democracy is neither revolutionary nor democratic, but a "bricolage," which is a mixture of Leninism, Marxism, Maoism, and liberalism.[57] In any case, the accomplishments of the state may be divided into two main major periods. The first period takes in the years 1991–2002, a decade of political consolidation—including the split within the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front—economic reform, and policy experimentation, which included ways and means of guaranteeing food security and ending the 2002 Ethiopian–Eritrean war. The second period, 2002–2012 was a decade in which Ethiopia big improvements in GDP growth and increased agricultural productivity[58] built significant infrastructure in the forms of highways and dams,[59] and provisioned rural Ethiopians with a workable and adequate healthcare system.[60] However, before delving into some of the accomplishments of the state, a review of the institutional foundations of the developmental state are in order.

In 1995 the EPDRF, after a transition period, established a federal republic. But the party experienced a setback and its image had been somewhat tarnished during the transition period when Prime Minister Tamrat Layne (1991–1995) was accused of bribery and was sent to prison. But a much more serious crisis took place during or in the aftermath of the 1998–2000 Ethiopian–Eritrean War, which resulted in the deportation of Eritreans from Ethiopia and vice versa.[61] The war led to factionalism within the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). As per one scholar, the division was caused by attempts of the former Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, to consolidate political power by marginalizing the key players within the TPLF and correcting "a deviation from the original course of socialist reconstruction, involvement in corruption, and the tendency of the entire leadership of the TPLF and the EPDRF to adapt dictatorial and bourgeoisie attitudes."[62]

While it was customary for the TPLF to hold evaluations periodically, *Tehadiso* was a multidimensional self-evaluation that led to the prime

minister presenting a paper on "Bonapartism" and pointing out that the Central Committee of the TPLF had become distant from the people. This was followed by an extensive debate in 2001 and resulted in some minority members of the Central Committee walking out and calling for a national convention to settle the dispute.[63] This led to a TPLF conference in Makelle, Tigray regional state, and culminated in the resignation of several members from government. Eventually, some of these dissidents such as Defense Minister Seeye Abraham were later arrested for corruption, imprisoned, and released; they became the founding members of the Forum for Democratic Dialogue.[64] In 2001, the state proclaimed a policy of *Tehadiso*, or renewal, which resulted in the re-education of its members about good governance and stewardship. The state followed up *Tehadiso* with the establishment of the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, mandated to investigate corruption and malfeasance at both federal and state levels. In 2007, the Ethiopian state declared its intent to implement Agriculture Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) under the guiding ideology of what it called revolutionary democracy.[65]

Any consideration of the state and developmental ideology in Ethiopia is dependent on the understanding that the political power base of the ruling party, the EPRDF, is rural. Thus, analysis of the ideology of revolutionary democracy (also called development-oriented democracy) needs to explore the organic link between the party and most the people, the Ethiopian peasantry. Equally important in understanding the program of revolutionary democracy are the political views of the regime regarding complex issues such as cultural and ethnic self-determination and its relation to political and economic power and the proper role of the state in the economy. Finally, in terms of industrial policy implementation, while corruption at times has careened out of control—with some party stalwarts being the main culprits—the ruling party seems to have a principled stand regarding the political economy of rent-seeking and corruption in high places in both the public and private sectors.[66]

One important development in terms of revolutionary democracy was reform of the party and bureaucracy. In 1991, when the EPDRF entered Addis Ababa, a bureaucracy was not in place; instead there was a patronage-exhausted, foot-dragging, unresponsive institution that creaked along staffed by former imperial or military era bureaucrats. These office holders, who for the most part were waiting to retire, holding fast to their sinecure, were at times hostile to the new men and

women who came down from the mountains and took the levers of national power. What this meant in practice was rapidly replacing corrupt officials engaged in bureaucratic rent-seeking, which in some regional governments had reached epidemic proportions.[67] But the program also included vigilance and keeping a sharp eye on ethnic entrepreneurs at all levels of government, who, glorying in their new-found powers, engaged in patronage. In the process the state established the key institutions of public administration and through its new technocrats began to reduce impediments or bottlenecks to industrial transformation, employing better managerial practices. In addition, the Ethiopian state established several institutions with the objective of producing competent, honest, development-oriented managers, such as the Civil Service College, the Institute of Federal Studies, and others. The new state leaders of Ethiopia believed such endeavors would increase state capacity, which would enhance not only implementation of the development policy, but also realization of its objectives as well. State leaders seemed to recognize the need to support private sector development as the engine of economic growth and productivity enhancement, and they are clearly committed to advancing industrialization and other high-value activities. Ethiopian leaders have defined the state as a manager of development. That is, the state can be characterized as "developmental" in the sense that its attitude and activities are strongly driven by the desire to lay the foundations for long-term economic development.

Indeed, the state has shown determined and credible commitment to industrial transformation, technical and vocational education and training, and science and development. Substantial investments have been made in new universities, expansion and reform of the educational system, specialized institutions for sector-specific technology development, and a new Ministry for Science and Technology. There is a strong policy focus on improving health as well as rural infrastructure, providing microfinance, maintaining land policies that protect the livelihoods of the poor, and decentralization of government power to the ethnic regions and the community (*woreda*) level.

## Conclusion

This chapter has drawn the broad contours of the Ethiopian developmental state. It has done so by first tracing the genealogy of the indigenous predatory state and showing how the earliest Ethiopian elites,

for the most part, eschewed economic activity and pursued political power through war making or pious activity. This chapter also demonstrated that although in the nineteenth century some political leaders of Ethiopia ushered in degrees of modernization in order to better centralize political power, the true ideologues of modernization and economic development were the Ethiopian intellectuals of the interwar years, the so-called Japanizers who were liquidated by Mussolini's legions during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936–1941).

Second, the chapter discussed the emergence of the Ethiopian developmental state. This section provided a basic definition of a developmental state, described the role of ideology, and explained how the concept of a developmental state, with variations, fit many African nations that had embarked on development objectives soon after independence. It then explored the applicability of the definition to the contemporary Ethiopian state by exploring diverse, often opposing views, and concluded that the state can be called developmental, albeit under the tight centralization of the EPDRF, which has absolute autonomy, if not capacity, to implement the developmental project. This section also noted the importance—and the absence—of civil society as a key plank in anchoring developmental objectives in Ethiopia, illustrated how social institutions facilitate the setting of public objectives, and underlined how public interchange and open deliberations can facilitate the means to attain development objectives.

Finally, the chapter discussed the role of ideology as an important variable in mobilizing citizens for development. This section examined the EPDRF's "Revolutionary Democracy." It outlined the ideology and showed how it defined and defended democratic centralism, a policy that was re-activated, in the *Tahadiso,* after the party cleavage in the aftermath of the Ethio–Eritrian war (1998–2000). The chapter provided the ideological argument for revolutionary democracy and explored how it differed from liberal democracy, making distinctions of the former's focus on social and individual rights. It examined the views of adherents of revolutionary democracy on diverse issues of relevance to Ethiopia, such as the economy, land, and ethnic groups' rights. It also presented the views of Ethiopian liberals who are opposed to revolutionary democracy, considering it essentially socialism by another name. Finally, this section outlined the ideological differences the EPDRF party faced in 2001 leading to the *Tahadiso* program, resulting in the re-education of some party members and the expulsion of others, the anti-corruption and

anti-malfeasance drive at both the federal and local levels, and the party's declaration in 2007 of its intent to implement Agriculture Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) under the guiding ideology of revolutionary democracy.

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