

# The Role of Ethiopia's Developmental State in Building a Strong State-Society Relationship to Eradicate Poverty

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**Abstract:-** The developmental state approach has been emerging in the South East Asian countries as a state-led macro-economic policy, which resulted in dramatic economic development. This achievement was the result of the unity of the public sector and civil society, business, and labour that works in a partnership. In Ethiopia, it came into realization under Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991, together with democratic federalism, unlike the South East Asian states. Then EPRDF's government uses state resources and state influence to eradicate poverty and expand economic opportunities. Thus, Ethiopia witnessed economic progress, which is unusual from the past. But, currently, over one-fourth of its population is still below poverty. Hence, this study hammers to investigate the efficiency of Ethiopia's developmental state. Assess its socioeconomic development and state-society relationships. It also provides challenges. In the end, conclusions and recommendations are forwarded.

**Keywords:-** *Developmental-state; State-society; Democracy; Poverty; Development; EPRDF and Ethiopia.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1991, the Ethiopian state has tried to adopt an ideological position that commits it to embark on a transition from being a predatory and quasi-failed state to be a protective and developmental state (Negash, 2011:4-12). This implies that the year 1991 is considered as a turning point for Ethiopia about the social, political, and economic changes that became possible after the military government was removed from power. During the military regime, the country suffered under a command economy that had closed itself off from the external economy. Internally, there were no democratic state-society relationships, rather every aspect of people's lives were under the regime's control (Teshome, 2012:384-396).

EPDRF as a coalition of Ethiopia's regional forces removed the military regime, in 1991 and the EPRDF government established the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). Then the Ethiopian developmental state emerged soon with the consolidation of power by EPRDF's government, with extensive policies to extricate the country from poverty (Tefaye, 2017:40-50).

In doing so, EPRDF launched pragmatic development policies and strategies that relatively fitted within Ethiopia's context to boost economic development and address the persisting socio-economic problems. Since the mid-1990s, EPRDF's government has formulated and implemented various socio-economic policies and strategies. The assumption was to accelerate the agricultural sector and overall economic development by strengthening the forward and backward linkages among the various sectors. Thus, Ethiopia sets the Growth Transformation Period (GTP) goal, which holds the issues to extricating itself from poverty and to reach the level of middle-income economy (UNDP, 2012:2-15; MoFED, 2002:2-13).

Therefore, EPRDF's government using the synergy of state machinery, the labour of the society, and the ideas of the party as a development force; achieved respectable rates of economic growth and social development in Ethiopia, in the last decade of the twentieth century. Close to 5%, average GDP growth was substantial when compared to the performance of other African countries (Muleta, 2017:202-231).

However, it was insufficient to resolve the multifaceted and deep-rooted problems of the country. Widespread poverty and other social complications have been prevalent in the current Ethiopian context (Ibid).

This research seeks to achieve the following objectives: (1) to evaluate the efficiency of the Ethiopian developmental state; (2) to assess its development record or its record on improving state-society relations or both and (3) to see how Ethiopia is practiced in line with the characteristics of the developmental state theory that practiced in South East Asian countries.

The structure of the article is; as follows: *Section two* briefly discusses the approaches of developmental state; *Section three* elaborates the methodology of the study; *Section four* explores the natures and the challenges of the developmental state approach in Ethiopian; *Section five*, provides the concluding and recommendation remark.

## II. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

### A. Empathies of the Developmental State

Chalmers Johnson is the first person who defined the term developmental state as an alternative development ideology to the neoliberal development ideology (UNDP, 2012:3-10). It's described as a state that puts economic development as the top priority of governmental policy and can design effective instruments to promote such a goal. The instruments would include the forging of new formal institutions, the weaving of formal and informal networks of collaboration among the citizens and officials, and the utilization of new opportunities for trade and profitable production (Bagchi, 2000:1-14).

It also used to identify state's specific form that is said to enjoy high levels of autonomy from different segments of the capitalist class, labour unions, and have the strong institutional capacity, both of which allow this specific form of state to implement a set of successful state - interventionist policies in pursuit of developmental goals (Mollaer, 2016:1-12).

According to Mkandawire (2001:3-19), a developmental state is simply a state whose ideological underpinnings are developmental and one that seriously attempts to deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development. It also termed as "Political stability and insulated bureaucracy...independent from political pressure...extensive and continuous investment in education...the promotion of the 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" (Tesfaye, 2017:40-50).

It also signifies linked with the right mix of state and market, governing the market and market forces to prevent market failure, creating capital transformation and new market opportunities, and supporting the private sector to realize its potential to create economic growth. This indicates that state intervention in a developmental state is not an obstacle to socio-economic development; instead, it supports the development trajectory by nurturing well-functioning diverse institutions (Bolesta, 2007:105-111). The existence of diverse institutions is an important element of the developmental state. It facilitates cooperation between the private and public sectors – or the state and society and contributes to better economic performance by minimizing market and governance failures to mobilize resources for development purposes (Johnson, 1999:35-50).

Generally, a developmental state may be perceived as one that "authoritatively, credibly, legitimately and in a binding manner can formulate and implement its policies and programs". This involves having a developmentally oriented ideology that treats 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 developmental project (Edigheji, 2010:11-20).

### B. Theoretical Debates and Features of Developmental State

One of the most general approaches of the developmental state is tended to East Asian governments that managed to diffuse a sense that they were honestly committed to a collective project of the national development goal (Evans, 1998:66–86).

Despite political divisions and governmental missteps, this sense of a national project gained surprising widespread credence and constituted one of the most important 'collective goods' provided by the state. The essential complement to this broad ideological connection was a dense set of concrete interpersonal ties that enabled specific agencies and enterprises to construct joint projects at the sector level. The evolution of government–business ties in East Asia has been even more convoluted and counter-intuitive than the evolution of the bureaucracy itself. (Ibid.1998)

In doing so, in the East Asian developmental states, the relationship between government and business is based on an agreement on common goals, strategies, and rules ('carrot' and 'stick'), and on mutual complementarity to achieve developmental targets (Ibid). According to the political school of thought, the developmental state approach shows that state-society relations, through productive collaboration between state elites and the capitalist class takes place, but allowing the state to intervene in the market successfully. On the other hand, the economic school is concerned with the policies enacted by the state that produce state-led economic development. It focuses on what policies to adopt to achieve developmental goals (Song, 2011:1-11; Fine, 2006:1-10).

Moreover, this state-private sector or state-society relations have been continuous throughout the process of the structural transformation. Committed political leadership, competent bureaucracy, and well-functioning institutions are the basic driving forces for the successful state-private sector or state-society relations at large in fostering economic development and eradicating poverty (Muleta, 2017:180-95).

By the same token, Mollaer (2016) characterizes the developmental state as "a political system which supports a shared project of economic transformation, where there is elite cohesion over core national goals, and where the economic bureaucracy is given sufficient scope to take initiatives and act effectively". In this understanding, the success of South Korea's state depends on the developmental trajectory and the failure of the India and Brazil states' are explained through the level of institutional capacities. These allow effective alliances to form between the political elite and the capitalist class, and the level of state autonomy that ensures that the state plays a pivotal role in planning and implementing long-term developmental goals.

According to Evans, the state is autonomous insofar as its bureaucracy cannot be instrumentally manipulated by powerful rent-seeking groups outside the state. But also embedded insofar as it can sustain close contact with dominant interests in society to negotiate and solicit necessary resource inputs required in the transformation process (1995:1-9). As for Johnson, the developmental state approach is a panacea to alleviate poverty and to foster socio-economic development when and if a country follows Japan's plan-rational system to a market-rational system on the one hand, and, although to a lesser extent, to a command central planning system on the other (1982:24-31).

Based on this distinction, Johnson (1982) advances three main arguments concerning the developmental state in Japan. First, he contends that markets do not exist in isolation, but they are a creation of the state and politics. He notes that "observers coming from a market-rational system often misunderstand the plan-rational system because they fail to appreciate that it has a political and not an economic basis". Second, he argues that, in this approach, developmental state creation comes first before development priorities are put in place. Finally, the developmental state's most crucial element is not its economic policy, but its ability to mobilize the nation around economic development within a capitalist system.

In so far, from the 1980s-1990s, attempts to explain the economic miracles of Japan and the four 'Asian Tigers' helped to generate new interpretations of this emerging phenomenon and gave birth to a new conception of the state-the developmental state. By the early 1990s, even the loyal advocates of free markets and minimal states, such as the World Bank, had admitted the significant role of the state in creating high economic growth rates and increasing the living standards of society in these East Asian countries (World Bank, 1993:4-19).

More importantly, the outcomes from the successful East Asian developmental states generated significant contributions to economic development, equity in income distribution, and poverty reduction. Due to these positive outcomes, donor communities, international organizations and neoliberal institutions began to rethink the role of the state in economic transformation (Ibid).

Nevertheless, others argue that the developmental state approach is not workable in the African context, due to the reasons of (1) Lack of ideology and dependency behavior of African states. (2) The African state is not able to commit itself to develop strategies and capture by special interest groups instead of state-society collaboration (3) Lack of technical/analytical capacity; (4) the changing international environment did not permit for infant industry protection; (5) poor performance records of the past due to lack of developmental commitment and the persistence of 'neo-patrimonial tendencies and (6) 'African states are fragmented-multi class states and 'Globalization had closed the window for state interventionism as it left little room for states to intervene in their respective

economies'(Mkandawire, 2001:5-15; World Bank, 1993:3-12).

Paradoxically, the proponents of the possible thesis in Africa asserted that there have many changes in the global political economy emanated from the success story of the East Asian developmental states; the consolidation of South-South political and economic integration, as well as the consolidation of continental and regional integration to mention a few. All these factors could create fertile ground for claiming an alternative development model outside the neoliberal fence by breaking the 'no alternative perception' (Mkandawire, 2001:5-15).

Therefore, the 'impossibility theorem' on the viability of the developmental state in Africa does not hold water. Because there are African countries, like Botswana and Mauritius that have claimed and practiced a developmental state model, both recently and in the past, through integrating the roles of the market-state and state-society. But only if countries nurture this ideology based on their context, given well-functioning institutions (Ibid).

Furthermore, according to the United Nation Development Program, when and if any country adept the developmental state features, they have an opportunity to foster socio-economic development and eradicate poverty. These are (1) Vision oriented and committed leadership-sets the development goals, designs the outline, builds ownership among an elite group of politicians and bureaucrats, and mobilizes long term popular support; (2) effective planning and coordination institutions endowed with the power and responsibility to plan, coordinating and monitoring and guide the development process. Like the MITI of Japan, and Economic Planning Board of South Korea; (3) building an effective and capable bureaucracy and expanding access to the quality of education and it should be clear how much the curriculum, education, and training is contextualized to address the development issues of the country; (4) meritocratic and autonomous bureaucracy that can function without the need for interference of government and; (5) the state, the private sector, and the market- in which the government has to play a great role in macro-planning, make a selective intervention in the market, not just do the same business of what the private sector is doing (UNDP, 2012:3-9).

In line with these characteristics, whether the developmental state approach by creating a strong state-society relationship has achieved socio-economic development in developing countries or not, will see the case of Ethiopia's developmental state approach in section four.

### III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research method of this article used both analyses of documentary sources and qualitative interviews of individuals who have available information on the issues. The documentary review includes various scientific publications (research papers, articles, and journals), books, and international institutions to acquire relevant theoretical

and empirical evidence. Moreover, information will be derived mainly from published and unpublished documents of the ruling party.

Qualitative research involves interviews and observations. The data will be collected using key informants based on semi-structured and open-ended interviews to increase the quality and validity of the study. This involves the selection of an individual from the population-based on available information. The discussion was undertaken intentionally with 10 representatives of the targeted groups, such as senior political leaders, the opposition parties, the political-economy experts, Bank managers, civic associations, and public relation experts working in the country.

The numbers of respondents are few, because qualitative research method contains almost similar group members in terms of background and perspectives, and also the number of respondents will be smaller. It means that a few cases are analyzed based on many characteristics. The primary data also collected using purposive sampling, which involves the selection of an individual by intuition based on criteria deemed to be self-evident and is used as a qualitative non-probability sampling because it uses the researcher's judgment in selecting cases (Fern, 2011:215-25). The data analysis used a qualitative narrative analysis conducted to analyze and interpret the data. Below I explained respondents' qualifications in Table 1.

**Table 1: List of Respondents**

No	Categories	Qualifications of the Respondents														
		Partici pants	Age-of respondents			Educational Status			Work Experience of respondents			Gender			Code no. of the interviewee	
		No.	30-35	35-39	40-50	BA	M A	PH D	5-10	10-20	20-30	M	F	T	In profession	
1	Ethiopia's-Ruling Party Leaders	2	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	2	Interviewee 1
2	Opposition parties' Leaders	2	-	1	1	-	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	Interviewee 2	
3	Civic Associations'Representatives	2	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	2	-	1	1	2	Interviewee 3	
4	The Bank Manager	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	Interviewee 4	
5	Economic Development-Senior Expert	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	Interviewee 5	
6	Political Science's Senior expert	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	Interviewee 6	
7	A Public Relation Expert	1	-	1		-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	Interviewee 7	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	

Source: Own survey, 2020

**IV. THE NATURE OF THE ETHIOPIAN DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

Before the current government took power from the socialist/military government in 1991, the country was in a dire political, social and economic situation. The country was suffering from a command economy that was isolated from the external economy. Since 1991 the new EPRDF government has declared itself to have become a *'democratic developmental state', later on interchangeably uses it with the revolutionary democracy or democratic federalism'*. It was the turning point for the developmental state paradigm to emerge as a national agenda and constitutional democracy, except the pioneering experience of East Asian countries which were undemocratic governments (Negash, 2011:5-10; Kefale, 2011:3-13; EPRDF, 2011:51-74).

Moreover, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (2006:4-12) argued that, in Ethiopia, the emergence of a developmental state paradigm is based on three promising points. First, it emerged as a successive attempt to emulate the developmental paths, policies, and strategies of different countries, and the global phenomena that led to the realization of neoliberal's shortcomings paradigm in Africa. Second, it was established as a part of the large-scale global reaction to neoliberalism's failure in the developing world, particularly in Africa. Finally, to achieve the desired socio-economic development, a 'democratic developmental state' ideology and its basic features applies in Ethiopia, but not just as southeast Asia did. Rather, democracy is not a matter of choice in Ethiopia's context, but it is a must. In its absence, Ethiopia would not survive as a country.

In line with these ideas, I asked Interviewees 1, 5, and 6, do the design of the developmental state and its policies and strategies appropriate to Ethiopia's context? They expressed that, of course, EPRDF's first task was to design policies and strategies that would fit with our culture and change the historical trajectory of the country (Interviewees, 2020). In the same voucher, interviewees 3, 4, and 7 emphasized that EPRDF's government designed the existing policies and strategies depend on the country's potentials, i.e., labour and land. That is why, the government has built a development force (with the synergy of state's machinery, society's labour, and party's ideas) to achieve what the official ideology described as sustainable economic growth. Then EPRDF has adopted agriculture as the central focus of the development policy, to escape from the existing extreme poverty (Interviewee, 2020).

On the other hand, interviewee 2 (2020) argued that at the beginning, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) as the orchestrator of developmental state has promulgated different policies and strategies in which indirectly exploit other Ethiopia's regions for the virtue and dominance of Tigray regional state, rather than to alleviate poverty in Ethiopia. Even if the government has established the so-called policies and strategies, but it did not work properly to foster economic development in Ethiopia. Because the policies and strategies have been designed in favors of the Tigray Region and also, practically every aspect of the activities has been controlled by the TPLF among EPRDF's four coalition parties. The remaining three parties, (the Amhara National Democratic Movement /ANDM, the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization /OPDO, and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Front /SEPDF) were powerless, rather act as TPLF's agent. And then they stressed that, due to these problems, the rest of the region of Ethiopia did not achieve the desired economic development in comparison with 'Tigray's Regional State'.

Other neutral scholars argued that, though TPLF/EPRDF lately exposed favoring to Tigray regional states dominance, primarily there were two basic reasons for the government's decision to focus its economic policy on agriculture. Firstly, most of the population lives in rural areas. Secondly, a lack of capital (human, physical and financial) made it difficult to start up a capital-intensive industrial base (Nishi, 2013:21-29). "The guiding principle was political stability and integrity of the state with society could be achieved by ensuring the political and economic rights of the nation. That means, to facilitate what is now regarded by the official government publications, some development agencies and certain academicians as the 'miraculous' economic development" (Teshome, 2012:384-396; Melke, 2013:12-19). Similarly, the researcher believed that the policies and strategies have been designed appropriately within Ethiopia's context. But the problem was an implementation that explicitly favor the Tigray region.

The other issue is how Ethiopia is efficient through practiced in line with the characteristics of the developmental state theory that practiced in South East

Asian countries? Concerning this, Meles Zenawi emphasized that the Ethiopian developmental state has been declaring its task based on the common criteria of developmental state to eradicate poverty. Again, he postulated that EPRDF's political elites are ideologically committed to the development and have created organizational complexes in which expert and improving bureaucratic agencies collaborate with organized private sectors to spur national economic transformation. In recent years, such efforts and implementation, however, randomly have been implemented and empirically documented it is developmental. 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 (Meles, 2012:3-20).

Paradoxically, other scholars noted that EPRDF's limitation to achieve the desired socio-economic development, the above features, and objectives were hindered by the capture of the state. Besides, these features are controlled 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 (Tesfaye, 2017:40-50).

In line with this, all the interviewees argued that, though theoretically, EPRDF has adopted these features, in practice, there is no vision-oriented and committed leadership; effective planning and coordination institutions; an effective and capable bureaucracy. The training should also only focus on expanding access but does not assure the quality of education and the curriculum has not integrated with the overall goals of the state (interviewee, 2020).

However, all the respondents (2020) agreed that, for the last two decades, there were relative political stability and capital accumulation, and industrialization. EPRDF has also transformed the country from a command economy that had closed itself off from the external economy and extreme poverty. Moreover, interviewee 2 expressed that, there is not a full-fledged meritocratic and autonomous bureaucracy, rather it inclines in favoring ethnic-based and party affiliation bureaucracy; and then the government can interfere in a market-friendly and do the same business of what the private sector is doing.

On the other hand, I asked all respondents, do you believe that developmental state or democratic federalism has achieved socio-economic development and human rights than liberal states? Then all interviewees except 2 and 5 expressed that, liberal democracy seems to work best in a well-developed market economy with a solid capitalist class aware of its historic role. But, if Ethiopia's government applies those features properly, a developmental state is better to achieve socio-economic development and social rights, than an abstract right of liberal democracy that applies in other developing states.

Moreover, they stressed that, if developmental state or democratic ethnic federalism is changed to consociational democratic federalism together with mixed (ethnic and territorial) boundary demarcation, it will empower not only individuals, but groups rights, recognizing every cultural community's rights, encouraging their free expression, and improving the socio-economic development than the liberal democracy. Whereas interviewee 2 and 5 argued that, revolutionary democracy or developmental state ideology by giving group right over individual rights, it has become a hindrance to individual rights and socioeconomic development than liberal democracy. They also, assured that it has promoted anti-democratic government in Ethiopia, than liberal states in Africa.

About revolutionary democracy or democratic ethnic federalism, other scholars argued that it has promoted instability through the entrenchment of ethnic differences rather than the promotion of state unity. Ethnic-based territorial demarcation also promotes ethnic identity as more important than Ethiopian identity. The individual therefore must belong to the group; there is a heavy restriction to operate outside the bond of the group. But when and if ethnic federalism changed into consociational democratic federalism with mixed boundary demarcation, it will be a suit for the Ethiopian context, then liberal democracy (Sibuh, 2020a:3490-3500).

In the same token, the researcher argued that the implication of this multiple names of ideology (Democratic developmental state or Revolutionary democracy or Democratic federalism) by recognizing ethnic-based boundary demarcation has created spontaneous inter-ethnic migration and conflicts, instead of sustainable socio-economic development. Similarly, if Ethiopia tries to adopt neoliberal's ideology in this situation, it will lead the society to capitalists slavery. But if Ethiopia follows a democratic developmental state using consociational democratic federalism; it will maintain unity with diversity, fostering its socio-economic development and eradicate poverty.

Concerning the efficiency of Ethiopia's developmental state in achieving socio-economic development and eradicating poverty, EPRDF acknowledged that following state lead macroeconomic policy has become in achieving national consensus. Then the country has achieved an amazing economic development, which improved people's lives, ascertained democracy, and human rights in the last 5 years (EPRDF, 2011:1-6).

By the same token, the interviewee 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 argued that Ethiopia's development strategy is relatively efficient because it's geared towards pro-poor economic and social development. Pro-poor economic growth over the last decade has led to a considerable increase in per-capita GDP and an impressive decline in the national poverty rate. Furthermore, sustained and robust economic growth has helped to alleviate unemployment problems. For instance, by refereeing the IMF (2014) report, they emphasized that overall unemployment in urban areas dropped to 16% in 2013 from 20.4% in 2009 though unemployment remains

high. But they said that the country could not eradicate poverty because of lack of a strong planning, coordinating, and monitoring institutions.

While the remaining respondents postulated that, though there is economic development, it is not efficient in achieving the desired goals, because still now there are over 20 million Ethiopians under poverty due to the reasons of lack of strong state-society relations, the absence of effective institutions, governments' patron-client relations and lack of check and balance system on the three government branches (Interviewee 2 and 5, 2020).

In general, all the respondents agreed that EPRDF's government has achieved economic development for the last two decades, though the country is still at a high rate of poverty. But the economic development has not accounted as the government repeatedly said through the positive cooperation of state and society relationship. They also believed that Ethiopia's economic development compared with Southeast Asian countries, the rate of unemployment and poverty, and the desired objects of the state are insignificant (All the interviewee, 2020).

Similarly, in the last two decades, I observed that, even if there is economic development through the unequal rate of economic distribution among the society at large, but it is inefficient, it has not a positive linkage with the society, because the farmers in the watershed areas as a development group (the labor force), working by EPRDF's coercive force, rather than through cooperation.

#### **A. Ethiopia's Democratic Development state and the State Society Relationship**

The developmental state literature shows that state-society relations are important at the level of policy formulation and implementation. Then effective relations depend on large volumes of high-quality information flowing between government and business corporations, and on confidence that predictions and commitments are credible (Onis, 1991:6-14). "In the political economy discourses, the state and society are the pivotal and contested ideas. State-society relations are understood as a model of connections between the two, to determine how power is structured, resources are allocated, and rules and controls are established" (Georg, 2004:7-15).

State-society relations are implicated in defining mutual rights and obligations, negotiation of power allocation and establishment of different modes of representation, and accountability to each other. The negotiation between the state and society to define their respective roles depends on their *access to power* (power between the competing actors- social classes, ethnic groups, political forces and *predictable organization* -constitution, institutions, formal and informal state structures) (Yeshtila, 2016:1-8; Jefferey, and Sun-Young, 2010:620-43).

Coming to Ethiopia's case, the ruling party EPRDF acknowledged that, following this ideology, the state-society relationship has become strong in achieving socio-economic

development and attacking the poverty rate. Moreover, it asserted that more than 85 nations, nationality and people of Ethiopia lives to gather in harmony and unity through ethnic federalism's arrangement (EPRDF, 2011:51-67; Sibuh 2020a:3492-3503).

Concerning this idea, all the interviewees (2020) argued that, currently, there are no strong state-society linkages rather in confrontation; there is no national consensus among the nations, rather because of ethnic federalism there is an ethnic conflict. They also stressed that, in the last two decades, there was no positive correlation between the state and the society; there were no feasible democracy and human rights in Ethiopia, rather it is theoretical because there is not fertile ground for competing political parties.

Moreover, all the respondents agreed that, before 2018, the state was the most influential and overriding actor at national, sub-national, and local levels, concerning Ethiopia's other actors, which meant it was an autocratic government. As a result, the Ethiopian society had struggled to limit the power and domination of the TPLF party in a state and then changed the new government within the same members of the EPRDF party. Again, they noted that today the state does not seem an autocrat, rather seems a laze-fire; that is why the relationship between the state and regions has been illustrated by contention, and contradiction (Ibid, 2020). Similarly, Yeshtila (2016:1-8) labeled the relation between the state and the society as contentious instead of cooperation. That is:-

The capacity of the state, therefore, depends on the growth of its infrastructural power. The infrastructural power in the context of our study is conceptualized as the capability of the state to enforce its authorities and implement its policy; capacity to have control over the means of violence or coercive forces; ability to maintain state symbols that reflect its authority; and command over social and political controlling mechanisms. State-society relations involve the overall power relations and interactions between the central state and local society regarding access to resources, exercise of political power, and control over the means of violence.

On the other hand, according to Muleta Yirga (2017:184-201), the Ethiopian development state approach has achieved socio-economic development in both urban and rural areas through building a strong relationship with the society (private sector and its constituent businesses). It also empowering domestic firms through incentives such as tax holidays, tax breaks, and concessional loans public investment in infrastructure expansion, and human-resource development that makes the private sector more profitable. Moreover, the government has strengthened the agricultural extension services and overall rural development, through establishing a farmers' movement in the main development fronts, such as in agriculture, education, and health, which is known as 'developmental army building.

Contrary to the above statements, especially interviewee 2 and 4 argued that the new federal constitution, theoretically that was established upon a structural foundation for state-society relations were ratified in 1995. It sets out a new democratic federal arrangement based on ethnic identity, bestows popular sovereignty on ethnic groups, and endows the right of self-determination, including secessions. But, EPRDF becomes hegemonic domination of the political realm, rather than the people who have real democratic power. In doing so, the rise of EPRDF as a hegemonic status leads to the virtual weakening of opposition political forces. It also controls the activities of civic and political organizations and harassing opposition political leaders, since the first Ethiopian national election. Because of this anti-democratic practice, in the 2005 election, EPRDF lost a considerable number of parliamentary seats.

By the same token, all respondents (2020) stressed that, even if EPRDF announced a democratic developmental state ideology, in the last two decades, evidence shows that, it was an autocratic state disguised in the virtue of a democratic developmental state. There is no room for political parties, media, and civil organizations to do things freely and independently. Moreover, though the government always propagates the power is in the hand of the people and the state-society is in collaboration to foster socio-economic development, practically the society has not such power; instead, the state-operated every activity without the society participation, popular legitimacy, and integration.

Moreover, Sibuh (2020b:5-6) in his study noted that, though there are differences from one another area, the community in the watershed activity working through force and harassment and anti-democratic approach. For him, if no force by the local government, they should not participate in the watershed area due to a lack of awareness and consciousness between the government and the people. Even the experts have not participated in the policy formulation process. In practice, there is no functional linkage between Agricultural Sector and Land Administration and Environmental Protection and Utilization Sectors. All these factors were a hindrance to sustainable watershed development for overall economic development.

In general, as I observed the situation in Ethiopia's developmental state, there was no strong state-societal cooperation to foster socioeconomic development. Especially, in agricultural development policy, farmers did not have full awareness about the benefit of watershed activities for agricultural development, and how to conserve and protect their endowment of natural resources. For these reasons, the government had not worked in advance about the usefulness of the policy and its future benefit on the parts of the community. Besides, the expansion of government's cooperations and enterprises as a competitor to the private sector in different infrastructure development projects, the private sector could not compete with the government. The opposition parties did not have the

freedom even to express their views which was a paradox from EPRDF.

### **B. The Challenges of Ethiopian Developmental State**

The developmental state agenda has been relevant and attractive to the Ethiopian context, but one of the challenges was its design (non-democratic with ethnic federation) and absence of introduction (to the party, government, and the public). Means, to become the governing ideology and to achieve the developmental state benefit should have been thoroughly discussed and internalized through an internal debate both inside and outside of the party. Many in the party simply bought into the idea out of self-interest and there was no strong ownership of the agenda in both political and academic terms (Anonymous, 2017:1.5).

In doing so, Ethiopia is challenged by political differences among different ethnic parties. In addition to developmental state ideology, different political groups, civil society organizations, and the media association did not have common interest and consensus on issues, such as ethnic federalism as a political power arrangement, the meaning and relevance of revolutionary democracy as an ideology, the development of the democratic process in the country, the conditions of human rights and political freedom.

Secondly, EPRDF's nature by itself is a challenge for Ethiopia's developmental state achievement, because it incorporates the ragged between the politicization of ethnicity and the presumed hegemony of a developmental state and between political control and development. And also a Lack of genuine fellowship and commitment to a developmental state among the leadership, particularly rank and file of the ruling party (interviewees 2- 7, 2020).

The third challenge is unable to meet some key features of a developmental state, such as a well-educated, independent, efficient, and nationalist bureaucracy, an independent institution for coordinating, evaluating, and monitoring of the macro-economy plane; the state, the private sector, and the market- in which the government interventionist tendency is too much to the extent of being market unfriendly, rather it intervenes into the functioning of the market. The dependence on a historical strong state alone was therefore a major shortcoming (UNDP, 2012:2-8; Mkandawire, 2001:3-16; Thakur, 2009:2-5).

Finally, the Ethiopian state principal challenge was competing, antagonistic narratives of statehood; because it cannot create a strong state-society relationship and an inclusive society. This is the most important defaulting of the Ethiopian developmental state discourse. The political requirements for the developmental state are lacking. Bridging the competing narratives was neither sought nor attempted. Without nationalism and elite education for national unity, and a collective memory underpinning it, the developmental state did not achieve the mobilizing power it needs to lead the country into the road of rapid development (Anonymous, 2017:3-5). "The developmental state discourse in Ethiopia fails to adopt a reform and prevent

elite contest for state power. The Ethiopian case was fuzzy developmentalism, a collage of different philosophical, and political ideas and a beehive of contradictions" (Ibid).

### **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The success of a developmental state depends on certain developmental trajectory features and the active involvement of social partners. Any developmental state's government has appropriately applied the characteristics of the developmental state (well-educated, independent, efficient and nationalist bureaucracy, an independent institution vision-oriented and committed leadership, and government's selective intervention in the market), it will achieve a macro-economic development. Next, the public approach to governance places a strong emphasis on building a broad front for development that involves a strong relationship between government, labour, business, and other organizations that are formed by different groups of citizens (civil society). Then these organizations are often called the social partners of government (Anonymous, 2017:3-5).

By the same token, Ethiopia's developmental state acknowledged the characteristics of the developmental state's essence. It also emphasized the government alone cannot grow the economy, solve all the community problems or deliver all the services to bring about a better life for all our people and to eradicate poverty. The government needs to work democratically and cooperatively together with all social partners and involve everyone in the effort to develop our country. But in practice, the Ethiopian government could not apply those developmental state doctrines; that was why it has slightly achieved socio-economic development.

Thus, the Ethiopian developmental state has flourished because of the widespread marginalization and exclusion of ethnopolitics. The real problem is therefore not a failure to articulate it in economic terms, but the challenges of implementing it properly, and then the real challenge is political. Therefore, Ethiopia is not a full-fledged developmental state. That is why, it didn't eradicate poverty, creates a strong state-society relationship, social cohesion, and national identity comparing the growth of ethnic identity and societal differences.

In line with the above conclusions, the researcher recommended the following resolutions for Ethiopia's future existence. First, if not Ethiopia shifts from socialist-based-ethnic federalism's ideology into consociational democratic federalism, whether it achieves and adopted the common features of the developmental state, it will not move forward to achieve economic development, rather it will remain the land of conflict and violence. Second, when it applies consociational democracy, the developmental state agenda would be relevant and attractive to Ethiopia's context, but with common consensus among the government parts, the competing political parties, and the general public in its approach and advantages. Finally, if so, Ethiopia will

achieve the desired socio-economic development, eradicate poverty, and creates national social cohesion.

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