

DEVELOPMENTAL STATE MODEL VIS-À-VIS MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ETHIOPIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Ethiopia's experiment with the developmental state model (DSM) within its federal system has been widely contested on the grounds of its compatibility with the country's constitutional democratic and federal system of governance. The study examines the state of democratic federalism under the DSM as once pursued by the now defunct Ethiopian Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The study employs a qualitative research methodology anchored on a retrospective study approach where data is collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and desk review of a broad range of official government and party documents. The study argues that even though the model tends to favor centralized state structure and authoritarian governance system, these features however are not necessarily inherent features of the model as the experiences of countries like India and South Africa demonstrate which managed to build democratic developmental states under constitutionally decentralized state structures. The article argues that Ethiopia's experiment with DSM had largely been characterized by centralized and authoritarian governance especially after the 2005 national election when EPRDF began taking a series of measures meant to establish developmentalism as a hegemonic ideology. The result was de facto one-party rule that contributed not only to shrinking democratic space but also to undermining multilevel governance. This has had far-reaching repercussions in shaping the course of politics in the country, eventually triggering a reshuffle within the country's top leadership in 2018 and a profound shift in power balance and dynamics within the country's current political landscape.

Keywords: Developmental State Model, Multiparty Democracy, Multilevel Governance, and Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

Following the Ethiopian government's official adoption of the developmental state model (DSM) as a viable path to realise rapid economic growth and industrialisation, the model has served until recently (2018, a year of major political change) as the driving ideological framework for the country's political economy. However, the DSM's implementation under the leadership of the now-defunct Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Party

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(EPRDF) has been a subject of debate in academic and policy circles.¹ The debates relate to, among other things, the question of whether the DSM harmoniously co-exists with the constitutionally decentralised and democratic federal system of Ethiopia.

On the one hand, proponents of the Ethiopian DSM (EDSM) argue that the model was essentially grounded in federal and democratic governance. They maintain that the democratic DSM implemented by the EPRDF delivered tangible results, as seen in the country's double-digit economic growth and the legitimisation of its top leadership in successive national elections². On the other hand, others argue that the application of the DSM under the EPRDF's leadership was characterised by and large by "development authoritarianism" that significantly undermined democratic federalism, in particular regional autonomy, multiparty democracy, freedom of the press, and freedom for civil society organisations (CSOs).³

Indeed, the DSM status as a distinct developmental path and its compatibility with democratic governance has been widely contested issue among scholars and policy-makers⁴. Two main arguments are espoused: the "incompatibility thesis" and the "compatibility thesis" of the model with democracy and pluralism. Indeed, many studies of the nature of the DSM have linked it to "authoritarianism".⁵ As a considerable number of scholars who studied the experiences of the East Asian developmental states (DSs) have argued the model tends to promote a governance system which is "hegemonic, centrist and interventionist" and whose priority is to realise economic development above everything else, even democracy.⁶

¹ Ermias Yemanebirhan, "Developmental State Model and Democratic Decentralization in Ethiopia: The Compatibility Dilemma", 5 *Journals of Political Science and International Relations*, (2022), at 24, 37, available at: <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.jpsir.20220501.14> (accessed on 15 November 2022).

² Bereket Simon, "A Tale of Two Elections: A National Endeavour to Put A Stop to an Avalanche: Ye-Hulet Merchawoch Weg: Nadan Yegeta Hagerawi Rucha" (Amharic) (2011); Meles Zenawi Foundation, "Ethiopia's Renaissance Journey: Development and Democracy Building Essays", Addis Ababa: Meles Zenawi Foundation, (2017).

³ Christopher Clapham, "The Ethiopian Developmental State," 39 *Third World Quarterly*, (2017), at 1151 - 1165, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1328982> (accessed on 15 November 2022); Asnake Kefale, "Narratives of Developmentalism and Development in Ethiopia: Some Preliminary Explorations", The Eur. Conf. on Afr. Stud., (2011).

⁴ Thandika Mkandawire, "From Maladjusted States to Democratic Developmental States in Africa. In: Edigheji, Omano", (Ed.) *Constructing a Democratic Developmental State in South Africa: Potentials and Challenges*, Human Sciences Research Council, (2010). Adrian Leftwich, "Democracy and development: Is there institutional incompatibility?" 12 *Democratization*, (2005), at 686, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340500322173> (accessed on 2 November 2022).

⁵ *Id.*: Vivek Chibber, "The Developmental State in Retrospect and Prospect", (2014), at 30-54.

⁶ Prado *et al.*, "The Dilemmas of the Developmental State: Democracy and Economic Development in Brazil", 9 *L. & Dev. Rev.*, (2016), available at: <https://doi.org/10.1515/ldr-2016-0015> (accessed on 10 September 2022).

However, even though dominant scholarly views on the DSM associate it with authoritarianism, there is a counterargument, albeit less dominant. There are some that opposes such an association and argues for the possibility of building a democratic developmental state model (DDSM).⁷ According to proponents of this view, who argue that there indeed are 21st century DDSMs, authoritarianism is an exogenous, rather than endogenous, feature of the DSM and the model can thus be democratic. But as several studies of successful East Asian developmental states such as South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, the prototypes of the DSM, have found, the DSM is antithetical to a democratic and decentralised governance system, which weighs in favour of the “incompatibility thesis”.⁸ As the result, the application of the DSM in a federal political system associated, at least in theory, with federal democracy raises serious questions about the compatibility of the former with the latter.

In federal political system (FPS), the essence of federal democracy lies in constitutionally entrenched multilevel governance anchored on division of state power that confers autonomy to regional states along political pluralism.⁹ It is true that a well-functioning federal democracy is essential for the meaningful exercise of both self-rule and shared rule in a federal political system.¹⁰ Hence, the experiment of DSM within the Ethiopian federation should examine within such broader context of these on-going debates, as well as of the country’s constitutional federal political system, which provides for decentralised and democratic governance of development.

There are studies which have explored the EPRDF’s conception and execution of the DSM as well as the model’s interplay with the country’s federal system. These studies can generally be placed into two broad categories. The first comprises studies that support the “incompatibility thesis”¹¹, and the second, those that support the “compatibility thesis”¹².

⁷ Thandika Mkandawire, *supra* note 4 and Vivek Chibber *supra* note 5, at 30-54.

⁸ Ha-Joon Chang, “Kicking Away the Ladder: Infant Industry Promotion in Historical Perspective (2003), available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360081032000047168> (accessed on 13 September 2022). Eun Mee Kim, “Crisis of The Developmental State in South Korea: Asian Perspective”, (1999), at 2.

⁹ Ronald W., “Federalism, Federal Political Systems, And Federations”, Annual Review of Political Science. , (1998), at 117 .

¹⁰ Elazar D., “Community and polity: The organisational dynamics of American Jewry”, (1995).

¹¹ Christopher Clapham, *supra* note 3; Mesay Kebede, “Meles Zenawi’s Political Dilemma and The Developmental State: Dead Ends and Exit”, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Jx4ith> (accessed on 25 August 2020).

¹² Bereket Simon, *supra* note 2, and De Waal, “The theory and practice of Meles Zenawi. African Affairs”, (2012), at 148–155, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/ads081> (accessed on 25 August 2022).

Indeed, even within these broad categories, the studies vary in terms of their focus of investigation and approach of enquiry as well as final outcomes.

In terms of their focus of investigation, studies that support the “incompatibility thesis” typically address at least one of four major themes: 1) the challenges and desirability of building a DSM; 2) the relationship between the DSM and democracy; 3) the relationship between an ethnic-based federal arrangement and the DSM; and 4) the pitfalls of applying the DSM in certain policy areas. Generally, most of the studies that support the “incompatibility thesis” share the argument that the practice of the DSM in Ethiopia by the EPRDF has undermined the country’s federal system.

These studies, however, fall short of providing a comprehensive explanation of the EDSM’s interplay with, and impact on, on Ethiopia’s federal system. They are also scanty and not sufficiently empirically rigorous in their analysis of specific policy areas and institutions. Specifically, the studies have two major limitations. First, they do not adequately explore how the DSM in and of itself (i.e. independently of other factors such as the EPRDF’s ideology of “revolutionary democracy”, the nature of political culture in the country, and the design of the Constitution with respect to the vertical division power between tiers of government) is actually linked to the tendency towards centralisation. Secondly, the studies appear to succumb to the myopic argument that because the DSM has worked well in East Asian countries within a context of unitary state structures and centralised systems of governance, it would not work in countries with a decentralised governance system, such as Ethiopia.

Similar is the case with studies that generally appear to support the “compatibility thesis” and the possibility of building a DDSM, and which, in fact, argue that the EDSM has been executed harmoniously with the country’s federal system. These studies also fall far short of critically examining and adequately explaining how the model’s authoritarian tendency and the EPRDF’s hegemonic rule under the EDSM have actually played out in the country’s federal system, particularly when it comes to running a democratic and decentralised development governance system. That is, they do not specifically indicate how the implementation of the model – which is often associated with a largely authoritarian and centrist governance approach – could actually be reconciled with the core values and

institutions of a genuine federal political system, such as democratic governance, subnational policy autonomy, policy innovation, and accountable and responsive governance.

Against this backdrop, this article assesses Ethiopia's experiment with the DSM *vis-à-vis* its impacts on democratic federalism from late 2002 until April 2018 (a critical juncture that saw key political changes, namely the demise of EPRDF). In doing so, the specific objectives of this study are twofold. First, it points out the impact of the EDSM on multiparty electoral democracy in Ethiopia; and secondly, it pinpoints the impact of the EDSM on the country's constitutional multilevel development governance system, which guarantees autonomy for regional states to make and execute their own regional development policies, as outlined under the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).¹³

2. METHODOLOGY

This study predominantly is a qualitative one based on a retrospective research design that looks back at Ethiopia's experiment with the DSM to examine the latter's interaction with and impact on the norms and institutions of democratic federalism enshrined in the FDRE Constitution. This study employs mainly qualitative procedures for collecting and analysing data from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include policy documents, strategic plans, and legislation. In addition, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted from with opposition party figures as well as senior government officials and technical experts who occupied various posts at the federal and regional state level under the EPRDF-led government. The interviews were conducted between March 2018 and November 2019 at venues and times of convenience and preference of the interviewees.

In selecting samples, the study relied on purposive sampling techniques, and due consideration was given to ensure that the selection of participants was fairly representative of the different socio-economic development levels of regional states across Ethiopia. Accordingly, a total of five regional states were identified and selected as participants in this

¹³ The FDRE Constitution provides for a decentralized and democratic governance of development underpinned by the core values and principles of a federal democracy and a constitutionally delineated vertical division of power between tiers of government. See the FDRE Constitution Proclamation No. 1/1195, Articles 1; 8; 9; 10; 12; 13; 39(1), (2) and (3); 41; 43; 50(2), (3), (4) and (8); 88; 89; 90; and 92.

study: the Gambella Peoples' National Regional State (GPNRS) and the Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State (BGNRS), from the 'emerging regions'; and the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS), the Oromia National Regional State (ONRS), and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), from the 'developed regions. These regions represent the different levels of socio-economic development that exist across the various regions and parts of Ethiopia. Out of the five regional states categorized as 'developed' regions, except the Tigray National Regional State (TNRS), the remaining ones (i.e. the ANRS, the ONRS, and the SNNPR) have been included to participate in the study, whereas two regional states (i.e. the BGNRS and the GPNRS) have been selected from the category of 'emerging' regions. Such center-periphery relations (i.e. as 'ruling party' and 'affiliated party') and power dynamics between the parties and the respective regions administered by those parties is an important variable, with significant implications within the country's political landscape, whereby the ANRS, the ONRS, and the SNNPR, as core members of the EPRDF coalition, almost exclusively control decision-making powers on the overall socio-economic and political direction of the country, including national development policies¹⁴. On the contrary, the BGNRS and the GPNRS, which are ruled by regional parties that have a designated status of 'affiliated parties' but not member of the EPRDF, have historically occupied a periphery position or status with a largely insignificant role within the country's political sphere in terms of the level of their participation, influence and leverage in policy and other important decisions at the central government level.¹⁵

The article is organized in 7 sections. The first section is this introduction. Section two provides methods and material of the study. Section three discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework of, and normative discourses on, the DSM in general. Section four describes the relation between DSM and authoritarianism. Section five provides the core normative and institutional underpinnings of EPRDF's DSM. Section six presents the empirical analysis and findings of the paper specifically on the implication of EPRDF's experiment with the DSM against multiparty democracy and multilevel development governance (MLDG). Section Seven, concludes the paper by recapping the core arguments and findings of the study.

¹⁴ Abbink Jon, "Land to The Foreigners": Economic, Legal, And Socio-Cultural Aspects of New Land Acquisition Schemes in Ethiopia", 29 *Journal of Contemporary African. Studies*. (2011), at 513, 535.

¹⁵ *Id.*

3. THE DSM: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is widely argued by many scholars that the DSM draws on aspects of all of the conventional paradigms or models of economic development; as a result, it is often seen as a mid-way point between socialism and market-led liberalism.¹⁶ While experiences with the DSM differ from one country to another, one can point out certain core elements that are shared by all of the countries that have adopted it. First and foremost, the DSM emphasises the importance of active state intervention in managing, governing and regulating the economy. The state plays an active role in regulating the market, building essential public infrastructure, redistributing resources as well as producing and providing goods and services which the private sector is unwilling or unable to provide¹⁷. The DSM specifically allows for a state-led capitalism within liberal economic principles. This in turn requires the “developmental” state to have at least two essential attributes: the state must have the capacity to control a vast majority of its territory, and it must possess a set of core capacities that enable it to design and deliver various development policies.¹⁸ Secondly, nationalism and a national vision lie at the heart of the DSM as propelled in the form of hegemonic developmentalism. This means people from the apex of power all the way down to farmers in villages need to align themselves with, and sing to the tune of, the “development agenda” set by the leadership at the top.¹⁹

Thirdly, embedded autonomy is another key tenet of the DSM. “Embedded autonomy” refers to the nature of the relationship that should exist between a strong interventionist state and other social agents, such as influential private businesses, landlords and the like.²⁰ According to Evans, under the DSM, the state is believed to be autonomous as long as it has a rationalised bureaucracy characterised by meritocracy and long-term career prospects – traits

¹⁶ Adrian Leftwich, “Bringing Politics Back In: Towards A Model of The Developmental State”, 31 *The Journal Of Development Studies*, (1995), at 400, 427; Woo-Cumings, M., “Introduction: Chalmers Johnson and the politics of nationalism and development”, *The Developmental State*, (1999), at 1–31, available at: <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501720383-003> (accessed on 25 August 2022).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Ghani, A., Lockhart, C., & Carnahan, “Closing the sovereignty gap: An approach to state-building”, Overseas Development Institute, (2005).

¹⁹ Woo-Cumings, *supra* note 16, 1–31.

²⁰ Chang, H. J. & Evans, P, *The role of institutions in economic change: Reimagining growth*, (2005), at 99–129, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1590/0101-31572022-3334> (accessed on 25 August 2022).

that make civil servants more professional and detached from the influence of powerful rent-seeking groups.²¹

Meanwhile, another important institutional factor for the DSM relates to the party system. Under the DSM, the party system plays a crucial role in defining the appropriate ideological orientation, institutions and policies to be adopted; the success of the DSM is often linked, among other things, to the party system in that the latter is the main driver of the ideology of developmentalism and its translation into institutions and practices.²² In developmental states, party politics are usually associated with either a dominant-party or a hegemonic-party system.²³ According to Woo-Cumings²⁴, a dominant-party system, otherwise known as a hegemonic-party system, is in one in which the incumbent is dominant to such an extent that its victory at elections is a mere formality. In these systems, incumbents face a very limited degree of competitive electoral challenge. The DSM often tends to embrace party politics that expedite developmental policy-making and enforcement with little or no procedural hurdles.²⁵ Under the DSM, therefore, a dominant, if not hegemonic, party system is viewed as apposite for expedited collective action that facilitates centralised rent creation and distribution.²⁶ The importance of a hegemonic party under the DSM is underlined by Leftwich:

In the DSM, without a dominant-party political rule, developmental elites would be divided or paralysed and relative state autonomy would have been impossible, and the bargaining demands of special interests would have come to predominate and the bureaucratic continuity and capacity may be compromised in a way that would be unlikely to serve national developmental goal/national development goals.²⁷

Last but not the least, the other feature of the developmental state is its tendency to change itself towards authoritarian regimes. Indeed, studies conducted on the nature of the DSM have often linked the model with ‘authoritarianism. As a considerable number of scholars

²¹ *Id.*

²² Bogaards, M, “Exchange: Reexamining African elections”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 24 No. 4, (2013), at 151–160.

²³ Woo-Cumings, *supra* note 16.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Booth D. “Development as a collective action problem.”, *Africa Power and Politics Programme Policy Brief*, (2012), at 9.

²⁷ Adrian Leftwich, A, *Forms of the democratic developmental state: Democratic practices and development capacity. The democratic developmental state: Political and institutional design*, Oxford University Press, (1998), at 400.

who have studied the experiences of the East Asian DSs have often argued, the model is largely viewed as tending to promote a governance system which is ‘a hegemonic, centrist and interventionist’ whose priority is to realize economic development more than anything else, even democracy.²⁸ East Asian DSs often described to have had traditional marks of heavy temptations toward authoritarianism which is in the words of Samuel Huntington ‘legacies of oriental despotism’ as their shared behavior.²⁹ Some of the explanations given to the authoritarian governances embedded with the DSM are the state must ease itself from the procedural hurdles of democracy to deliver fast economic growth not to mention that governments need to stay in power for a longer period so as to ensure continuity of policy that would transform the country.³⁰

As seen earlier, even though the dominant scholarly views on the DSM associate it with authoritarianism, there is a counter narration, albeit not dominant, that opposes such association and argues for the possibility of building a democratic developmental state model (DDSM). According to the proponents of DDSM, authoritarianism is an exogenous, rather than endogenous, feature of the DSM and the model can be democratic arguing that there indeed are 21st-century democratic developmental states.³¹ Similar is the case in Ethiopia as indicated earlier where the dominant view is that the EPRDF’s DSM have had authoritarianism as its dominant characteristic feature while others however few though are who argue that of the EDSM has been one of a DDSM, and implemented in a manner that complements the country’s federal arrangement. Let's then see the relationship that DSM have with authoritarian mode of governance.

4. DSM AND AUTHORITARIANISM: ARE THEY INHERENTLY LINKED?

As Leftwich³² argued, the DSM tends towards an authoritarian governance system as necessary evil to address the underdevelopment problem by curtailing the consolidation of democracy. In this regard, the dominant conception of the DSM is, as argued by considerable

²⁸ Prado *et al.*, *supra* note 6.

²⁹ Adrian Leftwich, *supra* note 4, at 686.

³⁰ Emanuele Fantini, *Developmental state, economic transformation and social diversification in Ethiopia*, 163, Ispi Analysis (2013).

³¹ Vivek Chibber, *supra* Note 5; Evans, P, Constructing the 21st century Developmental State: Potentialities and pitfalls in: Edigheji, O. (Ed.), “Constructing a democratic Developmental State in South Africa: Potentials and Challenges”, (2010), at. 37-58.

³² Adrian Leftwich, *Developmental States, Effective States and Poverty Reduction: The Primacy of Politics*, Indian Journal of Human Development 5(2), January 2018, DOI:10.1177/0973703020110205.

scholars³³ pays little heed to the democratic governance but for development authoritarianism. Indeed, one of the contending issues that often arise in the case of DSM is the interaction of the model with democracy.³⁴ This is, noted by Fritz & Menocal³⁵ as ‘historically, many developmental states have been based on various forms of non-democratic political regimes: monarchies in nineteenth-century Europe, capitalist dictatorships in South Korea and Taiwan, and communist authoritarian regimes in contemporary China and Vietnam. Furthermore, in describing the importance of expedient governance system under the DSM over democracy which is viewed as a hindrance for it provides procedural cumbersome in decision making and enforcement, it is pointed out by Fritz & Menocal as follows:

In case of authoritarian developmental states, power tends to be centralized in the hands of a few key actors and/or institutions, enabling political leaders to make and implement decisions (especially ‘difficult’ ones that may be opposed by certain segments of the population) more quickly. One of the characteristics of a democratic system, in contrast, is the diffusion of power among various sets of actors and institutions both inside and outside the government, which inevitably slows down the decision-making process, and makes it more difficult to take decisions that hurt important constituencies.³⁶

In fact, some scholars even considered authoritarianism as an essential element for the success of DSM and as one of the factors that enhanced developmental capacities of the Asian developmental states in the 1970s and 80s.³⁷ For instance, Huntington³⁸ in his analysis of the incompatibility of democracy and development in transitional poor societies pointing that democratic governments would simply be too “soft” and hence unable to mobilize resources, curtail consumption, and promote investment so as to achieve a high growth rate. Therefore, he stresses that, during the process of political development in the developing countries, the political leaders must focus on strengthening political authority, maintaining social order and promoting political institutionalization to create a favorable political environment for economic development.³⁹

³³ Huntington, S. P. (1987). The goals of development. *Understanding Political Development*, 27. (1987), at , 14–15; Robinson, M. & White, G. (Eds.), “The Democratic Developmental State: Politics and Institutional Design”, (1998).

³⁴ Woo-Cumings, *supra* note 16; Vivek Chibber, *supra* note 5.

³⁵ Fritz, V. & Menocal, A. R. (2007). Developmental States in the new millennium: Concepts and challenges for a new aid agenda. *Development Policy Review*, 25(5), 531-552.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Huntington, S. P., “The goals of development”, *Understanding Political Development*, (1987), at 14–15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Woo-Cumings, *supra* note 16, 1–31.

Similarly, Leftwich⁴⁰ argues that the discourse that dominates the course of development governance under the DSM is overcoming the ‘structural contradiction’ between democracy and development represents the most significant challenge in realizing democratic developmentalism. This is due to length of process and sometimes stalemate that may arise in democracies where consultation, deliberation and consents as ingredient of the process of democratic decision-making. Whereas, in DSM expedite radical decision making is more desirable than the lengthy and costly democratic process.⁴¹ In a similar vein, Bolesta⁴² asserts that the DSM would be difficult to sustain in a fully democratic system in which people enjoy extensive political rights. According to this view, if the management of the state is developmental in nature, then a form of authoritarianism can probably replace a democratic system, where the power legitimacy drawn from developmental achievements and not directly from public elements.

Indeed, successful East Asian developmental states were authoritarian in their approaches to enforcing developmental policies to realize fast growth within a short period of time.⁴³ In these countries, fearing that adherence to democracy would lead to unruliness and disorderly conduct that would be disadvantageous to development, they considered democracy in the short-term as a luxury they could hardly afford, and thus they focused more on developing discipline than democracy.⁴⁴ Their impressive success as some claims that should not be implicate that states need to be authoritarian in order to be developmental.⁴⁵ For the proponents of this view, they point out several authoritarian but anti-developmental or non-developmental states in Africa and Latin America. In this regard, Brazil, Botswana, Mauritius and South Africa are very good examples.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Adrian Leftwich, *supra* note 32.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² Bolesta, A., “China as Developmental State”, *Montenegrin Journal of Economics*, 5, (2007).

⁴³ Mkandawire, T, “Thinking about developmental states in Africa”, *Cambridge, Journal of Economics*, 25(3), 289–314, (2001).

⁴⁴ Mackie, J., “Development and Democratization in East and Southeast Asia, A Journal of Policy Analysis and Reform”, (1998), at 335-346.

⁴⁵ Mkandawire, T, *supra* note 43.

⁴⁶ Mackie J., “Development and Democratization in East and Southeast Asia”, *A Journal of Policy Analysis and Reform*, (1998), at 335-346.

However, the fact that it is possible to name a good number of authoritarian developmental states does not settle the issue as there are however few democratic experiments.⁴⁷ In contrary to the description of the DSM as authoritarian in its tendency, there are, however they are few, who argue that development authoritarianism is rather an exogenous than endogenous factors in the DSM and it can be democratic and even there are essentially 21st century democratic developmental state.⁴⁸ According to this view, unlike the 20th century's DSM, in the 21st century, the DSM is conceived as being primarily concerned with human well-being, and development strategies and policies cannot be formulated by technocrats, but must be derived from organized public deliberations.⁴⁹ In this regard, deliberative and participatory democratic institutions are seen as central to a 21st century conception of the DSM.⁵⁰

The general assertion that the DSM is inherently authoritarian is therefore challenged as it is hardly possible to make simple generalization about the inherent relationship between the DSM and authoritarianism given some democratic experience such as Japan.⁵¹ Randall, for instance, contends that it is necessary for the DSM to be democratic as authoritarian systems are a major hindrance not only to political development but also to economic progress.⁵² Democracy has a detrimental role in enhancing the effectiveness of the state in bringing about development.⁵³ As Mkandawire⁵⁴ argues, a democratic DSM that embraces a system of checks and balances and one that is based on broad-based state-society alliances ensures popular participation in governance and in the transformative processes. Thus, the conclusion is drawn that the DSM is autocratic by nature and thus not fitting with a democratic context. Such a conclusion is erroneous because first, not all the east Asian tigers were authoritarian. For instance, Japan was democratic while South Korea was authoritarian. Second, that the Asian type of the DSM was autocratic does not mean that others too have to be also autocratic.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Vivek Chibber, *supra* note 5,

⁴⁸ *Id.*; Thandika Mkandawire, *supra* note 4,

⁴⁹ Evans, P, *supra* note 31

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ Vivek Chibber, *supra* note 5.

⁵² Randall V., "Political Parties and Democratic Developmental States", *Development Policy Review*, 25(5), (2007), at 633-652.

⁵³ Lange, Rueschemeyer & Matthew (Eds), "States and Development, Historical antecedents of Stagnation and Advance", (2005).

⁵⁴ Thandika Mkandawire, "From Maladjusted States to Democratic Developmental States in Africa. In: Edigheji, Omano, (Ed.) *Constructing a Democratic Developmental State in South Africa: Potentials and Challenges*", Human Sciences Research Council (2010).

⁵⁵ Randall, V. Political parties and democratic Developmental States. *Development Policy Review*, 25(5), 633-652, (2007).

Generally, even though it may not be appropriate to describe the DSM as inherently undemocratic, but as shown above, a considerable number of scholars that characterize it as being often associated with ‘development authoritarianism’. For example, Woo-Cumings⁵⁶ notes that the DS can be “good in terms of its effectiveness but it can also be ugly for its undemocratic and authoritarian tendencies, explicitly or implicitly” Given such a normative depiction of the DSM as an authoritarian mode of governance, what would be the issues of incompatibility - at least in principle - that the application of the DSM in a FPS may raise given that the latter is often attributed to democratic governance that promotes political pluralism and multilevel governance system. Let's then assess the Ethiopian experience in relation to multiparty and multilevel governance perspective.

5. AN OVERVIEW THE EPRDF’S DSM

As recorded in various party and official government documents, the EPRDF’s DSM largely draws on the emulation of the development path of the NICs, such as South Korea and Taiwan that had proclaimed the essence and aspects of its hegemonic developmentalism under its DSM.⁵⁷ In this regard, for example, the Ethiopian government had invited Japanese and Korean experts to advise the country on industrial policy.⁵⁸ The various development policies prepared by the federal government exhibit policy parallels with that of the east Asian DSs where they state, as their pillars, early focus on boosting agricultural productivity to accumulate capital; increasing supply for agro-industries; providing incentives for export-orientation; and implementing ‘carrot and stick’ policies for enterprises.⁵⁹

Generally, as often argued by the EPRDF (2010), the DSM that the party sought to build in Ethiopia has at least three core features.⁶⁰ These are: a firm conviction that development must be considered and treated as an existential question; political and

⁵⁶ Woo-Cumings, *supra* note 16.

⁵⁷ EPRDF, “Ye Tehadso Mesmerand Ethiopia’s Renaissance”, Addis Ababa, (2010); Abbink Jon, “Ethnic-based Federalism and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing The Experiment After 20 Years”, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, (2011), at 596, and 618 available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2011.642516> (accessed 22 November 2022).

⁵⁸ Altenburg, T. (2010). Industrial policy in Ethiopia (No. 2/2010). German Development Institute/Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), (2010).

⁵⁹ Abbink Jon, *supra* note 57

⁶⁰ EPRDF, *supra* note 57; Meles Zenawi Foundation, *supra* note 2.

economic independence of the state or government from the influence of the economic elite; and ensuring the hegemony of developmental thinking. According to EPRDF, by embracing these principles and features, the EDSM will eventually help to extricate the country from poverty, with a goal to attain a middle-income economy as of 2020-2023.⁶¹ Consequently, undertaking development and bringing about structural transformation is considered to be not only an economic objective but also – perhaps primarily – a political one as well.⁶² This, as some argue, is an indication of the EPRDF's motive and intent that it had sought legitimacy to stay in power that is derived not from the ballot box but principally on its developmental success.⁶³ This has been implemented by the EPRDF by blending its old political program known as 'revolutionary democracy' propelled by 'democratic centralism' with DSM which it had sought to make a hegemonic ideology to govern the political economy of the country. This is underlined in one of the front political documents as "The Developmental State Model needs a developmentally-oriented dominant party that would stay in power until and up to its developmentalist mission is achieved when the core tents of developmental objectives are realized."⁶⁴

Indeed, as can be gleaned from major party and government policy documents, such as democracy and development (2006), rural development and transformation (2002), capacity building (reforms on civil service, education, justice sector) etc., the influence of revolutionary democracy tuned developmentalism is apparent. As some argued, by blending the ethos and institutions of the DSM and revolutionary democracy together, it seems the EPRDF sought to project itself as a vanguard party and sought to obtain 'legitimacy' from its developmental success through the proper implementation of the DSM.⁶⁵ Hence, as Lefort⁶⁶ noted that the EPRDF in its effort to institutionalize the DSM in Ethiopia includes undertakings to build a vanguard capitalist state where the party (EPRDF) is the omniscient and omnipresent propeller of the political-economy of the state, along the principles, paths and goals of developmentalism.

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² Altenburg, T. *supra* note 58 and Abbink Jon, *supra* note 57.

⁶³ Bach, J. N. (2011). Abyotawi democracy: Neither revolutionary nor democratic – A critical review of EPRDF's conception of revolutionary democracy in post-1991 Ethiopia. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5(4) 641–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2011.642522> (accessed on 10 September 2022).

⁶⁴ EPRDF, *supra* note 57.

⁶⁵ Abbink Jon, *supra* note 57.

⁶⁶ Lefort R., "The Theory and Practice of Meles Zenawi: A Response to Alex de Waal", *African Affairs*, (2013), at 460–470.

The EPRDF however has often claimed that the developmental success recorded over the past two decades was the result of its efforts and effective leadership in applying a democratic DSM in Ethiopia.⁶⁷ In this view, the EPRDF's efforts in building a democratic DS helped the party to get the legitimacy to stay in power through the free consent of the public, who expressed their approval to the party at the various national elections, as recognition of its success in entrenching democracy while achieving a commendable double-digit economic growth since late 2002. On the contrary, critics have often castigated the mode of execution of the DSM by the EPRDF, claiming that it was characterized by development authoritarianism, specifically by undermining regional autonomy and multiparty democracy, press freedom and freedom for civil societies.⁶⁸ Let us now turn to see the impact that the experiment with the DSM made on democracy and multilevel development governance as enshrined in the FDRE Constitution.

6. IMPACTS OF THE EPRDF'S DSM ON MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY AND MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM IN ETHIOPIA

The federalization of the post-1991 Ethiopian state was carried out with promises to institutionalize, among other things, a multilevel (self and shared) governance system anchored on the principles of sub-national autonomy, democratic governance and political pluralism.⁶⁹ Regarding, multiparty democracy, the constitution provides under Chapter three list of bill of rights that guarantees various civil and political rights from freedom of thought, expression, assembly, the right to elect and be elected etc. On multilevel governance, the FDRE Constitution empowers the federal government (under Article 51(2)) to “formulate and implement the country’s policies, strategies and plans in respect of overall economic, social and development matters...; ...establish and implement national standards and basic policy criteria for public health, education, science and technology...”. At the same time, for regional state, the Constitution confers the power to “formulate and implement development policies, strategies and plans in respect of overall economic, social and development matters of the regional states” [FDRE Constitution, Article 52(2-c)]. The wording of Article 52(2-c) seems to suggest that the regional states entrusted not just with administrative powers but with the power to formulate and execute economic, social and development policies as well. This

⁶⁷ Bereket Simon, *supra* note 2.

⁶⁸ Hagmann, T., Abbink, J., 2011, “Twenty years of revolutionary democratic Ethiopia, 1991 to 2011”, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No 4, (2011), at 579-595.

⁶⁹ Abbink Jon, *supra* note 57; Assefa Fisseha, “Ethiopia’s Experiment in Accommodating Diversity: 20 Years”, Balance Sheet. Regional & Federal Studies, (2012), at 435-473.

gives the impression that the two levels of government have concurrent power to make policies covering the bulk of social, economic and development spheres.⁷⁰ In nutshell, multilevel development governance in the Ethiopian federation basically entrenched under Articles 51(2) and 52(2-c).

In entrenching multilevel development governance in the Ethiopian federation, the FDRE Constitution does not stop by merely outlying division of power. It has also provided the democratic principles based on which the process of development governance (policy formulation and execution by any level of government needs to adhere.⁷¹ The FDRE Constitution provides that governance including development governance needs to be carry out in transparent, accountable, participatory, responsive manner (see the FDRE Constitution, for example, Articles 12, 52(1-a & 2-c), 43 (2) and 89(6)), offering adequate platform that enable the grassroots better to exercise their democratic rights. Specifically, under its Chapter 10, the FDRE Constitution provides for the respective tiers of governments in the federation, the objectives of and governing principles in the formulations and executions of development policies on economic, social and environmental matters (see: Article 85 of the FDRE Constitution).

Be the above constitutional provisions as they are, in spite of the fact that the federalization of the Ethiopian state brought some success in terms of institutional recognition of the ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity of the country and conferring them with self- and shared administration rights at federal, national and local levels. In spite of this, however, the federalization project, as some would argue, has nevertheless, been undermined by the highly centralized and authoritarian governance system that has dominated much of the EPRDF's rule. This, as some have argued, is partly attributable to the EPRDF's manner of execution of the DSM in Ethiopia.⁷² According to this view, Ethiopia's experiment with the DSM has been widely criticized for entrenching a centrist and authoritarian governance system in such a way that undermines a democratic federal system guaranteed under the FDRE Constitution.

⁷⁰ Assefa Fiseha and Zemelak Ayele, "Concurrent Powers in the Ethiopian Federal System In: Concurrent Powers in Federal Systems Authors: at, 241–260, available at: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004337572_014 (accessed on 10 September 2022).

⁷¹ Zemelak Ayele, "Local Government in Ethiopia: Still an Apparatus of Control? Law, Democracy & Development, Meheret Ayenew, "Decentralization in Ethiopia: Two Case Studies on Devolution of Power and Responsibilities to Local Authorities", in Bahru Zewde and S. Pausewang (eds), *The Challenge of Democracy from Below*, (2002).

⁷² Emanuele Fantini, *supra* note 30; Abbink Jon, "Paradoxes of Electoral Authoritarianism: The 2015 Ethiopian Elections as Hegemonic Performance", 35 *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, (2017).

Various scholars argue that the adverse consequences of the practice of the EDSM by the EPRDF began to make themselves felt in the country's political space and democratisation process following the much-contested 2005 general elections. The post-2005-election period is thus often depicted as the climax of the EPRDF's hegemonic rule, but unfortunately it is also marks an apparent regression in political pluralism in general and multiparty democracy in particular.⁷³

Such a practice of a dominant-party politics by the EPRDF under the guise of pursuing a DSM in Ethiopia has been widely criticised for undermining political pluralism, as the party's hegemonic developmental discourse and practice adamantly adhered to exclusionary politics and policies. As one informant put it:

The intention and the practice on the ground had been to keep an iron grip on political power where the EPRDF has long been controlling the political space and all of the state apparatus. The EPRDF, especially following the historic 2005 elections, had been unleashing widespread smear campaigns against the political opposition, independent media, civil society and the like, using such humiliating labels as “enemies of [the] developmental path”, “agents of neoliberalism”, “anti-peace elements”, and, in the worst cases, branding them as terrorists, which makes them a legitimate target of the party's clampdown measures taken in the name of development⁷⁴

The adoption of the DSM in Ethiopia has led to a regression in the country's electoral democracy, with a reversal taking place in the trend of progressive increase in representation of opposition parties in Parliament witnessed during the first three national elections prior to 2010 and culminating in literally no opposition representation at all in the 2015 elections.

In spite of this regression in electoral democracy and political pluralism in a supposedly multiparty system, some see the matter otherwise. In this regard, one key informant stated the following:

[The party] had been able to win the hearts and minds of the rural majority [which] led to its victory in the last four general elections held in the country. And its long-standing political dominance and stay in power in the country is a result of changes in the political culture in the country where it is getting into a new era where we have one dominant party – the EPRDF – which played the game

⁷³Abbink Jon, *supra* note 57

⁷⁴ Interview with an opposition party member and former member of the HoPR during the 3rd Parliamentary Season, in Addis Ababa, (5 November 2018).

according to [the game's] rules, [rules that] paved the way for its [victoriousness] within the context of a multiparty setting as outlined under the [FDRE] Constitution.⁷⁵

For those who are of the view that the DSM is compatible with a democratic system, the EPRDF's practice under the EDSM is seen as similar to the experience of countries like Japan and South Africa, where a dominant-party system exists within a democratic milieu. Such commentators thus try to justify their claims by equating the EPRDF with the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and the National Democratic Party (NDP) in Japan, which would imply that the EPRDF had been obtaining the popular mandate to rule the country through democratic elections in a competitive multiparty context where state power follows rules of the game that accord with principles and institutions set forth under the 1995 FDRE Constitution. Such a view, however, is fiercely opposed by the EPRDF's critics, who see the party's conception and implementation of the DSM in general and its conduct of dominant-party politics in particular as a cover-up for iron-fisted, authoritarian rule.⁷⁶ According to these critics, the EPRDF's politics falls within the ambit not of a dominant-party system but of an authoritarian, hegemonic-party system – one where the outcomes of elections are a foregone conclusion and there is a lack of strong opposition parties. Accordingly, EPRDF sought to project itself as a hegemonic developmental party, and in so doing acted against the values and principles of the FDRE Constitution by undermining multiparty democracy.⁷⁷ This is also true with multilevel governance system where EPRDF's revolutionary driven DSM unleashed coercive, intrusive and exclusionary development governance that undermined regional states constitutional autonomy to make and execute their own development policies as provided in the FDRE Constitution in the form of democratic multilevel development governance.

True that democratic multilevel development governance is embedded within the FDRE Constitution, which prescribes that development governance has to carry out in transparent, accountable, participatory and responsive ways.⁷⁸ Specifically, Chapter 10 of the FDRE Constitution provides for the respective tiers of government in the federation and sets out, in

⁷⁵ Interview with the head of the Institute of Policy Studies, in Addis Ababa, (March 2018).

⁷⁶ Mesay Kebede, *supra* note 11; Lefort Rene, "Free Market Economy, Developmental State and Part State Hegemony in Ethiopia: The Case of the Model Farmer", 50 *Journal of Modern African Studies*, (2012), at 681-706.

⁷⁷ Interview with the head of the Press Secretariat at the Office of the Prime Minister, in Addis Ababa, (10 March 2018).

⁷⁸ The FDRE Constitution Proclamation No. 1/1995, Articles 12, 52(1)(a), 52(2)(c), 43(2), and 89(6).

Article 85, the objectives and governing principles for the formulation and execution of policies on social, economic and environmental matters. The question is how the authoritarianism that characterised the EPRDF's developmentalism affected democratic multilevel development governance in Ethiopia.

The approach to development governance under the EPRDF's "developmental hegemonism" was characterised largely by the federal government's extremely centralised and authoritarian policy-making and execution practices. This was reaffirmed by participants in the FGDs, specifically those who were members of the House of People Representatives (HoPR and regional councils, who said it was a grave disciplinary offence to challenge policies already endorsed by the party's executive committee. This, as most of the FGD participants noted, was due to the unwritten rule that members may raise questions only on issues of implementation rather than on the policies themselves. According to one participant from the HoPR, "challenging the party's policies would be tantamount to challenging the party itself ... it could result in one being subjected to criticism and self-criticism, and even sometimes disciplinary measures for those who persisted in their stand".⁷⁹ Similarly, an informant from the ONRS observed as follows:

The EPRDF created conditions in which, far from being able to exercise their policy-making and implementation autonomy as clearly provided in the FDRE Constitution, regional states were not permitted to have a say about policies developed at the centre. Instead, once a policy was endorsed by the party, it simply rolled down to regions, where regional officials had to enforce it, with little to no opportunity available to them to challenge it.⁸⁰

The informant mentioned, as an example, the case of the Integrated Addis Ababa-Oromia Master Plan, which affected surrounding areas of the ONRS. Some of the participants said that the EPRDF's tight party control intensified, especially following the much-disputed 2005 national elections, with top-down intervention justified on the basis of an urgent need to serve the national interest. This deprived the platform of entertaining diverse views and critical voices that could have helped to ensure better ownership of the government's development projects by the public.⁸¹ The EPRDF's exclusionary approach to development policy

⁷⁹ Interview with a member of the HoPR and Chairperson of the Trade and Industry Affairs Standing Committee on Addis Ababa, in Addis Ababa, (14 July 2019).

⁸⁰ Interview with members of ONRS State Council, in Addis Ababa, (8 February 2019).

⁸¹ Interview with an official at ONRS Plan and Development Commission, in Addis Ababa, (5 December 2019).

planning and execution, as one informant described it, “hindered the building of a common national development agenda.”⁸²

The EPRDF seems to have been attempting to apply the DSM on the basis of its age-old Leninist belief in a vanguard party guided by the “I know for you” logic – all of which contributed to the apparent lack of ownership among the public of the policies made by the central government, not to mention the disfranchisement of the grassroots and the erosion of the accountability of regional and local administrations to the general public. For example, the Large Scale Commercial Farming (LSCF) projects, which are based on geographical differentiation, are often mentioned as an illustration of the EPRDF-led government’s elitist and exclusionary approach to developmental policy planning and execution. These projects were oftentimes designed and executed with little or no prior consultation with the concerned bodies, be they regional and local administrators, or the general public that would be affected by the projects.⁸³

Indeed, some research participants criticised the government’s choice of lowland areas for LSCF projects, saying it evinced an intrusive and exclusionary approach.⁸⁴ In turn, the government sought to justify its actions by pointing out the need to exploit the comparative advantages of these lowlands, given their combination of sparse population density and vast expanses of land with flat topography that makes it particularly suitable for irrigated mechanised farming.⁸⁵ The government’s preferred policy approach here has been to promote the leasing of land to foreign and domestic investors.⁸⁶ This approach, as one informant from the GPNRS commented, constitutes:

[a] double-standard approach between the highland areas and the lowland areas. People in the lowland areas, such as the GPNRS, have been at the periphery of the power relations with rulers at the centre in Ethiopia since the 19th century. And the EPRDF has simply maintained this historically lopsided centre-periphery political relationship, where the centre dominates the peripheries and dictates to

⁸² Interview with a member of the HoPR, in Addis Ababa, (14 July 2019).

⁸³ Interview with a member of BGNRS State Council and a former official at the GPNRS Agriculture and Natural Resource Bureau, in Addis Ababa, (5 December 2019).

⁸⁴ Interview with the former President of the GPNRS and an official at the GPNRS Agriculture and Natural Resource Bureau, in Addis Ababa, (14 October, 2019).

⁸⁵ Interview with a former official at the Ministry of Agriculture, in Addis Ababa, (9 July, 2019).

⁸⁶ Abbink Jon, *supra* note 14.

them to execute development plans formulated by the centre with little or no consultation.⁸⁷

In a similar vein, a key informant from the BGNRS noted that there has been a hierarchical relationship between the centre, led by the EPRDF, and the peripheries, led by affiliated parties.⁸⁸ There is no doubt that, as far as developmental policy-making and execution is concerned, the EPRDF dominated the entire process in an apparent violation of what is enshrined in the FDRE Constitution, be it the sovereignty of nations, nationalities and peoples or the regional states' autonomy to make and execute their own policies without undue influence by the federal government. The practice, moreover, has been that the central government's development plans result in a dispossession of resources from the peripheries for mega-development projects such as industrial parks, hydroelectric dams and LSCFs. In most of these projects, deals were made with domestic and foreign companies without the involvement or consent of the respective regional state governments and local residents, particularly so in lowland areas such as the GPNRS and BGNRS.⁸⁹

Similarly, in the case of Industrial Park Development Projects (IPD), informants from the respective IPD agencies of the ANRS and the ONRS underscored that the federal government often obligated the regional states to provide land for the development of industrial parks in their respective regions by the federal government, parks which were designed with little or no consultation.⁹⁰ The absence of regional-state participation in the planning and execution of development projects such as LSCFs and IPDs, as an informant from the ONRS Planning Commission explained:

closes up avenues that could create democratic and non-authoritarian social, political, and economic relations between and among the federal government and regional states, eventually ensuring that peoples' right to development and their freedoms and democratic rights are not undermined in the name of developmentalism as pursued by the EPRDF under the helm of the DSM.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Interview with a former official at the GPNRS Agriculture and Natural Resources Bureau, in Addis Ababa, (19 October, 2019).

⁸⁸ Interview with an official at the GPNRS Office of the Chief-Administrator, in Addis Ababa (19 October, 2019).

⁸⁹ Interview with a former official at the GPNRS Agriculture and Natural Resource Bureau and member of the central Committee of the then ruling party of the BGNRS, in Addis Ababa, (19 October, 2019).

⁹⁰ Interview with an official at the ANRS Industrial Parks Development Corporation and an official at the ONRS Industrial Park Development Cooperation, in Addis Ababa, (20 July, 2019).

⁹¹ Interview with an official at the ONRS Plan and Development Commission, in Addis Ababa, (7 November, 2018).

Similarly, as informants from the SNNPR noted, the absence of participation by regional states in policy and project design at the federal level denied them platforms which are important, *inter alia*, for expressing regional interests and priorities in the exercise of the rights to self-determination, self-rule and shared governance enshrined in the FDRE Constitution.⁹²

The lack of participation and engagement of stakeholders and citizens often resulted in severe criticism and grievances which, according to some observers, led the EPRDF to dig its own grave, as seen in the case of the Integrated Addis Ababa-Oromia Master Plan (IAOMP).⁹³ This has been mentioned as a typical case that shows the ramifications of the EDSM's authoritarian developmentalism.⁹⁴ The IAOMP was widely castigated by observers for being carried out in an authoritarian manner, as manifested, among other things, in the top-down, exclusionary and coercive formulation and implementation of development policies with no, or little, consultation with and consent from concerned stakeholders such as the ONRS, local administrators and farmers.⁹⁵ Aberra describes the practice as follows:

The plan is imposed “from above” as has always been, while a real development plan needs a free and informed consent of the affected people and includes measures to avoid or minimise any possible destruction to local communities. The designers of the Master Plan refuse to recognise examples from other parts of the world concerning legitimate development and ignore Oromo protests of unprecedented scale that has already led to hundreds of innocent victims. Such patterns are clear indicators of the designers' intent to destroy the Oromo identity in the area under the guise of the “Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan”.⁹⁶

These sentiments were confirmed by an informant from the ONRS, who explained the process of planning and (attempted) execution of the IOAMP as follows:

The problem with this Master Plan is both in its content and manner of enforcement. When I say “content”, I mean the federal government does not have the power to make detailed plans such as the IAOMP and oblige regional states and local governments to enforce [them]. The fact on the ground was that in the

⁹² Interview with an official at the SNNPR Council, in Hawassa, (April 18, 2019).

⁹³ The IAOMP, the tenth subnational integrated plan, was designed to be implemented from 2014 to 2037. The aim of the Master Plan, as stated in the original document, is “to developmentally link Oromia special zones and the City of Addis Ababa to improve the quality of life of citizens as well as contribute to the economic growth and development of the nation” (AACPO, 2017).

⁹⁴ Interview with an official at the ONRS Urban Development Bureau, in Addis Ababa, (December 5, 2019)

⁹⁵ Interview with a member of the ONRS Council, in Addis Ababa, (November 7, 2018)

⁹⁶ Aberra Degefa, “Addis Ababa Master Development Plan: A Program for Development or for Ethnic Cleansing?”, 19 *RUDN Journal of Sociology* (2019), at 2 .

case of the Master Plan, the administration in the ONRS was pressured by the EPRDF's officials at the party's higher echelon to enforce the IAOMP, which [was] prepared from the very beginning with little consultation and consent from the region, which, as seen later, erupted in fierce disagreements between the EPRDF leadership and the OPDO [Oromo People's Democratic Organisation].⁹⁷

What the IAOMP illustrates is that plans are often prepared with little or no consultation with the stakeholders concerned, be they regional or local officials or people at the grassroots.⁹⁸ Most of the informants from the ONRS stated that the IAOMP was prepared by a few elites, with little consultation, coordination and cooperation between officials of the ONRS and Addis Ababa from the inception of the plan up to the stage where it was to be implemented.⁹⁹ The IAOMP was formulated within small circles, mainly by EPRDF "big men" on its executive committee and a few confidante-technocrats. One informant from the ONRS planning and development commission said that "if you want a textbook example of centralised governance by the EPRDF that disregarded the federal system in general, and regional state autonomy in particular, it's the Addis Ababa-Oromia Special Zone Integrated Master Plan".¹⁰⁰

Indeed, the IAOMP is mentioned by a considerable number of scholars as a watershed moment that marks the pinnacle and decline of the centrist, top-down and exclusionary approach to development governance of the EPRDF. The announcement of the Master Plan triggered massive public protests across the ONRS, which eventually led to the disintegration of the EPRDF's democratic centralism and the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegne in April 2018.

CONCLUSION

As seen in this article, the core ideological and institutional drivers of the EDSM – a dominant party politics and a hegemonic, centralized, top-down governance pursued by the EPRDF – had significantly undermined a democratic and multitier system of governance within the Ethiopian federation, as provided under the 1995 FDRE Constitution. Contrary to the FDRE Constitution, which guarantees a democratic multilevel governance underpinned by the core values and institutions of a federal democracy, including among other things, a

⁹⁷ Interview with a former official at the ONRS Finance and Economic Development Bureau, in Addis Ababa, (February. 18, 2019)

⁹⁸ Interview with an official at the ONRS Urban Development Bureau, in Addis Ababa, (December. 5, 2019)

⁹⁹ Interview with a member of the ONRS Council, in Addis Ababa, (November. 7, 2019)

¹⁰⁰ Interview with a member of the ONRS Council, in Addis Ababa, (November. 7, 2019)

transparent, accountable and participatory approach in the formulation and execution of various development policies, plans and projects, this study found that, under the EDSM, the EPRDF- led government of Ethiopia had been pursuing ‘development authoritarianism’ where formulation and execution of development policies and plans was carried out in an authoritarian, highly centralized, top-down and non-participatory manner. Moreover, due to the EPRDF’s hegemonic developmentalism, the values and benefits envisaged under the Ethiopian federal system, such as policy innovation and competition, locally-tailored policies, popular participation, transparency and accountability, had been seriously compromised.

Generally, the practice of the DSM in Ethiopia under the leadership of the EPRDF has undermined the essence of MPDF, as outlined under the 1995 FDRE Constitution. The result of such a practice by the EPRDF has been a regression in multiparty democracy. Consequently, the EPRDF’s mode of execution of the DSM in Ethiopia has had its own contribution to the frequent civil unrests and public protests that the country has been experiencing seen since 2015, which eventually culminated with a reshuffle of top political leadership within the EPRDF and the government. Moreover, there have since been a series of political developments in the country, triggering a profound change within the country’s political arena that saw a significant shift of narrative towards a liberal political- economic model and the waning of the DSM and the EPDRF’s long-held ‘revolutionary democracy’ ideology and even the subsequent dismantling and rebranding of the front into a new party called Prosperity Party, led by PM Abiy Ahmed.