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COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENTAL STATE IN ETHIOPIA: EXPERIENCE FROM
THE TIGRAY NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE (2001-2019)**

BY:

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This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Yemane Gebremichael Gebretsadkan, entitled **Democratic Developmental State in Ethiopia: Experiences from the Tigray National Regional State(2001-2019)**, and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy in political science complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards and quality.

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Abbreviations

ADB	African Development Bank
ADLI	Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization
AFC	Asian Financial Crises
BPF	Bureau of Planning and Finance
BPR	Business Process Reengineering
BSC	Balanced Scorecard
BTIUD	Bureau of Trade, Industry and Urban Development
CA	Capability Approach
CADLI	Conservation-based Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization
CBB	Capacity Building Bureau
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
Das	Development Agents
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EFFORT	Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigre
EPB	Economic Planning Board
EPDM	Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
HRM	Human Resource Management
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPE	Institutional Political Economy
MCB	Ministry of Capacity Building
MZLA	Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy

MITI	Ministry of International Trade and Industry
MoFEC	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MOI	Ministry of Industry
MPSHRD	Ministry of Public Service and Human Resources Development
MSMEs	Micro and Small Manufacturing Enterprises
NIE	New Institutional Economics
NPC	National Planning Commission
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty
PC	Planning Commission (India)
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SDPRP	Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program
SMMIA	Small and Medium Manufacturing Industries Agency
SOEs	State-owned Enterprises
TIEPC	Tigray Investment and Export Promotion Commission
TIPS	Tigray Institute of Policy Studies
TNRS	Tigray National Regional State
TPLF	Tigray People’s Liberation Front
TSA	Tigray Statistical Agency
TVTE	Technical and Vocational Training Education
UN	United Nations
UN-DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WB	World Bank

ABSTRACT

This study examines whether or not the political and policy practices in the Tigray National Regional State essentially reflect the basic attributes of the democratic developmental state. Field data were gathered through key-informant interview and focus group discussion. As the findings of the study reveal that there are signs of good achievements in economic growth and strengths in terms of state autonomy, political commitment of the leadership, and ideational capacity, which enables the government penetrate deep into society to exercise political and policy control. However, there are limitations in achieving structural transformation of the economy, building capacity for effective policy implementation, and genuine commitment of the government to strengthening democratic institutions, which are vital for representation and empowerment of the people to effectively involve in the process of planning and implementing development activities, as well as, ensuring accountability of the government. Low level of agricultural transformation, backward institutions of support-provision and development infrastructures, lack of strong public-private cooperation and the subsequent limited capacity of the private business to invest in the manufacturing subsector, and absence of adequately trained human power are the main factors limiting structural transformation in the economy. The low level of effective policy implementation, in this regard, is largely associated with the deficiency of the civil service system, which is expressed in terms of poor organization and lack of implementing the reform-based capacity building programs, and inadequacy of strictly following the merit principles (due to politicization) in the process of selection, recruitment, and placement of civil servants. Democracy, which empowers the people to engage in policy and development processes, is difficult to achieve in Tigray because the region's government is not amenable to multiparty politics, and the participatory institutions both at the regional and local levels are nominal and more essentially loyal to the ruling party than the people whom they constitutionally represent. These findings suggest that if the current practices continue in this way, the aspiration of achieving the ideals of democratic developmental state in Tigray would largely remain rhetoric. The findings of the study also imply the need for effective institutional frameworks to build robust support provision structures, productive public-private cooperation, and depoliticized or merit-based civil service system with the requisite capacity for effective policy implementation. Moreover, as the findings of the study suggest that there is a need for strengthening the institutions of democracy in order to enhance multiparty politics and allow the people to broadly engage in the process of policy decisions, implementation of development activities, and ensuring government accountability.

Chapter One: Introduction

When the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) seized state power by overthrowing the *Derg* regime in 1991, it introduced federalism which privileges the right to self-determination of nations and nationalities, as stipulated in article 39 of the FDRE Constitution, and the democratic developmental state (strongly articulated after 2001) to build democracy and achieve rapid, as well as, inclusive economic development in Ethiopia. Particularly, within the framework of federalism, the democratic developmental state was introduced to solve Ethiopia's major problems in its modern history, i.e., lack of democracy and development (Ministry of Information, 2002). However, as the experiences of the most successful East Asian states (notably, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan) show, the developmental state is essentially centralized and unified state. What has largely been emphasized in the study of the developmental state, in this regard, is the role of national level institutions (Sinha, 2003).

On top of the general assumption that the concept is associated with a centralized political system, with the new political and economic reforms since 2018, it seems that the idea of the developmental state in Ethiopia is facing reversal. After the reform, it is the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a ruling party in the Tigray National Regional State, which continues to maintain the developmental state as the only alternative way to achieve structural transformation in the economy and society. In such a circumstance under a federal system, if the developmental state is to work in the Tigray National Regional State, there should be room for the region's state institutions to play a significant role in the process of development. Accordingly, this study examines whether the democratic developmental state is working at the Regional State level by taking the Tigray National Regional State as a case in point.

1.1. Background of the Study

The idea of the developmental state can be traced back to the work of Friedrich List (1885, in Kuye, 2011) when he suggested that less developed nations required active state involvement as a means to catch up with more developed countries. However, the concept of the developmental state owes its current usage to Chalmers Johnson (1982), who explicitly applied it to describe Japan as a state that gave priority to economic growth, which was characterized by the existence

of competent and merit-based bureaucracy, market-conforming methods of state involvement in the economy, and a pilot agency to control state policy. After Japan, the concept of the developmental state was adopted by the late industrializing East Asian economies (like South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore) and ‘has continued to capture attention from, and provide inspirations for scholars around the world’ (Chu, 2016:20). Consequently, since the empirical studies that showed the achievements of structural economic transformation in the aforesaid countries, the concept of the developmental state has been a central agenda of the debate in the development discourse (Botlhale, 2015; Caldentey, 2008).

At the outset, the developmental state was regarded as a state, which is identical to the post-Second World War state in East Asia-the authoritarian developmental state. As Mkandawire (2001: 291) points out, the developmental state is 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’. As the studies in East Asia show, exclusive pursuit of development, the existence of developmentally-oriented political elite with the mission of mobilizing the public around grand visions, ideational capacity, autonomy of the state to effectively plan and implement its policies (but also embedded in society and accept a partnership with the private sector (Evans, 1995), narrowly defined national economic project based on national consensus, and a relatively autonomous and merit-based bureaucracy were the main factors for the success of the developmental state (Arkebe, 2015; Leftwich, 1995).

In contrast to the neoliberal views of market determinism, the idea of the developmental state is grounded on the assumption that active involvement of the government in the economy is vital to correct market failures and shape the course of development (Getachew, 2018). Accordingly, state autonomy and capacity are at the heart of active government involvement in planning, orchestrating, or steering economic and social strategies to guide the transformation process. State autonomy, in this regard, refers to the condition that public officials are free from capture by any interest group and they have the authority to discipline the private sector to conform to the development policies of the government (Aaron, 2017). And, state capacity implies the ability of the state to mobilize elite collaboration, organize society, and implement policies for development goals (Aaron, 2017; Jossob, 2016). In other words, while state autonomy has to do with the right of the state to act independent of any sectarian group, state capacity refers to the

infrastructural power of the state, which is expressed in terms of elite coherence, the structure of the state and its organizational ability, and effectiveness of the bureaucracy to put the developmental policies into practice (Aaron, 2017).

Motivated by the economic achievements of the East Asian states, many developing countries have been aspiring to adopt the developmental state model. However, regardless of its remarkable achievements that inspired the developing countries, the classical developmental state in East Asia has recently been criticized for its democratic deficiency (Evans, 2010). Except Japan, the twentieth century developmental states in East Asia were authoritarian or undemocratic developmental states, which did able to achieve economic transformations at the expense of democratic values, particularly, during the Cold War era (Semahagn, 2014). However, with new developments that show strong assertions for democracy at domestic and international levels, the situation where dictatorships were tolerated for their economic achievements during the Cold War era no longer exist since the 1990s (Deen, 2011). In other words, the ‘old style of grip on power in the name of achieving economic development [would] not work’ (Semahagn, 2014: 143) in the twenty first century.

Unlike the authoritarian developmental state of the East Asian type, the current developmental state is supposed to be democratic and ‘pursue policies with a view to gaining popular support, and therefore cannot focus exclusively on economic development’ (Chu, 2016: 17). As a result, currently, the developmental state needs to be redefined to combine its previous qualities with a democratic political regime (Evans, 2010). In short, the contemporary developmental state is required to use its institutional autonomy and capacity in ways that facilitate transformation in terms of both democracy and economic development. Based on this view, the Ethiopian Government under the EPRDF leadership declared itself to pursue the path of a democratic developmental state. However, although there are evidences of developmental state behavior in the ideological tenets of the Front to achieve the country’s Renaissance (Arkebe, 2015), whether or not the basic attributes of the democratic developmental state have practically been in place is open to debate.

Because Ethiopia is a federal state with autonomous regions, the developmental state should be accompanied with the devolution of decision-making powers to local state institutions in order to

exercise democracy and meaningful popular participation at the grassroots level. However, as the available literature shows, what has largely been emphasized in the study of the developmental state is the role of state institutions at the national level (Sinha, 2003). The role of regional or local state institutions has largely been overlooked by the development researchers. Taking such limitations into account, this study seeks to provide a fresh perspective on the idea of the developmental state in the Ethiopian context, by examining the developmental practices at the regional state level by taking the Tigray National Regional State as a case in point. Accordingly, central to this study is the role regional and local state institutions would play in development and their amenability to exercise local democracy and meaningful popular participation to shape policy decisions that affect local democracy¹ and development in the Tigray National Regional State.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

By taking lessons from the experiences of the East Asian countries (notably, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan), the EPRDF-led government adopted a developmental state to achieve structural social and economic transformation in Ethiopia. However, the classical East Asian concept of the developmental state views the state as hard and insulated from society, which is not exposed to capture by interest groups (Wylde, 2012). Developmental state, in this view, has usually been noted as a state that imposes a national development agenda suiting to authoritarian or undemocratic regimes.

As the literature on the remarkable social and economic achievements in East Asia show, the idea of the authoritarian developmental state is largely attributed to the condition where the key elements of success- autonomy of state institutions and the political leaders, which enabled them to define and implement strategic goals of development; and terms of social embeddedness

¹ In the modern world, democracy is a much contested idea that has always been redefined and undergoing transformation. As a result, scholars lack consensus in providing agreed definition of the concept. Some define it as a set of representative institutions, while others define it as a set of qualitative practices (Biocchi, *et al*, 2011). In this study, democracy is viewed in its substantive way as a set of qualitative practices, which creates favorable condition for citizens to have an effective means of holding the government accountable, other than periodic elections. Therefore, democracy, in this case, should be understood as a mechanism that involves a bill of rights that goes beyond the right to cast a vote to include equal opportunity for substantial participation in local community institutions and discovering individual and group preferences as well as citizens' final control of the political agenda (Sorensen, 2008).

within which the government is part of a wider alliances of social groups, which facilitate social and economic change, were largely determined by the political elite (White, 1998). As a result, such state was characterized by the existence of weak civil society and strongly disciplined private capital under a close guidance of the government (Evans, 2010). Moreover, the East Asian developmental state was typically characterized by a high degree of bureaucratic autonomy and capacity (Chitonge, 2015) and exclusive focus on economic development, which attached less priority to democratic values.

Because of differences in terms of time, space, the nature of society and political culture, it has been understood that the authoritarian developmental state model, which suitably worked in East Asia would not work in other parts of the world, including Ethiopia. In other words, in the twenty-first century where bootstrapping democracy and the protection of human rights are central issues of governance, the East Asian type of developmental state, which exclusively focuses on growth and structural transformation in the economic front, has essentially lost its potency. Therefore, if the developmental state is to continue to function, it needs reconceptualization in order to combine the issues of democracy and inclusive economic development that benefits people in all walks of life.

Generally, due to increasing demands of societies for democratic values, unlike the twentieth century East Asian developmental state, the current developmental state is supposed to be both democratic and capable to effectively control and shape the pace of economic development. This idea suggests that the twenty first century developmental state should not only be characterized by autonomy and capacity, but also by the existence of substantial degree of institutionalized collaboration and negotiation between the political elite and several autonomous centers of power that have varied interests. The idea of the democratic developmental state, in this regard, is essentially grounded on placing equal emphasis on building democracy and achieving rapid economic development in tandem. This shows that the democratic developmental state seems an appropriate approach to settle the age-old debate on whether economic development should precede democracy or vice versa. Based on this view, with the intension of building democracy and achieving rapid economic development simultaneously, the EPRDF-led government declared its commitment to pursue a democratic developmental state model.

The EPRDF pursued a state-led market economy since the downfall of the *Derg* regime in 1991. Specifically, Ethiopia's developmental state emerged soon after the downfall of the *Derg* regime when the EPRDF published the program of Revolutionary Democracy as its political ideology, which emphasized the importance of blending democracy and state-led economic development for Ethiopia's transformation (Aaron, 2017). However, the Government explicitly made the democratic developmental state its official ideology of development with the launching of *Tehadso* (renewal) program in the aftermath of the war with Eritrea (1998-2000) and the subsequent split within the TPLF in 2001 (*Ibid*).

As Vaughan (2015:285) states, for the EPRDF-led Government, a 'state-driven process [was] essential to achieving socioeconomic growth that is broadly inclusive, sustainable, and not open to capture by wealthy elites or rent-seekers'. For this purpose, the EPRDF was 'keen to preserve the autonomy of the state from private sector influence [and]... emphasized the importance of a government having the will and the capacity to discipline market and private sector forces' (*Ibid*), and create a conducive institutional environment for rapid economic and political transformation. Based on this idea, the EPRDF sought 'to construct a developmental state while also deepening its democracy' (UNDP, 2012:1). This goal is clearly stipulated in the country's Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP I and II) (MOFEC, 2010; NPC, 2016). A challenging task of the EPRDF, in this regard, has been reconciling democracy with the developmental state concept.

According to the official pronouncement of the EPRDF, democracy is reconcilable with the idea of the developmental state (EPRDF, 2011). This seems to be true because democratic politics encourages and even puts pressure on the political elite to adopt inclusive development strategies, which would substantially contribute to the endeavors of the government to boost growth and democracy simultaneously (White, 1998). Moreover, it is often argued that democracy would strengthen and help achieve legitimacy of the government within a framework of consensual autonomy², which would result from wider processes of inclusive public involvement that makes rulers and bureaucrats responsible to a common strategic vision of

²Consensual autonomy refers to a mutual autonomy between the state and society; so that neither the state nor the society takes precedence (White, 1998). It is, therefore, explained in terms of reciprocally collaborative and transformative nature of relationships between the state and society; that is, the two work out a constructive partnership with the ultimate goal of structural social and economic transformation.

development (*Ibid*). For the effective functioning of this kind of political regime, both politicians and bureaucrats must be ‘inclusively embedded’ in society and all sections of the society, up to the grassroots level, should be adequately involved in the political process (TPLF, 2001). Based on this view, the EPRDF’s developmental state needed institutions that would enable it facilitate simultaneous economic and democratic transformation by involving all sections of the society up to the local level.

The official lines of the EPRDF, in its era, often expressed that Ethiopia was pursuing the path of a democratic developmental state (EPRDF, 2011). However, whether the country did able to put the basic attributes of the developmental state into place under a democratic political system needs careful examination. Although there was strong state autonomy, some studies like Assefa (2014) and Gebre (2014) show that the country lacked neutral, capable, and merit-based bureaucracy to implement its development policies effectively. The government often tried to provide institutional frameworks and implement reform programs to transform the civil service system. However, irrespective of the institutional frameworks in place, a capable, merit-based, and ‘neutral policy implementer civil service was [not built due to] politicization’ (Gebre, 2014:142) of the civil service system. As such there was no ‘clear distinction between the civil service and the political leadership or at least the boundary [was] fluid’ (Assefa, 2014:78).

The absence of neutral and merit-based policy implementer civil service system in Ethiopia under the EPRDF, therefore, was identified as a critical challenge of the democratic developmental state to develop national goals of development into effective policy action. This is still an existential problem in the Tigray National Regional State (a focus of this study) where the Regional Civil Service system is extremely politicized and influenced under the ruling TPLF. As Gebre and Melesse (2014: 98) aptly state, in the Tigray National Regional State ‘there exists unnecessary political meddling in recruitment, selection, promotion... and appointment, [which make the] civil service [lack] the essential characters and practical capability for that it stands for’.

In addition to the existed challenges pertinent to bureaucratic autonomy and capability, studies on the EPRDF’s developmental state ideals often expressed doubt whether the country would be able to achieve democracy and economic development simultaneously. Most of the studies

attributed the challenge to the belief that the developmental state essentially contradicts the ideals of a democratic political system. Indeed, drawing on the country's experiences, Meheret (2014: 7) pointed out that 'in the Ethiopian case, there [was] little prospect ... of marrying ... [economic] development and democracy at the same time'. Moreover, Semahagn (2014: 4) went a length to argue that 'the implementation of the developmental state doctrine... narrowed down the political space by granting unlimited power to the government to interfere and control the social, economic, and political activities of the people'.

Generally, the argument is that the EPRDF exclusively focused on economic development by overlooking issues related to democracy. In short, its government did not tolerate forces struggling for democracy (like civil society organizations), which were critical of its policies and practices. Based on this view, indeed, it seemed that in its attempts to imitate the experiences of the East Asian developmental states, the EPRDF certainly placed prime focus on economic development at the expense of practicing democratic values. Although its official lines claimed that it gave equal weight to democracy and economic development, 'there [was] certainly an evolving tendency that focused more on economic growth at the expense of [democratic rights]' (Assefa, 2014: 70). In addition to the problems of narrowing the political space for democratic forces, the EPRDF-led Government also blamed for its weak public-private cooperation- a big challenge for building a successful developmental state.

Democratic developmental state is supposed to involve strong public-private cooperation within a framework of wider social embeddedness- involvement of different centers of power, which articulate varied interests- in the social, economic, and political processes. However, in EPRDF's Ethiopia, 'the developmental state rejected effective partnership among the state, the private sector, and civil society organizations unless such a relationship guaranteed the dominance of the former over all other democratic forces' (Meheret, 2014: 9). Summing up, regardless of the official claims of the EPRDF, in the absence of the basic attributes of the developmental state such as competent, neutral, and merit-based bureaucracy, strong public-private cooperation, and a genuine commitment to democracy, among other things, how a democratic developmental state would be built in Ethiopia was a fundamental question that took attention within the academic and policy making circles.

Alongside the challenges indicated above, a general problem in the study of the developmental state is that much of the literature on the analysis of state-society relations essentially focuses on structures at the national level, which is not suitable to examine local democracy and popular participation to understand the democratic developmental state (Sinha, 2003). This is so because development scholars have essentially seen the state at the national level as a unified actor. They overlook the importance of multilevel character of states and the analysis of the developmental state at different levels (Sinha, 2003). As Hutchison (2008: 225) states, '[to] date, the developmental state literature has largely retained its focus on the national level'. While this level of analysis would be convenient to examine the nature and capability of the central government institutions, it is less valuable to appreciate the contexts at the local level. Especially, it lacks credibility in diversified and formally decentralized democratic developmental states where, active involvement of the government in the development process is evaluated in relation to local democracy and popular participation.

National level analyses, which pay little or no attention to local level performances, throw in doubt the validity and generalizability of conclusions to be drawn about the current developmental state (Sinha, 2003). To the contrary, by using the developmental state model below the national level (at the Regional State level in the Ethiopian case), ample insights on the basic attributes of the democratic developmental state such as state capacity, autonomy, and communication with the private sector could be gained as to how and whether local level institutions and policies influence democracy, politics, and economic activity.

By taking the Tigray National Regional State as a case in point, this study intends to provide fresh perspective to the field by examining the development activities so far practiced within the region against the basic attributes of the democratic developmental state. Moreover, by employing institutional analysis at the regional state level, the study examines whether the Regional Government in Tigray employs its capacity so that participatory democracy with the required level of decentralization is effecting to exhibit the attributes of a democratic developmental state.

The Tigray National Regional State is selected for this study, because it is the origin of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), as a core actor in the EPRDF coalition, up to very

recently, has been largely responsible for state restructuring and shaping of contemporary Ethiopian politics. Moreover, Tigray is selected for the reason that almost all structures of state-society relations (formal and informal) at the grassroots level throughout Ethiopia are the reinvented forms of the structures established by the TPLF during the armed struggle (1975-1991) (Markakis, 2011). Since the official declaration of a democratic developmental state model at the beginning of 2000s, these structures have become more essential mechanisms of mobilization at the local level both for political and development projects.

Another reason for selecting the Tigray National Regional State for this study is that, according to some observers, ‘decision making in Tigray is thought... to be... participating... as a legacy of the early TPLF’s commitment to grassroots democratic control’ (Segers, *et al*, 2009: 93). Moreover, drawing on the results of the consecutive national elections conducted in Ethiopia since the beginning of the 1990s, we can argue that the legitimacy of the government, consensus on policies, and the alliance between citizens and the ruling party are stronger in Tigray than in other regional states of the country (Smith, 2007). This may be attributed to the legacy of close TPLF-peasants relationship during the armed struggle. Therefore, examining the experiences in Tigray is essential to understand whether the political process in the region is suitable to augment the basic attributes of the developmental state under a democratic political system.

1.3. Core Argument

While there are signs of state autonomy and ability to penetrate deep into society up to the family level, the capacity to effectively implement policies and the democratic attributes of the democratic developmental state are yet to progress in the Tigray National Regional State.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to examine the attributes of the developmental state in reference to the basic standard accounts of the democratic developmental state in the Tigray National Regional State (2001-2019). The specific objectives of the study are:

- To explicate whether the Regional state of Tigray has the basic qualities of the democratic developmental state in terms of leadership, autonomy, public-private cooperation, and ideational capacity.

- To analyze whether the bureaucracy at the regional and *wereda*³ levels of administration is autonomous and staffed with capable technocrats who are hired based on meritocracy.
- To examine whether the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray is amenable to exercise local democracy and meaningful popular participation.
- To identify the challenges and achievements of the democratic developmental state at the regional state level in Tigray.

1.5. Research Questions

The core research question of this study is that does the government in Tigray possess the attributes of a democratic developmental state with particular reference to state autonomy, capacity, and democracy? The study also addresses the following specific questions;

- To what extent is the Regional State of Tigray qualified as a democratic developmental state in terms of leadership, autonomy, public-private cooperation, and ideational capacity?
- Is the bureaucracy at the regional and *Wereda* levels of administration autonomous and staffed with capable technocrats who are hired based on meritocracy?
- Is the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray amenable to exercise local democracy and meaningful popular participation?
- What are the challenges and achievements of the democratic developmental state in Tigray?

1.6. Study Area

The study was conducted at two sites in the Tigray National, Regional State, a northern region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, namely Qafta-Humera, a rural *Wereda* administration in western Tigray and Mekelle- a capital city of the region located in the northeastern zone. Based on the objective of investigating the practices of the democratic

³ A *wereda* (district), under the current Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's (FDRE) state structure, is a fourth tier of government between the zonal and *Tabia/Kebelle* levels of administration. *Wereda administration* (district) is accountable to the *zonal* level of administration while zones are directly accountable to the Regional States. However, in Tigray, a *Wereda* is an administrative unit between the regional and *Tabia/Kebelle* levels of administration. A *zone* in Tigray is nominal, which is not recognized in the regional constitution and does not have constitutionally established branches of the government. It is only staffed by few politically appointed individuals to oversee political and administrative issues in the *Wereda* administrations. However, constitutionally, *Wereda* administrations in Tigray are directly accountable to the regional government.

developmental state pertinent to its basic features, these sites were selected by the virtue of the relative concentration they have in agricultural and industrial investments respectively. For the purpose of collecting data regarding democracy and popular participation at the grassroots level, the study was conducted in four *Tabia* administrations- two in Qafta-Humera (Rawyan and May-Kadira), where agricultural investments are relatively more concentrated, and two in Mekelle city (*Tabia*⁴ Zeslassie in Kedamay Weyane sub city, where small merchants are concentrated, and *Tabia* Meles in Semien sub-city, where displacement as a result of industrial investment is relatively higher than in other *Tabia* administrations. *Wereda* Qafta-Humera shares borders with Eritrea in the north, Sudan in the west, *Wereda* Tahtay-Adiyabo in the east, and *Wereda* Wolqaiet and *Wereda* Tsegede in the south.

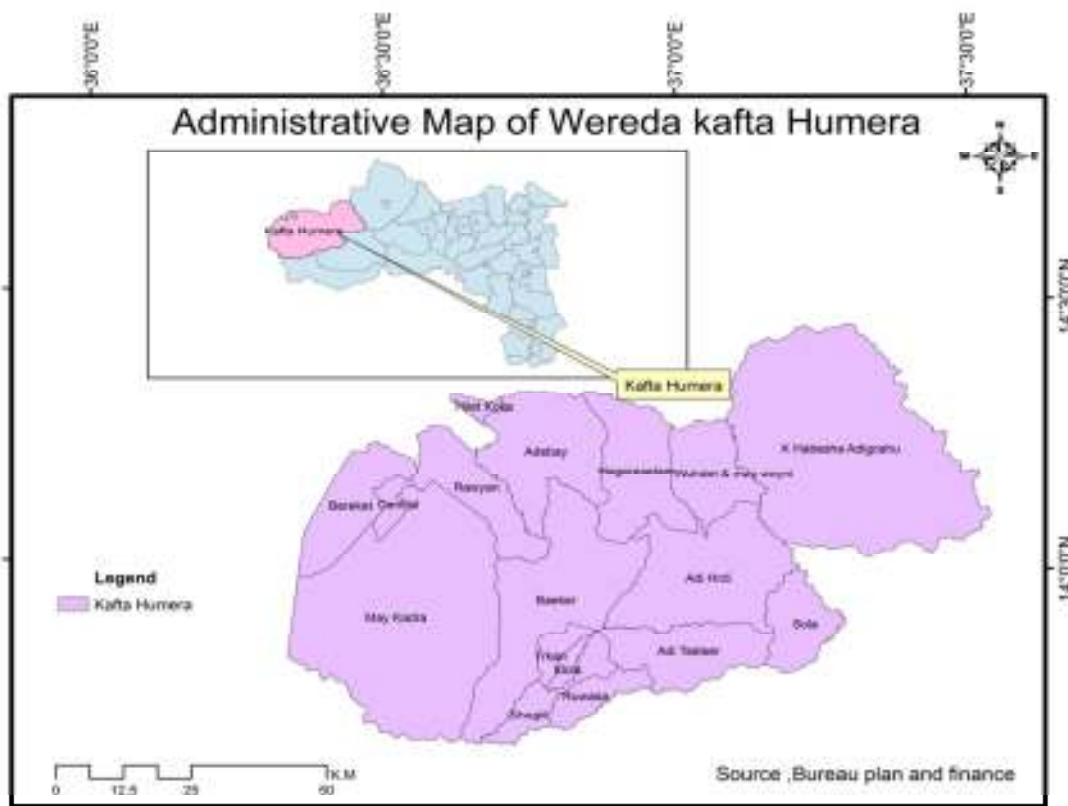


Figure 1: Administrative Map of Wereda Qafta-Humera (Source: Tigray Regional State Bureau of Planning and Finance)

⁴*Tabia, Kebele* in Amharic, under the current Ethiopian structure is an administrative unit below the *wereda*(district) level of administration. *Tabias* are directly accountable to the *Wereda* administration. At the bottom of the administration hierarchy, *Tabia* is the level where the state actually reaches the people at the grassroots.

Ranging between 568 and 2000 meters above sea level, the *Wereda* exhibits three ecological zones: medium land or *wiena-dega* (17.16%), lowland or *Kola* (77.16%) and desert or *Bereha* (5.67%). Total area of the *wereda* can be divided into arable land (54.19%), forestland (33.44%), grazing land (5.02%), hills (2.81), and rocky (4.54%).⁵ With its vast arable land, in Tigray, large-scale domestic and international agricultural investments are concentrated in *Wereda* Qafta-Humera where a number of investors are involving in the production of cash crops (oilseeds and cotton), sorghum, and others.

The *wereda* is divided into twenty one *tabia* administrations (twelve rural and nine semi-urban) with a total number of 2161 civil servants constituted by grade twelve and below (17.63%), diplomas (47.34%), first degree (31.42%), and second degree (0.56%).⁶ Qafta-Humera has more than 113, 000 population which consists of different ethnic groups, including Tigraway (predominant majority), Kunama, Irob, Amhara, Oromo and few Nigerians. The population is largely constituted by Orthodox Christians (92.9%); and the rest are Muslim (7%) and Catholic (0.01%)⁷.

The second site, Mekelle (an enclave in *Wereda* Enderta) is located in the Northeastern zone of Tigray. It is the capital city of the Tigray National Regional State. The City is located around 783 kilometers north of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, at a latitude and longitude of 13⁰38N, 39⁰36E, with an elevation of 2084 meters above sea level⁸. Administratively, Mekelle is considered as a Special Zone, which is divided into seven sub-cities (*kifle-ketema* or districts), namely, Adi-Haqi, Ayder, Hadinet, Hawelti, Qedamay Weyane, Kwiha, and Semein.

⁵Compiled from data obtained from *Wereda* Qafta-Humera's Office of Planning and Finance, 2017

⁶Compiled from data obtained from Tigray Regional State's Bureau of Planning and Finance, 2017

⁷*Ibid*

⁸*Ibid*

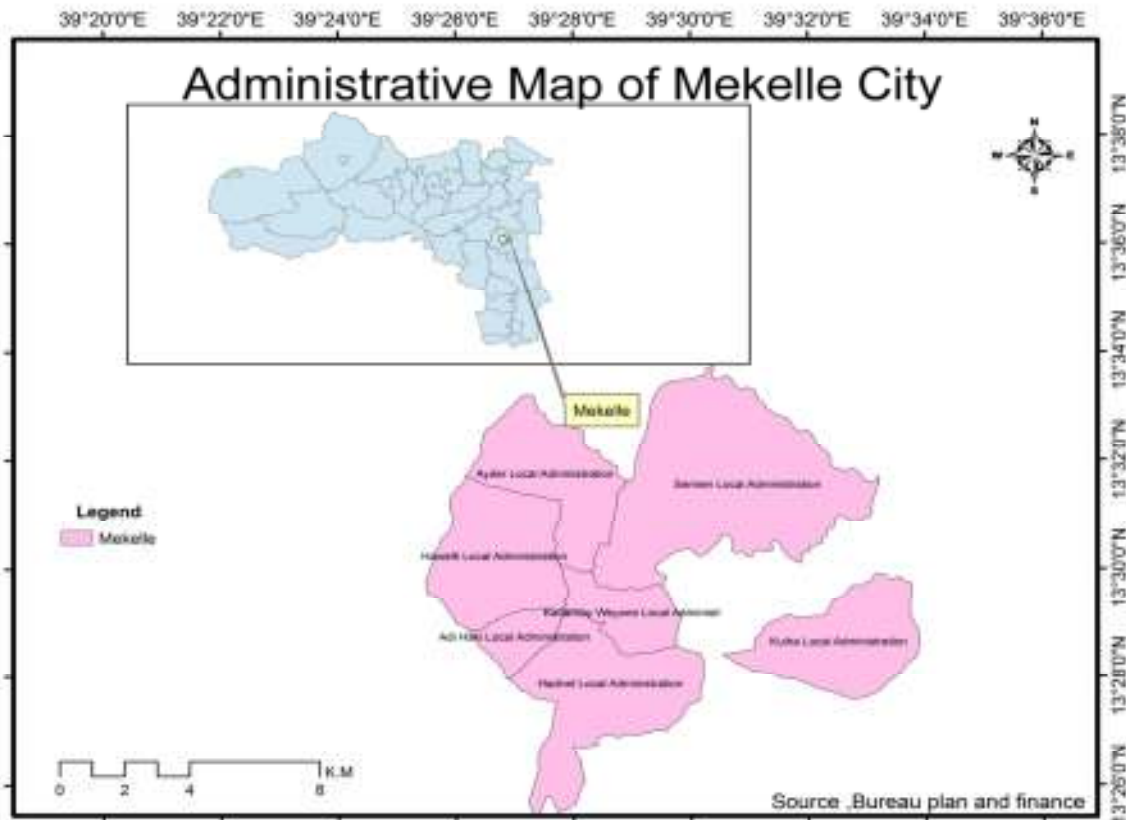


Figure 2: Administrative Map of Mekelle City (Source, Tigray Regional State Bureau of Planning and Finance, Sep. 2017)

The city is an economic, cultural, and political center in the Tigray National Regional State with a current estimated population of 340, 000. It is predominantly (92-95%) inhabited by Tigrigna ethnic group and followed by Amhara. Other ethnic groups like Afar and Agaw are also living in the city, but constitute almost insignificant number.

The reason for choosing Qafta Humera and Mekelle in this study was that most of the private and public agricultural and industrial investments are, respectively, concentrated in these areas. Qafta-Humera is found in one of the agricultural growth corridors identified by the government- Humera area and the other is Alamata area- where most private and public investments to produce strategic agricultural products like oilseeds and cotton are concentrated. And, Mekelle, being a seat of the regional government, is a political and economic hub of the Tigray National Regional State where most of the large, medium, and even small private and public industrial investments are concentrated.

1.7. Methodology and Methods

This study employed qualitative methodology, which focuses on learning by ‘studying carefully selected... cases than by studying representative ones’ (Jonson, *et al*, 2016: 229). This approach has enabled me adequately investigate and understand what the local people do, view, feel, or perceive regarding the issues examined in their natural settings. In this respect, it would be inappropriate to employ a quantitative methodology, which focuses more on large sample size, and attendant representativeness than the ‘idea about what the ... sample may reflect’ (Berg, 2001:32). This is because quantitative methodology often lacks intense and prolonged contact with participants in their natural setting to investigate a problem at hand. Therefore, by using pertinent methodology and instruments and consulting relevant sources, the study collected and used qualitative data necessary to address the research objectives set and answered the research questions forwarded. In line with this, a case study that considers multiple data sources and instruments of data collection was the strategy of this study.

1.7.1. Sources of Data and Instruments of Data Collection

The study consulted both primary and secondary sources of data. Most of the secondary data were gathered from online books, journal articles, and related research reports, as well as, Addis Ababa University libraries, especially, Kennedy, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, and Graduate libraries, and College of Law and Governance Graduate Library in Mekelle University. Besides, publications of the international and regional institutions such as the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) are other set of secondary sources of data. Such documents include overview or profile of Ethiopia and some critical and analytical works on Ethiopia by their experts. Moreover, sources of information about the overall directions of the federal government and the Tigray National Regional State Government are from the published documents of the ruling party (EPRDF and/or the TPLF) in the form of policies, strategies, and development programs. In addition, official documents issued by the Federal Government and the Government of the Tigray National Regional State, and decisions made by pertinent agencies and functional organs regarding development strategies and plans were consulted.

Primary data were also gathered from key informants and participants of focus group discussions (group interviews) in two rounds field trips (March 3–May 23, 2018; July 1-29, 2018, and May 23- June 20, 2019) in Mekelle and Qafta Humera *Wereda*. I also conducted in depth interviews in two rounds with key informants at the federal level in Addis Ababa between June 1-20, 2018 and August 1-23, 2018. The key informants were public officials and experts working in key government institutions of policy formulation and implementation at the federal, regional, and *wereda* level of administrations, leaders of opposition political parties like *Medrek*, which is a forum of different opposition political parties such as Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty and the Oromo Federalist Congress, and researchers, as well as, investors in the Tigray National Regional State. Key informants at the federal level included officials and experts in the policy making agencies including the Ethiopian Development Research Institute and the Planning Commission. Likewise, key informants at the regional level in Tigray were officials and experts in the Regional Civil Service Bureau, Bureau of Planning and Finance, Small and Medium Manufacturing Industries Agency (SMMIA), Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy (MZLA), Public Relations Bureau, members of the Regional Councils, leaders of mass-based and professional associations, local residents, as well as, professionals, especially, Mekelle University Professors.

At the local level, party representatives, government officials, and experts of the Qafta Humera *Wereda* (District) (Western Zone) Civil Service Office, Agriculture and Rural Development Office, Micro and Small Enterprises Development Office, members of the *Wereda* Council, local government agents, local Council members, and prominent peasants in *Tabia* Rawyan, as well as *Tabia* May-Kadra (Qafta Humera *Wereda*) were other set of key informants. Likewise, party representatives, government officials, experts, and district Council members of Semen *Wereda* and Kedamay Weyane *Wereda* in Mekelle City or Zone, as well as, prominent people and council members of *Tabia* Meles in Semen *Wereda* and *Tabia* Zeslase in Kedamay Weyane *Wereda* were also other key informants of this study.

Because of their position and exposure to the social, economic, and political dynamics of the country at different levels, key informants were regarded to have more robust knowledge about the subject studied than other research participants. Therefore, significant amount of the data collected for this study were generated through key informant interviews. To this end, a semi-

structured open-ended interview guides were prepared and used. The data gathered from key informants were also supplemented by focus group discussions (FGDs). That is, to reinforce the data gathered through key informant interviews, focus group discussions were also conducted.

Focus Group discussions were held to collect data on shared perceptions, views, and opinions of local residents regarding the nexus between democracy and development in their localities. In this regard, more emphasis was placed on issues such as mechanisms of participation, techniques of mobilization employed by the government, and the subsequent levels of popular involvement in development activities. To this end, in four *tabia* administrations, twelve groups (three for each *tabia*), which involved a total of 89 participants, were organized. Each group consisted of six to eight members and separately organized into male, female, and youth of both sexes among residents of the *tabia* or village communities. Such categorization was necessary in order to encourage female and youth participants to freely and independently express their views, which, for cultural reasons, especially in the rural areas, could be difficult to obtain when female and youth are organized into one group with adult male, who are culturally assumed to be dominant. Each contact session lasted between an hour and half and two hours.

1.7.2. Sampling Procedures

The study used non-probability sampling procedure and employed purposive/judgmental sampling techniques to identify and select both key informants and participants of focus group discussions. Purposive sampling technique helped me to trace and identify individuals who are most knowledgeable about the subject of the study, which was hardly possible to deal with it through employing probability sampling procedure using random sampling technique. To identify more research participants, I employed snowball sampling technique to select both key informants and FGD participants at the grassroots level. This helped me benefit from the information I gathered from the participants with whom I have already conducted interviews who recommended to me potential key informants and participants of group interviews who, in my opinion, adequately reflected the feelings, views, and attitudes of the local population whom they represent in the study areas.

1.7.3. Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation

After condensing, displaying and/or thematizing information, the empirical data gathered through multiple sources are analyzed qualitatively. Data reduction occurred continuously throughout the study, and involved the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, sharpening, and organizing data based on which final conclusions were drawn and verified. In the process of data reduction, most of the analysis is done in words; that is words are assembled, clustered, broken into segments, and reorganized to permit me to compare, contrast, analyze, and construct patterns out of them. Care is taken to avoid the loss of valuable information in the process of data reduction and condensation. Finally, after analysis, the primary data, in combination with secondary data, are interpreted in order to come up with findings of the study.

1.8. Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the responsibility of a researcher to be sensitive and respectful of research participants;

1. I have secured free and informed consent of participants, and nobody was compelled to participate in this research without his/her consent;
2. I did not employ research techniques to deceive informants in order to obtain information that would entail negative consequence for them;
3. I kept the confidentiality of the information provided and anonymity by not revealing the identity of the participants who, in few cases, insisted so.

1.9. Significance of the Study

Considering the inadequacy of literature that is concerned with the developmental state below the federal level in Ethiopia, this study would provide an empirical data regarding the practices of the developmental state in the Tigray National Regional State between 2001 and 2019. For almost two decades, the Ethiopian Government under the EPRDF leadership has implemented a democratic developmental state model. However, no adequate empirical research has been conducted regarding the achievements or failures of the developmental state policies below the federal level. In this respect, with the intention to fill the gap in the literature, this study has investigated the practices of the developmental state in the Tigray National Regional State with

particular reference to the standard accounts of the democratic developmental state, and provides policy considerations that will help enhance the achievements of the democratic developmental state in the region. Moreover, depending on the empirical findings, the study identified the achievements and failures of the developmental state model at the regional state level (Tigray). Along with these contributions, the findings of the study would show to which extent the developmental state model allows Tigray, as a Regional State, to exercise its political and economic autonomy as per the FDRE Constitution. Moreover, the findings of the study would motivate other researchers to examine the practices of the developmental state model in other National Regional States of the Ethiopian federation.

1.10. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the practices of the developmental state in the Tigray National Regional State between 2001 and 2019. As such, it deals with the policy and development practices in the region with reference to the basic attributes of the democratic developmental state.

1.11. Limitations of the Study

Because of leadership instability in the government departments since 2016, it was very difficult for me to access key informants at the federal level. Another constraint was that, as many government officials saw everything in terms of political interpretation, it was challenging to access official documents of government agencies both at the *wereda* and regional levels of administration. Likewise, several informants in government offices were skeptical when they provide me with the information. That is, they tried to evaluate my political position and when they believed that I was siding with the political opposition, they tended to give me out data that did not really show the reality on the ground. However, although it took more time, I managed to overcome these problems through persuading and convincing the informants that the purpose of this study was purely academic. Yet, because of these constraints, I have missed some important information that could more validate the argument of the study.

1.12. Organization of the study

This study is organized into the following six chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter. It lays out the study's problem statement, research objectives, and questions. By

identifying the gaps therein, it lays the groundwork for the study's arguments as it explains how it intends to provide a fresh perspective to the issue under investigation by examining the developmental state practices at the regional state level in Tigray. Moreover, this chapter discusses the methodology of the study and the methods employed in the course of gathering and analyzing all the necessary data used in the study.

The second chapter deals with the literature review and the theoretical perspectives. It starts by describing the debate between the neoliberal and developmental state theories. Then, it provides the theoretical perspectives of the study, which serve as stepping stones to the discussions in the next chapters.

The third chapter discusses the democratic developmental state at the national level in Ethiopia. It particularly focuses on the political and economic basis of justifying the need for a democratic developmental state in Ethiopia. It briefly outlines the achievements and challenges of the revolutionary democratic political-economic approach of development in Ethiopia by examining the actual practices in the country against the basic standard accounts of a successful developmental state.

The fourth chapter explicates the developmental state policy practices in the Tigray National Regional State in reference to the salient features of the democratic developmental state. Specifically, it focuses on the achievements and challenges of implementing the developmental state policies in the region.

The fifth chapter deals in detail with the regional civil service system in Tigray. By describing its organization and merit system, the chapter examines whether the civil service system in the region qualifies a developmental state bureaucracy. Moreover, the chapter identifies the main challenges that limit the quality and capacity of the civil service system to effectively and efficiently implement the development plans and programs in the Tigray region.

The sixth chapter is dedicated to the issues of local democracy and popular participation in Tigray. The main focus of this chapter is examining whether Tigray under the leadership of the TPLF is really amenable to exercising genuine democracy and popular participation at the local level. As such the chapter specifically examines whether the local institutions of democracy and

popular participation are providing forums to the local people to actively involving in public policy deliberations and decision-making processes that directly affecting their lives. Moreover, the chapter sees whether the regional and local institutions of democracy have strong means to ensure inclusive participation, representation, and accountability at different levels of the government within the region. Finally, a conclusion that delivers a synthesis of the whole discussion of the study is provided.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: Theoretical Perspectives

The role of the state has been a central agenda of the debate on development between the proponents of free-market economy and coordinated market economy since the end of the Second World War (Williams, 2014). During the postwar period, as Rapley (2007: 2) puts, 'the horrors of the [1930s Great] Depression and postwar political developments had given Keynesian economics pride of place in both [the] academic and policy circles'⁹.

The Keynesian theory of economics tried to show the limitations of neoclassical economics and provide a new framework of analysis by arguing that 'capitalist economies will not always tend to balance between supply and demand... that produces full employment' (Engel, 2010: 878). In this view, it recommended government involvement in the economy to enhance demand and generate employment opportunities (*Ibid*). Based on this view, many developing countries adopt state-led development as the best alternative way of achieving national economic development (Williams, 2014). Moreover, the confidence of developing countries' governments in this model of development 'further reinforced by the emergence of structuralist economics' (Rapley, 2007: 2)¹⁰, which claimed that because developing countries were distinctive in view of structural factors in terms of their level of development, they needed a different model of development that would foster public and private investment in tandem (Peet and Hartwick, 2015).

Based on the belief that market is not perfect, proponents of state-led development stress the necessity of government intervention in the economy in the post-Second World War remarkable economic growth period that caused the rise in the demand for less developed countries' primary goods in the developed countries (Rapley, 2007). This, in turn, created a good opportunity for governments of the developing countries to accumulate the necessary capital they needed for

⁹ Keynesian/Keynesianism is a political economic theory, which believes that growth requires a strong state role and even planning processes to mobilize resources and allocate them in ways that are dynamically efficient (Haggard, 2018:13).

¹⁰ Structuralism is an economic theory, which stresses economic problems stemming from the structural organization of the world economy, as well as, structural barriers to development in the domestic economy. Structuralists argue that reliance on markets may actually make the development process more difficult. Moreover, free trade according to the principle of comparative advantage will provide short-run efficiency gains for less developed countries. However, trade according to comparative advantage often consigns poor countries to be exporters of primary commodities, whereas developed countries would specialize in manufactured goods. One might argue that increasing returns are more likely in the latter and thus comparative advantage condemns less developed countries to a path of very slow growth relative to those countries specializing in manufactured goods (Horváth and Grabowski, 1999). The reason for this is that developing countries sell their raw materials at cheap price and import finished goods from developed countries at expensive price.

infrastructural development and industrialization (Rapley, 2007). However, 'after almost three decades of remarkable progress since the end of the Second World War, economic conditions [of these countries] started to deteriorate in the 1970s' (UN-DESA, 2017: 1).

When the postwar period rapid economic growth began to eclipse, the problems of state-led development became clear (Rapley, 2007). Consequently, the idea of state-led development was discredited and gave its way to neoliberalism, which focused on the primacy of the market and a minimalist role of the state in economic development. However, while state-led development was experiencing failures in a good number of developing countries in Africa and Latin America since the 1970s, it has continued to record remarkable achievements in some East Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan until the first half of the 1990s (Burkett and Hart-Landsberg, 2003). Such a dual experience, therefore, reinforced intensive debate between two theoretical views on the role of the government in the economies of the developing countries, namely, neoliberalism and the developmental state.

2.1. Neoliberalism

Depending on the historical terrains of the world, Chitonge (2015:143) points out that 'while state intervention was being favored from the 1940s until the 1970s... the sort of rampant state failure, which became evident during the 1970s led to strong anti-state sentiments in the 1980s and onwards'. Since then, the neoliberal view of market fundamentalism has become a dominant approach for development. Neoliberalism can be expressed in terms of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank policies imposed on developing countries since the 1980s (Meles, 2018). The neoliberal policies and views are defined and summarized in the Washington Consensus¹¹ into the principles of stabilization, liberalization, and privatization of public enterprises (Williams, 2014). By rejecting the need for government intervention in the

¹¹ Washington consensus, which was first coined in 1989 in Washington D.C, USA, is a set of ideas about development strategies that have come to be associated with the IMF, the World Bank, and the major Western powers. The Consensus envisions market fundamentalism in order to promote economic stability through fiscal adjustment and market orthodoxy, and dramatically reducing the role of the government in the economy. Generally, based on the western liberal views, the Washington Consensus has been centered on ten reform agendas, namely, (1) fiscal discipline in order to eliminate public deficits; (2) a change in priorities of public spending in health and education; (3) tax reform in order to broaden the tax bases and reduce tax rates; (4) positive interest rates determined by the market; (5) exchange rates determined by the market, which must guarantee its competitiveness; (6) liberalization of trade and opening up of the economy; (7) no restriction on foreign direct investment; (8) privatization of public enterprises; (9) deregulation of economic activity; and (10) a solid guarantee of property rights (Williamson, 2008: 16-17).

economy, the neoliberal economists stressed the benefits of letting unregulated market forces to flourish (White and Wade, 1988).

In contrast to the post-World War II interventionist model, in the 1980s, the neoliberals 'advanced the market primacy argument... and argued that... markets are natural institutions while states or other institutions are man-made substitutes' (Enzema, 2012: 104). This is to say that the market is self-regulating, and even when it seems to failing down, it would certainly correct itself and naturally continue to function well (Rapley, 2007). Based on this view, the neoliberals strongly advocate a limited role of the government and almost exclusively focus on the role of the market in economic development (Hundt and Uttam, 2017).

Depending on the failures experienced in the 1970s, the neoliberals argue that strong government hands in the economy will cause more failure than a less functioning market (Chitonge, 2015). The rationale behind this argument is that, for the neoliberals, the government as an economic actor is an obstacle to development, because it is a source of corruption and inefficient allocation of resources (Enzema, 2012). Generally, as Meles (2018) explained, the neoliberals strongly argue that government hands in the economy are corruption hands. This is because the economic policy would essentially be shaped in terms of the interests of the political elite and dominant social groups at the expense of public interests (Enzema, 2012). This argument is essentially associated with the assumption that the government is a 'distinct and well-organized powerful interest group of self-maximizing politicians and bureaucrats whose primary objectives are to maximize their own personal wealth and power' (Onis, 1995: 101). In short, the government is strongly undermined by the neoliberals as it is 'fundamentally self-serving, venal, or inefficient unless heavily restrained' (Weiss, 2010: 4). This view shows that the neoliberals consider the government as a rational actor, which operates based on egocentric predisposition towards maximizing group interests.

Because the government in a developmental state has the authority to distribute rents, the neoliberals attribute any relationship with the government to rent-seeking activity (Getachew, 2018). The more government intervention in the economy increases, the more the rent it distributes would increase. Equally, as long as the rent to be distributed by the government increases, the patronage relationship between the government and citizens would become so

pervasive (Getachew, 2018). In this process, a system that exclusively benefits the supporters of the political party in power would be created. Therefore, this condition would eliminate the benefits to be gained through free-market competition. The neoliberals also oppose expansive government involvement in the economy because, in their view, it denies people freedom to innovate and the space to conduct their activities (Rapley, 2007). In other words, strong government intervention in the economy is essentially unproductive because it undermines the market and stifles investment, creativity, competition, entrepreneurship, and government failure, which is more disastrous than market failure (Rapley, 2007; Weiss, 2010).

Generally, the neoliberals associate strong government intervention in the economy with distortion. Stressing market solution for all economic ills, as Rapley (2007:16) points out, they argue that 'the capitalist system [is] a complex and delicate mechanism that could easily break down once the state started meddling with it'. In short, depending on the assumption that market is perfect in efficiently allocating resources (Beeson, 2014), the neoliberals, therefore, call for government's hands off to achieve efficiency and development in the economic front. The neoliberals only recognize the essentiality of the government in implementing reforms that would advance the expansion of the market (Weiss, 2010). In short, they want to limit the role of the government only to ensuring contract enforcement and guaranteeing private property rights (Almeida, 2015).

The neoliberals, as discussed earlier, saw strong government involvement as detrimental to the economy and society (Chitonge, 2015). They 'argue that the government should be taken out of the market so that it will not disturb the working of the natural economic order' (Onis, 1995: 101). It was based on this view that the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) (prescription based on the Washington Consensus) emphasized on substantial reduction of government intervention in the economy, were recommended by the IMF, the World Bank and others to the developing countries' economies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America since the 1980s.

According to the prescriptions of the neoliberal institutions (notably, the IMF and the World Bank), 'transition and development can only take place if the government is allowed to play a passive role' (Enzema, 2012:103). In other words, for the neoliberals, limited government intervention is better for valuable economic advancement, because it will deny the influence and

rent-seeking activities of organized interest groups (i.e., self-serving bureaucrats, and politicians) (Onis, 1995). Because, for them, the best government is the limited government (Weiss, 2010), the neoliberals, through their major donor agencies (IMF and the World Bank), pushed and urged many developing countries to reconsider their statist development models and embrace market primacy policy since the early 1980s (Enzema, 2012).

As expressed in the reform packages provided by the IMF and the World Bank, the neoliberals recommended liberalization, opening of the economy, and quick privatization of public enterprises (Weiss, 2010). These recommendations were provided based on the belief that free market and private capital are the backbones of development. Accordingly, 'less government and more market' (Rapley, 2007: 3) as the prime objective of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) was prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank to the developing countries. As a result, many developing countries, especially in Africa, conjuring themselves to the assumption that private sector-based free-market is the basis for rapid economic growth, tried to implement the reform packages discussed above. These reform packages were converted into detailed tasks to reduce government involvement in the economy and achieve the objectives of the so-called 'stabilization-liberalization-privatization' triad (Stubbs, 2009). This shows that the neoliberals, therefore, want and even force the governments in the developing countries to set the stage only for the expansion of the market and private capital.

The IMF and World Bank recommendation-based practices in the developing countries (mostly, in the 1980s) fundamentally reduced the role of the government in the economy (Weiss, 2010). In the process, the end of the Cold War (1989) ushered neoliberal hegemony and globalization, which further reinforced the importance of less government involvement in the economy. In this situation, the neoliberals argue that in the era of globalization, because capital is mobile, the only thing left for the government to do is boosting the market by introducing enabling regulatory systems to create permissive environment for external capital investment (Cerny, 1995, in Weiss, 2010). This shows that the neoliberal globalization profoundly narrowed down the space for state-led developmental policies since the 1980s. Therefore, developing countries did not have an alternative way but to pursue the neoliberal model of development and implement the IMF and World Bank reform packages. However, contrary to the early expectations, the result was a development failure. After implementation of these reform measures was commenced, the

economies in many developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America doomed to collapse (Chitonge, 2015; Rapley, 2007).

Generally, the implementation of IMF and World Bank adjustment proposals caused economic, political, and social failures, because they lacked to consider the unique circumstances of the developing countries. It appears, therefore, that the neoliberals' exclusive focus on the importance of divesting the role of the government in favor of market primacy overlooked the problems this approach would cause in the developing countries. Indeed, the results of adjustment practices in the developing countries in the 1980s, particularly, in Africa, show that economic growth remarkably decreased, agricultural productivity remained far lower than population growth, the manufacturing sector stagnated, per capita income, investment, consumption, and job opportunities decreased (Rapley, 2007). This shows that the neoliberals forced developing countries to implement policies that disregard the contexts on the ground (*Ibid*).

Due to the structural adjustment failures in the developing countries in the 1980s, later, emerging views favoring an active role of the government disputed the neoliberal belief on the essentiality of market primacy and a diminished role of the government in the economy (Chitonge, 2015). Consequently, the neoliberal model of development began to face challenges in many developing countries, which has signified the argument for developmental state.

2.2. Developmental State

In terms of its general assumptions, as a challenge for market-led policy, the developmental state concept emerged as a counter-critique to the neoliberal theory of development. The central thesis of the concept, according to late development researchers¹², is that because it is logically wrong to leave all things to the market, there is a need for government intervention in the economy (Rapley, 2007). Particularly, as Mkandawire (2001: 292) notes, 'the market failure so prominent in [the developing economies] is... a problem that warrants government intervention'. In this

¹²The concept of late development may have different connotations in terms of time, space, and beliefs. But, for the purpose of this study, the term late development researchers refers to researchers or scholars who recognize market failures in delivering development, and hence there is a need for government intervention to facilitate the working of the market (Lo, 2012). In this regard, late development researchers object the neoliberal policy doctrine of market fundamentalism. However, they do not totally reject the role of the market in economic development. Rather, depending upon the lessons from East Asia, they have been trying to provide a balanced approach by recognizing the positive roles of both the state and the market (*Ibid*).

regard, proponents of the developmental state reject the neoliberals' view that government intervention in the economy would cause state capture by interest groups who focus on maximizing their narrow interests. Their argument is that if efficient and effective institutions are in place, the predisposition towards maximizing narrow interests would be essentially avoided (Getachew, 2018).

In the proper sense of the modern developmental state concept, it should be remarked that intervention should not be scope less. As Mkandawire (2001: 292) suggests, 'since ... failures differ in intensity, scope, and location, a selective set of intervention is required'. Therefore, in the tradition of the modern developmental state theory, government intervention in the economy is only required to correct market failures, not to inhibit the market as an institution. That is, particularly, in the developing countries, where market forces are less mature, government intervention in the economy is needed to fill the gap created by market failure. In short, government intervention in the economies of the developing countries is essentially useful to supply goods and services that are undersupplied by the market. For example, lack of technology as a determinant for economic transformation in the developing countries like Ethiopia is inadequately supplied by the market because the private sector has not the capacity and the interest to take risks in doing it (Getachew, 2018). Therefore, governments in developing countries are required to intervene and fill the gap in technology accumulation.

The need for state activism in the developing countries, in general is that 'the establishment of well-functioning market economy is impossible without well-functioning government institutions (Enzema, 2012: 104). This is because market failure is so pervasive in the developing countries that the government would play a productive role in managing it and identifying strategic industries to achieve transformation in the economy. The neoliberals reject this idea and argue that the government would not be able to distinguish between which industries are strategic and less strategic for achieving structural economic transformation; rather, the market is more effective in undertaking it (Hayashi, 2010). However, the neoliberals lack to consider that the market in the developing economies is less mature (or nonexistent) (*Ibid*). Therefore, in the absence of well-functioning market, non-market factors in the form of institutional arrangements that generate and translate policies into government actions shape the pace of economic development (Haggard, 2018).

It should be remarked that the developmental state does not advocate absolute government control of the economy and undermine the significance of the market. It rather focuses on the balanced and productive roles of both the market and the government to achieve the national goals of development. The model recognizes the limits of the free market and heavy government hands in the economy, and wants to capitalize on the strengths of both sides, thereby minimizing the weaknesses of both. However, it seeks the government to play a key role in shaping the pace of economic development and promote private capital (Wylde, 2012). To determine the pace of economic development, the configuration of its components to form ideology-structure nexus distinguishes the developmental state from the neoliberal model of development.

2.3. Main Features of Developmental State

The keys for the success of the developmental state (particularly, the classical one in East Asia) were capable state agencies and well-articulated policies, which focus on industrial growth that would enable it to have a determinant role in achieving structural transformation in the economy and society (Beeson, 2009). Therefore, this kind of state has institutional features that distinguish it from other models of development. The first is the presence of a genuinely committed and developmental-oriented leadership that takes development as a matter of survival (Fritz and Menocal, 2007). This enables the state to mobilize the ‘society around the national goals and hegemonic purpose’ (Arkebe, 2015: 37). As Francis Fukuyama (2019: Speech)¹³ indicated, this is to mean that the people at the top of the hierarchy in the decision making circle should believe in and take development as a matter of survival.

The second determinant factor for the success of the developmental state is state autonomy that signifies insulation of the state from the dangers of capture by interest groups ‘in order to keep private elites oriented towards [achieving] national projects’ (Evans, 2014: 225) of development, rather than focusing on their own exclusive interests. However, autonomy of the state, in this regard, should not undermine the developmental state to proceed in a way to promote public-private cooperation, a third feature of the developmental state. As experiences of the East Asian developmental states such as South Korea and Taiwan show that it was the cooperation between

¹³ Francis Fukuyama is a well-known American Scholar. He made the speech on June 11, 2019 in a Conference held on ‘Democracy and the Future of Ethiopia’s Developmental State’, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Addis Ababa.

the state and the market forces, which provided favorable conditions for structural social and economic transformation (Johnson, 1982; White, 1998).

Practically, it would be challenging to reconcile between the concept of state autonomy and public-private cooperation. This is because the autonomy of the state may be understood as complete independence from and dominance of the state over the private sector. In this respect, Evans (1995) provides new concept, embedded autonomy, in order to define a state, which is both autonomous from society but at the same time embedded in society, i.e., a configuration that shows mutual recognition between the two.

Embedded autonomy was an essential source of capacity for successful government intervention in East Asia (Evans, 1995; Leftwich, 2009). It provided the government with institutional channels through which it can discuss its policies with capital groups within the constraints accentuated in the ties it established with the society (Evans, 1995). For productive public-private cooperation, however, an institutional infrastructure that provides space to the private sector and meritocratic bureaucracy with the capacity to make long-term economic plans without being influenced by narrow short-term group interests is needed. For this purpose, the executive is supposed to give the bureaucracy adequate freedom 'to take initiatives and operate effectively' (Onis, 1991: 111).

Because of its meritocratic character, the developmental state bureaucracy has the required level of capacity to create close institutional links with the private sector and effectively steer it for structural economic transformation (Evans, 1995; Haggard, 2018). The close institutional links between the two is needed for consultation and cooperation to reach consensus on national goals of development (Evans, 1995). Moreover, such links are also helpful to promote cooperation that would help successfully implement the government's commitment and improve transparency that would yield trust between the two (Leftwich, 2009).

A fourth feature of the developmental state is state capacity. State capacity as the capacity of the government in several respects is a subject of debate in the academia. As Weiss (1998, in Kuthy, 2011:19) points out, it 'is impossible to clearly and completely define state capacity in the abstract because states are not monoliths'. Nevertheless, state capacity as the capacity of the

government should be understood as a broad concept that combines ideational, political, and technical, as well as, implementation capacities (Cummings and Norgaard, 2004).

Ideational capacity is a variant of state capacity that shows the extent to which the government is legitimate, in the eye of the public, and embedded in society (Kuthy, 2011). While political capacity is an ingredient for effective structures across groups and departments within the government, technical capacity refers to the bureaucratic capacity of the government in terms of organizational and trained human resources (*Ibid*). As experiences in the twentieth century East Asia show, the merit principles and the disciplinary coordination role of the pilot agency were critical institutional features of the developmental state that enabled it to achieve policy effectiveness (Evans, 1995; Jhonson, 1982). That is the quality of the bureaucracy is grounded in its Weberian characteristics (i.e., recruitment is merit based in order to select the best-talented technocrats available) and leadership is provided by a disciplinary coordinating agency (Chibber, 2014; Weiss, 1998: 52).

The bureaucracies in the most successful East Asian countries were coordinated by a pilot agency that had disciplining powers over other policy agencies (Chibber, 2002). Such agencies, for instance, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in Japan and the Economic Planning Board (EPB) in South Korea, had discretionary powers over the decisions of other policy agencies of the government (*Ibid*). These agencies 'largely used budget... [as] the most potent instrument by which... [they] acquired influence over other ministries' (Hundt and Uttam, 2017: 91). Such agencies did not only discipline other policy agencies of the government but also influenced and directed private investment towards priority sectors outlined by the government, particularly, the manufacturing subsector (*Ibid*).

As Chibber (2014: 32) points out, the easiest way of influencing the private sector 'would be the issuance of state directives: The state would announce where each producer could invest as well as the desired level at which they could invest'. However, treating the private sector in this way would be unproductive, particularly, in a democratic system. Therefore, the best means of inducing the private sector is using incentives as contracts, not gifts (*Ibid*). These may include access to credit services, foreign currency to import goods, logistics, research-based consultancy and extension services. Generally, the use of incentives, instead of state directives, to influence

the private business is an expression of mutual recognition and autonomy between the two (particularly, in a democratic system), which (as discussed earlier) Evans (1995) conceptualized as embedded autonomy.

Mutual reinforcement between the public and private sectors was crucial for the success of the classical East Asian Developmental states (Evans, 2014). However, it would be challenging 'to achieving the right degree ... of embedded autonomy' (Beeson, 2009: 10). The bureaucratic agencies are not only required to exhibit the necessary qualities in terms of policy effectiveness, but also to be adequately embedded in society (Beeson, 2009; Evans, 1995). The possible problem, in this case, is that embeddedness would give rise to crony capitalism when the critical policy 'agencies [of the government] become ... servants of particularistic interests' (Beeson, 2009: 10). Therefore, the very essence of the developmental state is keeping the balance between close public-private institutional linkages and ensuring the autonomy of policy agencies of the government from capture by segmental interests (Evans, 2014; Kohli 2004).

It should be remarked, however, that although embeddedness was 'central to the standard portrayal of the twentieth-century developmental state as bureaucratic capacity' (Evans, 2014: 225), it was quite narrow, which only focused on the cooperation between the government and the domestic, as well as, external capital (Williams, 2014). That means that it excluded civil society, labor and other social, as well as, political interest groups (Evans, 2014). Therefore, success in the East Asian developmental state was largely generated through the narrow elite collaboration and compliance of the public towards the development strategies outlined by the government. These were relatively easy to progress in the way of the East Asian developmental states, which exhibited an authoritarian character of their governments and relatively less diversity in terms of ethnic identity and culture (Semahagn, 2014).

Most of the East Asian developmental states were undemocratic and 'led by right-wing parties or leaders, and most were authoritarian to boot' (Haggard, 2018: 52). Because, the East Asian countries were successful in terms of economic transformation under authoritarian governments, a highly debated issue has emerged whether there is an association between the developmental state and the preference of undemocratic government (Hayashi, 2010).

Some scholars like Kohli (2004), try to justify the importance of authoritarian governments to achieve structural economic transformation by aggressively mobilizing resources from consumption to investment, which would be challenging for the developing countries to accomplish it in a democratic way. This argument would take us to the old debate whether democracy or economic development should come first. However, capability enhancing theory (Sen, 1999), which conceptualizes ‘development as freedom’, suggests that democracy and economic development should progress simultaneously.

For reasons such as variance in the nature of politics across societies and the advent of neoliberal globalization, developing countries in the twenty-first century could not exactly emulate the East Asian type of authoritarian developmental state. In the current context, the kind of authoritarian development activities experienced in East Asia would no more be tolerated (Haggard, 2018). This shows that the condition of superpower rivalry that allowed the East Asian states to practice authoritarian developmental policies no longer exists in the post-Cold War era (Semahagn, 2014). As a result, because of the strong emphasis on democracy and the protection of human rights in the post-Cold War era, the current developmental state is expected to embrace the basic attributes of a democratic government while pursuing its developmental policies- it should be both strong and democratic at the same time.

Although remarkable economic achievements were recorded under authoritarian governments in the East Asian developmental states, associating the developmental state with authoritarianism lacks theoretical soundness (Haggard, 2018; Hayashi, 2010). This is because undemocratic governments have also been the main causes of poverty and underdevelopment in many developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Cruz-del Rosario, 2018). Therefore, the economic achievements recorded under the authoritarian governments in East Asia are not logically adequate reasons to entirely associate the developmental state with authoritarianism. Based on this view, a redefined form of developmental state or a democratic developmental state is possible in the twenty-first century.

Another reason that prevents the developing countries from directly emulating the classical developmental state is that the East Asian developmental states were 'more or less unitary states without complicated heterogeneity' (Semahagn, 2014: 92). An important question in this respect

is how would these basic attributes of the developmental state endure in states that aspire to achieve both democracy and state-led economic development in diversified societies, like Ethiopia where state-society relations are more complex than in the East Asian countries? This is because diversity in terms of ethnic identity, religion, and regional divisions that have resulted in the existence of different social, economic, and political forces articulating diverging interests would make it difficult to organize and lead the society into a unified strategic goal. Especially, in a federal state with autonomous regions in several respects, the developmental state thesis, in the sense it was exercised in East Asia, would be very challenging to practice. This is because, in the available literature, developmental state is essentially understood as a top-down approach to development (Sinha, 2003).

Generally, in its classical sense, the idea of the developmental state has been associated with unitary and tightly centralized systems of government (Hutchison, 2008). Local entities often played a subservient role in the development process. This suggests that it is only the institutions of the central government that are in charge of crafting and implementing the national goals of development (Hsu, 2017). Based on this view, one can argue that the idea of the developmental state would not go hand in hand with multinational federalism, because it necessarily involves decentralization of decision-making powers. However, this argument lacks theoretical and empirical soundness.

Contrary to the available literature that largely associates the idea of the developmental state with tight centralization, Bateman (2017) identifies two types of local developmental states, namely, (1) hybrid local developmental state, which combines elements of both bottom-up and top-down forms of developmental state model, and provides institutional arrangements for cooperative work with the central government, and (2) the pure local developmental state model, which mostly rejects unconstitutional orders from the central government and undertakes its tasks autonomously.

Although it has not been high in the research agenda, the hybrid model of the developmental state was vital for the success of many countries. For example, after the Second World War, while Japan and West Germany built developmental state institutions at the national levels that helped them swiftly rebuild their economies after the war, local state institutions were also

equally vital in achieving structural economic transformation from below (Bateman, 2017). Bateman further stipulates that, particularly, in Japan, while the Ministry of International Trade and Industry was at the driver's seat in rebuilding the country's economy through a Fordist (an approach that focuses on large-scale mass modern industrial production methods (Bateman, 2017)) approach of industrialization, state institutions at the local level were also important in the development of micro and small manufacturing enterprises, which were critical for achieving structural economic transformation in the 1960s-1980s. South Korea and Taiwan (since the 1950s) and the recent Southeast Asian success cases such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand, and most recently Vietnam, recorded remarkable economic achievements through implementing policies that involve cooperating work between the central and local state institutions (*Ibid*).

Compared to the hybrid local developmental state institutions, regional state institutions of a 'pure' local developmental state arrangement are stronger and decisive in the development process. Among the best examples of pure local developmental states were emerged in Italy's red northern regions, the Basque region of Spain, local states of China after the 1978 reform, (Bateman, 2017), and the Penang region of Malaysia (Hutchinson, 2008). Regardless of the pressures from the central government, the northern red regions of Italy after the Second World War (Bateman, 2017) and the Penang region of Malaysia in the 1970s-1990s (Hutchison, 2008) managed to achieve economic transformation based on implementing regionally customized economic policies. Particularly, the Penang region was a regional developmental state operating in a federal system. Local state institutions in the Basque region of Spain (Bateman, 2017) and China after the 1978 reform (Oi, 1995) were also cases of pure local developmental state model, which played vital role in attaining economic transformation from below.

Unlike the red northern regions of Italy and the Penang Region of Malaysia, the local developmental states throughout China are free from any policy-based pressure from the central government. The central government has largely refrained from direct involvement in the local industrialization process (Ong, 2012). In China, two types of local developmental state models have been practiced. While the first-the Sunan model¹⁴- entails an indispensable role of a local

¹⁴ The Sunan model refers to the government mode of [enterprise development] located in southern Jiangsu Province [of China], including cities of Suzhou, Wuxi, and Changzhou. The most distinctive feature of the Sunan model is the leading role of community government [in which] ... local officials were the leading entrepreneurs. They set up the enterprises, took business risks, were in charge of the [enterprises'] daily operations, helped obtain credit from state

government in controlling, shaping and spearheading local economic development through developing collectively owned enterprises, the second-Wenzhou model¹⁵- advocates a strong role of the local government in supporting the private sector to play a leading role in facilitating economic development (*Ibid*). The Sunan model would weaken and crowd out the private sector for long, because it advocates direct local government control of the economy. Therefore, the Wenzhou model, if it is accompanied with democracy, would be more appropriate for building a capitalist economy, which the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray is aspiring to achieve.

Generally, the desirability to build democracy and promote inclusive development, ‘the current developmental state is required to be compatible with the ideals of a modern democratic state’ (Tapscott, *et al*, 2018: 9) underpinned by decentralization. Therefore, a redefined developmental state that includes local level issues in its analytic core, and extends its focus beyond economic growth to embrace democratic values, the practices of good governance and wider popular participation (Penderis and Tapscott, 2018) is needed in the twenty first century.

Because, 'the success of the democratic developmental state depends on [its] ability to maintain a balance between bureaucratic capacity, democratic engagement, and a vibrant market economy' (Tapscott *et al*, 2018: 30), the current developmental state, as Cruz-del Rosario (2018) indicates, needs an institutional design that would enable it to expand political and economic accesses to every section of the society up to the grassroots level. Generally, such state's defining features are identified by Tapscott, *et al* (2018: 11) as ensuring the involvement of citizens in the political, 'development and governance processes and ... foster[ing] pro-poor, broad-based economic growth, and humane development'. This indicates that the idea of a democratic developmental state is grounded in broadly embedded capitalism. This is to say that in addition to structurally transforming the economy, the democratic developmental state, as (Kanyenze, *et al*. 2017:20) argue, is needed to 'ensure that the economic growth [achieved] improves the living condition of the majority of its people'.

banks, secured land to build factories [and have] access to raw materials and built marketing channels, sometimes through their connection with state-owned enterprises (Xu and Zhang, 2009: 5-6).

¹⁵The Wenzhou model is taken after the name of a place-Wenzhou- which is located in the mountainous region in southern Zhejiang Province of China. In contrast with the Sunan model, in which local government officials are the key entrepreneurs who take risks and initiatives, the Wenzhou model is a reaction of local government to spontaneous private business development. In Wenzhou, most businesses are driven by private entrepreneurs. The critical role of local government in this model is to provide favorable business environment, particularly, protection to the private sector (Xu and Zhang, 2009: 6).

In terms of its social orientation, the idea of the democratic developmental state seems to ground on Rawl's (2001) conception of justice as fairness in that it focuses on an inclusive distribution of resources in order to replace exclusionary social logic with broader social embeddedness in the process of development. Generally, as the discussions in the available literature show, there seems a sort of consensus that the democratic developmental state has objectives that extend beyond achieving structural transformation in the economy to an emphasis on a more encompassing social, economic, and political goals (Gumede, 2009; Maphunye, 2009). As Tapscott, *et al* (2018: 34) note, this demonstrates that 'the notion of a democratic developmental state is more closely aligned to the developmental ideals of social democracy than it is to the state-centric East Asian model'¹⁶.

Summing up, the current discussion in the literature shows that capitalism in the democratic developmental state is expected to be more embedded in society than in the classical East Asian states by promoting broader social embeddedness and inclusive economic development. It may be challenging to build a consensus-based broad social compact in a developmental state, particularly, in federal systems with diversified societies like Ethiopia. However, a theoretical basis could be established by combining relevant experiences from the social-democratic developmental states and the classical, as well as, the recently emerged (notably, China) Asian developmental states to build a new developmental state that embraces popular democracy and inclusive development in its analytic core in developing countries.

2.4. Theories Capturing the Role of State in Development

Three approaches to studying development would be eclectically used to analyze the democratic developmental state. These include the institutional theory, the new growth theory, and the capability approach. These approaches combine elements of both political and economic issues. Therefore, they are political-economic approaches to studying development.

The institutional approach, 'focuses on the key role of enduring shared normative expectations or rules of the game in enabling forward-looking economic action' (Evans, 2014:223). The

¹⁶ 'social democracy ... [is a political] ideology which prescribes the use of democratic collective action to extend the principles of freedom and equality valued by democrats in the political sphere to the organization of the economy and society, chiefly by opposing the inequality and oppression created by laissez-faire capitalism' (Jackson, 2013: 394).

approach asserts that a good quality of institutions is at the heart of development success (Oguz, 2013). However, two types of institutional approaches (the New Institutional Economics-NIE) and Institutional Political Economy-IPE) vary in defining the kinds of institutions essential for achieving development. According to the contents of their views, while IPE is characterized by Chang (2001) as unambiguously institutional in its character, NIE is an approach that employs neoclassical methods of studying economic development (North, 1990). Accordingly, the two approaches differ in terms of the way they view and analyze institutions and development.

While the new institutional economics emphasizes the desirability of avoiding political involvement in the economy, the institutional political economy stresses the importance of political realities in selecting and shaping developmental policies (Castellano and García-Quero, 2012). Hence, it advocates productive government hands in the economy. The new institutional economists, on the other hand, seek to limit the main functions of the government to protecting property rights, ensuring the enforcement of contracts, minimizing transaction costs, so that, they argue, wealth accumulation and growth would be enhanced accordingly (*Ibid*). They also argue that 'politics inevitably generates state actions that go against market rationality, [and] ... claim that markets should be, and can be, free from politics' (Chang, 2001: 18).

Emphasizing the market determinist view, in short, the new institutional economists developed a negative attitude towards the role of government in the economy considering it as distortion. This is because they see the government as a rational actor, which has the tendency to maximize interests of the group who control decision-making powers (North, 2005). This view is premised on the assumption that unlike the market, the 'imperfect nature of the state results in government failures: regulatory capture, rent-seeking, corruption and so on' (Chang, 2001: 4). Based on this proposition, the new institutional economists advocate the primacy of markets and a limited role of the government as the lasting solutions to all kinds of economic ills.

The new institutional economists view the market as a natural economic creation, which is grown from the general disposition of humans to maximize profits from trading (*Ibid*). Based on this view, the new institutional economists claim that market is self-regulating; hence, it should be remained free of intervention by human-made institutions like the government (North, 2005). Generally, the new institutional economics approach sees conflicting relationships between the

market and the government's role in the economy (Castellano and García-Quero, 2012). On the other hand, the institutional political economy approach emphasizes that the market 'requires bringing politics explicitly into [its] analysis (Chang, 2001: iii).

As the institutional political economy approach posits an active role of the government in the economy 'is a precondition for transition to a market economy, because voluntary exchange cannot occur in an institutional vacuum' (Castellano and García-Quero, 2012: 927). Such a view of this approach is premised on the belief that the markets are essentially political creations; therefore, it is not logically right to leave them alone to function by themselves (Chang, 2001; Chitonge, 2015). Unlike the new institutional economists, institutional political economists, therefore, stress the role of politics or government in creating credible institutions for equitable development, representation of diversified interests, and correcting failures of the market in supplying goods and services that cannot be supplied by the private business (Chang, 2004; Mkandawire 2001). The institutional political economy approach, in this regard, concerns with how dealings and interactions among various actors representing the government, the private business, the public, and other interest groups are undertaken within the framework of institutional structures (Leftwich, 2009).

The institutional political economy approach focuses on the role the government can play in economic development in developing countries. The reason to focus on the role of the government, as Onis (1991: 109) argues, is that 'market failure is [so] pervasive... [in] the developing economies with the corollary that the government has an important role to play in correcting it'. This suggests that political institutions not only complement the market but also themselves can be mechanisms of economic coordination. Here, the role of the government is crucial in that it can construct specific institutions and determine the path of development, given its ability to enforce the rules of the game, *i.e.*, laws, and related enactments. For this purpose, in the context of a rising critique on the neoliberal-based new institutional economics' anti-government involvement position, the institutional political economy approach emphasizes on the productive role of the government in the economy.

Another theory that integrates statist elements in its study of development is the new growth theory. It concerns 'the economies of ideas and how the discovery of new ideas lies at the heart

of economic growth' (Jones, 2019: 860). The new growth theory stresses that the production of new ideas has more critical role in achieving growth than the increase of physical capital (Evans, 2014). In other words, this theory claims that the search for new ideas is vital for economic progress. This is because unlike physical resources, ideas are non-rival, which would not be exposed to falling in return, and could not be bushed by use, as they are technologically feasible for any number of people at the same time (Jones, 2019).

The new growth theory informs that long-term economic growth could be attained through endogenous forces such as human capital, expansion of knowledge and information technology (Sengupta, 1998). Accordingly, it could be suggested that in order to achieve economic transformation, countries should move away from an exclusive reliance on physical resources to expanding their knowledge base, and support the institutions that help develop and produce new ideas (*Ibid*). This theory suggests governments to invest significantly in helping institutions that produce such ideas because the private business does not necessarily have the motivation to do so (Jones, 2019).

The capability approach is also another theoretical underpinning, which integrates politics and the economy in its analysis of development. Pioneered by Amartya Sen, this approach underlines that 'economic indicators alone [are not enough to explain] ... the way actual life is ... lived by human beings' (Kbuhuma, 2018: 128). In other words, drawing on Sen's (1999) conception of the approach, Evans (2014: 223-4) states that 'growth of GDP per capita is not an end in itself but a proxy for improvements in human well-being, to be valued only insofar as it can be empirically connected to improved well-being'. As Frediani (2010: 176) notes, 'the core characteristic of the capability approach is, [therefore], to move away from the income-led [definition and/or] evaluation method, and focus on people's ability to achieve the things that they value'. In short, as Sen (1999) suggests, 'development should be measured in terms of the expansion of capabilities of people to lead the kind of lives they value- and have reason to value' (Evans, 2014: 223) them.

By rejecting the reduction of development to a single or few metrics, the capability approach expands 'the informational base for development [by] moving from income-[based] definition [and measurement] to one based on multiple ends' (Frediani, 2010: 176). Accordingly, the

approach identifies 'public deliberation as the only analytically defensible way of ordering capabilities and puts political institutions and civil society at the center of developmental goal setting' (Evans, 2014: 223). To this end, Sen's capability approach focuses on understanding the power relations at stake by analyzing the political forces that shape public policy (Spence and Deneulin, 2009).

The discussions pertaining to these three approaches (capability approach, institutional political economy, and new growth theory) integrate institutions into the analysis of development. All of the three approaches emphasize that an effective role of state institutions is central in achieving remarkable success in development. Therefore, putting these approaches together would be helpful to eclectically use them for analyzing the democratic developmental state. To this end, adopting Evans's (2014) formulation of convergence between one theory and the others is essential.

According to Evans (2014), if we merge institutional approach and new growth theory, the result will inform what kind of institutional arrangement would help societies produce new skills, knowledge, and ideas to further their growth and development. Evans also explains that if we combine Sen's (1999) capability approach and the new growth theory, the result is interesting in that the primary goal of capability enhancement is achieving growth and development. That is, the focus of the new growth theory on the importance of searching for new skills and ideas is essentially dependent upon the capabilities of individuals as vital inputs to growth and development. Moreover, Evans also identified an interesting convergence between the institutional and the capability approaches in that the institutional approach essentially stresses the results of collective or participatory goal setting and decision-making that Sen's (1999) capability approach put at the center of its development analysis. For instance, as Rodrik (2000: 14) points out, 'participatory political institutions [are] meta-institutions that elicit and aggregate local knowledge and thereby help build better institutions' that would help achieve growth and development.

As discussed earlier, building a democratic developmental state in federal systems with diversified societies logically requires an approach that integrates popular democracy and inclusive economic development in its analysis of development. Accordingly, this study uses the

approaches mentioned above in an integrated manner to analyze the practice of a democratic developmental state at the Regional State level in Ethiopia by taking the Tigray National Regional State as a case in point.

Chapter Three: Democratic Developmental State in Ethiopia

After the downfall of the *Derg* regime, the EPRDF-led government introduced state-led development to achieve economic and social transformation in Ethiopia. Particularly, since the launch of *Tehadso* (renewal) in the beginning of the 2000s, the government officially declared that it pursued a democratic developmental state model of development to build democracy and achieve rapid, as well as, inclusive economic development at the same time. Depending on the practices made, this chapter examines whether the democratic developmental state as an approach has been enabling the country to build democracy and achieve speedy economic development simultaneously.

3.1. Change of Government and Development in Ethiopia (1991-2001)

When the EPRDF overthrew the *Derg* (i.e. the military government) in 1991, it took the responsibility of saving a country ravaged by frequent famines, civil wars, and authoritarian governance practices (Lefort, 2015). The EPRDF, in this regard, understood that ‘[t]he major challenges that would critically define the future of Ethiopia [were] achieving democratization to genuinely accommodate diversity’ (Medhane, 2015: 258) and speedy economic development to benefit the large majority of the population. Indeed, genuine democracy and rapid economic development were believed to be immediate solutions to the age-old structural ills of the Ethiopian state (Ministry of Information, 2002). However, which democracy is appropriate and which model of economic development is feasible were two questions to be addressed by the incoming government.

During the armed struggle, the TPLF/EPRDF believed that a socialist system would be a solution to Ethiopia’s economic and political ills (Abera, 2018: interview)¹⁷. Yet, after the downfall of the *Derg*, it became almost impossible to address the country’s problems using a socialist model of development (Tilahun, 2018: interview)¹⁸. Due to the new changes in the international system after the Cold War and the dynamics at the domestic level, the EPRDF found it difficult to maintain its radical socialist ideology (Bach, 2011). As Aaron (2017: 1) describes ‘While the

¹⁷ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigre. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁸ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the TigrayNtional Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

[EPRDF] at one point was socialist, the end of the Cold War and the growing trend toward liberal economic policies ... altered its political and economic agenda'. Moreover, socialism as a political ideology was discredited by the Ethiopian people, because the *Derg* Government was committing atrocities in the name of socialism (Abera, 2018: interview)¹⁹. Generally, the point is that the EPRDF did not have an option but to disavow its socialist political and economic agenda to adjust itself to the new developments both at the international and domestic levels.

With the new changes both at the international and domestic levels, the EPRDF, therefore, officially abolished the socialist command economy, as well as, the one-party system of the *Derg* regime, and took initial steps towards building a democratic political system (Bach, 2011; Vaughan, 2015). For this purpose, 'a series of charter, constitutional, and legislative provisions for multiparty competitive politics, based on regular elections to a multi-level parliamentary system, was quickly put in place' (Vaughan, 2015: 294). In short, although several opposition parties were criticizing that the EPRDF was not genuine towards democracy and a capitalist way of economic development, politically, it provided space for competitive election and multiparty politics (at least in principle) and, economically, it introduced capitalism (Aaron, 2017), but not in its neoliberal perspective. At the policy level, from the beginning, the EPRDF-led government showed its strong commitment to democracy and speedy economic development (Ministry of Information, 2002). Such a strong commitment seemed to premise on the assumption that the country's continuity or survival is strongly associated with inclusive democratization process and rapid economic development, which would benefit the large majority of the population.

An inclusive democratization process was believed to be achieved by the EPRDF through building a political system that recognizes equal participation of all individuals and social groups (like ethnic, religious, or class) in the social, economic, and political life of the country (Abay, 2019: Panel Discussion)²⁰. Accordingly, as stipulated in its chapter three (Article 14-44, except Articles 35 and 39), the 1995 FDRE Constitution was promulgated to provide guarantee to

¹⁹ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigre. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁰ Abay Tsehaye is a veteran of the TPLF who served in different ministerial positions of the Ethiopian Government. The panel was conducted on June 15, 2019 in a Panel Discussion conducted in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state, Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy, June 15-16, 2019, Mekelle.

human and democratic rights of the individual, and introduced a federal state structure for ethno-national groups to unconditionally exercise their self-determination rights (Article 39). While the EPRDF was often criticized for giving precedence to group rights over individual rights, its policy documents show that it gave equal weight to individual and group rights (EPRDF, 2011), but often failed to provide equal protection of both rights.

To achieve the ideological commitment of broad-based democracy and economic development at the same time, the political economy that the EPRDF pursued was shaped based on revolutionary democracy and the developmental state model of development (*Ibid*). That is, for its twin objectives of achieving democracy and economic development, the EPRDF focused on the instrumentality of revolutionary democracy and the developmental state. But, a critical question that one may raise here is that how would revolutionary democracy as a political program and the developmental state as a model of development go hand in hand? The following discussion addresses this question.

3.2. The Nexus between Revolutionary Democracy and Developmental State

Revolutionary democracy as a political program was introduced by the TPLF (2001) during the armed struggle (1975-1991); and that adopted by other member parties to the EPRDF in the process of its creation and consolidation. This shows that the concept was not new to the Ethiopian political discourse. In the beginning, revolutionary democracy was formulated by the TPLF as a political program for a transitional period towards socialism (Tilahun, 2018: interview)²¹. Nevertheless, following the end of the Cold War, the idea passed through a re-conceptualization process (Abay, 2019: Panel Discussion)²²; because socialism was collapsed, and in its place, free-market capitalism has thrived in the post-Cold War era (Prunier and Ficquet, 2015).

²¹Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

²² Abay Tsehaye is a veteran of the TPLF who served in different ministerial positions of the Ethiopian Government. The panel was conducted on June 15, 2019 in a Panel Discussion conducted in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state, Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy, June 15-16, 2019, Mekelle.

The new realities after the Cold War prod the EPRDF to redefine revolutionary democracy and used it as a political program for a transitional period towards democratic capitalism (Bereket, 2018). Here, it should be noted that the mission of EPRDF's revolutionary democracy in the post-*Derg* era was essentially varied from the mission it had during the armed struggle (1975-1991). Yet, over the last three decades, the concept of revolutionary democracy has 'remained perilously ambiguous, [which] appears to have grown from a lack of solid literature or any critique written about it' (Nolawi, 2013: n.p). Likewise, Lidetu (2015) argued that the EPRDF did not have a clear ideological path.

As there is a limited literature, which clearly shows the distinction of revolutionary democracy from other ideological views, people from both the political and academic circles tend to characterize it as a hybrid political orientation. For example, Merera (2018: interview)²³ argued that revolutionary democracy is a hybrid political program, which combines ideas from both the Marxist and Liberal political doctrines and introduced by the EPRDF as a way out when the road to socialism was blocked with the end of the Cold War. In other words, EPRDF's revolutionary democracy borrowed certain ideas from liberalism, like multiparty system and the importance of free-market economy, and from socialism, it inherited the need for strong government involvement in the economy (Addis Fortune, 2017). Likewise, Bach (2011: 641) points out that the use of the concept 'since 1991 reveals a *'bricolage* [(i.e. construction or a structure of ideas achieved by using whatever comes to hand)] that [revolutionary] democracy is operating out of Leninism, Marxism, Maoism, and also liberalism'. Therefore, this seems to show that 'revolutionary democracy shares the aim of a socialist revolution with mainstream Marxist-Leninist thought' (Aalen, 2018: 1).

Generally, the idea of revolutionary democracy seems to incorporate elements from both the liberal and Marxist-Leninist doctrines. This makes it difficult to clearly show how the Ethiopian revolutionary democracy is conceptualized and distinguished from other political ideologies. As a result, there has been confusion regarding the meaning of the concept. Regarding this problem, the EPRDF was blaming scholars who researched in the area for they intentionally overlook to uncover the difference between the meanings of the concept during the times of the armed

²³ Merera Gudina is a chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress. The interview was held on June 22, 2018, Addis Ababa

struggle and the post-1991 period (Bereket, 2018). However, lack of providing clear redefinition of the concept on the part of the EPRDF created confusion within the political and academic circles, including many people within the EPRDF leadership (Seife, 2018: interview)²⁴.

When the EPRDF tried to provide an interpretation of the concept, it generally defined revolutionary democracy as a political program for a transitional period in times of both the armed struggle and the post-1991 period (EPRDF, 2011). It seems, therefore, that lack of change in its name and operational definition lead people to conclude that the idea of revolutionary democracy is actually related to socialism or communism. Although the EPRDF claimed that it already re-conceptualized revolutionary democracy, Tefera (2019: 474) argues that the Front did not still 'change its core socialist values'. Based on this view, some people from the opposition like Andualem (2018) went a length to say that there is no difference between the *Derg* Government's socialism and EPRDF's revolutionary democracy.

Andualem regards the seventeen years of armed struggle between the *Derg* Government and the EPRDF as a struggle between twin political ideologies, which traced their origin to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. The argument is that the EPRDF's struggle against the *Derg* could not be recognized as a struggle for genuine political change. In this regard, the association of revolutionary democracy with socialism produced considerable opposition to the EPRDF. By referring to the social, economic, and political problems caused in Ethiopia during the *Derg* regime, many people like Semahagn (2014) opposed revolutionary democracy as another face of socialism, arguing that it undermined individual rights and the growth of democracy. However, since 1991, the EPRDF's program and policy documents represent revolutionary democracy as one variant of capitalism, which is essentially different from socialism (EPRDF, 2011).

Because the TPLF was a radical Marxist-Leninist movement during the heydays of the armed struggle (1975-1991) (Idefort, 2015), at the outset, it fully embraced Lenin's interpretation of revolutionary democracy (Aalen, 2018). This indicates that the idea of revolutionary democracy is, indeed, derived from the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Nevertheless, after the fall of the *Derg* Government, the EPRDF redefined the concept in order to adapt to the Ethiopian context (TPLF,

²⁴ Seife Hailu is an Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science and Strategic Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

2001). This change, as indicated earlier, was essentially attributed to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the socialist system.

Since the late 1980s, the TPLF/EPRDF realized that the chance to advance socialism had gradually been narrowing down due to the international and domestic circumstances (Tilahun, 2018: interview)²⁵. Finally, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the radical change in the international system, socialism in Ethiopia after the *Derg* was discredited (*Ibid*). Because the *Derg* Government had widely committed atrocities in the name of socialism, Ethiopian citizens regarded socialism as an evil political system, which was anti-democracy and economic development (Abay, 2019: Panel Discussion)²⁶. Therefore, depending on the new dynamics at the international and domestic levels, the EPRDF seemed to understand that any attempt to advance socialism after the downfall of the *Derg* regime would not be practically acceptable. Although there were some people within the leadership circle who still hoped to build a socialist system, consensus was reached at the EPRDF level that there would not be a chance to advance socialism in Ethiopia (Tilahun, 2018: interview)²⁷.

Generally, the triumph of neoliberal global order and the domestic circumstances compelled the EPRDF to ‘adopt political and economic liberal principles and abandon [the road to socialism] in a context where there is no alternative to capitalism’ (Bach, 2011: 642). Consequently, after it captured state power in 1991, the EPRDF redefined revolutionary democracy as a political program for a transitional period from pre-capitalist to a capitalist system in order to adjust itself into the new international order (TPLF, 2001). Therefore, according to the EPRDF’s conception, revolutionary democracy is a political program for a transitional period towards democratic capitalism (Abay, 2019: Panel Discussion)²⁸.

²⁵Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁶ Abay Tsehaye is a veteran of the TPLF who served in different ministerial positions of the Ethiopian Government. The panel was conducted on June 15, 2019 in a Panel Discussion conducted in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state, Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy, June 15-16, 2019, Mekelle.

²⁷Tilahun Tareke, Director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency, Interview, April 16, 2018, Mekelle

²⁸ Abay Tsehaye is a veteran of the TPLF who served in different ministerial positions of the Ethiopian Government. The panel was conducted on June 15, 2019 in a Panel Discussion conducted in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the

People may also relate revolutionary democracy to a left-leaning political orientation because the EPRDF still maintained its organizational structure and working procedures in terms of democratic centralism. Generally, as Bach (2011: 647) argues ‘the practice inherited from the TPLF internal organization during the struggle [was] at the center of the administrative system in which the ruling party find a powerful way of controlling’ the social, economic and political lives of the country. Nevertheless, maintaining the organizational structure and working procedures in the EPRDF era and the strong political and economic control over the society do not necessarily imply that the EPRDF still remained a leftist party. The EPRDF, in this regard, often argued that some political forces demonize, condemn, and often associate revolutionary democracy with socialism without having a clear understanding of the concept (MZLA, 2017).

Generally, the EPRDF claimed that the revolutionary democracy practiced since 1991 was a new version, which aimed at transforming Ethiopia into a capitalist society (TPLF, 2001). The EPRDF believed that Ethiopia is largely in a pre-capitalist stage of development (Bereket, 2018). Therefore, the Front provided revolutionary democracy as a strategy of political struggle under a combined effort of the workers, peasants (the largest majority of the population) and the progressive intelligentsia to transform the country into a capitalist society (EPRDF, 2011). The progressive intelligentsia was expected to play a leadership role. As historical evidences show, within the framework of capitalism, there have been alternative forces to lead a democratic revolution (TPLF, 2001). The major ones are the bourgeoisie, the working class and the progressive intelligentsia (Bereket, 2018). Peasants could be critical supporters of a revolution, but could not principally be expected to play a leadership role (TPLF, 2001).

The type of democracy to be achieved through the revolution is expected to reflect the political interest of the social force, which played a leadership role. This implies that democracy is basically understood in terms of class analysis. If a revolution is led by the bourgeoisie, the outcome is expected to be liberal democracy; and if the working class plays a leadership role, the result of a revolution would be building a social-democratic political system (Bereket, 2018). Yet, a revolution which intends to achieve transformation of a pre-capitalist society to a capitalist

society, according to the TPLF (2001), is mainly led by a progressive intelligentsia, which is organized based on the idea of revolutionary democracy (EPRDF, 2011).

In developing countries like Ethiopia, where capital is scarce and the working class is very weak to play a leadership role, revolutionary democracy under the leadership of the progressive intelligentsia was identified by the EPRDF as the best alternative way to transform Ethiopia into a capitalist society (Abera, 2018: interview)²⁹. The idea is that because Ethiopia is largely in a pre-capitalist stage of development, it essentially lacks modern means of capitalist production, which would enable it to advance growth and development. At this level of development, democracy would not also be adequately thrived (*Ibid*). Therefore, the EPRDF argued, a kind of revolution (rapid and structural transformation in the economic and social affairs) that combines the objectives of democracy and economic development-revolutionary democracy- is the most appropriate approach to lift up the Ethiopian society from the life cycle of a pre-capitalist stage of development (TPLF, 2001).

Revolutionary democracy focuses on eliminating social and political forces that obstruct the process of transformation towards a capitalist society (Tilahun, 2018: interview)³⁰; and set the stage for democratic developmental forces to assume political power (MZLA, 2017). According to the EPRDF, in this regard, revolutionary democracy serves an irreplaceable role at the transitional stage of development (*Ibid*). It is a political idea emerged at the early stage of capitalism (Abay, 2019: Panel Discussion)³¹. When the objective of its creation (transition to capitalism) is achieved, its relevance would be elapsed and replaced by a new idea and direction of political struggle (Fetlework, 2018). Based on this view, the EPRDF argued that the relevance of revolutionary democracy will be ceased after the current social and economic realities in Ethiopia are significantly changed to open a new space for newly emerged social, political, and

²⁹ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

³⁰ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

³¹ Abay Tsehaye is a veteran of the TPLF who served in different ministerial positions of the Ethiopian Government. The panel was conducted on June 15, 2019 in a Panel Discussion conducted in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state, Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy, June 15-16, 2019, Mekelle.

economic forces who advocate either liberalism or social democracy (Tilahun, 2018: interview)³².

Contrary to the EPRDF's view, however, a noticeable number of people from the political and academic circles questioned whether revolutionary democracy would transform into democratic capitalism. For example, Andualem (2018) challenged the proposition that revolutionary democracy will be ceased after it achieves transition into democratic capitalism, arguing that it will be a nightmare. He argued that a political program that was devised for a transitional period towards socialism could not achieve transition to democratic capitalism. This could only be achieved by a purely liberal political party, which is fundamentally different from the EPRDF. Likewise, Merera (2018: interview)³³ also argued that a political strategy that was introduced to achieve transition to socialism could not equally serve to achieve transition to democratic capitalism. Rather, revolutionary democracy itself is a problem, because it has essentially narrowed down the political space for alternative views in Ethiopia (Abreha, 2018: interview)³⁴. Moreover, Tefera (2019) also challenged the idea of re-conceptualizing revolutionary democracy as rhetoric, by arguing that the EPRDF still maintained its basic ideals of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Regardless of the critics, however, as its policies and practices show, EPRDF's revolutionary democracy, since 1991, is more fundamentally geared towards capitalism than socialism. In terms of its ideas and practices, the post-1991 EPRDF's revolutionary democracy is different from socialism. As an early stage of socialism, revolutionary democracy advocates the dictatorship of the working class, and do not allow multiparty politics and the promotion of private enterprises (Abera, 2018: interview)³⁵. Yet, EPRDF's revolutionary democracy allows (at least in principle) multiparty politics and private capital (EPRDF, 2011). This became clearer when the government officially declared the adoption of a democratic developmental state in the beginning of 2000s. Particularly, since 2001, the idea of revolutionary democracy was elaborated

³²Tilahun Tareke was a director of the TigrayNtional Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

³³Merera Gudina is a chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress. The interview was held on June 22, 2018, Addis Ababa

³⁴Abreha Desta is chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle

³⁵Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

in the form of a democratic developmental state. In this regard, although it is arguable, Meles (2018) expressed that ‘revolutionary democracy and the democratic developmental state can be used interchangeably’.

3.3. Democratic Developmental State Since 2001

As the EPRDF policy documents like renaissance and renewal (2011) show, the mission of revolutionary democracy is building broadly embedded capitalism. Based on its very idea of inclusiveness and representation of every section of the society, revolutionary democracy advocates state intervention in the economy to achieve rapid growth, enhance human capability and promote social justice in terms of distributing benefits (Abay, 2019: Panel Discussion)³⁶. The EPRDF often justified the necessity of a developmental state model, because the market forces are yet to be matured. Therefore, market failure or its absence, which is expressed in terms of the existence of weak private sector and underdeveloped infrastructures for development, were the main reasons for the adoption of the developmental state in Ethiopia (Abera, 2018: interview)³⁷.

In the absence of matured market forces and basic development structures, therefore, the EPRDF-led Government believed that addressing the development predicament in Ethiopia needed a developmental state that is democratic and politically, as well as, socially inclusive with the necessary capacity to play a key role in the economy and achieve radical transformation (Aaron, 2017). In its attempts to build such a capacity, the government recognized the importance of the market, while it rejected market fundamentalism (Abera, 2018: interview)³⁸. It strongly opposed the market determinist approach to improve productivity and properly allocate resources to achieve structural economic and social transformation (Vaughan, 2015). As Lefort (2015: 361) points out, the Ethiopian Government argued that ‘the market suffers multiple failures ... [because] major free-market economy forces are not fully matured, [and in this

³⁶ Abay Tsehaye is a veteran of the TPLF who served in different ministerial positions of the Ethiopian Government. The panel was conducted on June 15, 2019 in a Panel Discussion conducted in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state, Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy, June 15-16, 2019, Mekelle.

³⁷ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

³⁸ *Ibid*

respect], adopting a neo-liberal paradigm [of] allowing the market to rule would lead to a dead-end’.

Generally, the EPRDF-led government believed that in developing countries like Ethiopia, recognizing supremacy of the market and believing that it would naturally correct its problems would eventually lead to a development failure (EPRDF, 2011). The government, therefore, saw the neo-liberal approach for development, which advocates market primacy, as a source of development failure in the developing countries (Tilahun, 2018: interview)³⁹. This is to say that because market failure is so pervasive in the developing countries, ‘a strong state geared towards purposive development agenda [is] required (Clapham, 2018: 1154) in order to correct this problem and build favorable conditions for the transformative role of the government. Based on this view, the Ethiopian Government adopted the developmental state as ‘the priority of priorities’ (Prunier, 2015: 434) to address Ethiopia’s development problems.

Although the EPRDF-led government was advocating state-led development since the fall of the *Derg* Government in 1991, the developmental state model was more emphasized and underpinned by ‘the articulation of coherent development strategy ... [since] the early years of the new millennium’ (Clapham, 2018: 1155). In this regard, although some researchers (Tefera, 2019; Aalen, 2018) consider that the developmental state in Ethiopia was introduced after the 2001 TPLF split and augmented following the 2005 election, a senior TPLF politician (Abadi, 2019: reflection)⁴⁰ explained that ‘the developmental state policies and strategies were drafted before these events happened’. Beginning in the 1990s, therefore, drawing on the East Asian model (notably, Korea and Taiwan), the EPRDF-led Ethiopian Government was attempting to implement the idea of a developmental state and tried to adapt it to Ethiopia’s circumstances (Clapham, 2018).

While the EPRDF’s developmental state was drawn on the lessons from the successes in the East Asian countries like South Korea and Taiwan, the government from the beginning emphasized

³⁹ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

⁴⁰ Abadi Zemo is a TPLF veteran, former vice chief administrator of the Tigray National Regional State reflected in a Panel Discussion conducted on June 15, 2019 in the Second National Research Conference Held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state. Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy (June 15-15, 2019), Planet Hotel, Mekelle.

that such state should not only be developmental but also democratic, providing the idea that Ethiopia certainly needed a democratic developmental state that would address the agenda of both democracy and economic development simultaneously (Abera, 2018: interview)⁴¹. In other words, the EPRDF-led government appreciated the success of the East Asian developmental states. It wanted to adapt this model to the Ethiopian context. However, the EPRDF understood that the East Asian Tigers did not achieve economic development in a democratic way (Abay, 2019: Panel Discussion)⁴². This suggests that economic development can be achieved under authoritarian political systems. Indeed, the East Asian Tigers were known for their authoritarian systems until they reached a higher level of economic development (Semahagn, 2014). But for the EPRDF, the issues of democracy and economic development were inseparable in the Ethiopian context (Ministry of Information, 2002). Therefore, at least in principle, it strongly rejected the authoritarian developmental state as an alternative model for Ethiopia. That is, both democracy and economic development should be equally emphasized. Therefore, unlike that of the East Asian developmental states, the developmental state in Ethiopia was required to be democratic.

Drawing on the modernization theory⁴³ of development, one may suggest that Ethiopia should focus first on economic development, and then democracy will follow. However, according to the EPRDF, this would not work in Ethiopia (EPRDF, 2011). As Abera (2018: interview)⁴⁴ explained, trying to work this way would inevitably lead to a disastrous crisis because of the following reasons. Primarily, since the Imperial times, the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities, and peoples paid a huge price in fighting for their democratic rights. They would no more tolerate an authoritarian government. In this regard, it should be noted that it was excessive repression and

⁴¹ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

⁴² Abay Tsehaye is a veteran of the TPLF who served in different ministerial positions of the Ethiopian Government. The panel was conducted on June 15, 2019 in a Panel Discussion conducted in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state, Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy, (June 15-16, 2019), Planet Hotel, Mekelle.

⁴³ Modernization theory claims that as countries save and invest at appropriate level that help enhance their infrastructure and social institutions, liberal democratic institutions will flourish as a natural response to the functional imperatives of society, and supply the best form of government. In short, modernization theory assumes that the process of socioeconomic development is a progressive accumulation of social changes that ready a society to its culmination, democracy (Landman, 1999: 608).

⁴⁴ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

violation of democratic and human rights that led to the downfall of the *Derg* government in 1991. Another reason is that Ethiopia is a diversified country in many respects, including language, ethnic identity, religion, level of development, etc. Owing to its diversity, therefore, Ethiopia can only maintain its unity and survival in a democratic way.

Historical experiences of the Ethiopian state provide us with adequate lessons regarding the political failures of previous governments in attempting to maintain national unity through the use of force. As stipulated in the preamble of the 1995 FDRE Constitution, Ethiopia's unity essentially rests on the free will of its diversified nations, nationalities, and peoples to live together in harmony under one economic and political community. And, it should be emphasized that unity based on the free will of the Ethiopian nations and nationalities (i.e., unity in diversity) will only work if all democratic rights (individual and collective) are unconditionally respected and gain effective protection.

The EPRDF-led government, generally, believed that without achieving democracy and rapid economic development in tandem, the survival of the country will be challenged (Tilahun, 2018: interview)⁴⁵. This implies that poverty and lack of democracy were identified by the EPRDF as serious national threats in Ethiopia. Therefore, Ethiopia according to the EPRDF needed a state model that would enable it to bring about rapid economic development that benefits the people, and democracy that serves as an instrument to mobilize around collective goals and to involve wider participation of the public in the implementation of these goals (Ministry of Information, 2002). Accordingly, unlike the traditional authoritarian developmental states in East Asia, where embeddedness had largely to do with mutual autonomy and collaboration between the public and private sectors, the developmental state to be built in Ethiopia was supposed to promote social embeddedness and encompass diversified social, political, and economic forces under a democratic political system.

As its legal and policy documents show, at least in principle, the EPRDF-led government was showing its commitment to achieve democracy and economic development simultaneously. According to the 1995 FDRE Constitution, the Government provided broad-based and inclusive democracy. As stated in the second paragraph of the preamble of the Constitution, the

⁴⁵Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

government showed a commitment to provide equal protection to both individual and group rights. The Constitution also provides a means for the government to be organized based on election (Article 54 (1)). Moreover, at least in principle, the FDRE Constitution ensures independence of the judiciary (Article 78 (1)), rule of law (Article 9 (2)); and, multiparty politics (preamble of Ethiopia's electoral law proclamation No. 532/2007 (FDRE, 2007)). However, the EPRDF-led government was criticized for its exclusive focus on economic development at the expense of democratic values (Assefa, 2014). Regardless of the disagreement on the government's statistical data, nobody would deny the achievements recorded in the economic sphere, although questions were often raised regarding the issue of equity in terms benefits.

Contrary to the achievements in the economic sphere, a critical problem was often raised by many on the issue of genuine democracy in Ethiopia. Lack of institutionalization was almost regularly reiterated as the main problem within the academic and political circles. Democratic institutions such as the justice system (the courts, police), the Electoral Board, and the security apparatus under the EPRDF were criticized for they were extremely politicized and used as instruments to maintain regime survival. Moreover, many committed observers also raised serious problems that obstructed the democratization process, like suppression of opposition parties and independent civic associations, which were critical to policies of the government (Abreha, 2018: interview)⁴⁶. In short, the EPRDF-led government was criticized for authoritarian tendencies, which were expressed in terms of intolerance to let democratic forces such as civil society organizations, opposition political parties, and other independent organizations that were critical to its policies and practices flourish and articulate their views in accordance with the legal and institutional frameworks stipulated in the FDRE constitution (Seife, 2018: interview)⁴⁷.

3.4. Achievements and Challenges of the Ethiopian Developmental State

When evaluated against the basic features of the developmental state, the Ethiopian developmental state showed mixed results. In terms of having developmentally-oriented leadership, autonomy and achieving speedy economic growth under the EPRDF, Ethiopia has qualified 'as one of the clearest examples of a developmental state in Africa' (Clapham, 2018:

⁴⁶Abreha Desta is a chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle

⁴⁷ Seife Hailu is an Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science and Strategic Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

1151). Since the official declaration of adopting a democratic developmental state after 2001, it seems that there was a ‘strong developmental orientation in vision and practice’ (Arkebe, 2015:74) in Ethiopia.

Although the idea of strong government involvement in the economy was introduced at the outset, following the fall of the *Derg* Government, the EPRDF leadership admitted that it lacked clear strategies and directions on how to build a capitalist system between 1991 and 2001 (Fetlework, 2018). Indeed, Yasuke and Khoo, (2019: 109) note that ‘the [EPRDF] did not seem to have a clear vision for economic development except the emphasis on the benefits of the peasant population’ until 2001. As a result, from 1991 up to 2001, on average, slower national economic growth (5.5 percent) (Neway, 2019: 7) was recorded than after 2001 (More than 10 percent on average) (MOFEC, 2010: 4; NPC, 2016: 5). Since 2001, however, the EPRDF leadership undertook in-depth studies to articulate and adapt the developmental state model to the Ethiopian context. Then, the democratic developmental state model has officially become the political-economic approach of the EPRDF (Fetlework, 2018). In this approach, the strategies and directions on building a capitalist economy through the developmental state model were clearly elaborated.

Generally, it was since 2001 that the EPRDF clearly defined its ways of social and economic development for Ethiopia (*Ibid*). These programs showed a strong commitment of the political leadership to achieve rapid and inclusive economic growth and reach the medium-term vision of making Ethiopia a middle-income country by 2025 (Arkebe, 2015; NPC, 2016) Indeed, as Arkebe (2015: 74) puts ‘the record demonstrate[d] a political commitment to a grand vision. [That is], the Ethiopian [Government] fostered a national project, the ‘Ethiopian Renaissance’, which was at the core of public policies’.

Drawing on the national policies and programs of development, especially, the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), one can conclude that the EPRDF leadership within the policymaking circle had a strong developmental orientation. Indeed, there was a cohesive national leadership, which took growth and development as a matter of national survival, and showed its strong determination towards achieving structural transformation of the country’s economy (Aaron, 2017). However, recently the EPRDF was fragmented from within. The Front

lost unity on the basic tenets of its political program of revolutionary democracy and the developmental state model. Indeed, as a result of the fragmentation of EPRDF, the idea of the developmental state in Ethiopia has already faced a reversal (Sibhat, 2019: reflection)⁴⁸. In the absence of cohesive and unified leadership that synergistically works for a shared vision, the idea of developmental state will no more work and continue to shape Ethiopia's development path.

Regarding the fast track record in economic growth, the EPRDF leadership was proudly explaining that its developmental policies achieved speedy and relatively inclusive economic growth by enabling the country to begin to repair its image of backwardness, which is largely expressed in terms of poverty and famine (Bereket, 2018). The EPRDF attributed this success to 'the soundness of [its] development strategy ... that [was] said to be notable for its rejection of the standard medicine for growth prescribed by mainstream or neoliberal discourse' (Dessalegn, 2014: XI).

According to the EPRDF's claims, Ethiopia recorded an increase in life expectancy (four years per one five years growth plan) from 45 years in 1991 to 64 years in 2016 (MZLA, 2017). Moreover, the country's GDP was growing by a double-digit (10 percent and above) since the 2000s (NPC, 2016). However, there have been questions on the issue of equity in terms of benefits. Critics against the EPRDF-led government contend that there was unfair share of benefits gained from the growth within the society. The argument is that Ethiopia's developmental practices were not benefiting a large quarter of the Ethiopian people. Rather, such practices were employing by the ruling party as a means of regime security and enriching the elite around the power circle (Andualem, 2018).

Generally, regardless of the economic achievements since the adoption of the developmental state, there has not been consensus at the elite level regarding who benefited from these achievements. This is because the political elite outside the EPRDF largely opposed the national goals of development, which were designed based on a developmental state vision. However, critics of the government did not deny the overall economic growth achieved under the EPRDF leadership. Indeed, many agreed that Ethiopia's economy was rapidly growing under the EPRDF

⁴⁸Sibhat Nega is a veteran of the TPLF. He forwarded his reflection in a Panel Discussion conducted on June 15, 2019, in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme "Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state. Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy (June 15, 2019), Planet Hotel, Mekelle.

leadership (Prunier and Piquet, 2015); but the growth achieved lacked to bring about structural transformation in the economy. The industrial sector was envisioned to significantly increase its share in the country's GDP and the creation of decent job opportunities (MOFEC, 2010; MOI, 2014a). However, the sector, particularly, the manufacturing, remained slower in its growth and share in the country's GDP.

When the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP-2005/6-2009/10) was commenced, 'the share of the industrial sector, including manufacturing, construction, hydropower, and mining, has not exceeded 14% of the GDP on average, of which the manufacturing subsector accounted for 5.5% of the GDP on average' (MOI, 2014a: 17). Without significant progress, at the conclusion of the first Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP-I) in 2014/15, the share of the industrial sector has remained '15.1% of the GDP on average' (NPC, 2016: 8). This empirical evidence implies that the national economy has shown little advance towards structural transformation.

As some sources reveal, the slower growth in the industrial sector has largely been attributed to low level of implementation capacity, poor linkage with the other sectors of the economy, and lack of interest and weak capacity of the private sector, because high risk and strong competition are attached to investing in the manufacturing subsector (Mulu, 2019; MOI, 2014b). To solve such problems, the developmental state government in Ethiopia was expected to provide support structures (institutions with varied roles) to facilitate the industrialization process through promoting technical skills, market networks, managerial capability, attracting the private sector to invest in the productive sector and providing easy access to credit services.

Generally, at the policy level, the EPRDF-led government placed due emphasis on the industrial sector to play a pronounced role in the national economy. Accordingly, the government was striving to establish and strengthen support providing institutions of various kinds. However, in both the public and private enterprises, there were limitations in terms of managerial and technical skills, because of the limited availability of competent human power (Semere, 2018: interview)⁴⁹. Although the EPRDF-led government tried to ease the problem, 'efficiency, productivity, competitiveness, technological and working system' (NPC, 2016: 22) remained

⁴⁹Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

poor due to the lack of trained human power (Semere, 2018: interview)⁵⁰. Such limitations have profoundly been expressed in terms of ‘weak business organization and management, inefficient marketing system, low quality and productivity, limited research and development, low technical capacity and entrepreneurial skills of domestic manufacturing firms’ (NPC, 2016), and low competitiveness. Shortage and low quality of industrial raw materials (because of less agricultural productivity and modernization), has also been critically limiting industrialization in Ethiopia (MOI, 2014b).

The EPRDF took the agricultural sector as a basis for industrialization. However, questions have been raised whether the agricultural sector in Ethiopia would supply adequate and quality raw materials to the industrial sector of the economy. The agricultural sector is not still transformed, i.e., it is largely subsistence-based. It lacks modernization because of the limited supply of technology and inputs. Moreover, resistance of peasants and pastoralist herders to use new technology and modern agricultural inputs also limits this sector to adequately supply raw materials to the industrial sector of the economy (*Ibid*).

The absence of adequate foreign exchange to import industrial inputs, electric power disruptions, and limited access to effective and efficient credit services have also been other factors, which limit the pace of industrialization in Ethiopia (MOI, 2014a&b). Moreover, limited capacity and lack of interest (because high risk is attached to the manufacturing subsector) on the part of the private sector to productively contribute to the industrial sector also limit the industrialization process in Ethiopia. However, some observers who have been critical to the EPRDF’s policies often argue that the huge government investment has essentially overcrowded the private sector (Mulu, 2019).

Contrary to the arguments regarding the government hands in overcrowding the private enterprises, however, as stipulated in the Ethiopian national industrial policy and strategy, the government was expected to aggressively invest in infrastructures that would create conducive business environment for the private sector (MOI, 2014b). This suggests that the government was not required to establish state-owned enterprises that would overtake the role of private enterprises in the process of economic development. According to the EPRDF, it was only

⁵⁰ Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

required to actively intervene and invest in carefully selected areas in order to address market failures (Getachew, 2018). In other words, the EPRDF emphasized that as far as possible, the government should be careful not to invest in economic activities that can effectively be undertaken by the private sector (*Ibid*). Accordingly, high-level party and government officials tried to validate the EPRDF policy by arguing that because the government is expected to concentrate on economic activities that cannot be undertaken by the private sector, state-owned enterprises operating in areas that can be effectively overtaken by the private sector have gradually been privatized (Girmay, 2018: interview)⁵¹. Therefore, the argument for overcrowding the private sector, as the EPRDF claimed, is not empirically true (Semere, 2018: interview)⁵². Rather, the EPRDF strongly associated the problem with the private sector's general weakness and lack of interest to invest in the manufacturing subsector (MOI, 204a&b).

More than 50 percent of the domestic private sector investment in Ethiopia, for instance in 2017, was concentrated in the service sector (Semere, 2018: interview)⁵³. The participation of the private capital in the industrial sector, particularly, the manufacturing subsector, has remained very low (Abera, 2018: interview)⁵⁴. As the evaluation results of the first GTP showed, this happened because entry to the service sector is easy (NPC, 2016). It requires a lower level of start-up capital, technical and managerial capacity than the manufacturing subsector, and the return in the service sector is quicker than in the manufacturing subsector (Semere, 2018: interview)⁵⁵. Less risk is also attached to the service sector than the manufacturing subsector (NPC, 2016). Moreover, the service sector during the EPRDF era was not exposed to external competition, rather, remained reserved only to domestic investors (Semere, 2018: interview)⁵⁶. For example, investments in banking and insurance services, as well as real estate development, have not been open to foreign investors. Therefore, unlike in the manufacturing subsector, competition in the service sector has remained locally based. In this regard, the EPRDF's

⁵¹ Girmay Gebrekidan was a of support service in the TRNS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April, 18, 2018, Mekelle

⁵² Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

⁵³ *Ibid*

⁵⁴ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

⁵⁵ Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

developmental state government has largely failed to use mechanisms of shifting capital (from the service sector) to the industrial sector of the economy.

As regards to state autonomy, the EPRDF-led government was largely free to frame and implement its development policies independently. It was ‘strong ... with relative autonomy and had achieved political insulation or buffering its economic policymakers from’ (Aaron, 2017: 52) segmental interests. State autonomy as Arkebe (2015: 77) notes is ‘about avoiding capture by specific interest groups and maintaining policy independence’. This implies that there are internal and external dimensions of state autonomy.

Internally, the EPRDF-led government had autonomy from the influence of segmental interests. Different researchers attributed such autonomy either to the government’s decision to distance itself from the private sector or to the absence of a powerful and vibrant private sector in Ethiopia. Focusing on the first one, Arkebe (2015: 77) has noted that ‘the government and the political party leadership in [EPRDF’s] Ethiopia [were] careful to maintain autonomy and distance [themselves] from the private sector’. This was premised on the assumption that the developmental state would be able to achieve rapid, inclusive, and sustainable economic development if it is essentially free from capture by wealthy-rent-seeking⁵⁷ elites (Semere, 2018: interview)⁵⁸. Contrary to Arkebe’s point, Assefa (2014: 80) associated the autonomy and hegemony of the EPRDF to design and implement its development policies with the existence of ‘few economically powerful groups [within] the Ethiopian economy’. That is, there was no strong private sector that challenged the government. However, Assefa tried to indicate that, in the absence of robust institutional check and balance, the system was prone to state capture by segmental interests.

Although the two authors provide different reasons, both agree that the EPRDF-led government maintained its autonomy from various interest groups. But it should be underlined that autonomy of the government does not imply the absence of engagement with the private sector and other

⁵⁷ Rent-seeking elite or rent-seekers are individuals or group of people who try to obtain benefits for themselves through the political arena. They seek to obtain economic gains through manipulation of the environment where economic activities take place. They do not involve in creating value; rather the cumulative cost of their unproductive competition for rents is a net loss to society (Krueger, 1974, in Olver, nd). In short, rent-seekers attempt to get a larger portion of the available wealth without involving in the process of its creation.

⁵⁸ Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

social, economic, and political forces. What a developmental state necessitates, as Evans (1995) suggested, is embedded autonomy- mutual recognition between the government and other social, economic, and political forces. Embeddedness, therefore, implies an institutional setup, which functions based on mutual acceptance and legitimacy. Ethiopia under the EPRDF lacked such institutional set up as it was expressed in the absence of strong public-private cooperation.

Externally, since the early 1990s, the EPRDF-led Government was strongly resisting pressures from the international financial institutions - the World Bank and IMF- and keeping strategic sectors of the economy (energy, telecom, railways, and banking) under government control (Arkebe, 2015; Bereket, 2018). The international institutions wanted the Ethiopian Government to fully adopt the neoliberal reform prescriptions stipulated in the Washington Consensus under the core principles of privatization, liberalization, and stabilization.

With regard to the inappropriateness of the neoliberal reform prescriptions to the Ethiopian context, Stiglitz (2002) recognized the Ethiopian Government's reason to reject the IMF's proposal to open up its banking system to external competition, and interest rates to be freely determined by market forces. But this does not mean that the government was entirely rejecting all proposals of the neoliberal forces. It was accepting neoliberal advices, which were useful for its ideology while out rightly rejected those which undermine its economic and political programs (Abera, 2018: interview)⁵⁹. Although the EPRDF believed in the role of the market in development, it resisted the proposals of the IFIs, like privatization of land⁶⁰, removing government involvement in the economy, unconditional privatization of public enterprises, and financial liberalization and deregulation (MZLA, 2017). Generally, regardless of the achievements and failures it experienced, the EPRDF-led government enabled the country to maintain its policy independence since 1991.

⁵⁹Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

⁶⁰ The issue of land ownership has remained one of the sources of disagreements between the Ethiopian government and the Western based donors. Moreover, the issue of land ownership has been a focus of debate within the political and academic circles. Generally, the debate shows dichotomy of views on state versus private ownership. State ownership of land has strongly been advocating by the ruling party (The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary democratic Front (EPRDF) and some researchers in the field while private ownership is favored by Western economic advisors, international organizations like the World Bank, many opposition political parties and some scholars as well (Yigeremew, 2002).

The EPRDF often argued that it focused on creating suitable environment for the development of productive private sector. It recognized the driving role of the private sector in the economy. Generally, its policies and strategies, particularly, the 2014 Industrial Policy and Strategy (MOI, 2014b) and the GTP (NPC, 2016) emphasized the belief that it is the private sector, not the public that should be the engine of development. The government was expected to use its authority to guide the private capital away from rent-seeking and towards productive investment, technology transfer, and enhancing competitiveness (MOI, 2014a). Strong government involvement in the economy, therefore, was aimed at fostering, not constraining, private sector development (Aaron, 2017).

As policy documents of the country showed, the government was expected to strongly intervene in selected areas of the economy, which were out of the private sector's reach (EPRDF, 2011). In other words, the government was expected to create conducive business environment by removing all bureaucratic bottlenecks, ensuring good governance, and providing effective public service (MOI, 2014b). Based on this view, the EPRDF-led government often claimed that it provided adequate space for the growth of the private sector. Indeed, at the national as well as regional levels, it provided packages to incentivize the private sector to productively involve in the national economy. However, critics argue that the business environment under a revolutionary-democratic developmental state favored party-affiliated endowment companies, which were overcrowding the private sector (Weldeabrha, 2018: interview)⁶¹. The contention here is that the party-affiliated large conglomerates, in the name of endowment companies, were essentially constraining the development of a free market (Andualem, 2018).

Researchers and practitioners who have been critical of the EPRDF policies often argued that endowment companies like the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT) and *Tiret* Corporate were favored by the ruling party to have control on a large portion of the national economy, which constrained the private sector from effectively competing in the market (Berhanu, 2011). Yet, some public officials like Abera (2018: interview)⁶² dismiss this argument as groundless. They largely associated the problem with the lack of interest and risk-taking, as

⁶¹ Weldeabrha Nigusse is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

⁶² Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

well as, the overall weakness of the private sector in terms of knowledge, skills and financial capital to involve in sustainably productive sectors of the economy, mainly, the manufacturing subsector.

As discussed earlier, the private sector in Ethiopia is not still matured enough to play its required role in the process of economic development. As a result, the EPRDF-led government was trying to fill this gap by attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). It is generally assumed that FDI will contribute in terms of technology transfer, capital, and job opportunities (Semere, 2018: interview)⁶³. Particularly, if the foreign investments are export-oriented, they would help the country improve its balance of payments.

FDI will be productive if it significantly contributes to strengthening the domestic private sector. The EPRDF policy focused on attracting FDI. But attracting FDI would not be productive without effective monitoring mechanisms. FDI would come up with both benefits and risks. Its cardinal objective is acquiring profit. If there is weak monitoring capacity at the national level, foreign investors would manipulate the market and use mechanisms like under-invoicing and over-invoicing when they export and import goods respectively. Moreover, in the absence of effective monitoring mechanisms, foreign investors will also involve in activities that would harm the national economy, such as capital flight. Ethiopia under the EPRDF lacked adequate capacity to control such problems, and, as a result, the country failed to acquire the benefits it should attain from attracting FDI (Abera, 2018: interview)⁶⁴. However, regardless of the hurdles, which were constraining the development of the private sector, the EPRDF-led government often claimed success in creating a large number of private enterprises as a result of its supportive interventions.

In a developmental state, the government is expected to discipline the private sector and ensure that it is free of rent-seeking behavior. A disciplined private sector, which collaboratively works with the government, is vital for the success of developmental state policies. In other words, the collaborative synergy created between the public and private sectors is at the heart of a successful developmental state. Based on this view, the EPRDF-led government created a

⁶³ Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

⁶⁴ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

framework for public-private cooperation to provide a favorable condition for collaboration between the two (FDRE, 2018a). Nevertheless, Ethiopia under the EPRDF lacked a functioning institutional set up to achieve this purpose (Semere, 2018: interview)⁶⁵.

There were attempts to establish forums for dialogue between the private sector and the government at both the national and regional levels (Abera, 2018: interview)⁶⁶. However, regular and continuous engagement between the two forces was lacking (*Ibid*). The forums did not have the capacity to address the real concerns of the private sector; and the government was also showing a tendency to marginalize the private sector in favor of the public sector (Semere, 2018: interview)⁶⁷. It gave more focus to public enterprises like the Sugar Corporation in terms of providing access to credit and foreign currency (*Ibid*). As a result, the private sector in Ethiopia remained to have a relatively limited access to credit services and foreign currency. This shows that the public sector was crowding out the private sector.

The EPRDF-led government was also less open to involve the private sector in the processes of policy formulation and improvement (*Ibid*). Therefore, reflections of the private sector were less considered in the processes of formulating the country's developmental policies. Consequently, the private sector in Ethiopia under the EPRDF did play an insignificant role, particularly, in the industrial sector (Mulu, 2019). These problems were largely attributed to lack of trust between the government and the private sector. This was a very critical problem that weakened synergetic work and collaboration between the two. Due to the pervasive rent-seeking tendencies, as Arkebe notes, the two sectors were 'disposed to be locked into a state of mutual suspicion and mistrust, [which] ... [was] an obstacle to a durable state-business relationship. [Hence,]... maintaining state autonomy and developing trust remain[ed] challenging' (2015: 77). This suggests that Ethiopia under the EPRDF lacked an important attribute of successful developmental state- strong public-private cooperation. On top of this, the EPRDF's aspiration to build a democratic developmental state became more difficult. This was because a democratic developmental state logically requires broader social embeddedness, which essentially is beyond

⁶⁵ Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

⁶⁶ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

⁶⁷ Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

the cooperation between the government and the private sector. That is, a democratic developmental state needs broader embeddedness of varied social forces or active stakeholders' involvement in both the political and economic spheres.

Another quality of the developmental state which EPRDF's Ethiopia lacked was elite consensus on the national goals of development. Political polarization based on varied ideologies still makes national consensus less imaginable in Ethiopia (Weldeabrha, 2018: interview)⁶⁸. Given that Ethiopia is a country with a highly diversified society in many respects, political polarization, which is often expressed in terms of animosity, has greatly affected its development, and if not survival. At the heart of the developmental state is building consensus on the national policies and goals of development. However, the Ethiopian elite have been lacking unity and consensus to synergistically work and properly chart the country's future destiny as a result of the ideological and political polarization, particularly, since the 1960s and 1970s (*Ibid*).

Ethiopia under the EPRDF also lacked a developmental state capacity. State capacity here is to mean the infrastructural ability of the government to effectively and efficiently implement its development policies. Generally, state capacity entails 'the ability of the [government] to organize society, implement policy, manage ... conflict, extract, and distribute resources' (Aaron, 2017: 9). Regarding the organization of society, the government needs institutions that have the ability to penetrate deep into society and influence the thought, attitude, and behaviors of people towards the direction it desired to attain the national goals of development. Such influence is expected to achieve the legitimacy of the government, as well as, public compliance and participation in implementing the national policies of development. In this respect, the EPRDF established an organizational structure that showed its pervasive presence throughout the society up to the grassroots level.

The *kebele* (sub-district) is the lowest level of administration in Ethiopia. But, the EPRDF entered deep into the society very far below the *kebele* level and established a 'one-to-five structure at the [bottom] level going down even to the family level' (Assefa, 2014: 74). It should be noted here that it was the party, not the government, structure that entered deep into the

⁶⁸ Weldeabrha Nigusse is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

society. In terms of its organization, as well as, human and material capital, the bureaucracy was weak to reach down the grassroots level. In this regard, Arkebe (2015: 76) notes that ‘the party’s organizational capacity [was] strong and may have compensated for the perceived deficiency of the bureaucracy in the short-term’. However, the pervasive structure of the ruling party did not sustainably substitute the role of an effective bureaucratic capacity.

State capacity, in essence, is the capacity of the bureaucracy to effectively implement the national policies of development. It is often stated that when the EPRDF took power in 1991, the bureaucracy it inherited from the *Derg* government was not suitable for implementing its developmental policies (Gebre, 2014). For the success of a developmental state, strong and merit-based bureaucracy is at the forefront. Based on this view, the EPRDF undertook continuous civil service reforms since the turn of the 1990s with the objective of building strong and merit-based bureaucracy (Gebre and Melesse, 2014). Particularly, when the developmental state was highly elaborated and articulated as an official model of Ethiopia’s economic development after the 2001 TPLF crisis, the government introduced a new phase of reform program to quickly modernize and professionalize the civil service system (Vaughan, 2015). However, the reform program ‘was not selective in its focus and did not succeed in generating the required transformation’ (Arkebe, 2015: 76).

The capacity of the state to deliver by implementing its development policies is essentially practicable if there is high-level of bureaucratic competence. In other words, merit-based bureaucracy that is effective and efficient is so vital to building state institutions, which are adequately capable to achieve the national goals of development through implementing public policies and strategies (Gebre, 2014). Therefore, the bureaucracy for a developmental state is necessarily required to be strong and capable, which is adequately autonomous and insulated from political patronage or unhealthy interference.

The overall quality of the bureaucracy is determined in terms of institutional organization, politics of the country, and staff competence. As the experiences of the most successful East Asian countries show, the economic bureaucracy is organized into a nodal (pilot) agency, which is staffed with the most talented professionals available to take the responsibility of charting and implementing the development policies of the country (Evans, 1995). However, in EPRDF’s

Ethiopia, unlike in the East Asian countries, the responsibility of crafting the national development agenda was not clearly given to the elite bureaucracy (Assefa, 2014). As Assefa (2014: 73) further explains, policy making during the EPRDF era was ‘the task of the political leadership at the highest level and not the elite bureaucracy’. This shows that the EPRDF did not organize the bureaucracy the way it was organized in the most successful developmental states in East Asia.

Drawing on the experiences of the East Asian developmental states, after the establishment of the National Planning Commission (NPC) in 2013, one might expect that it would play the role of a nodal agency, and be staffed with the best-talented professionals available. However, it seems that the Commission lacked the status of a pilot (nodal) agency, because the government did not have a means for it to be staffed with higher caliber professionals than other line ministries (Sisay, 2018: interview)⁶⁹. In the East Asian developmental states like South Korea and Taiwan, the nodal agency was filled by highly skilled and competent civil servants who were 'recruited from the most prestigious domestic and foreign institutions' (Mabasa, 2014: 39) or universities. Nevertheless, like other line ministries, the NPC in Ethiopia, used the available human resource in the market (Seife, 2018: interview)⁷⁰. As experiences of the successful states like Japan and South Korea show, the developmental state needs a productive institutional set up to lead and facilitate the process of industrialization. Implementation of the developmental industrial policy needs coordination and concerted efforts of all stakeholders. To this end, proper institutional set up (organization, design systems, and working culture) is at the forefront.

Drawing on the idea of the developmental state, therefore, the EPRDF was trying to build the necessary institutional structures to implement its policies and provide necessary supports, but in a fragmented way (Yemene, 2018: interview)⁷¹. This happened because there was no nodal (pilot) agency, which was in charge of coordinating all government agencies involving in the process of industrialization. Such a limitation in the institutional setup was often expressed in terms of weak intra and interagency coordination among main government ministries in terms of

⁶⁹ Sisay Alemayoh was a senior expert working in the National Planning Commission. The interview was held on June 30, 2018, Addis Ababa

⁷⁰ Seife Hailu is an Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science and Strategic Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

⁷¹ Yemane Zeray is an Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science and Strategic Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

joint planning and implementation, slow and inefficient delivery of public services, as well as, limited participation of the private sector in major industry planning (MOI, 2014c). The existence of weak interagency cooperation was also widely expressed in terms of underperforming logistics, legal and credit services (Mulu, 2019). In short, all the limitations associated with the poor institutional setup were expressions of limited state capacity in Ethiopia.

As Gebre (2014: 80) notes, ‘lack of capacity in Ethiopia [under the EPRDF was] a national problem in the civil service’. This finding is congruent with Chibber’s (2002: 951) conclusion that ‘while enjoying the required autonomy, states may nevertheless lack the capacity to intervene effectively’; and, hence, they would lose the quality of a developmental state. As indicated above, the EPRDF-led government was adequately autonomous to design and implement its development policies. What the government essentially lacked was sufficient bureaucratic capability for implementing its development policies and strategies. By examining dynamics within the civil service system since the 1990s, Aaron (2017: 4) concludes that ‘while there [were] improvements in terms of bureaucratic capacity to implement policy, and there [were] pockets of efficiency..., implementation, in general [was] difficult’. A critical thing to achieve the objectives of a developmental state is enhancing its capacity, and the means to do that is building a meritocratic bureaucracy that would effectively implement its public policies. In short, because the developmental state is all about delivery, it requires capable bureaucracy. However, in EPRDF’s Ethiopia, lack of merit-based bureaucracy that is effective and efficient was a factor that severely limited the capacity of the developmental state to achieve its development goals (Aaron, 2017; Gebre and Melese, 2014).

Politicization of the civil service and the ethnic-based federalism were among the main factors inhibiting the process of building meritocratic bureaucracy in EPRDF’s Ethiopia. Because of these factors, the promise of the EPRDF to build strong and autonomous civil service to independently implement the national policies of development was not materialized (Gebre and Melesse, 2014). The institution was politicized and failed ‘either to retain or attract capable people’ (Assefa, 2014: 75). That is, the government departments where the civil servants operate were not autonomous. They were essentially influenced by the ruling political elite (Bonda, 2011). Although it is difficult to accurately define the term politicization, here I adopt Peters and Pierre’s (2004) definition to refer to the ‘substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria

in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the public service'. As some research findings such as Gebre (2014) and Bonda (2011) show, this case accurately defined the Ethiopian civil service system during the EPRDF era.

It is to be noted, however, that politicization does not necessarily cause a problem. Politicization will be a problem if it is accompanied by patronage appointments. In practice, the public service can never be fully insulated from political influence. Drawing on the idea of Torstendahl (1991) Peters and Pierre (2004: 2) describe the public service as it is

inherently a political creation, and also inherently involved in politics, simply because it is the structure that delivers services to ... citizens- it plays a role in determining who gets what from the public sector. That said, however, the pattern of political development has been to shield the civil service from overt political control in order to enhance its efficiency and to ensure its fairness in dealing with citizens.

This indicates that politicization, on the one hand, will be an attempt to control policy and implementation, while on the other, it refers to just the supply of jobs to party members or members of a particular group (Gebre and Melesse, 2014). While politicization in the form of policy control and implementation is commonly practiced in the advanced industrialized countries of the Western world, its patronage form of appointment is more common in the developing countries (Peters and Pierre, 2004). Therefore, politicization of the civil service is essentially a problem in developing countries, including Ethiopia.

Based on the Ethiopian Civil Servant Proclamation No. 1064/2017 (FDRE, 2017), selection, recruitment, and promotion of civil servants to fill a vacant position are expected to be strictly undertaken based on qualification and competence. However, the civil service system in Ethiopia under the EPRDF was extremely politicized. There was no clear separation between the party and the government (Aaron, 2017; Gebre, 2014). As Assefa (2014: 78) described 'it [was] widely believed that recruitment, retention, and promotion to higher positions within the civil service [were] very much influenced by membership in the ruling political party and political affiliation'. It seems that such a practice was largely inbuilt in the political tradition of the EPRDF, in which there was no clear distinction between the party and the government (Vaughan, 2015; Assefa, 2014; Bach, 2012).

The politicization of the civil service may serve as a means for party loyalty and regime survival, but it will encourage corruption and cronyism (i.e, ‘success in business would depend on close relationships between business people and government officials’ (Ganguly, 2010: 76)). Particularly, in developing countries, it would undermine efficiency and competence, public confidence in the fairness of government institutions, the legitimacy of the bureaucracy, and accountability (Peters and Pierre, 2004). Moreover, it would damage the standard of ‘merit-based employment in the civil service, jeopardize bureaucratic integrity and, it [would] harmfully affect the professional quality of the civil service and its decision-making process’ (Gebre and Melesse, 2014: 94).

In a situation where the civil service sector was suffocated with political influence, Ethiopia under the EPRDF largely failed to build a civil service system that reflects the basic attributes of a developmental state bureaucracy. Therefore, to build merit-based and productive bureaucracy, what the EPRDF lacked to do was de-politicization of the civil service system in order to freely chart and implement the country’s public policies.

Coupled with politicization, the federal system also affected the quality of the civil service at the federal level. This problem would be also true in the ethnically diversified regional states, and has mainly been attributed to the principle of shared rule. As expressed in the 1995 FDRE Constitution, ‘Ethiopia adopted a federal system to accommodate diversity, ensure equitable development, and end overconcentration of power at the center’ (Assefa, 2014: 73). For this purpose, the federal system was designed to functions based on the principles of self-rule and shared rule. While self-rule is the act of recognition which provides autonomy to constituent units, shared rule is the representation of these constituent units in the institutions of the federal government (Yonatan, 2010). In EPRDF’s Ethiopia, the problem was that the allocation of civil servants to the federal line ministries based on the principle of shared rule undermined the quality of the bureaucratic system.

It should be noted that the practice of shared rule in itself is not a problem. However, top official positions in most of the government departments (line ministries) in the EPRDF era were largely filled based on an ethnic quota system (Desta, 2010). The argument is that the prime focus on the

quota system or what Weldeabrha (2018: interview)⁷² described as ‘ratio-based politics’ compromised merit-based selection, recruitment, and promotion within the federal civil service system. Generally, relegating quality in favor of patronage appointment in terms of meeting ethnic composition and political affiliation was expressed in the delays of ‘many fruitful projects, because the functionaries lacked the professionalism and commitment needed to mobilize the limited resources of the [country] for development’ (Bonda, 2011: 30). In short, in the absence of merit-based and relatively autonomous civil service system, the objective of building a developmental state in Ethiopia under the EPRDF has remained almost rhetoric.

3.5. Democratic Developmental State and Federalism: The Nexus

Ethiopia has introduced a federal system in 1995 to accommodate diversity and legally constrain the concentration of power at the center. Although the proponents of the unitary system like Semahagn (2014) argue that the federal system that constitutionally gives equal footing to all ethno-national groups is against the unity of the country, drawing on the age-old question of the Ethiopian nations and nationalities for self-determination, its framers regarded it as the only option for Ethiopia. Moreover, because Ethiopia is a highly diversified country in terms of ethnic identity, religion, culture, etc, it is believed that a federal system would provide appropriate structures and mechanisms of ensuring unity in diversity to ensure survival of the country (Abay, 2019: Panel Discussion)⁷³.

Federalism in Ethiopia functions based on institutional arrangements for self-rule at the regional level (in some regional states also include special zone, *wereda* and, *kebele* levels) and shared rule at the federal level. This arrangement shows a constitutionally entrenched division of power between the federal government and regional states. While self-rule represents the constitutionally defined autonomy of constituent units to control over various matters pertaining to social, economic, political, and cultural affairs, shared-rule embodies the representation of the regions in the federal institutions of government (Yonatan, 2010). Therefore, based on the

⁷² Weldeabrha Nigusse is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

⁷³ Abay Tsehay is a veteran of the TPLF who served in different ministerial positions of the Ethiopian Government. The panel was conducted on June 15, 2019 in a Panel Discussion conducted in the Second National Research Conference held with the theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state, Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy, (June 15-16, 2019), Planet Hotel, Mekelle.

constitutionally ingrained division of power, the central government is essentially constrained from arbitrarily revoking the autonomy of the regional states. Nevertheless, contrary to the constitutional trust, it could be argued that the ideals of EPRDF's revolutionary democracy (particularly, democratic centralism) and the dominant belief that the developmental state could only function in a politically and administratively centralized polity would challenge the idea of regional states' autonomy in Ethiopia. However, this argument lacks theoretical soundness and empirical basis.

Decentralization and federalism would not necessarily obstruct the advance of a developmental state model, as the idea of the developmental state can be contextualized and adapted to different circumstances (Semere, 2018: interview)⁷⁴. That is, the twenty-first-century developmental state is not expected to fully resemble the twentieth-century developmental state. This is to say, the strong association of the developmental state model with tight centralization is not always true. Therefore, decentralization does not necessarily contradict the idea of the developmental state. For example, proactive regional governments in post-war northern Italy, West Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Malaysia, Japan, and China played a crucial role in facilitating the emergence and success of growth-oriented micro, small and medium enterprises (Bateman, 2017; Schoburgh, 2016). These countries, either fully or partially, exercised a developmental state model of development during the high times of their growth periods. This shows that the practice of a developmental state at the local state level is possible.

Particularly, after the recent move to the post-Fordist State⁷⁵ that has seen transition from heavy industry-led development to light industry and service-led development, proactive regional governments essentially took the role of achieving sustainable growth and development (Bateman, 2017). Therefore, there is no justification to necessarily associate the developmental state with a centralized political and administrative system that only focuses on the roles the government can play in the economy at the national level. Rather, in an era of 'complex socioeconomic and political processes marked by democratization, marketization and decentralization' (Schoburgh and Charabarti, 2016: 24), regional state institutions could play a

⁷⁴Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

⁷⁵ Post-Fordist State is a state that shows transition from the large-scale mass modern industrial production methods pioneered by Henry Ford towards the use of small and flexible production units in the form of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Bateman, 2017).

vital role in facilitating economic development. Particularly, in a federal system where the issue of democracy and autonomy of constituent units is constitutionally addressed, an active role of regional state institutions in Ethiopia would profoundly promote rapid and inclusive economic development. Therefore, within the framework of a federal state structure, regional states in Ethiopia would pursue their own strategic goals and experiment different policies to address their own regional contexts.

The federal system in Ethiopia which constitutionally divides internal sovereignty between the federal government and the ethno-national groups, as stipulated in articles 51 and 52 of the 1995 FDRE Constitution, just invites a developmental role of the Regional States. This also makes more justifiable to emphasize the post-Fordist state focus (Bateman, 2017) on strengthening micro and small, as well as, medium-scale manufacturing enterprises (Arkebe, 2015; MOI, 2014a&b).

As Arkebe (2015: 74) points out, ‘promoting small business... has been preferred to the dominance of few large firms’ in Ethiopia. Indeed, the industrial policy and strategy for Ethiopia give particular emphasis to promoting and strengthening micro and small-scale manufacturing enterprises. In the post-Fordist State period of economic development, there has been a shift in focus from the role national level institutions could play to the role regional and/or local state institutions could play in the process of economic development (Bateman, 2017). Because regional state institutions are closer to the people, most probably, they are in a better position to facilitate light industry-led development than the national state institutions. Based on this argument, therefore, regional state institutions in Ethiopia would play a proactive role to achieve the structural transformation of the economy and society. This will address the growing sense of urgency and need for building a democratic developmental state that will be able to achieve rapid and inclusive economic development.

Ethiopia as a federal state consists of nine National Regional States that have autonomy and control over a range of economic and political powers. Such a state structure and allocation of power actually make it conducive and necessary to build a regional developmental state with the requisite qualities to achieve speedy and democratized development from below. In other words, such a clear division of power and responsibilities between the two levels of government would

usually encourage regional governments to play an active role in economic development. This is because adequate decision-making power is already devolved downwards to the regional state governments. Therefore, to create a regional developmental state in Ethiopia, there is no need to embark on some form of decentralization program. This suggests that, at least, the Regional State Governments in Ethiopia have a legal and institutional basis to play a developmental role within their dominions. However, their enhanced role in the economy should go hand in hand with the democratization and responsiveness of the regional and local institutions to create conducive environment for wider popular participation, which is often pointed out by the TPLF in Tigray as the basic attribute of its democratic developmental state (Abera, 2018: interview)⁷⁶.

It should be underlined, however, that regional (local) developmental state institutions could not operate in complete isolation from the central government institutions. That is, '[regional] states are not completely autonomous and thus cannot be treated like nation-states' (Sinha, 2003: 461). Nonetheless, they should have adequate level of autonomy that would provide them with freedom of policy action. In this regard, the level of autonomy they have to attain should be balanced vis-à-vis the federal government. As discussed in chapter two, Bateman (2017), identifies two types of regional (local) developmental state models: hybrid and pure regional (local) developmental state models.

Taking into account the success stories of both the hybrid and 'pure' local developmental state models, which model is more applicable for Regional States in Ethiopia, is an important question. Outright adoption of either of the two models would be problematic. As a federal state, exclusive and shared powers between the federal government and Regional States in Ethiopia are clearly specified in articles 51 and 52 of the FDRE Constitution respectively. While there are activities that need cooperation between the federal and regional governments, there are also activities that are exclusive to each level of government. Therefore, the Ethiopian case requires a balanced approach, to maintain the autonomy of regional states and enhance collaboration between both levels of government to undertake shared responsibilities. Therefore, the developmental state model to be pursued by any Regional State in Ethiopia requires a framework of interaction that invites collaborative work between the federal and regional governments.

⁷⁶Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

However, there are concerns whether a regional (local) developmental state would actually work in Ethiopia.

Since the launch of the first Growth and Transformation Plan in 2010/11, the federal government in Ethiopia has become the dominant actor in policy formulation and implementation (Meheret, 2014). This essentially contradicts with the federal system that allows regional states to autonomously craft their own policies. Genuine ‘federal systems allow various policies to experiment at the regional state level in order to address local contexts to a general framework policy set by the federal government’ (Assefa, 2014: 74). As envisaged in both the first and second Growth and Transformation Plans, however, it seems that the federal government narrows down the space and limits the scope of regional state institutions to play an active role in the economy. The issue of foreign direct investment (FDI) is a case in point.

Regional States in Ethiopia do not still play any role in matters relating to FDI. Based on the upward delegation of authority, the federal government has recentralized the powers of Regional States regarding the process of licensing and management of FDI (Semere, 2018: interview)⁷⁷. The federal government will approve or disapprove foreign investment project in any part of the country without involving Regional State Governments. That is to say, Regional States do not have a saying on issues relating to FDI, rather, they are simply passive suppliers of land (*Ibid*).

Generally, instead of capitalizing on the advantages created by the federal system for the Regional States to play an active role in development activities, the federal government has tight control over the policy process. As a result, Regional States do not effectively exercise their powers to plan their development activities in accordance with their own local contexts. They are almost passive recipients of guidelines from the federal government. Such a trend would greatly limit Regional States to use their unique advantages to achieve economic development. Therefore, in practice, Regional States in Ethiopia are not adequately autonomous. Strong centralization or ‘top-down decision making [is] actually eroding the autonomy of regional states’ (Meheret, 2014: 4) and, in the EPRDF era, this undermined the essence of federalism, as well as, the ideals of the democratic developmental state.

⁷⁷Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

Genuine federalism and a democratic developmental state at the Regional State level, therefore, require the agency of the Regional Governments. Therefore, the democratic developmental state to be pursued by any regional state in Ethiopia should not be dependent on the whims of the federal government, but largely by the region's development priorities. Based on this view, the necessity of a developmental state at the Regional State level is premised on the assumption that Regional Government autonomy and capacity would help facilitate social and economic development at the grassroots level. Moreover, it entails the empowerment of the local people and providing enough space for wider popular participation in the political and economic processes within a democratic state (Schoburgh, 2016).

A democratic state is largely associated with a political environment, which guarantees all spheres of rights (individual and group) and free operation of democratic forces like civil society organizations (CSOs). Drawing on these views, therefore, I would argue that a democratic developmental state that would achieve structural transformation of the economy would most productively thrive at the Regional State level in Ethiopia if the Regional State Governments effectively practice the agency they have as stipulated in the FDRE Constitution. Based on this view, taking the Tigray National Regional State as a case in point, the next chapters deal with how the region's government is using its constitutionally entrenched agency to practice the ideals of the democratic developmental state within its dominion.

Chapter Four: Democratic Developmental State Policies and Economic Development in the Tigray National Regional State

Driven by the national question for self-determination of nations and nationalities, the EPRDF radically restructured the Ethiopian state and introduced multinational-based federalism after it seized political power by overthrowing the *Derg* regime in 1991. The introduction of multinational federalism was grounded on the assumption that a ‘system that devolves the decision-making process is antidotal to the unitary and assimilationist policies that were at the root of Ethiopia’s political malaise’ (Alemseged, 2004: 608).

Federalism, according to the EPRDF, is introduced to solve the age-old nationality question and enable the Ethiopian ethno-national groups become the masters of their affairs (Alemseged, 2004; Young, 1997). An important question that deserves attention here is that how regional states in Ethiopia, as masters of their houses, are working within a framework of the developmental state in a federal system? To answer this question, an assessment against the basic attributes of the developmental state at the Regional State level is needed. Accordingly, this chapter examines whether the developmental state in Ethiopia is working at the regional level by taking the Tigray National Regional State as a case in point.

4.1. Change and Development in Tigray from 1991- 2001

After the downfall of the *Derg* in 1991, and the subsequent introduction of a federal system in Ethiopia, the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray took the responsibility of lifting up the war-ravaged region from poverty and underdevelopment. It has been attempting to address problems of the region by introducing new social and economic development programs. Since the downfall of the *Derg* regime, the Regional Government, as Young (1997: 81) points out, ‘has been attempting to stabilize the rural economy, repair and strengthen the infrastructure, create a climate in which private investment begins the process of establishing an industrial base to meet the rising demands of off-farm labor’. However, the regional government found it very difficult to ensure active private sector involvement in its endeavors of achieving rapid economic development.

The TPLF has a radical Marxist-Leninist ideological background (Bach, 2011; Semahagn, 2014). Initially, the Front advocated the idea of building a socialist system (TPLF, 1983). Nevertheless,

it later changed its ideology of socialism and shifted towards building a capitalist economy (Tilahun, 2018: interview)⁷⁸. Although the TPLF claimed that it had radically shifted its ideology towards building a capitalist economy after 1991, ‘business skepticism was not overcome until after a campaign had been launched in 1994 to convince entrepreneurs of the [Front’s] commitment to a capitalist economy’ (Young, 1997: 83). This happened because the private sector feared that the TPLF would not radically change the *Derg*’s command economic system (Vaughan and Mesfin, 2011). This was observed when the private sector lacked interest to invest in Tigray, particularly, during the transitional period (1991-1995) (Abera, 2018: interview)⁷⁹. Consequently, at the beginning, the private sector had limited involvement in the region’s economy. This shows that mobilizing the private sector to invest in Tigray had remained challenging for the TPLF, mainly, during the transitional period (1991-1995).

In the field of rural development, the TPLF was able to effectively mobilize peasants and achieve good results in natural resources conservation and rehabilitation activities. It would be the strong mutual support-based close TPLF-peasants relationship since the times of the armed struggle (1975-1991) that enabled the government of the Tigray National Regional State to convince peasants to widely participate in rural development activities. This achievement is strongly associated with the TPLF’s policies that place strong emphasis on ‘strengthening the livelihood base of ... peasants’ (Segers, *et al*, 2009:96). However, as indicated above, the TPLF was not able to convince the urban-based private sector to widely participate in the region’s development activities during the transitional period (1991-95). As a result, in the absence of strong private sector’s role in the economy, the TPLF found the struggle for development more difficult than the struggle it had fought against the *Derg* regime (*Ibid*).

In addition to the lack of confidence in the TPLF’s commitment to building a capitalist economy, the evident scarcity of improved infrastructure also undermined private investment in the Tigray region (Young, 1997). Moreover, the absence of improved conditions and rigid bureaucratic barriers also damaged the ambition of entrepreneurs who had strong interest to invest in the

⁷⁸ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

⁷⁹ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigre. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

region (Abera, 2018: interview)⁸⁰. Among the private entrepreneurs who have managed to undergo investment through struggling under a difficult environment were almost entirely engaged in the service sector and concentrated in Mekelle, capital city of the region (Young, 1997). This shows that the then private investors essentially ignored the manufacturing subsector. Yet, this does not mean that private investment in the other sectors of the economy was thriving well.

Since neither the private investors nor the government had the means to establish an industrial base in Tigray, in 1995, the TPLF set up the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT) (Paulos, 2003). Although many observers are critical to the legal foundations of EFFORT, the endowment was essentially established with the objective of using public resources held by the TPLF for Tigray's development, and particularly, serving as 'an instrument to promote the industrialization of the region because most investors prefer the service sector, given that a minimum risk is attached to it' (Vaughan and Mesfin, 2011: 37). Therefore, it seems that EFFORT was established in Tigray to serve as a launching stone for achieving the objectives of state-led industrial development in Tigray.

State-led development in the framework of building a capitalist economic system (i.e., the developmental state model) envisages strong government intervention in carefully selected sectors of the economy to correct market failures (Getachew, 2018). That is, a government in a developmental state is required to distance itself from areas that could be covered by the private sector. It should only intervene in economic activities to supply goods that could not be supplied by the market. As its stated objectives show, EFFORT was established to serve as a tool for the TPLF-led regional government to play a developmental role in the Tigray region (Tilahun, 2018: interview)⁸¹.

Official sources of EFFORT 'claim myriad development goals focused on the Tigray Regional State, including attracting new investment to... the region, opening up new sectors and markets for others to follow and establishing a core of skilled workforce and experienced managers' (Berhanu, 2011: 42-3). This shows that EFFORT was established to fill the gap because neither

⁸⁰ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigre. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

⁸¹ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

the local private sector nor the government had the resources to initiate the process of industrialization in the region (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2002). Moreover, in the absence of adequate infrastructure in the region, local investment in the industrial sector was less likely to thrive (Young, 1997). As a result, EFFORT was established to facilitate industrialization in Tigray through technology transfer and skill development and attracting investment (Berhanu, 2011). Accordingly, the regional government of Tigray claims that EFFORT has been playing a ‘significant role in creating conducive environment for investment, technological transfer ..., and stabilizing the market’ (BPF, 2010: 41).

Contrary to the claims by both EFFORT and the regional government of Tigray, critics like Vaughan and Tronvoll (2002: 56) contend that EFFORT is emerging into a monopolistic company, which crowds out the private sector and damaged fair competition in the market. As Weldeabrha (2018: interview)⁸² argued, this is mainly expressed in terms of the government’s favor to the endowment-owned companies. Likewise, Berhanu (2011: 44) contends that endowment-owned firms are ‘preferentially treated in terms of obtaining licenses [and] ... access to government credit services. . . . [They are also] less constrained by investment climate issues and are more likely to be consulted on policy issues’. In short, the argument is that because of the preferential treatment given to the party-affiliated endowment-owned firms, there is a structural obstacle to the growth of competitive market in the Tigray region and in Ethiopia in general. However, EFFORT sources are quick to undermine such argument as groundless.

Depending on the official sources of the organization, as Vaughan and Tronvoll (2002: 56) report,

[EFFORT] does not have monopoly in any of the sectors in which it operates, and that, unlike most businesses, it is motivated not by the desire simply to make money, but by the mandate continues to move on to develop new sectors which others would otherwise be unwilling or unable to work, because of the existing levels of development.

This is to mean that EFFORT has an expressed aim of promoting industrialization in the Tigray National Regional State by investing where the government and the private sectors are unable (Addis Fortune, 2018). In other words, it does not have the intension to crowd out the private

⁸²Weldeabrha Nigusse is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

sector and have a monopolistic control over the market. Nevertheless, it should be noted that research has rarely been carried out to empirically assess the impact of EFFORT-owned companies on local investment and the development of a competitive private sector in Tigray. With all their problems, however, EFFORT-owned firms were the pioneers to engage in the industrial sector of the Tigray region's economy (Abera, 2018: interview)⁸³. Prior to them, there had never been a meaningfully noticeable industrial enterprise in the region (Tilahun, 2018: interview)⁸⁴. Therefore, they can be taken as the launching pads to kick the start towards industrialization in the region. Particularly, before the developmental state model was officially launched at the beginning of the 2000s, it was EFFORT which was dominantly engaged in the industrial sector in Tigray (Girmay, 2018: interview)⁸⁵. This means that although the regional government had been making efforts to attract investment, the involvement of other private investors remained very low.

As stated in the Ethiopian Government Portal, the Tigray region has created encouraging conditions to attract investors. So far, until the beginning of 1998, there were 361 projects, which focus mainly on agriculture, industry, service, mining, construction, and transport with a capital of four billion Ethiopian *Birr* (FDRE, 2018b). This shows that overall private, as well as public investment in Tigray, was not encouraging in the years before the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998-2000). It seems, therefore, that achievements have been recorded after the war with the implementation of developmental state policies. Nevertheless, although there have been improvements after the war, the industrial expansion favored by the TPLF and the regional government has been constrained by lack of continuous power supplies and other infrastructures necessary for industrial expansion, such as roads, telecom services, and logistics (Abera, 2018: interview)⁸⁶.

Regardless of the limitations to achieve the required level of development, the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray would be praised for the stable economic and political condition

⁸³ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigre. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

⁸⁴ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

⁸⁵ Girmay Gebrekidan is a director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was conducted on April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

⁸⁶ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigre. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

[it has set up, which is] serving to create an environment in which development can take place (FDRE, 2018b). The regional government contextualized the Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization strategy (ADLI), a long-term development strategy of Ethiopia since the transitional period (1991-1995), into the actual circumstances of the region and formulated a Conservation-based Agricultural Development-led Industrialization strategy (CADLI) (Van der Veen and Tagel, 2011). To bring about structural transformation in the economy, ADLI/CADLI placed emphasis on accelerating agricultural growth through supplying inputs like fertilizers and improved seeds, expansion of exports to pay for capital goods imported, and expansion of small scale industries that have strong linkage with the agricultural sector (Mamusha, 2007). Drawing on the historical accounts of poverty and despaired life in the Tigray region, the TPLF introduced this strategy to place a strong emphasis on the rural poor (*Ibid*).

As Young (1997: 2) notes, Tigray, as a region, was ‘one of the most destitute lands in Africa’. Therefore, faced with the challenges to rehabilitate this war-ravaged and poverty-ridden region, the Regional Government of Tigray adopted CADLI, which gives priority to environmental rehabilitation, ‘food security, and poverty reduction through the expansion of infrastructures and social, as well as, economic services, strengthening community participation in development programs..., [and] creating conducive environment for the private sector’ (Mamusha, 2007: 59). CADLI, in this regard, was devised to achieve growth in agriculture that would serve as an engine for industrial expansion. However, though CADLI was devised for fostering mutually reinforcing transformation of agriculture and industry, its top priority was the development of the agricultural sector, principally, through enhancing the productivity of rural-based smallholders; with the understanding that, gradually, the industry would take over the lead in the region’s economy (Tilahun, 2018: interview)⁸⁷.

Generally, CADLI is grounded in the belief that ‘growth in the agricultural sector would increase output, create employment and help increase household income, thereby expanding markets for industrial commodities’ (Habtemariam, 2008: 161). It seems that the main reason for CADLI to primarily focus on agricultural transformation is that Tigray, like other regions in Ethiopia, is largely constituted by rural-based peasant society in which the agricultural sector is dominated

⁸⁷ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

by smallholders who employ traditional means of production. That is, the rural agricultural economy in Tigray is backward, which lags far behind to achieve food self-sufficiency at the regional level (Lyons and Freeman, 2009).

As Tigray is constituted by an agrarian society, in line with the development strategy of the federal government, the Regional Government of Tigray emphasizes that growth and structural transformation in the region's economy should be facilitated through targeting peasant households. Consequently, detailed rural development policies, strategies, and programs were developed from the grand strategy (CADLI) and implemented in the consecutive five years development plans since 1995. CADLI as a development strategy takes into account the challenges of agricultural productivity, mainly environmental degradation. Drawing on conserving the natural resources base, to advance agricultural productivity and attain food security, specific policy measures of CADLI in Tigray include: 'agricultural extension, training, and research; agricultural export promotion; Food Security Program, productive Safety Net Program [and] voluntary Resettlement Program' (Future Policy, 2019: n.p).

The Regional Government has been trying to support the policy measures by supplying modern agricultural inputs, expanding the coverage of credit services, capacity building through the deployment of development agents (DAs), [peasant] training, creating market networks and enhancing farmers' cooperatives (Mamusha, 2007). In particular, the deployment of DAs to every rural sub-district (*tabia*) in Tigray to technically help smallholder farmers to adopt modern agricultural inputs and involve actively in sustainable agricultural practices such as, water and soil conservation contributes to improving food self-sufficiency and economic growth in the region (Tadesse, 2018: interview)⁸⁸.

As pointed earlier, since 1995, the implementation of CADLI has passed through four consecutive five years of regional development plans, where encouraging achievements have been recorded by implementing these plans. However, impressive development was begun to take place in the beginning of 2000s after the food security program was commenced in accordance with the federal government's Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP-2002/03-2004/05) (MoFED, 2002). Such impressive development was

⁸⁸ Tadesse Weldegebriel is ad Deputy Head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

continued throughout the third five year strategic plan (2004/5-2009/10) of the Tigray National Regional State, which was designed based on the Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP-2005/6-2009/10 (MoFED, 2006). Assessments of these plans by the Bureau of Planning and Finance (BPF, 2010) show that rural transformation that significantly reduces poverty has been TPLF's top policy agenda and different indicators show that significant achievements have been recorded.

The food security program that was implemented during SDPRP period designed to 'address household food security and poverty reduction, giving emphasis to input delivery, agro-processing, cooperative development, private sector development, capacity building, and industrial development' (Mamusha, 2007: 59). During this period, on average, Tigray had achieved 10.1% annual GDP growth (BPF, 2010: 2), which uninterruptedly continued for the consecutive five year development plans, i.e., the regional strategic plan (2005/06-2009/10) and the first Regional Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP-2010/11-2014/15).

The regional strategic plan (2005/06-2009/10) placed emphasis on reducing poverty and aimed at increasing income of the household, as well as, at the regional levels through crop development, livestock development, expansion of irrigation, strengthening farmers' cooperatives, natural resource conservation, and environmental protection, and strengthening small-scale industrial enterprise development (BPF, 2010). During this plan period, on average, Tigray had attained 11% annual GDP growth (*Ibid*: 2). Likewise, during the first regional Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP-2010-2015), Tigray, on average, had registered 10.9% annual GDP growth, which enabled it to achieve the then Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁸⁹ (BPF, 2016:5). This plan was prepared based on the federal government's national vision of achieving a lower-middle-income country by 2025 (SMMIA, 2017). It was intended to achieve speedy and inclusive development that would significantly reduce poverty in the region by implementing pro-poor policies, strategies, programs, and projects of development. These policies, strategies, and programs envisaged achievements in the field of rural development in improving agricultural

⁸⁹ The Millennium Development Goals eight goals designed by the United Nations to be achieved by 2015 in order to: (1) eliminate extreme poverty and hunger, (2) achieve global primary education, (3) empower women and promote gender equality, (4) reduce child mortality, (5) to promote maternal health, (6) fight malaria, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases (7) promote environmental sustainability, and (8) develop a universal partnership for development (UN, 2008: 3).

productivity through extension services and natural resources conservation works, and in urban areas, this was intended to be achieved through implementing programs of micro, small and medium-scale industrial enterprise development (BPF, 2016).

As discussed earlier, in terms of the volume of GDP growth, rapid economic growth (10% and above) has continuously been recorded since the beginning of 2000s. The government has largely attributed this success to the soundness of the developmental state policies. As discussed above in chapter two, the term developmental state is referred to as a phenomenon of state-led economic development, where the government is autonomous or adequately insulated from the influence of segmental interests when it designs and implements national development policies (Aaron, 2017). An important issue, in this regard, is that this process attracts attention as it shows that the poor section of the society appears to benefit more under the developmental state than the neoliberal model of development. Based on this view, the next section examines whether the democratic developmental state at the regional state level in Tigray is proceeding in this way.

4.2. Developmental State Practices in Tigray

Drawing on the recent political dynamics in Ethiopia, politicians, and analysts forward their doubts regarding the current leadership's interest in the idea of democratic developmental state. For example, Neway (2019) remarks that the recent decisions of the leadership show its less interest in the developmental state model. Nevertheless, the new leadership is not openly declared that it rejects the idea of the developmental state. In short, its preferred approach of development for Ethiopia is not clearly known. Therefore, in this situation, it is uncertain whether or not the developmental state would continue to shape the direction of development in Ethiopia. However, regardless of the federal government's position, the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray has been strongly arguing that there is no alternative to the developmental state model of development (Redae, 2018: interview)⁹⁰. Likewise, in a research conference held on the issue of the developmental state, a senior TPLF official (Gobezay, 2019: Speech)⁹¹ expressed that although it is not clear whether the current federal government would maintain the

⁹⁰ Redae Halefom was a head of the Tigray National Regional State's Bureau of Public Relations. The interview was held on July 26, 2018, Mekelle.

⁹¹ Gobezay Weldearegay is director of Meles Zenaw Leadership Academy in Tigre. The speech was made on June 15, 2019 in the Second National Research Conference which was held with the Theme Capacity Building for Sustainable Development and Hegemony of the Developmental state, Organized by the Tigray National Regional State Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy (June 15-16, 2019), Planet Hotel, Mekelle.

hitherto developmental state as its model of development or not, at the regional level in Tigray, the TPLF makes it clear that there would not be any change that contradicts the developmental state model.

Although it is challenging to maintain and use the developmental state model at the Regional State level, drawing upon the position of the TPLF, the following sections examine to what extent development practices in the Tigray National Regional state are reflecting the major attributes of the developmental state, including state autonomy, development-oriented leadership, capacity of the government to penetrate deep into the society, institutionalized public-private cooperation and a policy that places particular emphasis on the industrial sector of the economy.

4.2.1. State Autonomy

At any level of administration, the developmental state would be successful if it is safe from the dangers of state capture by interest groups or free of political influence in the process of charting its development policies. Nevertheless, it should also be sufficiently embedded within society, so that its policies and strategies reflect the interests of its citizens (Evans, 1995). Based on this view, in terms of crafting the region's policies, strategies, and programs of development, the Regional Government of Tigray seems autonomous and free from the influence of private or segmental interests. This is because there are no strongly organized interest groups that wield a capacity for state capture. That is, there are no powerful interest groups that have the ability to influence policy decisions at the regional level (Abera, 2018: interview)⁹². However, this does not mean that there is no potential danger of state capture by interest groups (Weldeabrha, 2018: interview)⁹³. 'There are strong patronage networks within the government' (Haftu, 2018: interview)⁹⁴, which may create conducive environment for interest groups to gradually gain the capacity to influence policy-making processes. Particularly, in the absence of strong legislative branch of the government, there would be a room for interest groups to co-opt people within the policymaking circle to craft policies that suit their interests.

⁹² Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was held on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

⁹³ Weldeabrha Nigusse is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

⁹⁴ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

It is often argued that ‘one of the worst consequences of the developmental state is its concentration of power in the executive’ (Fukuyama, 2019: speech)⁹⁵. This implies that in a developmental state, there is a weak check and balance between the executive and legislative branches of the government. However, the democratic developmental state is believed to be characterized by a strong check and balance (Haftu, 2018: interview)⁹⁶. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a strong legislative branch of the government in a democratic developmental state to closely follow up the works of the executive. Because the government in a developmental state mobilizes huge resource, it would easily be exposed to corruption or predatory activities, and state capture by interest groups.

In order to control the possible prevalence of corruption, predatory activities, and the possibility of state capture by interest groups, a strong legislative branch of the government with the requisite capacity to check the executive is needed in a developmental state. In other words, to avoid or minimize corruption and state capture, there shall be a balanced power between the legislative and executive organs of the government. Nevertheless, the reality in Tigray is against such an expectation. The legislature has the mandate to control the executive. However, actually, the Regional Council lacks the capacity and confidence to strongly influence the decisions of the Regional Executive (Haftu, 2018: interview)⁹⁷.

While the Regional Executive, in principle, recognizes the powers and responsibilities of the legislative, the executive actually views the legislature as a fault finder, which shows a tendency to resist directives from it (*Ibid*). This is also a problem at the *wereda* level of administration. For example, in the Semein *Wereda* administration of Mekelle City, although the *wereda* executive has not been showing a tendency to radically move away from the decisions of the *Wereda* Council, it still considers the Council as a fault-finding body, and even sometimes tries to show its power by withholding the regular budget of the Council (Leul, 2019: interview)⁹⁸.

⁹⁵ Francis Fukuyama is a well-known American scholar. He made the speech on June 11, 2019 in a Conference Organized on ‘Democracy and the Future of Ethiopia’s Developmental State’, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Addis Ababa.

⁹⁶ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

⁹⁷ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

⁹⁸ Leul Alemayoh is a speaker of Semen *Wereda* (Sub-City) Council. The interview was conducted on June 13, 2019, Mekelle.

The weak position of the regional legislative branch of the government to control and discipline the executive in the Tigray National Regional State could be attributed to the absence of a clear separation between the government and the party. All members of the Regional Council are members of the ruling party, TPLF. Based on internal party discipline, the regional executive projects its dominance over the regional, *wereda* and *tabia* councils. In practice, it seems that it is the party structure, not the government structure, which prevails over the affairs of the Tigray National Regional State. This is expressed in the fact that members of the Regional Council dominantly feel that it is the TPLF, not the electorate that brought them to the position as representatives (Haftu, 2018: interview)⁹⁹. That is, they are primarily loyal to the TPLF than the electorate in their constituencies. This problem is more acute at the *wereda* and *tabia* levels of administration (Teame, 2019: interview)¹⁰⁰.

Generally, the absence of a clear distinction between the party and the government in Tigray is an expression of weak institutionalization. Instead of working for building strong institutions of the government, the TPLF is being criticized for its obstructive role by directly intervening in the affairs of the legislative and other organs of the government (Abreha, 2018: Interview)¹⁰¹. As a result, in Tigray, it is yet to build strong and vibrant legislative organ of the government that would play a determinant role in fighting corruption and preventing the possibility of state capture by interest groups through closely overseeing the activities of the executive.

4.2.2. Leadership

The presence of genuinely committed and development-oriented leadership that takes development as a matter of survival is a vital condition for the success of a developmental state. As Fukuyama (2019: speech)¹⁰² notes, '[t]he people at the top of the hierarchy that are directing the bureaucracy have to believe in development'. Based on this view, as clearly reflected in the first and second Growth and Transformation Plans (GTPs) of the region, at least at the policy level, the leadership in Tigray has the quality of developmental state leadership. The TPLF-led

⁹⁹ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁰⁰ Teame Hatsey is speaker of *Tabia* Meles Council. The interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle

¹⁰¹ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁰² Francis Fukuyama is a well-known American scholar. He made the speech on June 11, 2019 in a Conference Organized on 'Democracy and the Future of Ethiopia's Developmental State', Hyatt Regency Hotel, Addis Ababa.

government of the region takes poverty as the enemy of the Tigrayan people. Its official strategies and plans of development show that the leadership has strong determination to fight poverty through coordinating the collaborative energy of the government, the private business, and the masses (BPF, 2016). However, beyond the policy trust, the people at the apex of the political leadership should practically show a moral attitude that relegates their personal interests in favor of the region's development. In other words, the political leadership is expected to clean itself from rent-seeking tendencies and corruption. This is to say that the developmental state leaders are relatively uncorrupt, patriotic, visionary, and nationalistic with a genuine intent to achieve rapid growth and structural transformation in the economy (Leftwich, 2000). Based on this view, we cannot safely argue that everything is going right in the Tigray National Regional State.

As indicated in the performance evaluation report regarding the three years implementation of the second GTP of the Tigray region, the dominance of a rent-seeking political economy is the main challenge that essentially constrains the advance of the developmental state objectives (BPF, 2018). Because rent-seeking is a quest for a benefit from existing wealth or a pursuit for privileged benefit through influencing policy, it would induce the top leadership within the policymaking circle to be geared towards seeking unearned personal interests. Although it is difficult to clearly uncover the tendencies of the top leadership at the regional level in Tigray, evidence of rent-seeking tendencies and corruption is discernible within the government. This is mainly expressed in terms of popular criticisms against the political leadership. Some informants like Amdom (2018: interview)¹⁰³ went a length to describe the current government of the region in terms of pervasive patronage networks, problems of transparency and accountability, corruption, and conclude that there is no genuine and committed leadership, particularly, at the local level in Tigray.

4.2.3. State Capacity

The actual technical and implementation capacity, which could be defined as bureaucratic capacity in the Tigray National Regional State is discussed in detail in the next chapter. The focus of this section is on the political and ideational powers of the ruling TPLF to build and use

¹⁰³ Amdom Berhe is a peasant residing in Tabia May Kadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018, Maykadra

an infrastructural capacity that enables the Regional Government penetrates deep into the communities within the society.

As a result of its unchallenged ideational and political position in Tigray, since the times of the armed struggle (1975-1991), the TPLF managed to almost uniformly unite the people of Tigray under its leadership. This is to say that the TPLF has been successful to inculcate the ideals of its political orientation (named in Tigrigna as *Mesmer*) in the minds of the Tigrayan people. This is expressed in terms of the wider popular consensus on the long-term visions and goals of the Front for the region (Abera, 2018: interview)¹⁰⁴. As reflections in group discussions and key-informant interviews conducted in the study areas (Qafta Humera and Mekelle) show, there seems a general belief that if the Tigrayan people stride steps through the TPLF *Mesmer*, they would achieve incredible victory in the political, social, and economic fronts. It seems, therefore, that this level of legitimacy enables the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray to penetrate deep into the society to build organizational structures for mass mobilization and control from the top down to the grassroots level.

Local communities in both rural and urban Tigray are organized into networked units of development groups (known in Tigrigna as *gudijile limat*) and one-to-five networks that are instrumental for public mobilization in development activities and political control. *Gudijile limat* is created in a particular locality by incorporating 25-30 people, which consists of five or six one-to-five networks (Berihu, 2019: interview)¹⁰⁵. Leaders of the one-to-five networks together constitute the leadership of the development group. Formally, development groups and one-to-five networks are government structures at the grassroots level (Semen *Wereda* Women's Affairs Office, 2019). Every individual in any local community is required to be part of a development group and connected into a one-to-five network (Britane, 2018: interview)¹⁰⁶. Any service or support, which is provided by the government, is channeled through these structures. For example, credit services provided by the Dedebit micro finance institution to enterprise developers in groups, safety net programs (food for work), and consumer goods like sugar and

¹⁰⁴ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was held on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁰⁵ Berihu Araya is a focal person in charge of facilitating Government-Intelligentsia cooperation in Semen *Wereda* (Sub city) TPLF office. The interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle

¹⁰⁶ Birtane Fisseha is a deputy speaker of Qafta *Wereda* Humera Council. The interview was held on April 30, 2018, Humera.

oil are distributed through these network structures (Teame, 2019: interview)¹⁰⁷. Because these organizational structures have strong impact on the daily lives of households and individual persons, they are serving the government as effective instruments of political control in the society and policy implementation.

Parallel to the government structures at the community level, there is also a party structure that is known in Tigrigna as *Wahyo* (Cell). It is created by incorporating 4-49 persons as the lowest unit of the TPLF (Berihu, 2019: interview)¹⁰⁸. This shows that there is no clear distinction between the government and party structures. Members of any development group are encouraged and sometimes induced to join the TPLF membership (Abreha, 2018: interview)¹⁰⁹. Indeed, the TPLF aggressively works to convince those who are outstanding and vibrant amongst the development group members to become its frontline members (Berihu, 2019: interview)¹¹⁰. In addition to the government and party structures, the regional government in Tigray also uses mass-based associations of Women, Farmers, and the Youth as tools of public mobilization and control (Abreha, 2018: interview)¹¹¹. In principle, these associations are independent and free of politics. However, since the times of the armed struggle (1975-1991), they have essentially been serving as the informal arms of the TPLF, and by extension, of the Regional Government of Tigray (Weldegiorgis, 2018: interview)¹¹².

Generally, the synergy among the three structures (government, party, and party-affiliated mass-based associations) strengthens the political and economic control of the government over the society to avoid any encumbrance in implementing the policy it chooses. Summing up, because of the relatively strong legitimacy it maintains, and the densely interconnected formal and informal networks built over time, the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray has enhanced its capacity to penetrate deep into the society and implement the policy it chooses on the ground.

¹⁰⁷ Teame Hatsey is a Speaker of Tabia Meles Council. The interview was conducted on June 13, 2019 in Mekelle.

¹⁰⁸ Berihu Araya is a focal person in charge of facilitating Government-Intelligentsia cooperation in Semen *Wereda* (Sub city) TPLF office. The interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle

¹⁰⁹ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

¹¹⁰ Berihu Araya is a focal person in charge of facilitating Government-Intelligentsia cooperation in Semen *Wereda* (Sub city) TPLF office. The interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle

¹¹¹ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

¹¹² Weldegiorgis Belay is a peasant residing in *Tabia* Rawyan. The interview was held on May 6, 2018 in Rawyan, Qafta Humera.

4.2.4. Public-Private Cooperation

A strong public-private partnership is at the heart of a successful developmental state. Accordingly, the government in a developmental state is expected to work in close collaboration with the private sector. Based on this view, as a developmental regime, the Government of the Tigray National Regional State has been attempting to involve the private sector in the processes of policy formulation, improvement, and implementation (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹¹³. Although this kind of collaboration lacks regularity and adequate institutionalization, the government considers the reflection of the private sector and uses it as an input in the process of policy formulation and implementation (Haftom, 2019: interview)¹¹⁴. But, this does not mean that all reflections of the private sector are useful inputs. To avoid demands that would undermine collective public interest and cause state capture by interest groups, the Region's government has been trying to maintain adequate distance from the private sector (Abera, 2018: interview)¹¹⁵. Therefore, establishing close public-private collaboration does not mean mixing up the government with the private sector and vice versa. Rather, it calls for synergetic work with certain distance that shows reciprocal relationship between the two.

If the public-private cooperation is to work in a desirable way, the government is required to discipline the private capital (Williams, 2014). Because the government in a developmental state does not only intend to create conducive environment for rapid economic growth, but also works to determine the direction and type of investment (Chibber, 2014), it necessitates a capacity to induce the private capital investment in priority sectors using incentives as contracts, not rewards. Accordingly, the Government of the Tigray National Regional State intends to use incentive packages like free duty capital goods, construction materials, and vehicles for investment projects, exemption of income tax for certain periods, loan facilities, creating market access, and cheap land supply (BTIUD, 2017), and so forth as ways of disciplining the private capital.

¹¹³ Girmay Gebrekidan is a director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was conducted on April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

¹¹⁴ Haftom Hagos is chairman of the Tigray Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. The interview was held on June 11, 2019, Mekelle.

¹¹⁵ Abera Tesfayis is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was held on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

According to Chibber's (2002) prescription, the incentives used by the Regional Government of Tigray, however, could only bring about the required discipline of the private capital if they are offered in the form of contracts attached to performance standards, not gifts. Indeed, the government has been trying to attach benchmarked performance standards to the incentives and supports it provides to enterprise developers in the industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy (Abera, 2018: interview)¹¹⁶. However, the government lacks institutional capacity to effectively use incentives as contracts. Consequently, there is no guarantee that, for instance, once appropriated funds, in the form of cheap loans from the government, are being used in a fruitful way by enterprise developers. Indeed, they certainly divert once appropriated funds to other channels that may yield quick return, mostly to the service sector, and as a result, undermine developmental priorities (*Ibid*).

Against the violation of the standard operating procedures by the enterprise developers in using the funds appropriated for a particular line of investment, what the government of the Tigray National Regional State should strive to do is ensuring that the incentives should not turn out to be gifts, but contracts attached with performance standards. That is, as Chibber (2014) explains, the government should ensure that in exchange for the cheap loan facilities, the market networks created, cheap land supply, duty free goods, exemption of income tax for certain periods, and so forth, private owners are investing as per benchmarked performance standards; otherwise it could take corrective measures upon them. However, the problem is that public-private cooperation, in the first place, is not strongly institutionalized in the Tigray National Regional State (Tilahun, 2018: interview)¹¹⁷. This problem is largely attributed to the lack of creative and capable leadership at the regional level (Haftu, 2018: interview)¹¹⁸.

There have been attempts to establish institutions or forums of dialogue between the private sector and the government. Indeed, there are sector-specific associations through which the private sector communicates its problems with the government. However, these forums are nominal and lack to serve continuous engagements between the two (Girmay, 2018:

¹¹⁶ Abera Tesfayis a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was held on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹¹⁷ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

¹¹⁸ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

interview)¹¹⁹. Such forums are also nominal because they are not in a position to genuinely address the real concerns of the private sector (Mulu, 2019). This problem is attributed to the lack of trust between the government and the private, which is a national problem that undermines synergy between the two (Arkebe, 2015). Although the government officially claims that it is not the public, but the private sector, which is the engine of development (BPF, 2016, 2018), it does not actually give it adequate space in the economic front. Therefore, the common belief that the developmental state agenda is a joint project that is grounded in the alliance between the political elite and domestic private sector (Evans, 1995) is not really working well in the Tigray National Regional State.

4.2.5. Emphasis on Manufacturing Industry

As the developmental state strategies of development are shaped by a government commitment that privileged increasing wealth accumulation through sustainable industrial growth, the TPLF-led government in Tigray places emphasis on the industrial sector of the economy. However, this does not mean that the government relegates other economic sectors to a secondary status, particularly, the agricultural sector. Currently, traditional agriculture is the mainstay of the region's economy. Without transforming or modernizing the agricultural sector of the economy, industrialization would not proceed well. Accordingly, within the framework of Ethiopia's strategy of development, the Regional Government of Tigray introduced a development strategy for the region in the 1990s, known as Conservation-based Agricultural Development-led Industrialization (CADLI). CADLI envisages two stages of economic development: enhancing agricultural productivity and modernization, which subsequently would lead towards industrialization that focuses on the manufacturing subsector (Neway, 2019). CADLI as a strategy is designed to serve only up to a particular stage of development. That is, after a particular stage, the industrial sector is expected to take the lead in the region's economy (*Ibid*).

The TPLF-led government adopted such a two-phased strategy because it understands that without extensive progress in the agricultural sector, in terms of productivity and modernization, the drive towards industrialization would be essentially constrained (Tadesse, 2018:

¹¹⁹ Girmay Gebrekidan is a director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was conducted on April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

interview)¹²⁰. In terms of GDP growth, Tigray has recorded remarkable achievements in the last 28 years. Particularly, when we calculate the growth rate in the last thirteen years (2005-2018), on average, Tigray has achieved 10.7% annual GDP growth (BPF, 2010, 2016, 2018). Sector-specific contribution to the achieved level of growth varies. While agriculture grew on average by 7.48%, industry registered 11.84% growth, and the service sector grew by 12.46% in the last thirteen years (*Ibid*). Such an impressive achievement could be attributed to the implementation of the developmental state policies since the beginning of the 2000s. Specifically, the 10.9% average annual GDP growth registered during the first GTP period (2010-2015) was so remarkable, because it enabled the region to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (BPF, 2016: 6).

In terms of the share to the regional gross domestic product (GDP), at the conclusion of the third year of the region's second GTP in 2018, agriculture, industry, and services constituted 36.57%, 25.98%, and 37.45 % respectively (BPF, 2018: 5). While the industrial sector constitutes one-fourth of the region's GDP, the share of the manufacturing subsector, which is at the core of structural economic transformation, is very smaller, not more than 10% (*Ibid*). This shows that although achievements have been recorded in terms of GDP growth, almost three decades have elapsed since the adoption of CADLI strategy without significant structural transformation in the region's economy. As Mulu (2019: 687) points out, the rapid structural economic transformation in the successful Northeast Asian developmental states like South Korea and Taiwan in which 'the private sector has played a prominent role [shows] that the manufacturing sector, not only grew faster but also more than doubled its share in GDP in about twenty years, accounting for about 30 percent'. However, this subsector remains in Tigray, and Ethiopia at large, weak, and small due to the lack of implementation capacity.

At the policy level, the Regional Government of Tigray places emphasis on the industrial sector, particularly, the manufacturing subsector (BPF, 2016). Based on the belief that an economy that is constituted the largest portion of it by industry is sustainable, the Regional Government is aspiring to achieve transition from an agrarian dominated economy to a manufacturing industry-

¹²⁰ Tadesse Weldegebriel is a deputy head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

led economy (Tilahun, 2018: interview)¹²¹. Accordingly, the government has to expand the subsector in terms of creating employment opportunities and its share to the region's GDP. To do so, it focuses on creating conducive environment for small and medium level manufacturing enterprise development (SMMIA, 2017). Particularly, the Government of Tigray has been trying to facilitate the expansion of priority manufacturing industries in textile and garment, leather and leather products, and agro-processing to lead the drive towards industrialization (BPF, 2010, 2016, 2018). These industries are chosen based on the comparative advantage¹²² they provide to the region, because they have relatively strong linkage with the agricultural sector of the economy (Abera, 2018: interview)¹²³.

Labor intensive, import-substitution, and export-oriented manufacturing enterprises are prioritized in order to create employment opportunities and earn, as well as, save foreign currency. To this end, the government is expected to provide supports that would enhance the capacity of the manufacturing enterprises produce quality products that would effectively compete in the domestic and international markets (Tilahun, 2018: interview)¹²⁴. In the contemporary world, survival is mainly achieved through high level of competitiveness. It would be impossible to build sustainable and advanced industrial economy without engaging in producing competitive industrial goods in the international market.

The manufacturing subsector is at the heart of achieving industrial transition (or changing the structure of the economy) by producing competitive goods in the market (Yülek, 2018). However; it should be underlined that although the manufacturing subsector is largely (if not solely) desirable for structural economic transformation, it is a very difficult enterprise to sustain. The main challenge is that unlike the service sector, the manufacturing subsector would only survive if it is sufficiently competitive in the international market (Neway, 2029). It necessarily

¹²¹ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the TigrayNtional Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

¹²² Comparative advantage, here, means choosing priority industries based on the availability of factors of production like raw materials and labor that would help the Tigray region become more successful in achieving economic transformation.

¹²³ Abera Tesfayis a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was held on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹²⁴ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the TigrayNtional Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

faces external competition, be it domestic or foreign firm (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹²⁵. Therefore, the manufacturing subsector needs enhanced capacity to successfully compete with producers who have rich experience, modern technology, and information power to dominate the complex networks of the international market. However, industrial firms in a developing country like Ethiopia cannot possess such capacities. Therefore, there is a need for assistance from the government in several respects.

Although it is currently very difficult to protect the manufacturing industries from external competition for long, the Government of Tigray should provide the support that would enable the subsector enhance its capacity to effectively compete in the market. However, because of its limited technological and financial capabilities, the government is not in a position to provide sustainable support services to the enterprise developers in the manufacturing subsector; and consequently, the sector still remains weak, slow in progress, less competitive and underdeveloped (Haftom, 2019: interview)¹²⁶.

Generally, several factors that are constraining the pace of industrialization (growth in the manufacturing subsector) are discernible in the Tigray National Regional State. Among these factors, the most determinant one is that the agricultural sector is still dominantly traditional, which lacks modern management system and advancement in technology, and is poorly supported by scientific research to enhance productivity and commercialization (Tadesse, 2018: interview)¹²⁷. Agriculture is considered to be the basis for achieving economic transformation in Tigray (BPF, 2016). However, in the absence of modernization and commercialization of the sector, the course towards structural transformation will be rough and difficult. Indeed, although agriculture is expected to be a backbone of the industrial sector, it does not have the capacity to amply supply raw materials to the industrial sector in terms of both quantity and quality (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹²⁸.

¹²⁵ Girmay Gebrekidan is a director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was conducted on April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

¹²⁶ Haftom Hagos is chairman of the Tigray Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. The interview was held on June 11, 2019, Mekelle.

¹²⁷ Tadesse Weldegebriel is a deputy head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

¹²⁸ Girmay Gebrekidan is a director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was conducted on April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

At the policy level, in Tigray, like in Ethiopia in general, higher emphasis is placed on smallholder agriculture (*Ibid*). Accordingly, the government has been trying to modernize and commercialize the sector through providing rural peasants with technical assistance in their fields, credit services, and modern inputs that would help enhance productivity (Tadesse, 2018: interview)¹²⁹. However, questions often have arisen whether smallholder peasant agriculture has the capacity to produce enough raw materials to facilitate the pace of industrialization. It may be argued that large-scale mechanized agriculture would play more vital role in the process of industrialization than smallholder agriculture. Nevertheless, what matters most is the level of transformation and commercialization, not special focus on either of the two.

While large-scale mechanized agriculture played a crucial role to achieve structural economic transformation in some Latin American countries like Brazil and Chile, smallholder agriculture was at the heart of economic transformation in the East Asian states, such as South Korea and Taiwan (Semere, 2018: interview)¹³⁰. Therefore, the problem in Tigray is not exclusive focus on smallholder agriculture, but low level of productivity and commercialization. Smallholder agriculture could supply raw materials in abundance to the industrial sector. However, this could be possible if the subsector is significantly transformed in terms of productivity and quality of products. As indicated earlier, the CADLI strategy gives particular emphasis to smallholder agriculture. However, this should not limit the government from focusing on developing large-scale mechanized agricultural enterprises, particularly, in western Tigray. Tigray needs, therefore, to focus both on the smallholder agriculture and large-scale mechanized farms in the lowlands. This is because, currently, the smallholder alone would not sufficiently supply raw materials to the industrial sector of the economy.

Tigray has a huge potential for large-scale mechanized agricultural development, particularly, in its western zone. Indeed, the Regional Government has been attempting to facilitate the development of large-scale mechanized agriculture in this part of the region, based on the assumption that the agro-processing industries under construction would be successful if the private investors are widely involved in the production and supply of raw materials in terms of

¹²⁹ Tadesse Weldegebriel is a deputy head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

¹³⁰ Semere Equbay is a senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute. The interview was held on August 2, 2018, Addis Ababa.

quality and quantity (Tadesse, 2018: interview)¹³¹. For this purpose, extensive arable land is leased out to investors (*Ibid*). However, the problem is that these investors are using capacities that are not different from the smallholder farmers in their production activities (Gebretinsae, 2018: interview)¹³². Most of them are not fundamentally different from the smallholders in terms of the technology and inputs they employ to undertake their production activities (Tadesse, 2018: interview)¹³³. While such investors are expected to introduce and use modern technologies that cannot be introduced and used by the local smallholder peasants, they are actually doing what the local smallholder peasants can do, and disappointingly, their productivity per hectare is, on average, smaller than that of the local smallholder peasants (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹³⁴. Moreover, they are seasonal producers who essentially wait for rain as the local smallholders do (Amdom, 2018: interview)¹³⁵. In short, many of them often fail to use the basic components of agriculture that would enable them enhance productivity (Tadesse, 2018: interview)¹³⁶.

The reason for this is that most of the investors engaging in commercial agriculture, particularly, in western Tigray are traditional and less literate; they have either less interest in or limited knowledge to use modern technology that enhances productivity in their fields (*Ibid*)¹³⁷. The worst thing is that such investors are broadly involving in rent-seeking activities, and use to rent the land they took at a minimum lease price (in the name of investment) to other developers and, simply collect money in cash without adding any value to it (Alganesh, 2018: interview)¹³⁸. Moreover, many of the agricultural investors are essentially absentee landholders (*Ibid*)¹³⁹. They undertake cultivation activities from a distance through representatives known in Tigrigna as

¹³¹ Tadesse Weldegebriel is a deputy head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

¹³² Gebretinsae Gebremichael is a peasant living in Tabia Rawyan. The interview was held on May 6, 2018, Rawyan

¹³³ Tadesse Weldegebriel is a deputy head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

¹³⁴ Girmay Gebrekidan, Director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency, Interview, April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

¹³⁵ Amdom Berhe is a peasant residing in MayKadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018, in Maykadra, Qafta Humera.

¹³⁶ Tadesse Weldegebriel is a deputy head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*

¹³⁸ Alganesh Gebreegziabher is *Tabia* Rawyan Women's Affairs Chairwoman. The interview was held on May 5, 2018, Rawyan

¹³⁹ *Ibid*

Kobreerti, who manage the production process in the field (Tadesse, 2018: interview)¹⁴⁰. Foreign investors in the agricultural sector in Tigray are rare because production cost is high as the sector intensively uses manual labor, which discourages the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) to the region (*Ibid*)¹⁴¹.

Generally, the main problem that constrains improvements in terms of productivity and commercialization in both the smallholder and large-scale agricultural sectors in Tigray, as indicated above, is lack of adequate supply in modern inputs, the practice of backward technology and traditional management systems. Moreover, weakness of the Regional Government to effectively exploit available opportunities in areas with huge agricultural potential is another reason for the lack of surplus production in the region. For example, western Tigray, especially, the Humera area, has immense but unexploited potential for agricultural development. However, agricultural experts and the local people contend that the government places less emphasis on exploiting such a huge potential. To achieve food self-sufficiency and surplus produce at the regional level, agricultural experts suggest that there is a need to place greater emphasis on building irrigation dams to use the extensive arable land available in western Tigray (Tadesse, 2018: Interview)¹⁴².

The agricultural sector in Tigray, like in Ethiopia in general, is essentially characterized by low levels of modernization and productivity (*Ibid*). This is to say that the sector is not in a position to adequately supply raw materials in terms of quality and quantity to the industrial sector. However, peasants in western Tigray argue that in areas of relatively surplus produce, they lack market access to their products, particularly, during the harvesting season (Amdom, 2018: interview)¹⁴³. Lack of market access for peasants, in this regard, implies lack of chance to attain profits through selling what they produce. This discourages them to introduce modern inputs and produce more in their fields.

¹⁴⁰ Tadesse Weldegebriel is a deputy head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*

¹⁴² Tadesse Weldegebriel is a deputy head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

¹⁴³ Amdom Berhe is a peasant residing in MayKadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018, in Maykadra

Modernization and high level of productivity in the sector, therefore, would be high if agriculture remains a profitable business. However, in the absence of adequate market access, agriculture will not become a profitable business. The government believes that a lasting solution to this problem is the development of agro-processing industrial enterprises (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹⁴⁴. Accordingly, if we take western Tigray as an example, an agro-processing industrial park is under construction at Ba'eker, few kilometers away from Humera town. However, it should be noted that the current level of modernization and productivity might not be able to supply enough raw materials to the agro-processing enterprises that would be established within the industrial park under construction. Therefore, in order to avoid cyclical problems, a strong linkage should be created between the agro-processing industries to be established and the agricultural sector of the economy. However, this would be possible only if a remarkable progress is achieved in terms of modernization and productivity in the agricultural sector.

In addition to the limited availability of raw materials, as a result of low level of agricultural modernization and productivity, the pace of industrialization in Tigray is also slowing down due to weak support-providing institutions, bureaucratic inefficiencies, backward infrastructure in electricity (frequent power disruptions) and telecom, poor culture of research and development, limited trained human power in terms of quantity and quality, and lack of interest and capacity on the part of the private sector to invest in the manufacturing subsector (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹⁴⁵.

Tigray as a region has poor support-providing institutions. This is because the credit service institutions are weak and, the research and development institutions are either less institutionalized or absent (Abera, 2018: interview)¹⁴⁶. The Regional Government shows strong commitment to creating conducive business environment for the private sector to invest in the manufacturing subsector. It provides investors with land at a minimum lease price (0.75 *Birr* per square meter in Mekelle, and 0.5 *Birr* in the other eleven big towns), credit services, tax

¹⁴⁴ Girmay Gebrekidan, Director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency, Interview, April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁴⁵ Girmay Gebrekidan, Director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency, Interview, April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁴⁶ Abera Tesfayis a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was held on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

exemption, market networks, and technology extension service (Tilahun, 2018: interview)¹⁴⁷. However, although the Regional Government has been trying to create conducive environment for investment, there are still serious limitations in terms of providing support services (Haftom, 2019: interview)¹⁴⁸.

Land for investment, as indicated above, is transferred at a minimum lease price to investors. There are, however, bureaucratic inefficiencies and exclusive standards set by the government for particular cities and towns that essentially complicate the process of transferring land to investors. It will take years for investors to acquire a license and land for investment. Moreover, in the twelve big cities and towns¹⁴⁹ in the Tigray National Regional State, land is transferred to investors at a minimum lease price (0.50-0.75 *Birr*) fixed by the Regional Government. However, there is no clear price set by the government for the emerging towns (Gebremedhin, 2018: interview)¹⁵⁰. This may result in the concentration of investment and resources in particular cities and towns. Another problem is the issue of providing microenterprise developers with access to working areas (workshops), particularly, in urban areas.

The working area (shed) is given to microenterprise developers through a contractual arrangement for five years in the absence of adequate infrastructure (Leul, 2019: interview)¹⁵¹. As a result, lack of infrastructure would make developers to transfer their working areas to other new entrants before they enter into production stages because their contract period would expire at the end of the fifth year (*Ibid*)¹⁵². Because of delays in infrastructure expansion (road, electricity, and water services), in the working areas prepared by the urban municipalities, micro-enterprise developers often forced to start paying interest rates for the credit they

¹⁴⁷Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁴⁸Haftom Hagos is chairman of the Tigray Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. The interview was held on June 11, 2019, Mekelle.

¹⁴⁹The twelve big cities and towns in Tigray are: Alamata, Korem and Michew (in the southern Zone of the region); Mekelle (the capital city of the region); Wukro and Adigrat (in Eastern Zone), Abyi Adi, Adwa and Aksum (in the central Zone); Shire and Sheraro (Northwestern Zone); and Humera (in the Western Zone of the region).

¹⁵⁰Gebremedhin Yifter is an expert in charge of Coordinating integrated service for manufacturing development in *Wereda* Kafta Humera Office of TIURD. The interview was held on April 30, 2018, Humera

¹⁵¹Leul Alemayoh is speaker of Semein *Wereda* (Sub-City) Council. The interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle

¹⁵²*Ibid*

appropriated from microfinance institutions before they start producing marketable goods (Focus Group Discussion, 2019)¹⁵³.

The aspiration for industrialization or growth in the manufacturing subsector in Tigray is also being constrained by the shortage of foreign currency to import machineries and spare parts, lack of managerial and technical capacity due to the limited trained human power, limited energy supply, which is expressed in terms of frequent power disruptions, and shortage of market access for goods produced within the subsector (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹⁵⁴. These problems essentially limit productivity and investment in the manufacturing subsector within the region. This shows that the intended goal of transformation through remarkable progress in the manufacturing subsector is not undergoing well.

The available credit service institutions in Tigray are also extremely weak to provide enough services, although the culture of saving is relatively good in the region (Haftom, 2019: interview)¹⁵⁵. That is, the financial institutions available have very limited capacity and slow, as well as, archaic delivery of services in providing loans to their customers (Leul, 2019: interview)¹⁵⁶. There are two alternative arrangements to find access to credit services: 40% or 60% (if a developer saves 40 percent of the initial capital to begin a project, the government will cover the rest 60% in the form of loan to be repaid) and, the second is the collateral loan (a developer would have access to credit service in banks, if he/she has an asset in kind that would serve as a guarantee to the bank if he/she fails to repay it (Gebremedhin, 2018: interview)¹⁵⁷. The second alternative has serious limitations. Investors who have the capacity in terms of knowledge and skills to involve in manufacturing enterprise development would lack the chance, because they do not have a private capital like building that could be used as collateral assets for appropriating personal loans. Summing up, in terms of the procedures they follow, and the

¹⁵³ Focus group discussion conducted on June 13, 2019 with micro enterprises developers in groups in Tabia Meles, Mekelle.

¹⁵⁴ Girmay Gebrekidan, Director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency, Interview, April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁵⁵ Haftom Hagos is chairman of the Tigray Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. The interview was held on June 11, 2019, Mekelle.

¹⁵⁶ Leul Alemayoh is speaker of Semein *Wereda* (Sub-City) Council. The interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle

¹⁵⁷ Gebremedhin Yifter is an expert in charge of Coordinating integrated service for manufacturing development in Qafta Humera *Wereda* Office of TIURD. The interview was held on April 30, 2018, Humera

capacity they have, the financial institutions in the Tigray region lack the capacity to provide sufficient credit services to enterprise developers of any kind (Haftom, 2019: interview)¹⁵⁸.

Another problem regarding the provision of support services is that although there have been attempts to expand consultation and industrial extension services through a collaborative work of universities, research institutes and the region's Technical and Vocational Training Education Bureau (TVTE), such attempts do not actually touch the ground (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹⁵⁹. This is because, as indicated earlier, the research and development institutions are less institutionalized and, in some cases, are almost absent (Abera, 2018: interview)¹⁶⁰.

In addition to the requirements discussed above, the process of industrialization needs a strong and visionary private sector. However, the private sector in the Tigray National Regional State is very weak, and does not have the capacity and interest to invest in the manufacturing subsector (Tilahun, 2018: interview)¹⁶¹. This is also a problem at the country level in Ethiopia. As Neway (2019) points out, due to its weak capacity in terms of knowledge, skills, and capital, the private sector in Ethiopia is less interested to invest in the manufacturing subsector. This implies that due to the limited capacity of the domestic private sector in Tigray, and Ethiopia at large, doing well in the manufacturing subsector is very difficult. This is because competition is stronger in the manufacturing subsector than in other sectors of the economy (*Ibid*). Particularly, competition in the service and construction sectors is local-based. Accordingly, domestic private investors want to concentrate on construction and service sectors, because quicker return would be gained in these sectors than the manufacturing subsector. These sectors are profitable, because, particularly, the service sector is strongly protected from external competition (Haftom, 2019: interview)¹⁶².

¹⁵⁸ Haftom Hagos is chairman of the Tigray Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. The interview was held on June 11, 2019, Mekelle.

¹⁵⁹ Girmay Gebrekidan, Director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency, Interview, April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁶⁰ Abera Tesfayis a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was held on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁶¹ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁶² Haftom Hagos is chairman of the Tigray Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. The interview was held on June 11, 2019, Mekelle.

The service sector in Ethiopia is largely reserved to the domestic investors, and non-Ethiopian nationals are not fully allowed to invest in this sector (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹⁶³. Therefore, investing in the service sector is an easy business, because it needs small startup capital and yields quick returns with a high level of profit (Mulu, 2019). Generally, as a source from the Investment Directorate in the Bureau of Trade, Industry and Urban Development (BTIUD) (2019)¹⁶⁴, in the last 25 years (1993-2018), 9035 domestic investment projects with a total capital of more than 140 billion *Birr* and 185, 297 permanent job opportunities were approved in the Tigray National Regional State. In the same period, ten foreign direct investment projects (five in agriculture and five in manufacturing) with a total capital of about 562.3 million U.S dollars and 3, 066 permanent job opportunities were registered in Tigray. Of these ten investment projects, six (two in agriculture and four in the manufacturing subsector) entered into operation, while one, within the manufacturing subsector, was under implementation stage, and the rest three, within the agricultural sector, were still inactive until May 2019 (BTIUD, 2019)¹⁶⁵.

With regard to the domestic projects, in terms of number, the shares of agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and services were 22.7, 24.1, 37.22, and 13.62 percent respectively. And, in terms of the amount of capital registered, the shares of agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and services were 5.3, 43.84, 31.19, and 18.29 percent respectively (*Ibid*). The average profile shows that more than 50% of investment in the region has been concentrated in the construction and service sectors. This is also strongly reflected in the investment profile recorded during the first five years (2010-2015) growth and transformation plan of the Tigray region (BPF, 2016). Within the five years, on average, of the overall amount of investment registered in the region, 58% was in the service and construction sectors combined, while 29.1 and 12.9 percent, were registered in agriculture and manufacturing respectively (BTIUD, 2019)¹⁶⁶. In terms of the amount of capital, the construction and service sectors together registered 54.6%, while agriculture and manufacturing registered 22.8 and 22.6 percent, respectively (SMMIA, 2017:8). This trend suggests that unless the government steadily

¹⁶³ Girmay Gebrekidan, Director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency, Interview, April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁶⁴ Compiled from data obtained from the Tigray Region's Bureau of Trade, Industry and Urban Development Investment Directorate, May 2019

¹⁶⁵ Compiled from data obtained from the Tigray Region's Bureau of Trade, Industry and Urban Development Investment Directorate, May 2019

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*

intervenes to balance and redirect the flow of investment more towards the manufacturing subsector, it would be difficult to achieve rapid and structural transformation in the region's economy.

Some observers like Berhanu (2011) attribute the absence of a strong and vibrant public sector that engages in manufacturing production activities to the government's policy that exclusively favors public and party-affiliated endowment companies. Their argument is that the private sector is crowded out by huge government investment in the economy. However, public officials dismissed such an allegation as groundless, and argue that the government concentrates on two things: first, it is aggressively investing in the infrastructural and human capital development that would help create conducive business environment for the private sector to thrive in general, and second, on providing direct assistance to priority industries such as textile and garments, leather and leather products, and agro-processing industries (Tilahun, 2018: interview)¹⁶⁷. Moreover, to encourage and facilitate the development of the private sector, the government has a strategy of 'progressively withdraw[ing] its entities from areas that can be efficiently [covered] by the private sector' (Mulu, 2019: 690), and only concentrates in addressing the gaps created by market failures (Girmay, 2018: interview)¹⁶⁸.

Contrary to the official claims of the government, however, some observers counter-argue that the government favors public and party-affiliated endowment companies (like EFFORT) over privately owned enterprises (Berhanu, 2011). The argument is that in terms of access to credit and foreign currency services, the government gives priority to firms within the realm of the public sector and endowment companies (Mulu, 2019). This means that the private sector is relatively cornered out or marginalized from government support services. This is another reason for the absence of strong private sector and, subsequently, slows industrialization process in the Tigray National Regional State.

Summing up, with the launch of *Tehadso* (renewal) in 2001, the Regional Government of Tigray has been attempting to shape development in the region based on the ideals of the democratic developmental state. Nevertheless, when evaluated against the basic features of the

¹⁶⁷ Tilahun Tareke was a director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency. The interview was held on April 16, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁶⁸ Girmay Gebrekidan, Director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Agency, Interview, April 18, 2018, Mekelle.

developmental state, Tigray shows mixed results. It has a relatively autonomous government with adequate freedom to chart its development policies and a committed leadership that prioritizes popular interest and takes development as a matter of survival. However, due to the pervasive presence of rent-seeking tendencies within the government and the society, the leadership in the policy making circle would not be safe from capture by interest groups. Moreover, because of the pervasive patronage networks within the government structures, the political leadership in Tigray is not sufficiently clean from rent-seeking tendencies and corruption.

In terms of capacity, the regional government in Tigray has a densely interconnected party, government and party-affiliated mass associations that enable it deeply penetrate into the society and have tight economic and political control to avoid any encumbrance to implement the policy it chooses. Nevertheless, it lacks to create strong and institutionalized public-private cooperation. Therefore, the common belief that the developmental state agenda is a joint project that is grounded on the alliance between the political elites and the domestic private capital is not actually working well in the region. Another limitation of the developmental state in the Tigray region is that while it records good achievements in terms of GDP growth, the region still lacks structural transformation in its economy. This problem is largely attributed to the low level of agricultural productivity, poor support services, limited human power, inadequate infrastructure, and weak, as well as, less interested private sector to invest in the manufacturing subsector. Generally, the limitations in the Tigray National Regional State suggest that if the developmental state is to work in a desirable way, the regional government should focus on enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of support-providing institutions and human capital.

Chapter Five: The Civil Service System in the Tigray National Regional State

The existence of merit-based civil service system (bureaucracy), which is capable and rule following (Evans, 1995), relatively autonomous, well-organized, accountable, and free of corruption is crucial to implement developmental state policies effectively and efficiently (Gebre and Melese, 2014). Such bureaucracy is required to be Weberian in its nature in that staffing or employment is based on 'competitive exam, promotion is by merit, remuneration is competitive..., tenure in office is long, sanctions for corruption are clear and effective, and leadership occurs through a pilot agency' (Doner, *et al*, 2005: 330) that is endowed with a disciplinary coordinating power over all government agencies (Chibber, 2002). Based on this assumption, this Chapter examines the civil service system in the Tigray National Regional State against the basic attributes of a merit-based bureaucracy.

5.1. Civil Service Reform

Within the framework of the federal civil service reform program, the Tigray National Regional State has been embarking on reforming the regional civil service system. The Ministry of Capacity Building (MCB), currently named as the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which was mandated to formulate the federal civil service reform program, segmented the reform program into five sub-programs, which include the top management, human resource management, service delivery improvement, government expenditure and control, and ethics subprograms (Adebabay, 2011; CBB, 2009). Because, with the introduction of federalism, Regional States were required to regionalize and adapt the national civil service reform program into their own administration and development purposes (Gebre and Melese, 2014), the civil service reform program in Tigray was formulated parallel to the reform program at the federal level (CBB, 2009). As a result, all components of the federal civil service reform program are components of the reform program at the regional level in Tigray (Tewodros, 2018: interview)¹⁶⁹.

Like in the federal government, the main objectives of the regional civil service reform program in Tigray has been building the capacity of the civil service for effectively implementing the region's development policies and programs, providing professional and fair services to the

¹⁶⁹ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

public, building accountable and transparent civil service system that is free of corruption, nepotism and partiality (CBB, 2009). In accordance with the civil service reform programs at the federal level, the Government of the Tigray National Regional State gave the mandate of regionalizing and adapting the civil service reform program to the region's Capacity Building Bureau (CBB), which later named as Civil Service Bureau (CSB). Accordingly, the CBB divided the regional civil Service reform program into five sub-reform programs: top management, human resource management, public service delivery, government expenditure management and control, and ethics sub-programs (*Ibid*).

The top management sub-reform program was intended to enhance strategic planning capacity of the leadership, inter-sectoral coordination (CSB, 2017), 'measure and manage regional performance, develop regional structures and systems for reporting, regional program and project management, managing regional value for money, among others' (Gebre and Melese, 2014: 96). The Human Resource Management sub-reform program was also designed to introduce human resource planning, human resource information systems, job classification and placement of civil servants, and provide legal basis for merit-based selection, recruitment, and promotion, and ensuring civil servants' capacity-building training and result-oriented performance appraisal to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity of civil servants (CBB, 2009; CSB, 2017). Likewise, the region's government expenditure management and control, as well as, the service delivery sub-reform programs were launched to improve progress in terms of efficiency, and effectiveness in public expenditure management and quality service delivery respectively; while the ethics reform sub-program was intended to develop regional codes of conduct for civil servants, promote ethics education, and establish a regional anti-corruption commission (CSB, 2017).

Generally, the National Regional Government of Tigray has been trying to implement the reform programs as instruments of building capable and merit-based civil service system. In order to facilitate the reform-based capacity-building of the workforce (human resource) and efficient service delivery, in line with the initiatives of the federal government, the Regional Government of Tigray introduced various reform tools, namely, Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Balanced Scorecard (BSC), change army, kaizen and Citizens' Charter.

5.2. The Reform Tools and their Implementations

In line with the directions of the federal government, the reform tools (i.e., BPR, BSC, change army, Kaizen, and Citizens' Charter) were introduced by the National Regional Government of Tigray to be implemented in all sector agencies (Kidane, 2018: interview)¹⁷⁰. Depending on what Hammar and Champy (1993), Davenport (1993), and Vidgen, *et al*, 1994) pointed out regarding the objective of BPR, Abera (2018: interview)¹⁷¹ explained that BPR was introduced by the Regional Government of Tigray to radically change the civil service system in order to reduce cost, improve quality and speed in work flows, improve effectiveness in service provision by avoiding excessive bureaucratic and complex decision-making procedures, employ enabling technologies, and ensure public employees' accountability.

After BPR, BSC was introduced by the National Regional Government of Tigray to enhance leadership and civil servants' capacity, ensure the culture of performance, process efficiency in the civil service system, and customers' satisfaction (Tewodros, 2018: interview)¹⁷². In short, as a measurement of public service performance, BSC has been implementing in Tigray to align individual performance with organizational goals (*Ibid*). Moreover, because BSC is helpful to align all levels of staff around a single strategy and translate organizational strategic objectives into a set of performance indicators (Jonson, 2007), it has been one of the most widely implementing tools in the Tigray National Regional State (Kidane, 2018: interview)¹⁷³.

The change-army is also another reform tool that has widely been implementing in the Tigray National Regional State. As a reform tool, it was introduced to modernize and strengthen the civil service system through a teamwork approach to improve managerial effectiveness and productivity of the workforce (Gebre and Nigussie, 2016; MPSHRD, 2017). The change-army has been exorbitantly popularizing by the Regional Government of Tigray as the best mechanism of achieving the designated goals of the developmental state. Accordingly, the government has

¹⁷⁰ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁷¹ Abera Tesfayis is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was made on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle

¹⁷² Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁷³ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

streamlined it into the civil service system to create a strong teamwork, which acts as a standby-armed force for achieving the goals of the developmental state (Gebre, 2014). As Abera (2018: interview)¹⁷⁴ explained, the change-army at the regional level in Tigray is required to be built in line with the ideals of the developmental state, so that it would be able to achieve the predominance of developmental thinking over a rent-seeking political economy. To this end, the process of building the change-army is needed to proceed by eliminating all sources of rent-seeking, corruption, and predatory activities (*Ibid*). For this purpose, the concept of the change-army organization is needed to shape the behaviors and attitudes of civil servants across government agencies and the general public (Haftu, 2018: interview)¹⁷⁵.

As the official document of the federal government (MPSHRD, 2017), which is directly adopted by the National Regional Government of Tigray shows, the change army across public agencies (from the top up to the bottom) is needed to attain uniformity in terms of ideas, attitudes and clarity on the developmental policies of the government. Based on this view, the objective of organizing the civil service, based on the direction of the change army, as Worku (2019) points out, is bringing about public consensus by involving the synergy of three wings, i.e., the government, the public, and the party.

The government wing represents the entire civil service system, which consists of five levels: the top-level management, middle-level management, work team (lower level leadership), frontline (model) civil servants, and individual civil servants (MPSHRD, 2017). It is generally responsible to achieve policy effectiveness. The public wing is like a forum, which involves mass-based associations of the youth, women, and peasants; professional associations like the Teachers Association, cooperatives, the private sector, and other stakeholders (*Ibid*). This change-army wing is supposed to articulate the interests of service users (the public) and influence the government wing to prioritize public interest, rather than personal or group interests (Kifle, 2018: interview)¹⁷⁶. The party wing, on its part, focuses on building consensus within the society on the main goals of development. Therefore, it is in charge of orienting civil servants and the public to

¹⁷⁴ Abera Tesfayis a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was made on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁷⁵ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁷⁶ Kifle Girmay is a Public Relations officer in the Tigray Teachers' Association. The interview was held on April 23, 2018, Mekelle.

sufficiently understand and successfully implement development policies of the government (Abera, 2018: interview)¹⁷⁷.

Kaizen and Citizens' Charter are also reform tools that have been implementing in Tigray in order to improve performance and facilitate efficient delivery of public services. Kaizen as a reform tool was introduced to motivate and improves the morale of employees because it is a participatory and human-oriented philosophy of management (MPSHRD, 2018). In line with the directions of the federal government, the Regional Government of Tigray has been implementing Kaizen; because it is helpful to accelerate reform, eliminate waste, save cost, improve engagement between the management body and workers, enhance labor productivity, improve job satisfaction and creativity, enhance office efficiency, and improve process (service delivery) and quality (*Ibid*).

Citizens' Charter which refers to 'agreements between citizens and service ... providers that clearly lay down expectations and standards in the realm of service delivery' (Saxena, 2013: 10) is also recently introduced to improve service delivery and ensure the accountability of civil servants. As a reform tool, Citizens' Charter is expected to necessarily reflect citizens' priorities and include well-functioning grievance redressing mechanism to narrow the gap between service demands and delivery (*Ibid*). Therefore, it has been implementing by the Regional Government of Tigray as a mechanism to ensure the quality of service provisions in accordance with the standards established, agreed and publicized based on consultation between government agencies and the public (MPSHRD, 2018). Generally, as a reform tool, Citizens' Charter is introduced to improve efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and good governance (Kidane, 2018: interview)¹⁷⁸.

Generally, the reform tools have been implementing in all government agencies at the regional level in Tigray in order to fundamentally alter the civil service system into a modern, capable and merit-based system that would enable the government achieve its policy objectives. However, as some studies (Adebabay, 2011; Gebre, 2014; Worku, 2019) reveal that the implementation of these reform tools failed to bring about the expected results. To explain in the

¹⁷⁷ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was made on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁷⁸ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

words of Tilaye (2007, in Worku, 2019: 5), the main reason to fail these reform tools achieve their envisaged goals is that 'the programs of implementing these tools [have been] short-lived, and new ones would be introduced before observing the outcomes of the previous ones'. The argument is that the government has swiftly been introducing and implementing new reform tools without examining why the previous ones fail to achieve their designated objectives (Tewodros, 2018: interview)¹⁷⁹. This is to say that there has been inadequate time between the implementation of consequent reform tools to examine their impacts after intervention (Haftu, 2018: interview)¹⁸⁰.

Another problem that has been limiting the reform tools to achieve their targeted goals is that the government simply put such tools for implementation without adequately acquainting the civil servants with the necessary knowledge for their implementation. For instance, most civil servants do not sufficiently understand how the change-army is organized and functioning (Kifle, 2018: interview)¹⁸¹. Majority of the civil servants, of course, try to understand it in relation to the ability to implement tasks cooperatively (Zeray, 2018: interview)¹⁸². However, there is confusion whether the idea of the change army is universally applicable in all government agencies (Halefom Berhe, 2018: interview)¹⁸³. Generally, lack of achieving the envisaged targets after the implementation of the civil service reform is expressed in terms of limitations in the structural organization, human resource management, capacity, and quality service delivery in the civil service system.

5.3. Structure and Organization of the Civil Service

With the introduction of federalism, the EPRDF-led government undertook administrative reform that brought about decentralization of power to the Regional States. Generally, the introduction of federalism in Ethiopia established five levels of government structure (Federal,

¹⁷⁹ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁸⁰ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁸¹ Kifle Girmay is a Public Relations officer in the Tigray Teachers' Association. The interview was held on April 23, 2018, Mekelle.

¹⁸² Zeray Gebrehiwet is Education and Training Officer in the Tigray Teachers' Association. The interview was held on April 23, 2018, Mekelle

¹⁸³ Halefom Berhe is an expert in Kedamay Weyane Wereda Civil Service Office. The interview was held on March 19, 2018 in Mekelle.

Regional, Zonal, *Woreda* and *Kebele*). Based on this federal arrangement and decentralization of power, like other regional states in Ethiopia, Tigray has established a regionalized civil service system. However, unlike in some other Regional States like] Amhara, Oromia, and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's (SNNPs), the Zonal administration in Tigray lacks elected council and sector agencies. Indeed, the zonal administration in Tigray is excluded from the tiers of government established by the 2001-revised Regional Constitution. Article 45 of the constitution stipulates that the Tigray National Regional State is administratively organized into three levels of government: the regional, *wereda* and *tabia*.

Although the zonal administration in Tigray lacks elected council and sector agencies, as expressed in the revised proclamation No. 301/2018 (TNRS, 2018), it has an executive committee, which is delegated (by the regional government) to perform certain functions. For example, according to article 9 (3) of the Proclamation, the zonal administration is authorized to coordinate, supervise and support economic, social and cultural institutions, which operate in more than one *wereda* administration. Therefore, the zonal administration in Tigray is functional and powerful enough, especially, to politically control the *wereda* levels of administration. Nonetheless, only the regional, *wereda* and *tabia* levels of administration are constitutionally recognized tiers of government that have elected councils and executive bodies, which are responsible for governance, provision of public services and social, as well as, economic developments (TNRS, 2001).

The civil service system that comprises the organizational and institutional structures of sector bureaus and offices at the regional and *wereda* levels of administration respectively, and at the *tabia* level to a certain extent, are responsible to deliver public services. Parallel to almost all Regional Bureaus, sector offices are established in all *wereda* administrations in the Tigray National Regional State. However, the *tabia* level of administration lacks adequate organization and personnel to provide sector-based services that would satisfy public demands (Haftu, 2018: interview)¹⁸⁴.

Based on the idea of state-led development, the Government of the Tigray National Regional State has been trying to build an effective civil service system that reflects the basic attributes of

¹⁸⁴ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

a developmental state bureaucracy. However, it lacks coordination by a nodal agency that has financial and disciplinary powers over the region's policy agencies or bureaus and offices. Based on the experiences in the East Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore (Tsui-Auch, 2004; Caldentey, 2008; Chibber, 2002) show, Tigray needs such a specialized agency to have disciplinary and financial control over other policy agencies to effectively implement the developmental state policies.

In terms of the powers and functions specified in the Tigray Region's proclamation No. 215/2012 (TNRS, 2012) that established the regional executive and defines the powers and functions of each sector agency, one may assume that the Bureau of Planning and Finance (BPF) is there to play the role of a nodal agency within the region. According to article 10(5) of the Proclamation, BPF has the mandate to chart long-term, medium-term, and short-term regional development plans and provide policy ideas that would help implement them. The bureau is also authorized to coordinate and lead the preparation integrated long-term, medium-term, and short-term programs and projects of regional development to be collaboratively implemented by varied sector agencies and offices. Moreover, the BPF is also endowed with the power to supervise sector bureaus and offices to work as per the financial policies and laws of the region. Nevertheless, this government agency lacks essential powers of a disciplinary coordinating nodal agency.

Drawing on Low's (1993, in Tsui-Auch, 2004) view, if a developmental state civil service system is to be built at the Regional State level in Tigray, there should be a nodal agency that perform various functions (instead of few), which essentially shows its financial and decision-making powers over other agencies. Particularly, such agency should control other policy agencies in areas like investment promotion and endorsement, financing, development, and management of industrial parks, and the management of incentive packages. The nodal agency should also be a clearinghouse for information, a center for policy formulation, and powerful to discipline other agencies towards implementing the long-term goals of the region's policies, strategies and plans of development, and settle interagency conflicts. However, the BPF, which, perhaps, is expected to perform such multiple functions, lacks an overarching power that enables it to qualify a nodal agency.

There is no institutional and legal basis for making sector bureaus (agencies) accountable to a nodal agency in the Tigray National Regional State (Seife, 2018: interview)¹⁸⁵. All sector agencies have relatively equal power and are directly accountable to the region's chief administrator. Although the policy agencies in a developmental state are expected to be willingly responsive to the requests of the nodal agency for cooperation and have not a discretionary power to resist its orders for reporting information and policy implementation (Chibber, 2002), there is no institutional and legal ground for a single agency to have a direct control over the critical economic policy agencies in the Tigray National Regional State. Government agencies, including the Bureau of Trade, Industry and Urban Development (BTIUD), the Institute of Policy Studies (TIPS), the Statistical Agency (TSA), and the Investment and Export Promotion Commission (TIEPC), among others, are entrusted with specific policy-related tasks to be implemented, but lack coordination by a pilot agency.

According to the TNRS Proclamation number 306/2018 (Art. 5 and 10), the Tigray Institute of Policy Studies is mandated to undertake policy research that would generate new policy ideas and help avoid limitations of implementation, bring about positive impacts that would enhance institutional capacity, good governance, and development across sectors like agricultural and rural development, urban development, industry and macroeconomic dynamism. As stated in the TRNS Proclamation number 305/2018 (Art. 5 and 9), the Tigray Region's Statistical Agency also collects, organizes and makes up-to-date, quality and clear statistical data available to be used by the region's government to design a long-term development plan. Moreover, as stipulated in the TNRS Proclamation number 319/2019 (Art. 5 and 9), the region's Investment and Export Promotion Commission is also recently established to facilitate investment attraction, export promotion and provide support for the growth of the private sector's role in the region's economy. However, the problem is that these agencies are only directly accountable to the Tigray region's chief administrator, not to a coordinating nodal agency. This makes the regions civil service system to lack a basic attribute of a developmental state bureaucracy.

In the absence of a super-agency that coordinates and disciplines other policy agencies, fragmentation in terms of organization, interagency communication, and flow of information,

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plan formulation, and implementation, would undermine the ability of the government to shape the direction and pace of development in Tigray. Therefore, formulating integrated plans and their effective implementation requires the existence of a strong coordinating agency, which facilitates interagency communication and discipline other policy agencies to undertake their activities as per the directions of the government.

The absence of a nodal agency, which is endowed with a discretionary power over other policy agencies in the Tigray National Regional State is reflected in the inefficient utilization of available resources due to lack of inter-agency coordination in planning and implementation, particularly, in infrastructural development activities (Haftu, 2018: interview)¹⁸⁶. This shows that the Government of the Tigray National Regional State has been trying to undertake developmental state policies in the absence of a disciplinary coordinating agency, which is fully authorized to control other policy agencies of the region. However, as the experiences of failed developmental states (particularly, India) (Chibber, 2002) show, without such an agency, the developmental state policies in Tigray would not achieve their designated objectives.

Regarding the failed and successful developmental states, Chibber's (2002) comparative analysis between India and South Korea would be an important lesson for Ethiopia in general and Tigray in particular. Both India and South Korea had relatively comparable modern bureaucracies in the 1960s, which were designed to be coordinated by a nodal agency, the Planning Commission and the Economic Planning Board respectively. Nevertheless, the Indian Planning Commission failed to play the role of a legitimate nodal agency, because it lacked the requisite power to have control over other government agencies, while the Economic Planning Board of South Korea was able to compel discipline and performance from other government agencies (*Ibid*). This is because, while institutional basis in India limited the Planning Commission to have financial and disciplinary power over other state agencies, the apportionment of power in South Korea allowed the Economic Planning Board to have command on financial and disciplinary power over other government agencies (Tsui-Auch, 2004).

Drawing on the success of South Korea and the failure of India, therefore, to build an effective developmental state bureaucracy in the Tigray National Regional State, rule-following civil

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servants who are recruited and placed based on their merits, and a mere installation of a nodal agency are not enough. In addition to these, for the developmental state bureaucracy to be effective, it should be structured in a way interagency power relations would accommodate the mandate given to the nodal agency through an appropriate distribution of power among sector economic policy agencies of the region's government.

As indicated earlier, because the nodal agency is a center of policy designing and coordination, the staff of this agency should be carefully selected, adequately trained, trusted to plan and implement development policies, and programs with full authority (Chan, 1971, in Tsui-Auch, 2004). That is, the agency should be 'staffed with the best available managerial talent' (Ahrens and Stark, 2014: 111). When evaluated against these standards, the civil service in the Tigray National Regional State lacks functional merit system that enables the most talented civil servants available to assume merit positions in the economic bureaucracy. As a result, the civil service system in Tigray lacks the requisite capacity for effective policy implementation. This is because of the limited availability of qualified civil servants due to several problems in the process of selection, recruitment, and promotion. The next section deals in detail with these issues.

5.4. Human Resource Management and Capacity Building

Based on the view that appropriate human resource management (HRM) is essential for effective policy implementation and ensuring speedy social and economic development, the Government of the Tigray National Regional State (TNRS) has established a legal framework for human resource planning, merit-based selection, recruitment, promotion, placement, transfer, and performance evaluation, as well as, grievance handling mechanisms in the civil service system (Kidane, 2018: interview)¹⁸⁷.

Selection, recruitment, and promotion of civil servants at any level of administration in Tigray are supposed to be conducted based on merit-based competition (Tewodros, 2018: interview)¹⁸⁸. That is, any government organization in the region is expected to select employees through a

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¹⁸⁸ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

competitive examination in the form of interview and testing (*Ibid*). To this end, in line with the federal civil service legislation, the Tigray National Regional State civil service law provides sufficient legal basis to implement merit-based principles in selection, recruitment, promotion, transfer, and performance evaluation of civil servants (Gebre, 2014). As it is stipulated in the region's civil servants' proclamation No. 189/2011 (TNRS, 2011), selection, recruitment, and promotion are merit-based following open and fair competition (Art. 16(1)).

The Tigray region's civil servant proclamation also provides a basis for equal and fair treatment of applicants, as well as, staff members working in any public organization (Art.5 (2)). Moreover, equal pay for equal work (Art. 8 (1))- although the Proclamation provides for special salary scales to certain government agencies as per the nature of their works (Art. 8(3))- achievement-based performance evaluation and reward (Art. 5(1), promoting integrity and accountability of civil servants, and prioritizing public interests are core principles of human resources management in the region.

The Government of the Tigray National Regional State introduced the merit system with the intention of building a civil service that has the requisite capacity to effectively implementing development policies and strategies (Kidane, 2018: interview)¹⁸⁹. The emphasis on the capacity of the civil service, in this regard, is essential in that success in growth and development activities is essentially determined by the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service system (Cohen, 1995) as it was the case in the East Asian developmental states (notably, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore) (Waheed, 1999). This is to say that the performance of the civil service would determine the development performance of the region. Based on this view, the Regional Government of Tigray, therefore, has been trying to implement institutionalized meritocratic criteria in selection, recruitment, and promotion in the civil service system.

Although the Regional Government of Tigray, however, has laid down the legal basis for merit-based human resource management, administrative deficiencies and malpractices have been constraining the aspiration to implement the merit principles in the civil service. Among the main problems are the absence of uniform and institutionalized exam-based recruitment, lack of focus on professional relevance in placement of civil servants, and subjective performance

¹⁸⁹ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

evaluation of civil servants (Tewodros, 2018: interview)¹⁹⁰. Although civil servants in a developmental state are required to pass a centrally administered public service exam as an objective requirement, which is prepared by an 'independent body on public service employment' (Hyden, *et al*, 2003: 9), before being employed (Doner, *et al*, 2005), this is not fully implementing in the Tigray National Regional State (Kidane, 2018: interview)¹⁹¹.

In Tigray, in a bid to address quality problems in the civil service, graduates of level I-V in the Vocational Training Education institutions are required to pass quality assurance exams before being employed in any government organization. Such exams are exclusively applicable at the diploma level, for graduates of the Vocational Training Education. Graduates of the first degree and above are not subjected to take civil service exams after their graduation. Although the attempt to address quality problems at the diploma level should be appreciated, the Regional Government of Tigray is not employing regionally administered standard public service exams beyond the diploma level to select and recruit the most capable professionals available (Haftu, 2018: interview)¹⁹².

As stipulated in Article 17 of the TNRS (2011) civil servants' proclamation No. 189, bureaus and other government agencies at the regional level and the civil service office at each *wereda* administration are in charge of autonomously dealing with all matters relating to selection and recruitment of civil servants (Tewodros, 2018: interview)¹⁹³. In short, the region lacks a central agency that is responsible for exam-based selection and recruitment of civil servants. Rather, each sector agency at the regional level and the Civil Service Office in all *wereda* administration are responsible for hiring their own civil servants (Kidane, 2018: interview)¹⁹⁴. To explain this problem in the words of Peters (2001: 97), 'this system of decentralized [selection and] recruitment [would] ... allow considerable latitude for the use of partisan criteria in hiring' civil servants. The argument is that, in the absence of a well-institutionalized exam-based recruitment

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¹⁹² Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁹³ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁹⁴ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

of public employees, it is hardly possible to build a civil service system that reflects the basic qualities of a developmental state bureaucracy. Therefore, it would be recommended that exam-based selection and recruitment should be strictly and universally used across the board in order to build merit-based civil service system in the Tigray National Regional State.

Lack of attention to professional relevance in the process of selection, recruitment, and placement of employees is another problem that undermines the merit system in the Tigray National Regional State's civil service. In principle, as expressed in the civil service laws of the Region, merit-based recruitment and placement of civil servants are at the heart of building professional bureaucracy in Tigray (CSB, 2014). However, the actual practice seems to resonate contrarily. Regarding this issue, Tewodros (2018: interview)¹⁹⁵ expressed that because the civil service system in Tigray is still underdeveloped, there might be problems in recruiting and placing employees in terms of their capacity and profession, so that there have been obstacles that limit the applicant and the position to find each other. Likewise, as Tsegay (2018: interview)¹⁹⁶ also explained that 'the process of selection, appointment, and promotion of civil servants often disregards the relevance of profession. As a result, there have been problems in placing civil servants as per their professional backgrounds'. This problem calls for a careful remedial action from the government. The point is that meritocratic civil service system could not be built without ensuring professional relevance in the process of selection, recruitment, and placement of employees.

Administrative problems in conducting performance evaluation of individual civil servants also limit to effectively execute merit principles in the Tigray National Regional State. In principle, it is stated in the civil service laws of the Region that civil servants should be evaluated based on their achievements (TNRS, 2011). However, in practice, there are problems. Particularly, at the *wereda* level of administration, as Amaha (2018: interview)¹⁹⁷ expressed, many of the sector offices have problems in implementing result-oriented performance evaluation. The main problem is that there are no universal criteria for evaluating the performance of civil servants

¹⁹⁵ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

¹⁹⁶ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

¹⁹⁷ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

(Kidane, 2018: interview)¹⁹⁸. Consequently, lack of clear, objective, and universal criteria across sectors often leads to the tendencies of evaluating civil servants in terms of the personal relations they have with their immediate line managers, not based on their achievements (Tsegay, 2018: interview)¹⁹⁹. Tsegay further expressed that this problem is often reflected in the fact that majority of grievances brought by civil servants at every interval (mid-term and annual evaluations) in a year to the grievance hearing body at the *wereda* level of administration were cases related to performance evaluation. In short, political and personal interests affect performance evaluation results of civil servants, and consequently, the civil service system is often criticized for its failure to properly address these problems (Amaha, 2018: interview)²⁰⁰.

As Gebre and Melese (2014: 98), documented, in spite of few improvements, 'the merit-based ... [human resource management] in the Tigray Region is more functional in drafting regional proclamations, rules, regulations, and guidelines than implementing accordingly'. Therefore, the problem in the region is lack of strictly implementing the merit principles that would enable the government to build a civil service system that has the requisite capacity to achieve policy effectiveness. This makes it challenging for the Regional Government of Tigray to proceed within the framework of a developmental state model. Because the developmental state is all about delivery, it needs capable and merit-based civil service system (bureaucracy). However, a low-level of efficiency and effectiveness are critical problems in the Tigray region's civil service system (Abera, 2018: interview)²⁰¹.

Tigray, as a region, lacks capable or effective civil service system that has the required level of capacity to adequately implement its development policies and strategies (Haftu, 2018 interview)²⁰². The low profile of the region's civil service system in terms of education and training would be one factor that limits its implementation capacity. As the annual report of the Civil Service Bureau of Tigray (CSB, 2017: 5) shows, of the total civil servants of the region,

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¹⁹⁹ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

²⁰⁰ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

²⁰¹ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was made on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁰² Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

66.7 percent of them were either college diploma holders or below, while 32.7 percent were first degrees, and the remaining 0.6 percent were second degree and above. This shows that the civil service system in Tigray is constituted by ‘a large number of non-qualified experts’ (Gebre, 2014: 70). Consequently, in a bid to address this problem, along with the attempts to implement merit principles, the National Regional State Government of Tigray has been trying to enhance the capacity of the workforce through reform-oriented short-term and long-term capacity building trainings since the 1990s (Abera, 2018: interview)²⁰³.

Building capable civil service institutions is essentially dependent upon the quality of the available workforce, which is a determinant factor for successes in policy implementation (Neway, 2019). Accordingly, as (Gebre, 2014: 70) argues, ‘government institutions must provide an enabling environment and ‘necessary resources for enhancing civil servants’ knowledge and skills and allowing them to specialize and become versatile’. Based on this view, in line with the capacity building programs at the federal level, the Government of the Tigray National Regional State has continuously been offering trainings to enhance policy effectiveness through building the capability of civil servants in different sector bureaus and offices of the region (Kidane, 2018: interview)²⁰⁴. Attempts have been made to tune such trainings to the reform programs in order to modernize the civil service system and enhance the quality of service delivery (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²⁰⁵. Short-term and long-term trainings that enabled the government to achieve progress to a certain extent have been conducted across sectors (BPF, 2016). However, some evidence shows that the civil service capacity building trainings that have been conducted so far in the region do not help build the required level of capacity (Haftu, 2018: interview)²⁰⁶.

The very objective of the civil service capacity building is improving the quality of staff in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to effectively formulate and implement development policies and programs of the government. Moreover, civil service capacity building aims at achieving policy effectiveness through enhancing managerial and technical (expertise) capacity

²⁰³ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was made on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁰⁴ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²⁰⁵ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²⁰⁶ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

and ensuring remarkable work performance, team spirit, and scaling up of best practices across institutions within the civil service system (Gebre, 2014). However, this is not the case in the Tigray region. Most civil servants in the region lack the capability to achieve policy effectiveness (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²⁰⁷. This is because, the Regional Government's training programs fail to ensure that civil servants are acquiring the basic knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to undertake their tasks effectively. Consequently, because the civil service as an institution (particularly, at the *wereda* level of administration) lacks the requisite capacity of policy implementation, many essential local projects of development either remained unimplemented or failed to provide public services just few months after they entered into operation (Asefa, 2018: interview)²⁰⁸.

Because of the failure of the training programs (among other things) to build an effective civil service system, lack of capacity to implement policies and programs of development has become a serious problem at the regional level in Tigray (BPF, 2018). Likewise, as Abera (2018: interview)²⁰⁹ expressed, 'lack of proper policy implementation is at the heart of all problems limiting the Regional Government of Tigray to achieve its development objectives'. The problem, as government officials like Haftu (2018: interview)²¹⁰ argue is that while the government has good policies, it lacks the capacity to adequately implementing them.

Most of the capacity building trainings that have been conducted so far in the Tigray National Regional State failed to meaningfully build or enhance the capacity of the workforce, because they lacked relevance, focus, depth (Abera, 2018: Interview)²¹¹, adequate preparation (Tewodros, 2018: Interview)²¹², and skill gap analysis (Gebre, 2014). Instead of placing emphasis on enhancing the professional knowledge and skills of civil servants, most of the trainings focus on

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²⁰⁸ Asefa Gebremariam is a chairman of the Legal Affairs and Administration Standing Committee in the *Wereda* Qafta Humera Council. The interview was held on April 30, 2018, Humera

²⁰⁹ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was made on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

²¹⁰ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²¹¹ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was made on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

²¹² Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

political issues (Yemane, 2018: interview)²¹³. That is, in the name of professional capacity building, the ruling party has largely been using the training programs for the purpose of political indoctrination (Abreha, 2018: interview)²¹⁴. That is the civil service capacity building trainings have been undertaking in mass, for political purposes (Amaha, 2018: interview)²¹⁵, without specifying the areas where the required knowledge and skills of civil servants are lacking (Gebre, 2014).

Civil service capacity building training is required to be undertaken continuously. There is no problem in the Tigray National Regional State to do accordingly. The Government of the Region, indeed, places emphasis on the civil service capacity-building program. According to the Region's civil servants' proclamation No. 189/2011 (TNRS, 2011), it defines how and when to conduct human resource training, and improve the quality of the workforce for better policy implementation. However, such trainings lack implementation of a strategy that would address skill deficiencies of civil servants. In short, they lack the use of pre-training assessment to identify the skill gaps to be bridged through capacity building training interventions (Tsegay, 2018: interview)²¹⁶.

While capacity building training would be effective if the programs are held after a systematic skill gap analysis (Gebre, 2014), the case in Tigray is that trainings are mostly offered without conducting an assessment and identifying the appropriate target group (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²¹⁷. Besides, although civil service capacity building trainings have continuously been undertaken at the regional level in Tigray, their impacts have not been adequately assessed (*Ibid*). Assessing the performance of civil servants after the trainings would help identify areas where civil servants' skills are lacking. Nevertheless, lack of systematic skill gap analysis and absence

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²¹⁵ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

²¹⁶ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

²¹⁷ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

of planned mechanisms of monitoring performance evaluation are the main challenges limiting capacity development in the civil service (Amaha, 2018: interview)²¹⁸.

Lack of skill gap analysis has been the main cause for duplication of training, because it has been very difficult to distinguish civil servants who took a particular training from those who have not (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²¹⁹. This problem indicates that capacity building training in the Tigray National Regional State would be effective if such programs are conducted based on systematic skill gap analysis to determine weaknesses and have updated information regarding the gaps in the civil service, which need interventions.

The impact of capacity building training on the performance of civil servants is largely determined in terms of their performance evaluation results in their everyday work activities, tasks, and duties. The problem in Tigray, in this regard, seems to what Holton (1996, in Diamantinis and Chantzoglou, 2014: 151) points out that 'one of the reasons behind unsuccessful training program is the rare implementation of the training content by trainees in their job activities because of poor transfer design' and weak follow up and subjective performance evaluation. Objective performance evaluation, which is supported by continuous and close follow up is, therefore, important to carefully identify gaps that necessitate accountability and intervention in the Tigray National Regional State civil service system.

'[A]ccountability for results requires an effective performance evaluation system (Saxena, 2013: 8) based on strong monitoring and follow up to determine weaknesses, the relevance of the training, and devising intervention mechanisms. However, there have been limitations in the Tigray National Regional State in this regard. Several capacity-building trainings that have been conducted so far in the region lacked accountability for results and 'relevance to the civil servants' specific job description' (Gebre, 2014: 80). Moreover, as a result of the weak follow-up, poor and intermittent performance evaluation, and limited relevance of the training to the specific jobs, most civil servants have been showing less interest to take such trainings seriously

²¹⁸ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

²¹⁹ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

(Kidane, 2018: interview)²²⁰. That is, most civil servants of the Tigray region consider the capacity building training as less useful to improve their professional capabilities; rather, they often link such training to certain benefits such as traveling and participating with expenses covered than the actual objective of learning and enhancing individual performance (Amaha, 2018: interview)²²¹.

Another problem that limits the effectiveness of civil service capacity building in the Tigray Regional State is lack of unified and effective system of delivering training programs. As stipulated in the Tigray Civil Servants' Proclamation No. 189/2011 (TNRS, 2011), the responsibility for human resource development through short, medium, and long-term training is given to the Civil service Bureau and the *Wereda* Civil Service Offices. This shows that Regional Bureaus and *Wereda* Civil Service offices are autonomous to deal with all matters relating to human resource development under their dominions. This kind of power structure would result in disparity in terms of selection criteria and policy implementation. Against this problem, Tewodros (2018: interview)²²² argued that 'capacity building training would be effective if it is coordinated and led by one but strong regional agency'.

Generally, as discussed earlier, administrative problems (especially, the poor management of capacity building programs) limit the effectiveness of the civil service system in the Tigray National Regional State. Although improvements have been recorded since the launch of the reform and capacity building programs, still the civil service system in the Region is extremely weak to implement development policies and provide quality public services. Therefore, a low level of implementation capacity is a serious problem in the Tigray National Regional State. This shows that, although Tigray is a region that aspires to adapt the development experiences of the East Asian developmental states, it lacks a capable civil service that would enable it achieve rapid economic growth and development, and create favorable investment climate that would facilitate wider popular participation in economic activities. Therefore, the most critical problem that needs an urgent solution in Tigray is the weak capacity of the civil service to implement

²²⁰ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²²¹ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

²²² Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

policies, particularly, at the *wereda* level of administration. This is being expressed in terms of delays and quality problems in executing local development projects like the construction of urban and rural water projects (Britane, 2018: interview)²²³.

The limited capacity and quality of the civil service in the Tigray Regional State are also strongly reflected in the poor delivery of public services. Although the Regional Government has been trying to improve service delivery through implementing the varied reform tools discussed earlier, the provision of public services is still very slow, inefficient, and ineffective. The problem is largely attributed to the limited human power (in terms of quality), absence of adequate technological infrastructure, dissatisfied and less motivated civil servants to serve the public, weak follow up and control, and high turnover of civil servants (Haftu, 2018: interview)²²⁴. The shortage of qualified human power is a national problem in Ethiopia in general and the Tigray Regional State in particular. Besides, civil servants also lack adequate technological and 'physical infrastructures ... [like] office equipment and other facilities to perform their duties in a professional manner' (Gebre, 2014: 70).

The dissatisfaction of civil servants in their jobs is largely related to poor salary and rewarding system. Because of the low level of salary and progressive inflation, civil servants are becoming economically the poorest section of the society (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²²⁵. Although the government has been trying to ease this problem through continuous salary increment, due to inflation, still the economic situation of civil servants is terribly declining from time-to-time (Kidane, 2018: interview)²²⁶. Another factor that causes dissatisfaction with civil servants is the disparity in terms of salary scales between different government agencies. The Regional Government of Tigray allows special salary scales to some government agencies, like the region's Revenue Authority, the Revenue Offices at the *wereda* levels of administration, Water Development and Construction Enterprise and the urban municipalities (Tewodros, 2018:

²²³ Birtane Fisseha is a deputy speaker of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Council. The interview was held on April 30, 2018, Humera

²²⁴ Haftu Aregawi is a director of the Research, Follow up and Support Core Process Owner in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²²⁵ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²²⁶ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

interview)²²⁷. This actually violates the principle of equal pay to equal job, because varied salary scales are being allowed for equal positions and professional status in different government agencies. To solve this problem, the government has recently introduced Job Evaluation and Grading system (JEG), but its impact is yet to be seen.

The disparity in terms of salary scale between similar positions and professional status across different government agencies in the Tigray National Regional State makes some civil servants feel inequity, which eventually results in high employee turnover, weak synergy among civil servants and rent-seeking tendencies in the civil service system (Kidane, 2018: interview)²²⁸. The high turnover of civil servants also causes a more frequent change of leaders (leadership instability) (*Ibid*). That is, in many government organizations, experienced employees have been quitting their job in search of a better salary in other organizations (Amaha, 2018: interview)²²⁹. Consequently, the shortage of experienced employees has been negatively affecting the quality and speed of service delivery in many government organizations (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²³⁰.

Another problem that has been undermining efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services in the Tigray National Regional state is low commitment or lack of genuine determination on the part of many civil servants to serve the public. In other words, many civil servants do not show willingness or the tendency of willingly serving the public (Tsegay, 2018: interview)²³¹. They do not have professionally induced self-motivation to serve the public (Alganesh, 2018: interview)²³². Although it does not mean that their mere existence in office suffices to quality service delivery, many civil servants do not regularly avail themselves in office throughout the working hours (Leul, 2019: interview)²³³. This shows the existence of weak

²²⁷ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²²⁸ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²²⁹ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²³⁰ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²³¹ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

²³² Alganesh Gebreegziabher is a Women's Affairs Chairwoman of the *Tabia* Rawyan administration. The interview was held on May 5, 2018 in Rawyan

²³³ Leul Alemayoh is speaker of Semen *Wereda* (Sub-City) Council; the interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle.

accountability system. Indeed, as Tsegay (2018: interview)²³⁴ explained, there is a weak follow-up and control-based support within the civil service system. Although the actual behavior of the civil servants calls for strict follow up and control, the government simply remains closed at the regional level, and has limited knowledge about what is going on in the ground (Focus Group Discussion, 2018)²³⁵.

Attempts have been made by the government to improve the quality of public service delivery by introducing performance standards based on varied tools like BPR, BSC, and citizens' charter. Nevertheless, because of limited public awareness regarding these tools, particularly, the Citizen's Charter, and weak follow up and control on the part of government agencies, the government lacks to achieve its target goals to the desired level (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²³⁶. Summing up, unless the Regional Government of Tigray takes measures that would help meaningfully address the problems that cause dissatisfaction of civil servants and strengthen the system of accountability, it will not be able to improve the quality of public services.

5.5. Politicization of the Civil Service

Neutrality and merit criteria are fundamental principles of a modern civil service system. That is, civil servants are obliged to be neutral from political affiliation in resolving service issues. To this end, professionalism should be ensured in the civil service system by using the merit principle for recruitment, selection, staffing, performance evaluation, promotion, or professional advancement of civil servants (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²³⁷. That is, merit principles (merit-based recruitment, selection, placement, and promotion) should be seen as 'elements of an incentive structure that equalizes the incentives of individual civil servants and induces them to base their administration of policy on the law' (Christensen, 2004: 16).

Generally, a depoliticized civil service is a keystone for policy effectiveness and quality service delivery. However, in the case of the Tigray National Regional State, in spite of the regional civil service laws' greater emphasis on the desirability of a neutral civil service system, there have

²³⁴ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²³⁵ A focus group discussion conducted on May 6, 2018 with local residents in *Tabia* Rawyan

²³⁶ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²³⁷ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

been evidences that show politicization of the civil service under the TPLF-led Regional Government (Gebre, 2014). In principle, the civil service law of the Tigray National Regional State provides legal basis for the management of the civil service system based on merit principles (TRNS, 2011). Based on the assumption that 'in developmental terms, ... the impetus for the adoption of merit recruitment is the desire to remove the appointment of administrative positions from political patronage and to require merit qualifications' (Peters, 2001: 87), the Tigray civil service legislation did establish the principle of apolitical civil service. The region's civil servants' proclamation No. 189/2011 (TNRs, 2011), distinguishes between merit positions and political positions at both the *wereda* and regional levels of administration (Art. 6, 1 and 2).

The proclamation gives wider space to the merit positions (to be filled by professional technocrats who are selected based on fair competition) and few at the top for political appointments. Accordingly, in the Tigray National Regional state civil service organizations, Bureau head and vice head at the regional level, and office head at the *wereda* level, as well as, their equivalents (Special agencies' directors), are political appointees to lead and control the bureaucracy (Kidane, 2018: interview)²³⁸. However, regardless of the legally established institutional framework that provides for civil service neutrality, the politicization of the civil service is pervasive in the Tigray National Regional State (Tsegay, 2018: interview)²³⁹. That is, the institutional and legal frameworks are not effectively functional; hence, failing to make the civil service of the region a neutral policy implementing body.

To understand how politicization is undergoing in the Tigray National Regional State civil service, it would be helpful to view it in terms of Mulgan's (1989) classification into patrician politicization (appointment of employees based on their clear party membership), policy-related politicization (appointment of employees based on their support to a particular policy, and managerial politicization (replacing public servants by a new incumbent government to strengthen its control over the civil service). Based on this theoretical-based classification, how and why the civil service in the Tigray Rational State is being politicized is an important question to be addressed.

²³⁸ Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²³⁹ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera

The main practice of politicization in Tigray is expressed in terms of the utilization of partisan criteria to recruit and appoint individual persons in merit positions (Abreha, 2018: interview)²⁴⁰. In many cases, if not in all, human resource management decisions like placement, promotion, performance evaluation, and transfer in the region's civil service system depend not on the quality of the civil servants but on their loyalty to the ruling TPLF (Amaha, 2018: interview)²⁴¹. However, many civil servants in the leadership hierarchy dismissed such allegations as groundless.

When asked whether there is political involvement in decisions pertinent to recruitment, placement, and promotion, majority of the civil servants in the Tigray National Regional State would respond that civil servants are appointed and promoting based on merit principles, rather than based on party membership and loyalty. For instance, Kidane (2018: interview)²⁴² expressed that 'the civil service strictly follows merit principles, and candidates are selected based on the relative capability they demonstrate in the civil service competition tests'. He further tried to validate his argument by saying that 'if political membership is taken as a criterion for recruitment and promotion, it is entirely against the civil service law'. However, because large majority of the civil servants in Tigray and particularly, those who constitute the entire leadership hierarchy, are members of the ruling party, the arguments they forward in defense of civil service neutrality are not really reflecting what is being practiced on the ground. Indeed, as Britane (2018: interview) expressed, the civil service system is not free and independent of political influence.

Contrary to what different civil servants in the leadership hierarchy argue, the imposition of political criteria to appoint party members in the merit positions across government agencies (Gebre, 2014) in the Tigray National Regional State is an indication of violating the principles of civil service neutrality and professionalism. Merit-based appointment in the region has been largely violated due to the political pressure from leaders of government agencies at the *wereda*

²⁴⁰ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁴¹ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁴² Kidane Gebretensay is a director of Human Resources Development, Organization, and Record Analysis Process owner in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

and regional levels of administration (Amaha, 2018: interview)²⁴³. Indeed, when political leaders at both the *wereda* and regional levels of administration make decisions regarding issues pertinent to human resource management, they do not seriously consider the civil service law. Rather, they largely focus on the political issues (Tsegay, 2018: interview)²⁴⁴. Patronage appointment of individual persons without fair competition but based on their party membership in merit positions are also documented by Gebre and Melese (2014) as symptoms of the absence of civil service neutrality in the Tigray National Regional State. This supports Peters (2001: 87) assertion that 'responsive competence may be more important than neutral competence in assuring that the tasks of government are accomplished well'. However, this should not undermine the merit principles.

Generally, although the civil service law gives greater space to the merit principles, political influence is reflected in the process of recruitment, placement, and promotion of civil servants within the civil service system in the Tigray National Regional State (Tewodros, 2018: interview)²⁴⁵. It seems that the civil service system in the region is consciously politicizing by the political leaders with the intention of recruiting party members from among the civil servants with less regard to attaining efficiency and enhancing policy effectiveness. That is, unlike the experiences in the most successful East Asian developmental states (like South Korea and Taiwan), the depth of political appointment in the Tigray National Regional State is so high, which limits the capacity of the civil service to perform effectively and efficiently.

The politicization of the civil service in the Tigray Region seems more of partisan in its character, because it essentially focuses on attaining political support by controlling the civil service. Public jobs (particularly, the decision-making positions) are largely held by civil servants whose political connection to the TPLF is obvious (Abreha, 2018: interview)²⁴⁶. Indeed, as Gebre and Melese (2014) explain that there are tendencies and practices of assigning employees to local agricultural development program coordinator, local health center director, *tabia* manager,

²⁴³ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁴⁴ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁴⁵ Tewodros Amare is a director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau. The interview was held on March 20, 2018 in Mekelle.

²⁴⁶ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

primary or high school director (but first, they are required to pass entrance exams), and a *wereda* core process coordinator positions within the civil service based on their party membership.

The actual practices in the Tigray region, as indicated above, show that the intention of politicizing the civil service seems to maximize the number of party members within the civil service system. Indeed, as Abera (2018: interview)²⁴⁷ expressed, the TPLF wants to increase its members within the civil service system. However, this is not a problem in itself, but the allocation of civil servants based on their allegiance to the ruling party. This kind of political motive may depend on the assumption that the best mechanism to politically controlling the civil service system is appointing one's own faithful party members to the merit positions across the civil service agencies (Peters, 2001).

As indicated earlier, the need to politicize the civil service may be resulting from the assumption that it is when it dominates the merit positions that the TPLF would be able to ensure that the civil service is compatible with its partisan and policy preferences. That is, by appointing party loyal people in the merit positions, the government would make sure that the execution of political decisions would undergo smoothly (*Ibid*). Based on this assumption, it also seems that the TPLF created a situation where the 'politically appointed officials are exploiting the civil service to extract merit demanding positions for their potential partisans' (Gebre and Melese, 2014: 103). However, such a pervasive utilization of political criteria is eliminating the distinction between the party and the government and undermining the quality of the civil service by weakening the merit criteria.

According to the TPLF's tradition, party members (particularly, those who are in the leadership hierarchy) have dual 'accountability directly to their institution and the party office... [and for this purpose], [t]he government administrative structure and the party office are placed top-down in parallel' (*Ibid*: 101-103) from the region up to the grassroots level. This trend is essentially contradicting the Weberian conventional belief that 'the division of labor between politicians and bureaucrats would work best when there is a clear distinction between the two sets of actors' (Matheson, *et al*, 2007: 5). Based on the Weberian belief, the role of policy advising to political

²⁴⁷ Abera Tesfay is a deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was made on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

leaders in merit-based bureaucratic systems is given to professional civil servants (*Ibid*). However, contrary to such a conventional belief, the appointment of advisors (largely, from the TPLF office) to each government agency both at the *wereda* and regional levels of administration in Tigray is an indication of politicization that makes more elusive to distinguish between the party and the government.

Generally, as a result of the complicated mechanisms of appointment, which mix up the political and governmental roles, practices seem to show that agency (bureau and office) heads found it difficult to distinguish between their governmental and political roles (Abreha, 2018: interview)²⁴⁸. Consequently, they require career civil servants to perform tasks that should be performed by members of the ruling party, TPLF (Tsegay, 2018: interview)²⁴⁹. In such a context, the civil servants would find it difficult to oppose performing political functions assigned to them to secure their jobs. This is a clear impact of politicization that invalidates the legal framework (the Tigray Regions' Civil Servants' Proclamation No. 189/2011 (TNRS, 2011), which, in principle, ensures employment stability and career development.

Drawing on the above discussions, the cumulative effect of politicization of the civil service in the Tigray National Regional State is failure in policy effectiveness. This is because a civil service system that fails to adequately notice merit principles in selection, recruitment, and promotion of civil servants is less efficient. Moreover, the politicization of the civil service in the region also causes loss of public confidence in the performance of government institutions in handling public service issues (Amdom, 2018: interview)²⁵⁰. Politicization in the Tigray National Regional State also causes limited accountability of the civil service, particularly, at the *wereda* level of administration, because patronage networks that undermine objectivity by inhibiting genuine follow-up and control are so pervasive (Leul, 2019: interview)²⁵¹.

²⁴⁸ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁴⁹ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁵⁰ Amdom Berhe is peasant living in Maykadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018, Maykadra, Qafta Humera

²⁵¹ Leul Alemayoh is a speaker of Semen *Wereda* (Sub-City) Council. The interview was conducted on June 13, 2019, Mekelle.

Another problem of politicization in terms of appointment and promotion of civil servants based on party loyalty in the Tigray National Regional State is that it excludes or diminishes the role of relatively well-qualified non-partisan professionals (perhaps, amongst the most talented available) in the civil service system. This is because if a partisan appointment is pervasively apparent in the civil service, and the critical merit positions of influencing policy are allocated to political appointees, career professionals who have the requisite capability of policy implementation would no longer have the interest to work in the civil service. In the process, this would cause a shortage of well-trained human power in the civil service in Tigray.

Summing up, in terms of its organization, the civil service system in the Tigray National Regional State lacks a nodal agency that is endowed with financial and decision-making powers over other policy agencies of the government. This results in critical deficiency in terms of accountability, bureaucratic rationality, and interagency communication in plan formulation and implementation. Moreover, the region's civil service lacks the requisite capacity to implement policies and provide quality services due to the lack of proper human resource management in terms of training and implementation of merit principles. Regarding merit principles, while the legal and policy trusts of the Tigray National Regional State civil service are adequately inclusive, administrative malpractices and politicization of the civil service undermine merit-based selection, recruitment, placement, promotion, result-oriented performance evaluation, accountability, and the use of incentives to overcome dissatisfaction and high turnover of employees. This, therefore, suggests the need for the establishment of a nodal agency at the regional level, de-politicization of the civil service, proper implementation of merit principles, and ensuring that the capacity building trainings are conducting after skill gaps that necessitate interventions are carefully identified through skill gap analysis.

Chapter Six: Participatory Democracy and Development in the Tigray National Regional State

With the introduction of federalism after the downfall of the *Derg* regime in 1991, Tigray was restructured as one of the nine National Regional States in Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995). In line with the newly introduced federal arrangement, as stipulated in the 2001 revised Constitution of the region, the Regional Government of Tigray has established three tiers of government (i.e., the Regional, *Wereda*, and *Tabia*) with specified mandates under their dominions. This Chapter examines whether or not the TPLF and the Regional Government of Tigray are using such an arrangement for exercising multi-party politics, election, participatory democracy, representation, and accountability at the grassroots level in the region.

6.1. Multiparty Politics and Elections

The TPLF-led government in Tigray is praised for its economic achievements in the last 27 years. However, the Front is blamed for its lack of genuine commitment towards building democracy in the region. This is largely expressed in terms of the absence of strong alternative political parties and meaningful competition in the last five general elections (1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015). If competitive election is taken as an important variable to measure democracy, since the dawning of a new political order in Ethiopia in 1991, the national and local electoral arenas have been open for political pluralism. Nevertheless, such a new political opening has been lacking to provide a meaningful choice in Ethiopia in general, and in the Tigray National Regional State in particular (Abreha, 2018: interview)²⁵².

In all of the general elections conducted in Ethiopia to date, the TPLF won each of the 152 regional and 38 national seats without any meaningfully rival party to challenge it in the polls. Even in the 2005 election, which is largely recognized as an exception because ‘the combined opposition increased its seats from 12 to 172, representing 31 percent of the total seats in the federal parliament’ (Lyons, 2010: 108), in Tigray, the TPLF ‘won 93% of the votes counted’ (Ishiyama, 2009: 45) and secured each of the seats at the regional and national levels. This shows that while the opposition strongly challenged the EPRDF in the 2005 elections at the federal

²⁵² Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

level, it lacked the capacity to compete with the TPLF in Tigray. Some researchers (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2008; Lyons, 2010) attribute the weak prominence of the opposition to the mechanisms of societal control used by the TPLF to narrow down the political space for securing its unchallenged dominance within the region.

Due to the rich experience TPLF has and the close relationship it established with the Tigrayan people since the days of the armed struggle, no political party could match with it in terms of its consolidated organization and mechanisms of popular mobilization in the Tigray National Regional State. That is, the TPLF uses its advantages of strong organization and public mobilization up to the grassroots level, as well as, (being a ruling party) the levers of power it has at its disposal to contain any rival political opposition in the Tigray region. In defense of the TPLF's strategy of containing the opposition in Tigray, Britane (2018: interview)²⁵³ assertively expressed that 'every individual in our community is connected into one-to-five networks. Therefore, enemies, [i.e., opposition political parties] could not easily penetrate us, and we are strongly working day and night to avoid such a problem'. This shows that the TPLF uses the structures of the change army at the grassroots level for its political objectives.

The change army, as discussed in Chapter Five, is an innovative mechanism that was introduced to achieve the objectives of the developmental state by enhancing broader popular participation and synergy among different stakeholders, including the party, the government, and the public wings. Nevertheless, the specific tasks of these wings are not clearly distinguishable. The government has been trying to organize and build the change army with the intension of ensuring unity of ideas and uniformity of attitudes towards the common goals of development across the civil service system and the society (MPSHRD, 2017). The practice of organizing and mobilizing the public to ensure the hegemony of a developmental thinking within the political and social spaces has essentially been constraining plurality and presenting alternative political choice in Tigray (Seife, 2018: interview)²⁵⁴. This is largely reflected in the absence of clear distinction between the party and government lines in organizing the change army from the top

²⁵³ Birtane Fisseha is a Deputy Speaker of the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Council. The interview was held on April 30, 2018, Humera.

²⁵⁴ Seife Hailu is an Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science and Strategic Studies, Mekelle University. The interview was held on April 27, 2018, Mekelle.

down to the grassroots level. This makes citizens to lack seeing a difference between the two. For them, the TPLF is the government and the government is the TPLF.

According to the organizational and working procedures of the change army, individuals in every community in the Tigray National Regional State are expected to join a *gudjile limat* (*i. e.*, development group), which consists of 25-30 people living in a particular environ. Parallel to the development group, as the lowest unit of the TPLF, *wahyo* (cell) is established. It consists of 4-49 members in every village and urban quarters throughout Tigray with the objective of mobilizing people in the development groups become members of the TPLF (Berihu, 2018: interview)²⁵⁵. In this regard, although the TPLF, in principle, claims that membership is voluntary based, it's longer and better established network of influence would not actually let individuals in a particular community to reject the request for membership. Generally, it seems that in the name of enhancing popular participation in development, the TPLF uses the organization of the change army to narrow the political space and undermine the growth of alternative political opposition in the Tigray region. Indeed, organization of the society into development groups and networks makes it easy for the ruling TPLF to control political lives within the society through a network of its activist members across the region.

The change army-based public mobilization and organization in terms of development groups and networks have broadly been employing by the EPRDF in general and the TPLF in particular after the 2005 elections. As discussed earlier, these techniques were adopted to enhance broader popular participation and synergy for achieving national development objectives. However, to avoid the kind of challenge it faced from the opposition in the 2005 elections, the EPRDF used development group and 'one-to-five' network as the best tools of mobilization to generate voters in the 2010 and 2015 elections. Particularly, in Tigray, the TPLF used the development groups and 'one-to-five networks' to effectively beat the opposition in the polls in the two general elections. That is, by mobilizing the public through these networks, the Front did able to overwhelmingly win the votes counted in the consecutive national elections (Abreha, 2018:

²⁵⁵ Berihu Araya is a focal person in charge of facilitating Government-Intelligentsia cooperation in *Wereda Semen* TPLF office. The interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle

interview)²⁵⁶. In short, the tactics of networked popular mobilization helped the TPLF control political lives in society and eliminate meaningful challenge from the opposition in the polls.

According to the TPLF's (2017) organizational principles, *wahyo* is established across different sections of the society. In the rural areas, separate *wahyos* are established for peasants, civil servants, teachers, students, and youth and women leagues. Similarly, in the urban areas, *wahyos* are organized for citizens engaging in micro and small enterprises development, small and medium manufacturing industries, and for civil servants, school teachers, students, workers in non-governmental organizations, the labor, and youth and women's league. In the micro and small enterprises development sub-sector, *wahyo* is established by grouping individuals based on their types of business including, service organizations, merchants, manufacturing, construction, and urban agriculture. Similarly, in the small and medium manufacturing industries development sub-sector, *wahyo* is established by grouping people in different business activities including, metal woks, wood works, textile and garment, leather and leather products, agro processing, chemical and chemical products, etc. Two sub-sectors would jointly establish a *wahyo* if the number of people in a particular type of business is below the required point. Such an extended organizational structure of the TPLF up to the grassroots level is an indication of strong political control over the entire society in Tigray.

As discussed earlier, the *wahyo* is established in every development group. While the number of people in a single development group ranges from 25-30, the number of people in a single *wahyo* ranges from 4-49. The *wahyo*, as the lowest unit of the TPLF at the grassroots level, is expected to ensure that the development group and 'one-to-five' networks are being led by its frontline members (Berihu, 2019: interview)²⁵⁷. This seems to premise on the assumption that, if the TPLF members control the leadership in the development group and 'one-to-five' networks, they would play a vital role to influence non-members to join the Front. Indeed, based on this assumption, the main political mission of the *wahyo* in every section of the society is mobilizing or influencing all members of a development group to join the TPLF (*Ibid*). As a result, in most cases, all members of the development group are members of the TPLF. This essentially helps

²⁵⁶ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁵⁷ Berihu Araya is a focal person in charge of facilitating Government-Intelligentsia cooperation in *Wereda* Semen TPLF office. The interview was held on June 13, 2019, Mekelle

the Front closely follow up the activities of opposition political parties (considering as enemies of peace and development) and effectively contain their operations at the local level.

Generally, the cumulative result is that its intricacies and mechanisms of societal control made the TPLF to remain the dominant political party in Tigray, and more than in any other region in Ethiopia, it seems that this has essentially been constraining the growth of strong opposition parties in the region. As a result, election in Tigray has been meaningless, because in the absence of genuine and reliable political choice, the value of election logically lacks soundness. However, it should be noted that it is not only the intricacies of the TPLF that undermines the growth of reliable political opposition in Tigray, but also the influence of history and weaknesses of the opposition political parties in terms of organization and leadership are critical problems (Rigbe, 2018: interview)²⁵⁸.

As the reflections of informants in group discussions in the study sites show, history of the armed struggle (1975-1991) has strong influence on the psychological conviction of the Tigrayan people to have less confidence in opposition political parties. Such a belief has also been more strengthened with the re-emergence of political forces that have developed a negative attitude towards multinational federalism and the constitutionally entrenched right to self-determination of nations and nationalities. As a result, regardless of its problems, the Tigrayan people support the TPLF, because they do not actually find an alternative political party, which is more reliable and progressive than the TPLF in terms of its strategic vision for Tigray in Ethiopia (*Ibid*). Likewise, Alganesh (2018: interview)²⁵⁹ assertively expressed that;

We support the TPLF, because we do not still find an alternative political party that is more reliable and determined than the TPLF to achieve social and economic transformation. Regardless of its problems, therefore, we want it to stay in power. In the absence of more reliable alternative political party, we are not in a position to punish the TPLF in the polls. Rather, we want the Front to progressively correct its mistakes.

²⁵⁸ Rigbe Abrha is a focal person for public mobilization and organization in the Tigray Women's Association. The interview was conducted on April 21, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁵⁹ Alganesh Gebreegziabher is a Chairwoman Women's Affairs in *Tabia* Rawyan administration. The interview was held on May 5, 2018.

Generally, as the reflections in the group discussions and key informant interviews of this study reveal, the Tigrayan people seem reluctant to support and have confidence on opposition political parties. This is strongly reflected in a view expressed by Amdom (2018: interview)²⁶⁰ as follows:

We do not trust opposition political parties. We do not let individuals in our community to associate with them. This is because, we do not believe that there is a better program than that of the TPLF to achieve sustainable development in Tigray. In other words, we believe that there is no more genuine alternative political party to the TPLF in Tigray. That is why opposition political parties in all the elections conducted so far have never gained a single seat both at the regional and national levels. The rationale behind for TPLF's consecutive victory in all the elections is that we vote for a genuine political program, not for individual persons.

This level of support based on articulated reasoning from a peasant in the countryside is an expression of well institutionalized presence of the TPLF in society. Reinforced by the memories of the armed struggle, the organizational and mobilization capacity of the Front to penetrate deep into the society enables it avoid strong challenge from the opposition. However, it should be noted that although the TPLF has a strong social base in Tigray, recent developments show that signs of popular dissatisfaction with the Front are increasing from time to time. As Asefa (2018: interview)²⁶¹ pointed out, 'people support and vote the TPLF in election, because they believe that it genuinely represents their interests. However, majority of the people in our locality feel that TPLF leaders have gradually been overlooking their ones reliable social base, the poor'. This shows that if the TPLF fails to progressively correct such a problem, it will be an inevitable cost for the Front's future.

In addition to the historical influence, which is reinforced by pervasive institutional networks of the TPLF for public mobilization and control, the organizational and leadership weakness of the opposition political parties is another problem that limits genuine political plurality in Tigray. There is extremely weak presence and organization of opposition political parties in the Tigray region. Especially, they are almost non-existent at the local level as expressed by local residents in Qafta-Humera District in western Tigray. The local residents explained that the opposition political parties are not active at the grassroots level in their locality. They only see their signs in the ballot paper during election days. The opposition political parties, indeed, lack organizational

²⁶⁰ Amdom Berhe is a Peasant residing in May-Kadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018.

²⁶¹ Asefa Tamto is a peasant living in May Kadra. The interview was conducted on May 3, 2018.

capacity to penetrate deep into the society in the Tigray region. However, they largely associate their weakness with the TPLF's intricacies and intimidation to eliminate any political opposition in Tigray. The argument is that although the political and administrative sabotages made by the TPLF are the main problems, internal weakness of the opposition political parties is also an averred problem.

Summing up, although elections that encourage (at least in principle) genuine competition have been regularly conducted for the last five terms, they did not actually provide meaningful political choice to the electorate in Tigray. Therefore, the problem, as Lyons (2010: 110) pointed out, is that 'elections are fundamental for democracy, but ... fallacy of electoralism [or] lack of choice makes voting lack substance'.

6.2. Participatory Democracy, Representation, and Accountability

6.2.1. Participatory Democracy

At the center of the TPLF's development agenda is the belief that democracy and economic development would not undergo progress in isolation (TPLF, 2001). Accordingly, the political-economic approach of the TPLF to development places equal emphasis on building democracy and achieving speedy and inclusive economic growth, which would fairly benefit people in all walks of life (*Ibid*). This suggests that the type of democracy and the economic development, which the TPLF is aspiring for, is participatory or all inclusive. To this end, the Regional Government in Tigray is expected to build institutions by creating decision-making structures to exercise participatory democracy. In other words, in order to exercise participatory democracy and achieve inclusive development, the government is required to build institutional structures that are necessary for citizens to share power with the state in government and the economy.

Unlike liberal democracy, which only focuses on organizing the government based on competitive elections (Fung and Wright, 2003), the type of democracy that the TPLF aspires for seems popular democracy. Popular democracy, in this regard, grounds on the assumption that democracy as a way of forming the government based on competitive election to select representatives is less enough to exercise the core values of a democracy, such as broader and genuine citizens' participation in policy decisions that would directly affect their lives, and ensuring equitable, as well as, humane development (*Ibid*).

For the effective functioning of participatory democracy, therefore, the TPLF-led National Regional Government of Tigray should build institutional structures, as Montambeault (2016: 2) indicates, that would allow it to ‘include ordinary citizens’ input in decision-making processes at the local level’. In other words, it needs an institutional and decision-making structure, which is accompanied by decentralization and empowerment of local units. This is because the institutional reality of participatory democracy requires the administrative and political decentralization of powers to the local units to create space for ‘political self-organization of citizens and self-government’ (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2017: 13).

When seen in terms of its vertical government organization, Tigray as a regional state seems suitable to exercise participatory democracy. As the lowest levels of government units in the region, the *wereda* and *tabia* levels of administration are expected to be the practical sites of exercising local democracy and popular participation, both in the rural and urban areas. Indeed, since the times of the armed struggle (1975-1991) under the TPLF leadership, though redefined later in the post-1991 period, institutional structures have been provided under these levels of administration for exercising participatory democracy.

As Segers, *et al* (2009) point out, since the late 1970s, the TPLF had been implementing a policy of strengthening the livelihood base of the peasants and promoting self-government of communities in order to establish its strong social base within the liberated areas under its control in the countryside. In these areas, mass-based associations for women, peasants, and the youth were established (Abera, 2018: interview)²⁶², through which the people ‘elected their representatives in the local *Bayto* (local council) the committee governing a district’ (Segers, *et al*, 2009: 6).

The mass-based associations and the *Bayto* were crucial institutions at the grassroots level for active popular participation in rural Tigray during the armed struggle. After the armed struggle, while the *Bayto* was constitutionally recognized and established at the regional, *wereda* and *tabia* levels of administration, the mass-based associations formally disassociated from the TPLF (*Ibid*) and reorganized as free associations to articulate and defend the interests and rights of their

²⁶² Abera Tesfay is deputy head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray. The interview was conducted on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

members (Rigbe, 2018: interview)²⁶³. In short, after the armed struggle, the once embedded structure of different institutions of public mobilization and involvement under the TPLF reconfigured into separated institutions and organizations: the party, the government, and the public, which later depicted as three wings of the change army.

The essence of TPLF's revolutionary democracy is expressed in terms of 'communal collective participation, based on consensus forged through discussions led by the vanguard organization' (Segers, *et al*, 2009: 6). This implies that at the heart of revolutionary democracy's political-economic approach of achieving transformation is broader popular participation. Accordingly, whether the local government institutions' decision-making processes are incorporated into policy issues, and are being providing the forums for face-to-face interactions and deliberations in public-sphere policy debate should be the issues of discussion. This is because, as in any other region in Ethiopia, the governance system in the Tigray National Regional State is constitutionally decentralized. It is at the local level that most of the services are provided. Therefore, it is at the local level of administration that citizens should actively involve in policy decisions and learn to exercise democracy. However, although local institutions of democracy and popular participation are formally established, the 'room for bottom-up development initiatives for local government officials and citizens alike is limited' (Segers, *et al*, 2009: 7) in the region.

As practices in the Tigray National Regional State show, the government sees the local units (*wereda* and *tabia*) more as instrument of service delivery and policy implementation than forums of participation. In short, mechanisms of participation at the local levels are designed largely to implement development programs and plans initiated at the regional level. That is, local institutions do not actually have the authority to design and implement development plans and projects autonomously. As experiences in Port Algere City of Brazil (Baiocchi, *et al*, 2011) and the Kerela and West Bengal states of India (Isaac and Heller, 2003) show, participatory democracy would function well if local governments have the authority to implement their own development plans, which are designed based on series of discussions at different levels to involve wider citizens' participation.

²⁶³ Rigbe Abrha is a focal person for public mobilization and organization in the Tigray Women's Association. The interview was conducted on April 21, 2018, Mekelle.

Devolution or decentralization of power, which makes local units ‘fully fledged governing institutions with functional, financial and administrative autonomy, rather than service delivery conduits’ (Isaac and Heller, 2003: 81) would facilitate the practice of participatory democracy. However, the problem in Tigray is that the government sees the *wereda* and *tabia* levels of administration as channels of service delivery and implementation of development plans, not as forums of policy deliberations.

The 2001 revised Constitution of the Tigray National Regional State, as indicated earlier, did establish formal local governments (*wereda* and *tabia*) to practice decentralized governance and administration. Nevertheless, the decentralization project lacks the devolution of adequate decision-making authority and control over resources to facilitate development at the local level. That is, the local government units enjoy limited authority and financial resources to achieve their mandated goals and objectives. For example, according to the 2001 revised Regional Constitution, the *wereda* administration in Tigray has the right and authority to determine its affairs (Art. 72 (2)). Nevertheless, its mandate is limited to implementing the economic development plans and performing the delivery of social services in accordance with the laws, regulations, and directives received from the regional government (Art. 72 (1)).

The highest organ of the government at the *wereda* level (i.e., the *Wereda* council), which is expected to have a legislative role is only responsible to approve administrative, development and service delivery plans and programs in its dominion, follow up the implementation of agricultural development activities, the management of natural resources, and ensures that land use and agricultural taxes are collected, levy service taxes as determined by law, examine and approve the *wereda*’s annual budget, and develop and use income sources, other than those expressly given to and administered by the Regional Government, within its dominion (Art. 74 (2 (a-h))).

According to the 2001 revised Constitution of the region, the *wereda* chief administrators in Tigray would be elected from among the Council members (Art. 74 (2(d))). However, in practice, in consultation with the TPLF Office, *wereda* chief administrators are directly appointed by the

region's chief administrator (Amaha, 2018: interview)²⁶⁴. The respective councils 'approve' the appointments for formality. Although, according to the 2001 revised Constitution, the chief *wereda* administrators are accountable to their respective *Wereda* Councils and the region's chief administrator (Art. 82 (1)), they are actually more accountable to the regional chief administrator than the *Wereda* Councils (Amaha, 2018: interview)²⁶⁵.

According to the revised Constitution of the region, the *tabia* administration is also established as the lowest tier of government in the Tigray National Regional State. As stipulated in article 87 (1, 2, 6 and 8) and article 91 (1(c)) of the region's Constitution, the *tabia* administration has the mandate to implement the development plans and directives approved by the *Wereda* Council, develops and implements necessary social directives in its dominion, develops detailed schedule that would enable it implement the social and economic development plans it received from the *wereda* administration, and mobilizes the local people for development activities, and facilitates the conservation and management of natural resources within the *tabia* administration.

The *tabia* administration, therefore, seems simply an agent of the *wereda* or the regional administration, which does not have a significant decision-making authority and control over resources to promote local development. According to the 2001 revised Regional Constitution, the highest organ of the government at the *tibia* level (the *Tabia* Council) has the authority to elect the *tabia* chief administrator from among the council members (Article 87 (3)). However, he/she is directly appointed from above by the *wereda* administration, and the Council simply approves his/her appointment for formality (Amdom, 2018: interview)²⁶⁶. Summing up, both the *tabia* and *wereda* levels of administration in the Tigray region enjoy very limited decision-making authority and control over the necessary resources to promote development within their dominions (Amaha, 2018: interview)²⁶⁷.

Generally, the discussions regarding the limited decision-making authorities of the *wereda* and *tabia* administrations indicate that the Regional State Government is a single provider of

²⁶⁴ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was held on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁶⁵ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was held on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁶⁶ Amdom Berhe is a Peasant residing in May-Kadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018.

²⁶⁷ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was held on May 1, 2018, Humera.

development strategies, plans, and projects in Tigray. Agencies at the *wereda* level of administration follow similar pathways and pass down different programs and projects of development to the grassroots level (Segers, *et al*, 2009). Such kind of top-down decision-making and planning approach essentially narrows down the space for popular policy deliberations at every level of administration in the region. This does not, however, mean that deliberations between the government and the public, particularly, at the local level are completely absent.

Although plenary meetings for deliberations between the government and the society are occasionally conducted, the problem in the Tigray region is that public proposals for local development activities are not dully considered in the government's policy decisions and actions. This is essentially expressed in terms of the weak influence of local popular involvement in prioritizing local development projects (Amdom, 2018: interview)²⁶⁸. As Selomon (2018: interview)²⁶⁹ explained, the government lacks genuine commitment to widely involve citizens' participation in decisions that directly affect their lives at the local level, in that issues that need deliberation at the grassroots level often brought up for discussion at the eleventh hour. As a result, the local people usually lack the chance to provide input to the decision-making processes in designing and implementing local development projects that have direct impact on their lives. In short, the interest of the local government is not on the importance of popular participation in policy deliberations to determine local issues of democracy and development, but on the collective hands of citizens in soil and water conservation works and the implementation of other development programs passed down from the Regional Government (FGD, 2018)²⁷⁰.

Generally, practices under the TPLF leadership show that top-down initiative and centralized decision-making approach are established traditions in the Tigray National Regional State. This is manifested in implementing supply-driven and quota-based development programs in that 'target numbers of rural farmers expected to join a program are passed down from higher to lower levels' (Berhanu, *et al*, 2003, in Segers, *et al*, 2009: 7). In this regard, the way fertilizers are distributed among the peasants every year at the beginning of the rainy season is a case in

²⁶⁸ Amdom Berhe is a peasant residing in MayKadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018.

²⁶⁹ Selemon Gebru is a local resident in *Tabia* Zeslase (Kedamay Weyane *Wereda*). The interview was conducted on June 13, 2019, Mekelle.

²⁷⁰ Local residents explained in a group discussion conducted on May 3, 2018 in May-Kadra.

point. The number of quintals expected to be used by the peasants is passed down from the region to each *wereda* administration, and then, from the *wereda* administration to each *tabia* administration without conducting adequate need assessment studies (Tadesse, 2018: interview)²⁷¹.

Since *wereda* administrations are evaluated and ranked based on the number of quintals they distribute each year, they used quota-based allocation system to reach every household in the rural village communities (Tadesse, 2018: interview)²⁷². Resistance to accept such a supply-driven quota from the local peasants is regarded as dissent, and is silenced using coercive mechanisms like exclusion from the productive safety-net program (i.e., food for work) and other benefits provided by the government (Amdom, 2018: interview)²⁷³. The government uses similar ways to maximize popular involvement in various programs of development that are implemented by different district agencies.

To implement the supply-driven (i.e., quota-based) top-down development plans at the local level, the TPLF-led Regional Government of Tigray uses stakeholders in the development process, which are grouped into three wings: the government, the public, and the party. While the government wing comprises the *tabia* administration and professionals who are assigned by the *wereda* administration as local development agents, the public wing consists of mass-based associations for women, peasants, and the youth, as well as, professional associations like that of teachers. The party wing essentially represents the lowest unit of the TPLF, *wahyo* (cell), which is constituted by a network of committed members of the Front at the grassroots level who mobilize the population for political and development purposes.

To harness the synergy of the three wings, a program steering committee is established, which consists of ‘district administrators, [peasants’], women’s, and youth association leaders, and peasants with specific technical or managerial competences (such as agricultural cadres, village leaders, or barefoot health workers’ (Segers, *et al*, 2009: 9). The main task of the development program steering committee is to motivate the local people to actively participate in

²⁷¹Tadesse Weldegebriel is a Deputy Head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was held on May 1, 2018 in Humera.

²⁷² Tadesse Weldegebriel is a Deputy Head of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Agriculture and Rural development Office. The interview was held on May 1, 2018 in Humera.

²⁷³ Amdom Berhe is a peasant residing in May Kadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018.

implementing the development programs designed by the government (*Ibid*). In collaboration with the district staff under different agencies, the local administrations across the Tigray Regional State use strategies of motivating the local population to implement the government's development programs. These include showing the benefits of adopting new agricultural production techniques through regular extension support to farmers in the countryside and organizing the urban poor in terms of networks and providing them with startup capital in the form of credit to involve in productive activities(1975-1991) (Segers, *et al*, 2009). To this end, mobilization by capitalizing on the collective memory of the Tigrayan people in the armed struggle is an important instrument.

6.2.2. Grassroots Level Institutions of Mobilization and Accomplishment

The Regional Government of Tigray uses mass-based associations, local government institutions (particularly, the local council and development groups), and the network of party members as instruments of popular mobilization and actions at the grassroots level. Plenary meetings that involve people from the three wings of the change army (the government, public, and the party) are frequently convened. They are important forums to conduct mobilization activities based on appeals to the Tigrayan people's memories of the armed struggle. In this regard, Segers, *et al* (2009: 11) explained how local officials try to translate the Tigrayan people's commitment and determination in the armed struggle against the *Derg* into a commitment and goal of reducing poverty after the downfall of the *Derg* regime by implementing the government's development programs as follows: 'In the past, people realized that the *Derg* was bad to them. The *Derg* killed the people. The people resisted, fought, and won. Today the enemy is poverty'. The argument is that as today's number one enemy of the people is poverty, as they did against the *Derg* regime, they should strongly fight to overcome it (Abera, 2018: interview)²⁷⁴. This shows that the current struggle against poverty is regarded as equally important as the previous struggle against the *Derg* regime.

While the plenary meetings are forums for providing orientation and conducting overall evaluation regarding the level of programs implementation, the political and economic ideals of the TPLF-led government in the Tigray region are expected to be converted into practice by the

²⁷⁴ Abera Tesfay is a Deputy Head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigre. The interview was held on April 17, 2018 in Mekelle.

institutions at the grassroots level, i.e., the mass-based associations and the networked development groups in the local administration. The mass-based associations for women, peasants, and the youth represent the public wing of the change army. While these associations were politically active in public mobilization to generate support for the TPLF during the armed struggle, they are now, in theory, free associations, which are free of TPLF's political influence (Rigbe, 2018: interview)²⁷⁵. Nevertheless, in practice, it seems that these associations are politically affiliated. Indeed, the TPLF is open in mobilizing its members to join their respective mass-based and professional associations in which they are expected to play their active role in shaping such associations based on the ideals of revolutionary democracy (TPLF, 2017). That is, members of the TPLF in different sections of the society are expected to join their respective associations (like that of peasants, women, the youth, and teachers) and shape them based on the ideals of the TPLF political program (i.e., revolutionary democracy).

Members of the TPLF who joined the mass-based and professional associations have the mission of influencing or convincing non-party members of these associations to become TPLF members (TPLF, 2017). As a result, as discussed earlier, most members of the mass-based and professional associations in Tigray are members of the TPLF (Rigbe, 2018: interview)²⁷⁶. Generally, for they are politically affiliated associations under the TPLF, the mass-based associations and the Tigray Teachers Association (to a certain extent) are serving as effective tools of mobilization and information sharing for political and development purposes (Abreha, 2018: interview)²⁷⁷.

The development group (*gudjile limat*), a government wing above the 'one-to-five' network, is another institution at the level of neighborhoods in both rural and urban areas, which is important for public mobilization and actions to implement the programs of development designed by the government. A development group is the redefined form of the group of 30 neighboring households led by *abo selasa* (a leader of 30), which was established by the TPLF to facilitate mobilization and organization of the peasant population in areas under its control (*Hara Meret*,

²⁷⁵ Rigbe Abrha is a focal person for public mobilization and organization in the Tigray Women's Association. The interview was conducted on April 21, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷⁷ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

meaning liberated area) during the armed struggle (1975-1991) (Weldegiorgis, 2018: interview)²⁷⁸.

The development group could be regarded as an ideal forum of exercising democracy and genuine popular participation at the local level. This is because every individual who reaches the age of the majority (18 years and above) is connected into a development group (Britane, 2018: interview)²⁷⁹. However, the organization and operational procedures of the development group essentially limit democracy and self-motivated popular participation at the local level. This is particularly observed in the organization of development groups for women and peasants in the urban and rural areas, respectively. The women development group (in urban areas) would be established by grouping 25-30 individual women living in neighboring households, or, in a workplace, by incorporating 15-25 women who are working in their share micro and small enterprise (*Wereda* Semen Women's Affairs Office, 2019). If the number of individuals working in a particular share enterprise is not enough to establish a development group, they are required to be organized into a network of five women ('one-to-five' network) (*Ibid*).

The women's development group is accountable to both the *Tabia* Women's Association and the *Tabia* Steering Committee (Rigbe, 2018: interview)²⁸⁰. The *Tabia* Steering Committee is established by incorporating representatives from women's association (deputy coordinator), federation of women (member), TPLF office (member), Women's League (member), and almost every sector agency of the *wereda* administration, including women's affairs office (coordinator), health office (secretary), education office (member), technical and vocational training education office (member), justice (member), police-crime investigation and prevention- (member), public relations office (member), security and administration (member) and the urban agriculture office (member) (*Wereda* Semen Women's Affairs Office, 2019). In this combination, the roles of the women's association, women's affairs office, and the TPLF office, and the women's league are interesting.

²⁷⁸ Weldegiorgis Belay is a peasant residing in *Tabia* Rawyan. The interview was held on May 6, 2018.

²⁷⁹ Birtane Fisseha is a deputy speaker of Qafta Humera *Wereda* Council. The interview was held on April 30, 2018, Humera.

²⁸⁰ Rigbe Abrha is a focal person for public mobilization and organization in the Tigray Women's Association. The interview was conducted on April 21, 2018, Mekelle.

Premising on the assumption that to achieve development in developing countries like Ethiopia, there is no alternative to fighting poverty and inequality in an organized way, the women's association was established to mobilize all women to become its members and join the development groups (*Ibid*). As a free organization that works for articulating and defending the interests and the rights of its members, the association motivates all women to defend and promote their rights and interests in an organized way (Rigbe, 2018: interview)²⁸¹. According to the manual prepared by the *Wereda* Semen Women's Affairs Office (2019), representing the government wing in the change army organization, the women's affairs office designs development packages for every sector to be implemented by the development group. In collaboration with the other sector agencies, the office prepares an integrated training manual, which would help build the implementation capability of women to improve their economic status and wellbeing. Representing the party wing, the women's league and the TPLF office also collaboratively work to establish *wahyo* (cell) in every development group. Recruitment to both the league and TPLF membership first targets the role models or frontline members of the development groups, and then others will follow to join to both grassroots organizations.

Although, in theory, the government, the party, and the mass-based associations are separate entities, three of them are intricately mixed up for the purpose of political, social, and economic control under the TPLF. There is no clear line that distinguishes between three of them. Particularly, under the development group, they are being reduced into a single hierarchy of institutional operation. As shown earlier, while the women's affairs office designs the development projects to be implemented by the development group, the women's association organizes the group and follows up the implementation of the development projects, and the women's league and the TPLF office jointly monitor the political lives of the development groups by establishing *wahyo* for each. Under this institutional configuration of varied responsibilities, the women's development group's direct accountability structure (under *Tabia* Women's Association and the *Tabia* Steering Committee) makes it confusing to distinguish between the party, the government, and the association. This is also reflected in the tendency of the women's association to influence its members join the TPLF and the women's league (a

²⁸¹ Rigbe Abrha is a focal person for public mobilization and organization in the Tigray Women's Association. The interview was conducted on April 21, 2018, Mekelle.

league of young women TPLF members) (Rigbe, 2018: interview)²⁸². A similar practice is being observed in the peasants and youth associations, as well.

Generally, merging the government, the party, and the public wings into a single hierarchy of collective institutional operation narrows the space for bottom-up initiatives and free operation of civil society organizations at the grassroots level in the Tigray National Regional State. Indeed, although popular participation is so high in local development activities like water and soil conservation works, inputs from the local people are less considered in the decision-making process regarding local projects of development (Amdom, 2018: interview)²⁸³. In other words, local participation in Tigray does not actually give citizens a meaningful role in local government decisions that affect their lives. While government representatives, sometimes, consult the local people, the local administrators conduct deliberations with them very late and mostly as a formality (Weldegiorgis, 2018: interview)²⁸⁴. This trend shows poor or unproductive engagement between the local residents and the local administration. In short, the role of local popular participation to meaningfully influence government decisions is not actually working well in the Tigray National Regional State. Consequently, as Segers, *et al* (2009: 4) point out, ‘low performance due to lack of meaningful participation by the [local people in Tigray] is legion’.

In theory, a government is expected to ensure that before local development projects are commenced, feedback from the people is taken into account in order to address local priorities during planning and implementation. Nevertheless, the case in Tigray contradicts this assumption and the government largely follows a top-down decision-making approach. As Teame (2018: interview)²⁸⁵ explained, local peoples’ participation in the process of identifying priority projects of development is ‘almost absent; and it is the higher body that decides on which projects should be prioritized and passed down to the local administration for implementation without consulting the local population’. This statement is strong enough to demonstrate the extent to which local development projects in the Tigray National Regional State are lacking democratic or participatory decision-making processes. In practice, the

²⁸² Rigbe Abrha is a focal person for public mobilization and organization in the Tigray Women’s Association. The interview was conducted on April 21, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁸³ Amdom Berhe is a peasant residing in May-Kadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018.

²⁸⁴ Weldegiorgis Belay is a peasant living in *Tabia* Rawyan. The interview was held on May 6, 2018.

²⁸⁵ Teame Hatsey is a Speaker of *Tabia* Meles Council. The interview was conducted on June 13, 2019, Mekelle.

grassroots participatory institutions are mainly characterized by insufficient participation and deficiency of democracy, where voices for more participation and democratization are silenced through coercion (Amaha, 2018: interview²⁸⁶; Segers, *et al*, 2009).

Public participation in Tigray seems almost absolutely dictated from above. It is organized to serve as an instrument of political control and productive involvement of the local people only in development activities. Indeed, participation in local development activities in the Tigray region is massive due to the presence of government and party facilitators at every level of the local administration (Amaha, 2018: interview)²⁸⁷. Such a pervasive presence of the party shows that local popular participation is largely controlled by the networked TPLF structures up to the grassroots level. It seems, therefore, that the political environment in the Tigray region is not open for growing popular control of the sphere and moving from a top-down control to a genuine participation in the decision-making process pertaining to the local issues of democracy and economic development. The existing participatory mechanisms and institutions, as discussed above, are hierarchically and intricately controlled by the party structures, and are organized in a way to serve mostly as instruments of public mobilization for achieving economic development. This is to say that the need for public participation in the political affairs is either overlooked or discouraged by the TPLF. This shows that the government's official claim of equal emphasis over democracy and economic development seems rhetoric.

The TPLF-led Regional Government in Tigray (as discussed above) claims that it gives equal emphasis to democracy and economic development (Abera, 2018: interview)²⁸⁸. Nevertheless, as informants in a focus group discussion in May Kadra (2018)²⁸⁹ explained, there is no genuine democratic exercise at the societal level. Indeed, the government's stronger emphasis on achieving economic growth than building democracy is essentially observed in the public media's exclusive focus of reporting on the economic achievements. This is also strongly reflected in the outcome, in that, the government is more successful on the economic sphere than

²⁸⁶ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was held on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸⁸ Abera Tesfay is a Deputy Head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigre. The interview was held on April 17, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁸⁹ Focus Group Discussion with local residents. Conducted on May 3, 2018 in May-Kadra

the democratic sphere (Alganesh, 2018: interview)²⁹⁰. In short, contrary to the economic achievements, indicators of democratic deficiency are so pervasive in the Tigray region, particularly in the justice, security administration and the civil service systems (*Ibid*). Because of the latent and clear violation of rights often committed by officers in the police and security apparatus, and a fear of discrimination in the service providing agencies, people are mostly reserved to freely express their ideas and assertively demand their rights (*Ibid*). Such problems are largely associated with the existence of patronage networks established based on group and personal interests across government agencies from the region down to the lowest levels of administration (Tsegay, 2018: interview)²⁹¹.

As indicated earlier, another factor that shows the deficiency of democratic practice at the societal level in Tigray is the weak existence and operation of civil society organizations (CSOs). Particularly, the activity of CSOs at the local level in the region is almost non-existent. Because organized participation is systematically controlled by the ruling party and the regional government, there is a narrow space for the growth of independent civil society organizations in the Tigray region (Abrha, 2018: interview)²⁹². Civil society organizations are critical to the quality of democracy' because they support collective organization-based action and press demands on the government, minimize patronage-driven politics and provide citizens with alternative channels to strengthen the participatory character of a democratic system (Baiocchi, *et al*, 2011; Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2017).

It must be remarked that in principle, when the civil society organizations become a locus of power to challenge a government to respect citizens' authority, participatory democracy will function well. However, the Regional Government's tendency to become party-dominated and to distrust non-party affiliated citizen's collectivities, has essentially constrained the growth of civil society organizations with the capacity to aggregate demands, and press the government to address societal problems in the Tigray region (Abrha, 2018: interview)²⁹³. This is because there

²⁹⁰ Alganesh Gebreegziabher is a Women's Affairs Chairwoman of the *Tabia* Rawyan administration. The interview was held on May 5, 2018.

²⁹¹ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁹² Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁹³ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

seems to be a belief that except the developmental state government under the leadership of a progressive vanguard party (i.e., the TPLF), other actors, including the civil society, would not act in the interest of citizens. Rather, most of them are regarded as either rent-seekers or instruments of rent-seekers. This condition lets me to argue that the TPLF is tending to position itself as the sole legitimate representative of the Tigrayan people and acting as both a political and social movement in Tigray.

6.2.3. Representation and Accountability

A government at any level of administration would be judged as democratic, if it is acting in the best interest of its citizens and is responsive to their demands (among other things). That is to say representative and accountable government can be described as a government, which acts ‘in the interest of the governed in a manner responsive to them’ (Pitkin, 1967: 209, in Fischer, 2016: 2). When evaluated against these standards, practices at the local level in the Tigray National Regional State do not actually show success.

The Representatives in Tigray (elected *tabia*, *wereda*, and regional councilors) are entirely TPLF members. Because the core value of representation is acting in the best interest of the represented, the Council members at the three levels of administration are expected to reflect and articulate the demands of the people whom they represent. Due to lack of congruence between administrative and electoral districts in Tigray, representation in the Regional Council and in the House of Peoples’ Representatives at the federal level lacks substance. It would be difficult to recall and make representatives at the federal, as well as, regional levels accountable to the electorate. In most cases, communities organized under a single electoral district in the region are divided into different *wereda* administrations. Therefore, there is no institutional structure that would enable the local people in a particular electoral district to make their representatives in the Regional Council and the federal house accountable for their failures, and force them to act in the interest of the communities whom they formally represent. Therefore, it is only at the local level (*tabia* and *wereda*) that the people in Tigray have the institutional structure that would enable them directly communicate with and make their representatives accountable for their decisions and actions.

Although the 2001 revised Constitution of the Tigray National Regional State provides the means for popular representation and accountability at the *tabia* and *wereda levels*, members of the councils at both levels of administration (which is also true at the regional level) act as representatives of the TPLF, not of the public (Haftu, 2018: interview)²⁹⁴. Most of them believe that it is the TPLF, not the local people that brought them to the position as representatives (*Ibid*). Acting in the local councils (largely) in terms of party loyalty is, therefore, one factor that makes representation lack substance in Tigray.

Since the local councilors understand the value of representation in terms of their loyalty to the TPLF, they mostly fail to articulate the interests and demands of the people whom they are supposed to represent. Indeed, as Asefa (2018: interview)²⁹⁵ explained, because the *Tabia* and *Wereda* Councils are nominal institutions, which largely serve the interests of the ruling party, they are not actually regarded as true representatives in their constituencies. As a result, in practice, the local councils do not have the capacity to induce the local government to act in the best interest of the public in the Tigray region. Therefore, representation as a means of practicing local democracy that ‘focuses on the character of public authority through which citizen’s interests are translated into tangible outcomes’ (Fischer, 2016: 2) is not working well in the region.

As discussed above, the local government units in Tigray lack the necessary resources and decision-making authority to address local issues of development. They are simply working as agents for service delivery and implementation of development plans designed by the Regional Government. This experience is in line with Fischer’s (2016:) argument that ‘[w]here local governments have no powers to act, or they are simply following mandates from above, they cannot be responsive to citizens’ interest; representation, by definition, does not exist’. Therefore, lack of adequate decentralization of resources and decision-making powers is the main factor that makes representation less meaningful at the local level in the Tigray National Regional State.

Genuine representation would ‘occur in situations where the conduct of elected representatives is made visible to citizens, who scrutinize, evaluate, and sanction [them] accordingly’ (Agrawal

²⁹⁴ Haftu Aregawi is a Director of the Research based Follow up and Support Process Owner Department in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018, Mekelle.

²⁹⁵ Asefa Tamto is a peasant living in May-Kadra. The interview was conducted on May 3, 2018.

and Ribot, 1999, in Fischer, 2016: 3). Therefore, to ensure genuine representation, there should be mechanisms to make elected representatives accountable to the people whom they formally represent. Several mechanisms could be employed to ensure the accountability of an elected government. Among them, elections and multiparty politics, strong civil society organizations (CSOs), vibrant media, and public meetings are the most important ones (Blair, 2000).

Regular and democratic elections would be powerful mechanisms to ensure accountability of a government. In the case of Tigray, in line with the national electoral law of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), elections have regularly been conducted in the region. However, they have not been serving as effective tools to ensuring accountability. As discussed earlier, there has been weak operation of opposition political parties in Tigray. Generally, there has not been a political party, which is strong enough to meaningfully challenge the TPLF in the ballot box. This situation essentially denied a genuine and reliable political choice other than the TPLF to the electorate in the region. Consequently, election has not been a powerful tool to ensure accountability in the region, because, to date, the TPLF has never been faced a threat of losing its control of power through the ballot box.

According to Manin, *et al* (1999: 10) '[e]lections are contingent renewal accountability mechanism, where the sanctions are to extend or not to extend the government's tenure'. However, the absence of strong opposition political parties that would provide alternative political choice has essentially denied citizens the chance to use their vote to threaten the TPLF, if they believe that it fails to genuinely representing their interests. In short, elections have been weak mechanisms to hold occupants of the legislative and executive powers accountable for their decisions and actions in the Tigray National Regional State.

In a democratic system, accountability relations are agency relationships, in which the government is an agent (representative), which acts in the interest of the represented (the public) who have the powers to sanction or reward the government (Fearon, 1999), mainly, through election. Although this kind of relationship is constitutionally recognized to be a governing principle in the Tigray region, in practice, the local people essentially lack the power to sanction their administrators. While the local people claim that they are being able to discern between the

local administrators who are acting in or against their interests, they lack functional means to sanction them appropriately for their failures (Amdom, 2018: interview)²⁹⁶.

Beyond elections, within the framework of accountability or principal-agent relationships, democracy would work ‘if public servants are ... accountable ... to [the] elected representatives and representatives [are also] ... accountable to the public’ (Blair, 2000: 27). However, due to the absence of strong monitoring and control mechanisms, lack of accountability on the part of government employees is often expressed in terms of delays and lack of good governance in the process of providing public services in the Tigray region (Tsegay, 2018: interview)²⁹⁷. Local residents in *Tabia Rawyan* (FGD, 2018)²⁹⁸ consistently explained that local government employees do their jobs properly when they see their supervisors. Therefore, the failure to hold public employees accountable for their actions is largely attributed to the weak and inconsistent follow up of the leadership to properly implement the available mechanisms of reward and punishment (Tsegay, 2018: interview)²⁹⁹.

While the limitation to hold public employees accountable for their failures is associated with lack of close follow up and control, the failure to sanction elected officials and representatives is mainly attributed to the lack of proper institutionalization (Amaha, 2018: interview)³⁰⁰. As discussed earlier, in Ethiopia, in general and the Tigray National Regional State in particular, there is no clear distinction between the party and the government. This condition essentially constrains the growth of democratic institutions at the local, as well as, regional levels. However, the problem is not only the absence of clear distinction between the ruling party and the government, but also, in practice, loyalty to the party is more important than loyalty to the electorate (Haftu, 2018: interview)³⁰¹. This is practically observed in the local and regional councils. Members of the councils at every level of administration are more loyal to the ruling party than the people whom they represent. Because people actually vote for the party in

²⁹⁶ Amdom Berhe is a peasant residing in May Kadra. The interview was held on May 3, 2018.

²⁹⁷ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

²⁹⁸ Focus Group Discussions conducted on May 3, 2018 with local residents in *Tabia Rawyan*, Rawyan.

²⁹⁹ Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

³⁰⁰ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was held on May 1, 2018, Humera.

³⁰¹ Haftu Aregawi is a Director of the Research based Follow up and Support Process Owner Department in the Tigray National Regional State Council. The interview was held on April 20, 2018, Mekelle.

elections, not for individuals, the councilors believe that it is the power of the TPLF, not of the people, that brought them to the position as representatives (*Ibid*). In this case, although the councils are constitutionally mandated to hold leaders accountable for their failures in the public realm by citizens, in practice, they simply formalize the decisions made (behind the curtain) in the party meetings (Tsegay, 2018: interview)³⁰².

The overriding prominence of the party and the nominal, as well as, indecisive nature of the local councils in the Tigray National regional State are clearly seen in the relocation of corrupt and inefficient leaders from one local administration to the other. According to the views expressed by the local people in the study sites, instead of taking measures to hold public officials accountable for their failures, either transferring to another local administration or promoting to higher positions within the government has become a tradition in the Tigray region. In several cases, while the local people openly oppose the appointment and promotion of incompetent and corrupt officials to a government office, their objections are not seriously considered by the TPLF and the government (Asefa, 2018: interview)³⁰³. In search of solutions, tabling such issues for discussion is primarily the responsibility of individual local councilors. However, because the councilors are working based on the party discipline (the principle of democratic centralism), acting in the interest of the local people whom they formally represent may sometimes contradict with the party's interest and regarded as dissent. Therefore, when evaluated in terms of representation and accountability, the agency of the local councils in Tigray is largely rhetoric.

The role of civil society and the media as essential tools of ensuring accountability is also almost absent in the Tigray Region. In democratic systems, 'civil societies have crucial role in advocating for constituents, acting as watchdog[s] over the [government], and supporting political competition generally' (Hansen, 1996, in Blair, 2000). As it is often argued, therefore, local democracy would be successful when there is a room for civil society organizations to act in the interest of the people or groups whom they represent as non-elected representatives (Baiocchi, *et al*, 2011; Van de Bovenkamp, 2019). However, because of the TPLF and the Regional Government's negative attitudes towards non-party affiliated citizen collectivities, there is a limited space for civil society organizations to provide alternative channels of voice for

³⁰² Tsegay Ghidey is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was conducted on May 1, 2018, Humera.

³⁰³ Asefa Tamto is a peasant living in May-Kadra. The interview was conducted on May 3, 2018.

citizens to articulate their cause in the public sphere in an organized way in the region (Abreha, 2018: interview)³⁰⁴.

The mass-based associations of peasants, women, and the youth are the most prominent ‘non-party’ citizen collectivities in Tigray. They are expected to play a significant role in enhancing democracy and accountability of the government. Nevertheless, their relations with the government and the ruling party tend to be dominated by patronage. This makes them to remain having no effective means to hold the government accountable and being reduced to dependent clients working as the informal arms of the government and the TPLF. To explain the case of Tigray in the words of (Baiocchi, *et al*, 2011: 13), therefore, in a political environment ‘where the formal associational autonomy of citizens is compromised by weak institutions ... promoting [popular democracy] is far more difficult’. Generally, the nominal nature of representation in the local councils and the absence of a favorable political environment for non-party affiliated associations of citizens make both election and non-election-based mechanisms of ensuring government accountability still to remain weak and ineffective in the Tigray region.

Regarding other mechanisms of making the voices of the people heard, the media (both printed and electronic) would play an important role in ensuring accountability by making the political news public and uncovering government misdeeds (Blair, 2000). Blair stresses on the necessity of good investigative journalism to help citizens depend on credible information in order to hold their politicians and government officials accountable for their decisions and actions. However, the problem in Tigray is that while the local private media (entirely printed) is weak and mainly lacks professionalism to undertake investigative journalism (Redae, 2018: interview)³⁰⁵, the public media (both printed and electronic) tends to exclusively report development achievements recorded by the government in the region. In short, while physically and structurally the local media exists in Tigray, it does not actually serve as a reliable source of public information that would help citizens hold politicians and their public officials accountable for their decisions and actions (*Ibid*).

³⁰⁴ Abreha Desta is Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty. The interview was held on April 26, 2018, Mekelle.

³⁰⁵ Redae Halefom was a head of the Tigray National Regional State’s Bureau of Public Relations. The interview was held on July 26, 2018, Mekelle.

Public meetings as mechanisms are also lacking impact in ensuring government accountability in the Tigray region. Local party and government representatives in every part of the region often convene public meetings to evaluate the progress and implementation of local development programs. However, such meetings lack to produce binding decisions to hold politicians, as well as, public servants accountable for their misdeeds. Rather, local public meetings in the Tigray region are often conducted as consultative participatory systems without producing binding sanctions (Amaha, 2018: interview)³⁰⁶. They are mostly initiated, organized, and guided based on the active and intensive intervention of the ruling party (TPLF) and local agents of the government (*Ibid*).

Summing up, the existence of weak opposition political parties (in view of both their own weakness and domination by the ruling party), less empowered local government units, and the absence of genuine representation make the exercise of multiparty politics and participatory democracy far difficult in the Tigray region. Moreover, in the absence of strong local participatory institutions, civil society organizations, local media, and popular meetings that could produce binding decisions, it becomes more difficult to ensure accountability of the government in the region. Based on these findings, therefore, if the TPLF-led Regional Government in Tigray is really committed towards multiparty politics and participatory democracy, it should genuinely open the political and policy spaces for the opposition political parties, the operation of civil society organizations, and broader public deliberations, all of which are among the yardsticks of a democratic political system.

³⁰⁶ Amaha Aregawi is an expert in the Qafta Humera *Wereda* Civil Service Office. The interview was held on May 1, 2018, Humera.

7. Conclusion

The extent to which Tigray, as a region, can be characterized as a democratic developmental state; it needs careful examination whether it has functional economic and political institutions, which would enable it to achieve democracy and economic development in tandem. When evaluated based on the core institutional features of the democratic developmental state, the Regional State of Tigray shows achievements, failures, and challenges.

Tigray has a relatively autonomous government with adequate freedom to chart development policies for the region, and a committed leadership that takes development as a matter of survival. Such qualities are being reinforced by the government's ideational capacity, which enables it penetrate deep into the communities through a densely interconnected party and party-affiliated mass associations, and have tight political control to avoid any encumbrance to implement the policy it chooses. However, if the government continues to fail in controlling the pervasive patronage networks and rent-seeking tendencies within the government and the society, the leadership in the policymaking circle would gradually fall under capture by interest groups. Moreover, because there is a limitation in public officials to understand the concept, the government lacks strong and adequate intellectual defense force that would enable it fully achieve and maintain hegemony of the idea of the democratic developmental state in the society.

In its policy trusts, the Regional Government of Tigray places emphasis on the necessity of strong state intervention to shape the region's economy to progressively record rapid growth and undergo structural transformation through creating conducive environment for the development of the private business. While remarkable achievements have been recorded in terms of GDP growth, the intended transformation is not undergoing well due to low level of agricultural transformation, poor support services, limited human power, inadequate infrastructure, and weak or incompetent domestic private sector to invest in the manufacturing subsector. The lack of strong local private business that the state can embed with to realize its development objectives in Tigray is underpinned by the tendency of the government to distrust the private sector, as expressed in the institutional deficiency of building synergetic cooperation between the two.

Tigray also lacks a qualified developmental state bureaucracy in terms of its organization, capacity of policy implementation and merit-based human resource management. The regional

civil service legislation lacks dictating provisions to establish a disciplinary coordinating nodal agency that is endowed with financial and decision-making powers over other critical policy agencies of the government. Such a deficiency in organization limits the civil service to ensure accountability, bureaucratic rationality, and interagency communication in plan formulation and implementation. Although the legal and policy trusts of the Tigray National Regional state are adequately inclusive, the government actually fails to build merit-based civil service due to politicization. Politicization, as the replacement of merit criteria with political criteria, undermines the process of merit-based selection, recruitment, placement, and retaining of the most talented professionals available in critical merit positions of influencing policy and quality service delivery. Lack of conducting reform-based capacity building trainings after skill gaps that need intervention are identified by skill gap analysis also limits the quality of the civil service system to achieve policy effectiveness in the Tigray National Regional State.

Regarding democracy, although the TPLF has declared its commitment towards multiparty politics since the dawning of a new political era in 1991, the new political opening has been lacking to provide a meaningful political choice to the electorate in Tigray. The main problem is that there have not been alternative opposition political parties that challenge the TPLF in the polls. Although this problem is mostly associated with the TPLF's mechanisms of political control in society, the weak organization, mobilization, and leadership capacities of the opposition political parties is also a critical problem. Because the TPLF has long established organizational structure that reduces the three wings of the change army (government, public, and party) into a single hierarchy of collective institutional operation under the development groups at the local level, it essentially limits the growth of opposition political parties that would challenge it in the polls. Consequently, due to the absence of strong opposition political parties, lack of choice has essentially been making voting in election lack substance.

In accordance with the idea of revolutionary democracy, which emphasizes broader and collective communal participation, the organization of the government in Tigray seems suitable to exercise popular democracy and inclusive development. However, the constitutionally established local government institutions (*tabia* and *wereda*) do not have adequate decision-making authorities over their dominions. Although local institutions of democracy and popular participation are formally established, there is a limited room for bottom-up initiatives in Tigray.

The regional government of Tigray sees the local government units as conduits of service delivery and policy implementation, rather than as public spaces for policy deliberations. The decentralization project in the region lacks the devolution of adequate decision-making authority and control over resources by the local government units. Because the Regional Government is the provider of development plans and programs, such a top-down decision-making approach narrows the space for popular policy deliberations at the local level.

Dictated local participation in development activities is massive in Tigray because of the pervasive presence of government and party facilitators at the community level. Such kind of participation is an expression of the government's focus on the collective hands of the local people in implementing local development activities, not on their inputs to the decision-making processes in identifying local priorities of development. As a result, local development projects in the Tigray region are lacking participatory decision-making processes. The local participatory institutions in the region are largely characterized by insufficient participation and deficiency of democracy, where voices for more participation and democratization are often silenced through coercion. Therefore, the government's official claim of equal emphasis on democracy and economic development is largely rhetoric.

The existence of limited space for exercising local democracy in the Tigray region is also observed in the absence of genuine representation, strong civil society organizations, and vibrant media. Due to the absence of clear separation between the party and the government, while the local councilors are expected to act in the interest of the people whom they in theory represent, they are made to primarily advance the interest of the ruling party. Representation at the regional and local levels lacks substance, because the local councilors largely believe that it is the power of the TPLF, not the people, which brought them to the position.

The tendency of the regional government to become party-dominated and the TPLF's distrust on non-party affiliated citizen collectivities also limit the existence and operation of civil society organizations in Tigray. Moreover, the local media is not playing its required role in uncovering government misdeeds by undertaking good investigative journalism. The absence of genuine representation in the local participatory institutions, strong civil society organizations, vibrant

local media, and popular participation that produce binding decisions generally make the exercise of participatory democracy far difficult in the Tigray region.

The findings of this study, therefore, show that political and policy practices in the Tigray National Regional State largely contradict or lack to sufficiently reflect the ideals of the democratic developmental state. This shows that whatever adequate and comprehensive the legal and policy foundations, if not appropriately practiced, they would not serve as guarantees to build a democratic developmental state.

The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that if the democratic developmental state is to work in a desirable and productive way, the Regional Government of Tigray should first, ensure the functioning of the institutional structures for strong public-private cooperation, capacity building, effective support services, and building depoliticized, merit-based civil service system. Second, it should make local institutions of democracy vibrant in order to ensure genuine representation, empowerment, broader and effective participation of the people in the process of planning and implementing development activities.

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Appendixes

Appendix-I: Interview Guidelines

(A) The Democratic Developmental State in Ethiopia

Changes and Development in Ethiopia between 1991 and 2001

Revolutionary Democracy and the Developmental State: The Nexus

Party and government officials at the federal and regional levels

- (1) There is a confusion regarding the similarity and difference between revolutionary democracy and the developmental state. Could you clarify the difference and similarity between the two?
- (2) Some people relate revolutionary democracy with socialism. Is there any similarity between the two?

The Democratic Developmental State Since 2001

Party and government officials at the federal and regional levels

- (1) What is the main reason to choose pursuing a democratic developmental state model as the best alternative model in Ethiopia?
- (2) The Ethiopian government has been criticizing for its more emphasis on economic development than democracy. What is your view on this idea?

Professionals in the academic circle

- (1) Do you think that the basic infrastructures to build a democratic developmental state are in place in Ethiopia?
- (2) The Ethiopian government under the EPRDF has been arguing that democracy and the developmental state are reconcilable. What is your view on this idea?

Opposition party leaders

- (1) The Ethiopian government under the EPRDF has been arguing that democracy and the developmental state are reconcilable. What is the view of your party on this idea?
- (2) Does your party support/oppose the introduction of the developmental state in Ethiopia?

Achievements and Challenges of the Ethiopian Developmental State

Party and government officials at the federal and regional levels

- (1) What are the achievements so far recorded after the introduction of the developmental state?
- (2) What are the main challenges of building the democratic developmental state in Ethiopia?
- (3) Do you think that the bureaucratic agencies in charge of implementing policies at the federal level are free and insulated from patronage networks?

Opposition party leaders

- (1) How your party evaluates the impact of the developmental state model in Ethiopia?

- (2) What do you think are the main limitations of the democratic developmental state in Ethiopia?

The Democratic Developmental State and Federalism: The Nexus

Party and government officials at the federal and regional levels

- Because the idea of developmental state is often associated with unitary system, how it could be practiced within a framework of the federal system in Ethiopia?

Professionals in the academic circle

Do you think that the democratic developmental state is applicable in a federal system? How/why?

(B) Developmental State Policies and Economic Development in the Tigray National Regional State

Assessing the Developmental State Practices in the Tigray Region

State Autonomy

Professionals (university professors)

- Does the state at the regional level in Tigray is adequately free from capture by segmental interest groups?

Leadership

Opposition party leaders and academicians (university professors)

- (1) How do you see the commitment of the political leadership in Tigray towards achieving rapid economic development?
- (2) Do you think that the leadership in Tigray has the required ability to effectively formulate policy decisions in a systematic and well-thought manner?

State Capacity

- (1) Within the framework of the grand policies at the federal level, how the government in Tigray would address the unique opportunities that may have decisive role in transforming the region?
- (2) What are the main problems (if any) that limit the regional government's capacity to achieve policy effectiveness?
- (3) Does the *wereda* level of administration have the required institutional and/or organizational structures that would enable it to effectively achieve the objectives of the developmental state?

Opposition party leaders

- How your party sees the implementation of the developmental state policies in Tigray?

Professionals in the academic circle (University professors)

- (1) Does the government in Tigray have adequate ideational capacity to penetrate deep into society to effectively implement the policy it pursues?
- (2) How do you evaluate the implementation of the developmental state policies in Tigray?

Public-Private Cooperation

Party and government officials at the regional and wereda levels

- (1) Does the government in Tigray provide enough space for public-private cooperation?
- (2) It has been argued that the private sector is often thwarted in favor of the public sector. What is your view on this idea?
- (3) Does the Government of the Tigray National Regional State have support programs to enhance the capacity of the private sector within the region?
- (4) How the government of Tigray is harnessing the capacity of the civil society with the capacity of the private sector and of other stakeholders to achieve its developmental objectives?

Opposition party leaders and Professionals in the academic circle

- (1) Does the government in Tigray provide enough space for public-private cooperation?

Emphasis on Manufacturing Industry

Party and government officials at the regional and wereda levels

- (1) What kinds of industries are on the priority list of the Tigray National Regional State Government?
- (2) How the agricultural sector, which is dominated by smallholders, would serve as a basis to transform the economy in Tigray?
- (3) What is the problem that makes the manufacturing sub-sector slower in its growth than the other sectors of the economy?
- (4) Official reports show failures in projects management to create linkages between agriculture and the other sectors of the economy. What do you think is the reason for this problem?
- (5) What efforts have been made by the Tigray National Regional State Government at the regional as well as local levels to advance the level of technology to produce value added products and commercialize them?

Opposition party leaders and Professionals in the academy (University professors)

- (1) Are the industries in the priority list of the government in Tigray carefully identified based on their comparative advantage?
- (2) What do you think are the main problems slowing down the pace of rapid structural transformation in the region's economy?

(C) The Civil Service System in the Tigray National Regional State

Civil Service Reform

The Reform Tools and their Implementation

- (1) What are the main reasons to embark on reforming the civil service?
- (2) What are the main factors limiting the proper implementation of the reform tools within the civil service system in Tigray?
- (3) What are the specific roles of the party, government, and public wings of the change army organization?

Structure and Organization of the Civil Service

Government officials and experts in the policy agencies of the government at the regional and wereda levels

- (1) Does the organizational structure of the civil service system allow coordinating plan formulation and implementation among policy agencies of the government?
- (2) Do you think that the developmentalist institutions in current Tigray are coherent enough to achieve the goals of development?
- (3) Do you think that the developmentalist institutions in current Tigray are coherent enough to achieve the goals of development?

Human Resource Management and Capacity Building

Party representatives and government officials at the regional and wereda levels

- (1) To what extent are bureaucrats in the Tigray National Regional State free of influence and/or pressure from the political leadership or other interest groups to independently develop national goals into effective policy action?
- (2) Does the Civil Service Law in Tigray guarantee the professionals who staff the bureaucracy with long-term career rewards?
- (3) Could you tell me the delimitation between the political and merit positions in the civil service system?
- (4) What are the main problems constraining the implementation of the merit principles in the civil service system in Tigray?
- (5) Do the reform measures enhance the capacity and quality of the bureaucracy in terms of service delivery and accountability of the civil servants?
- (6) Does the regional government regularly evaluate the impacts of the capacity-building trainings in the region?
- (7) With the devolution of power to the *wereda* level, are there challenges to achieving policy effectiveness?
- (8) What are the main obstacles that limit the capacity building training programs of the civil service to achieve their designated objectives?

Opposition party leaders, professionals, and experts in the civil service

- (1) Is there a clear distinction between the party and the government in Tigray? How/why?
- (2) To what extent are bureaucrats in the Tigray National Regional State free of influence and/or pressure from the political leadership or other interest groups to independently develop national goals into effective policy action?
- (3) What are the main problems constraining the implementation of the merit principles in the civil service system in Tigray?

(D) Participatory Democracy and Development in the Tigray National Regional State

Multiparty Politics and Elections

Party and government officials at the regional level

- (1) Do you think that a true democratic developmental system would be built in a situation where the ruling TPLF designs strategies for staying dominant in power for a longer period of time? How?
- (2) Do you think that a true democratic developmental system would be built in a situation where the ruling TPLF designs strategies for staying dominant in power for a longer period of time? How/why?

- (3) Do opposition political parties have the chance to mobilize and organize their supporters as the TPLF do everywhere in Tigray? How/why?

Opposition party leaders

- (1) What are the main challenges your party face in mobilizing and organizing its members in Tigray?
- (2) Why your party failed to win a single seat in the legislative organs at every level of administration in all the previous national elections?

Academicians (University professors) and leaders of mass-based, as well as, professional associations

- (1) How do you see the political space in Tigray?
- (2) Do you think that the developmental state policies and strategies are suitable to exercise democracy at the regional level? Why/how?
- (3) What is the reason that makes opposition political parties weak to challenge the TPLF in the polls?
- (4) How do you see the commitment of the political leadership in Tigray towards building genuine democracy that involves broader popular participation?
- (5) Do you think that the government in Tigray is using the capacity of its agencies up to the grassroots level in a way to promote democracy with economic development? How/why?

Key informants and FGDs at the local level

- (1) Why do you think is people (and perhaps, you) consistently voted for the TPLF in the previous national elections?
- (2) What do you think will be the consequence upon you if members of the ruling party know that you vote for an opposition party in the next national election?
- (3) Do opposition political parties organize their supporters, as the TPLF is doing, in your community?

Participatory Democracy

Key informants and FGDs at the local level

- (1) Because participation of citizens in development activities is social responsibility in a developmental state, how the Regional Government of Tigray is trying to ensure positive interactions between democratic rights of citizens and policy implementation?
- (2) How the public mobilization and policy implementation structures are organized at the *wereda* and *tabia* levels?
- (3) How the channels which allow the exercise of participatory democracy and ensure transparency, as well as, government accountability are functioning at the local level?
- (4) There is a densely established network of mass-based associations of women, farmers and the youth in Tigray.
 - (i) What are the specific roles of these associations in the current development endeavors?
 - (ii) Do these associations have the room to independently reflect the voices of their respective local people?
 - (iii) What type of relations they have with the TPLF and the government?

- (5) Are there formal structures that clearly spell out the roles that citizens and community organizations should play in collaborating with the local government in the development endeavors? Could you describe them?
- (6) How the government agents in your locality are selected in order to lead you actively participate in the development process?
- (7) Do the representatives at different levels of government regularly consult with the population in your community on decisions that have direct impact on your life?
- (8) Do you think that your democratic rights are adequately respected by the government?
- (9) How the local government ensures your participation in the process of outlining development priorities of your respective communities?
- (10) Have you ever been participating in any kind of consultation with government agents on development programs and projects that have direct impact on people's lives in your community?
- (11) What will be the consequence upon you if you failed to participate in the development programs outlined by the government?
- (12) What are the basic factors (if any) that limit local officials to address the demands of the public and encourage active citizens' participation for collective action in your community?
- (13) Are there civil society organizations operating in your community? What are they doing?

Leaders of Mass-based Associations

- (1) Can you describe to be the objectives of your association?
- (2) How your association interacts with the TPLF office and the government?
- (3) What are the main challenges your association faces in articulating the interest of its members?
- (4) How your association involves in development activities?

Representation and Accountability

Key informants and FGDs at the local level

- (1) Are public officials (leaders) in your constituency more accountable to the public or to their party hierarchy?
- (2) Do the current institutional arrangements in your locality adequately enable the people to make public officials accountable for their decisions and actions?

Appendix-2: List of Key Informants

R.N	Full Name	Position	Interview Date	Place
1	Abreha Desta	Chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty	April 26, 2018	Mekelle
2	Abera Tesfay	Deputy Head of Meles Zenawi Leadership Academy in Tigray	April 17, 2018,	Mekelle
3	Alganesh Gebreegziabher	Tabia Rawyan Women's Affairs Chairwoman	May 5, 2018	Rawyan.
4	Amaha Aregawi	Expert in the Wereda Kafta Humera Civil Service Office	May 1, 2018	Humera
5	Amdom Berhe	Farmer	May 3, 2018	Maykadra
6	Anguach Fantahun	Local Resident in Tabia Meless	June 14, 2019	Mekelle
7	Asefa Gebremariam	Legal Affairs and Administration Standing Committee chairman of the Qafta Humera <i>Wereda</i>	April 30, 2018	Humera
8	Asefa Tamto	Farmer	May 3, 2018	May Kadra
9	Berihu Araya	A Focal Person in Charge of Facilitating Intelligentsia-Government/Part Cooperation in Semen District's (Sub city) TPLF office	June 13, 2019	Mekelle
10	Birtane Fisseha	Deputy Speaker of Qafta Humera <i>Wereda</i> Council	April 30, 2018	Humera
11	Endakiros Hagezom	Deputy Speaker of <i>Tabia Zeslassie</i> Council	June 13, 2019	Mekelle
12	Gebremedhin Yifter	Coordinator of One-Stop Service for Manufacturing Development in Qafta Humera <i>Wereda</i>	April 30, 2018	Humera
13	Gebretinsaie Gebremichael	Farmer	May 6, 2018	Rawyan
14	Girmay Gebrekidan	Director for support service in the TNRS Small and Medium Manufacturing Industries Agency	April 18, 2018	Mekelle
15	Haftom Hagos	Chairman of the Tigray Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations	June 11, 2019	Mekelle
	Halefom Berhe	An Expert in Kedamay Weyane <i>Wereda</i> Civil Service Office	March 9, 2018	Mekelle
16	Hutso Gebrelibanos	Farmer	May 6, 2018	Rawyan
17	Kidane Gebretensay	Human Resources Development, Organization and Record Analysis Director in the Tigray Region's Civil Service Bureau	March 20, 2018	Mekelle
18	Kifle Girmay	Public Relations officer of the Tigray Teachers' Association	April 23, 2018	Mekelle
19	Leul Alemayoh	Speaker of Semen <i>Wereda</i> Council	June 13, 2019	Mekelle
20	Redaie Halefom	Tigray National Regional State Government Communication Affairs Bureau Head	July 2018	Mekelle
21	Merera Gudina	Chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress	June 22, 2018	Addis Ababa
22	Rigbe Abrha	Focal Person for Public Mobilization and Organization in the Tigray Women's Association April 21, 2018	April 21, 2018	Mekelle
	Selemon Gebru	Local Resident in <i>Tabia Zeslase</i>	June 11, 2019	Mekelle

23	Semere Equbay	Senior researcher in the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI)	August 2, 2018	Addis Ababa
24	Seife Hailu	Assistant Professor of Political science in the Department of political Science, MU	April 27, 2018	Mekelle
25	Tadesse Weldegebriel	Deputy Head of Kafta Humera <i>Wereda</i> Agriculture and Rural Development Office	May 1, 2018	Humera
26	Teame Hatsey	Speaker of <i>Tabia</i> Meles Council	June 13, 2019	Mekelle
27	Teberh Gebremariam	Focal Person for Gender Affairs in the Tigray Teachers' Association	April 23, 2018	Mekelle
28	Tewodros Amare	Director of the Research and Organization Directorate in the Tigray Civil Service Bureau	March 20, 2018	Mekelle
29	TilahunTareke	Director of the Tigray National Regional State Small and Medium Manufacturing Industries Agency	April 16, 2018	Mekelle
30	Tsegay Ghidey	Expert in the Kafta Humera <i>Wereda</i> Civil Service Office	May 1, 2018	Humera
	Weldeabrha Niguse	Assistant Professor in the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies/Mekelle University	April 27, 2018	Mekelle
31	Weldegiorgis Belay	Farmer	May 6, 2018	Rawyan
32	Yemane Zeray	Assistant Professor of Political science in the Department of political Science, Mekelle	April 27, 2018	Mekelle
33	Zeray Gebrehiwot	Education and Training Head in the Tigray Teachers' Association	April 23, 2018	Mekelle