When Theory Misses History
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State and Economic Development in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia
by Aaron Tesfaye
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A s the latest addition to the literature on the Ethiopian development experience, the book, published mainly in the context of the political crisis that has been currently shaking the country, any reader of (Ethiopian) political economy would benefit from reading this book. The Ethiopian developmental state is represented as an achievement of the Ethiopian state. The author argues that ‘a modernizing’ force committed to bureaucratic centralization and consolidation of the power of the state, achieving the age-old mission of making wars for wealth and religion (p. 1). Despite the emergence of modernizing monarchs in the nineteenth century, the true development agent for Aaron is the incumbent party, EPRDF. Development, which is also defined as a technical process, is conceived as a survival issue for Ethiopia because Ethiopia is surrounded by ‘failed and failing states’ (p. 7). The author thus defines the African past as devoid of accumulation of wealth in a capitalist sense? Without offering an in-depth historical study, the author makes bold generalizations about the pre-modern Ethiopian state as a warrior state, even though it was a strong state, it lacked the will and the ideology of development.

It is only with ‘the insertion of Ethiopia into world capitalist economy’ that Ethiopian political elites became a ‘modernizing’ force committed to bureaucratic centralization and consolidation of the power of the state, achieving the age-old mission of making wars for wealth and religion (p. 1). Despite the emergence of modernizing monarchs in the nineteenth century, the true development agent for Aaron is the incumbent party, EPRDF. Development, which is also defined as a technical process, is conceived as a survival issue for Ethiopia because Ethiopia is surrounded by ‘failed and failing states’ (p. 7). The author thus defines the African past as devoid of accumulation of wealth in a capitalist sense? Without offering an in-depth historical study, the author makes bold generalizations about the pre-modern Ethiopian state as a warrior state, even though it was a strong state, it lacked the will and the ideology of development.

One of the positive aspects of the theoretical chapter is that the author analyzes the debate on developmental trajectories by considering the historical differences of Asian, Latin America and African states. According to the author, the presence of Japan as a model to be emulated and trigger a sort of domino effect is a unique geographical condition that animated the exceptional trajectory of the East Asian states. However, Aaron did not give any explanation as to how the Japanese development track is different from the Western model apart from describing it as a late development economy located in Asia. Similarly, in addition to the role of the political elites, Aaron considers the role of foreign colonial powers and cold war intervention as contributing factors. In the South Korean case, for example, in addition to the Japanese colonial intervention, the US also played a key role in its economic transformation.

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The second section of the first chapter presents the theoretical framework of the work; it is anchored on the comparative analysis of the state and the policies of development in the global south. The author presents an extensive theoretical and conceptual discussion on the historical role of the state in transforming society and achieving development through the launching of a successful policy and strategy of industrialization. Without considering the experience of the Western world, the author has situated the study in the global south taking the exceptional success stories of East Asian ‘tigers’ as a model to be emulated. He argues that in spite of the misrepresentations of the global south in the development literature, ‘the East Asians have clearly demonstrated in their march from the periphery that development is possible, albeit, via authoritative allocation’ (p. 7). The choice of the subject matter and the historical case studies are thus a political decision.

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condition, instability and dysfunctional features made production non-existent and state failure. Even Emperor Menelik II, who is considered by the author as 'the architect of the centralized Ethiopian state' (p. 43), is at the same time criticized for not emulating the Japanese model.

The author traced the imagination of the developmental concept as an ideology to the early twentieth century intellectuals known in Ethiopian historiography as the 'Pioneers' and the 'Japanizers.' He characterizes them as the only 'true intellectuals of modernization and economic development' (p. 59). Though most of these intellectuals emerged in the post-Menelik period, the author anachronistically questions why the idea of development did not take root in that period. Further, the author did not adequately trace the influence of the intellectuals, both the pioneers and the second-generation intellectuals, on state ideology and policy.

Emperor Haile Selassie I, who patronized these intellectuals, is described as a 'cautious modernizer, not a visionary leader' (p. 46). Such a bold assertion would have been enriched if the monarch's relation with the intellectuals concerning Ethiopia's development was put into context. What was the difference, at least at the ideological level, between the modernizing emperors and the 'Japanizers'? How did this ideology of leaders and intellectuals contribute historically to the emergence of a developmental state in post-1991 Ethiopia? How was modernization or development negotiated with the old ideology of religion and religiosity in Ethiopia? While tracing the history of the 'indigenous' state, it would have been illuminating if the author explored the dynamics and evolution of state ideology, mainly with the emergence of modernizing emperors. How does a predatory state committed to war and religious fundamentalism become a modernizing state in the twentieth century?

Despite the emergence of the modernizing emperors, the state has to wait till the late twentieth century to find a new 'consensual parameter' to 'cage conflict' and to achieve development. The Ethiopian federal structure which emerged after 1991 is considered by the author as the only successful 'consensual parameter' opening the structure for the practice of democratic centralism and using the EPRDF's party structure, and to achieve development. This new conception shifts into a celebratory, if not a developmental vision, the author explores the performance of the Ethiopian developmental state. Operationalizing the concept of structure as the institutional capacity of the state, the author explores the evolution of the party and its efficiency from the ancien and military regimes to the contemporary EPRDF regime. In the federal arrangement, notwithstanding the amplified principle of self-determination and decentralization, the central state has been able to make the regional and local states dependent through a strong party structure and democratic centralism, as well as using its fiscal resources. This capacity of the central state is considered a necessary condition of the developmental state as it is dependent on the party structure. The proliferation of institutional, legal and financial institutions is described as a progressive step without questioning the wider politics and context of institutional making.

All the dynamic innovation of institutions is seen as far as the author is concerned as a step forward for the implementation of national development policies and/or as means to check patron-client relations and/ or institutional dependencies. Institutions are not seen as an arena of contestation and negotiation; rather, they are conceived as supra-political apparatus and extended organ of the party in business. Under the developmental levelling logic of the building of creeping bureaucracy and centralization process was criticized for being dysfunctional mainly because of the interventionist tendencies of both the emperor and the later military leaders, the author refrains from criticising the post-1991 bureaucracy at least to the degree of the EPRDF regime's own self-criticism. Instead, the author has chosen to chronicle the incremental institutional reforms as a progressive step in building the policies and taking the political capacity of the state. For example, the establishment of anti-corruption commissions and civil service reforms are chronicled as institutional progress in the seizure of the political-aesthetic. The bold critical stance exhibited in discussing the previous regimes' performances shifts into a celebratory, if not apologetic, narrative when it comes to the developmental state.

Chapter four is entitled 'Economic Policy and Performance', and the author presents a general overview of Ethiopia's economic policy and performance since 1991. Similar to the previous chapter, the author chronicles the different policies and their evolution focusing on what is known as the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP). Moreover, the chapter gives substantial space to a discussion of patron-client relationships such as the Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADDL) to the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) as well as the 'impressive' growth record so much lauded by international development agencies. This chapter, however, raises the question of whether the intellectual contribution of this chapter given that the author chooses to merely describe the economic policy and the headline story of 'impressive' growth record. The author presents economic policymaking and implementation as apolitical processes, ignoring the theoretical and historical discussion of policy implementation in the history of different developmental states. In the author's understanding, the ability of the Ethiopian state critically engage the performance of the economy, particularly in addressing structural poverty, which is manifested among other things by the human development index, according to the author, Ethiopia holds the bottom position in comparison to other sub-Saharan states. Without interrogating the GDP growth record, the author chooses to reproduce the discourse of the impressive growth record as a manifestation of the success of the policy and its implementation.

"Development policy in Ethiopia and Globalization" is the problematic of the fifth chapter in which the author shows how the industrial policy of Ethiopia, instead of import substitution and protection of infant local manufacturing, deliberately aimed at exposing the manufacturing industry to global competition to realize an export-oriented manufacturing sector. As far as the author is concerned, private capital is at the center of industrial policy of achieving industrial transformation through making agriculture an engine of economic development. In other words, the agrarian policy is considered as an engine of growth to provide capital for investment in industries. However, Ethiopia's manufacturing industry, as in many late developing countries, is primarily light industry, i.e. producing food, beverages and textiles. These enterprises are owned by micro and small holders while state, political parties and foreign investors play an active role by owning a considerable chunk of medium scale and emerging large scale manufacturing industries. The author anchors his analysis on the performance of the leather industry. In so doing, he documents how the state promoted the industry through legal and institutional mechanisms, such as special agencies for developing it. Such institutional intervention is considered as an example of Ethiopia's successful emulation of the East Asian model of the developmental state.

The author describes the ruling party's ownership of manufacturing industries and the outcome of its endowment. However, the author refrains from discussing the implication of the ruling party's involvement in business for the economy and political dynamics of the country. Different authors have considered the party's businesses as a factor in analyzing the Ethiopian developmental state. Some have dubbed the Ethiopian case as developmental neo-patrimonialism, by re-conceptualizing the concept of neo-patrimonialism to a social asset that can be used to meet a developmental end. The endowment factor is seen as one strategy through which rent is successfully managed for the long-term national objective. However, the author does not engage much on the similarities between EFFORT, a TPLF-owned business conglomerate, and the South Korean company Chae-bols. Aaron remains silent. What is the place of an ethnic-based party and business on the Ethiopian federal developmental state? How can one discuss the autonomy of the state while political parties own large businesses in the country? Do parties, like the state, play a legitimate role or a role extended from societal division and contract? Are political parties supra-social entities?

In the last chapter, which is the conclusion, the author summarizes each chapter in detail and devotes only a few lines to the theoretical and historical discussion. The author appreciates the twenty-year performance of the Ethiopian federal state, given the fact that Ethiopia is located in a volatile region with internal politics of nationalism and sectarian contestations. However, except for the passing remark on the similarities between EFFORT, a TPLF-owned business conglomerate, and the South Korean company Chae-bols, Aaron remains silent. What is the place of an ethnic-based party and business on the Ethiopian federal developmental state? How can one discuss the autonomy of the state while political parties own large businesses in the country? Do parties, like the state, play a legitimate role or a role extended from societal division and contract? Are political parties supra-social entities?

The fundamental puzzle is: how is it that Ethiopia, with an ‘impressive growth record’, a celebrated institutional capacity to formulate and implement policy, faces such a serious political crisis? How did the new ‘consensual parameter’, which the author argues managed to ‘cage conflict’ in Ethiopia, fail to regulate conflict and ensure peace and stability? The author has documented how democracy was absent in the takeoff stage in both the Western and East Asian historical experience. Both regions evolved in different temporal and spatial contexts, which makes the comparison pertinent. Nonetheless, the book says little about the emerging political crisis in the country. March/Mar 2018
To conclude, the book raises timely and relevant questions concerning the politics of development and the role of the state in the global south in general and in Ethiopia in particular. The author must be commended for this scholarly contribution to the study of the developmental state presented from an optimistic perspective. It is a recommended book for readers, students and scholars alike interested in the political economy of Ethiopia and the continent at large.

Notes
3. Alice H Annen, 1989, Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization, New York: Oxford University Press.