

Critical Review of *Medemer* from Ideological Perspectives

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Abstract

Medemer, both as a book and as an idea, is trapped between two extremes: admiration and rejection. Writers from both ends offer their thoughts, criticisms, and reviews of *Medemer*. The aim of this article is to analyze *Medemer* from an ideological perspective. Raising some political and policy questions about *Medemer*'s application is also the aim of this article. This article used a qualitative research approach and comparative and critical research methods. Secondary sources of data were used to compare *Medemer* with various political ideologies. Ideologically, *Medemer* meets the three criteria (critics of the present order, vision of the future society, and theory of change). *Medemer* is a “blended ideology” that combines concepts, principles, and ideas from liberalism, socialism, conservatism, and fascism. Furthermore, *Medemer* ideology attempted to combine concepts from opposing political ideologies and proposed it as a solution to Ethiopia's complex sociopolitical and economic problems. Despite the government's claim that *Medemer* is Ethiopia's redeemer, several political questions remain unanswered given the country's current situation. Therefore, the country's complicated sociopolitical and economic problems under the regime of the Prosperity Party challenged the applicability of *Medemer*. Is *Medemer* thus the sole (or perhaps the only) instrument, policy framework, ideology, and mechanism for resolving Ethiopia's multiple, dynamic, and complex socio-political problems? These remain a point of contention among academics and politicians.

Keywords: Blended Ideology, Ethiopia, Ideologies, *Medemer*

Introduction

Historically, Ethiopia passed through three types of political regimes based on their ideologies: imperialism, socialism, and the developmental state. The imperial government adopted the European nation-state model (Weldeyes, 2017). This regime ruled the country from the inception of so-called Modern Ethiopia until 1974. Imperialism's nation-building projects oppressed the entire community and failed to integrate multi-national identities into politics. Political discontent during the late 1960s and early 1970s because of national oppression resulted in widespread political opposition to the imperial regime, which resulted in the disposition and emergency of the military government of Derg (Horst, 2020; Aweke, 2021; Yusuf, 2019a & b).

The Derg regime attempted to adopt Russian socialist ideology until 1991 (Zimmermann-Steinhart and Bekele, 2012; Fentaw, 2011). The Derg aimed to create a totalitarian unitary socialist state and failed to integrate multi-national identity. The collision of ethno-nationalist groups brought down the socialist regime and instituted the developmental state as its ideology until 2018. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) introduced multicultural identity as a political philosophy to resolve the national oppression thesis and problems of identity politics. But identity politics was used as an instrument for political mobilization (Gudina, 2011).

Currently, except Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), the government of Abiy dismantled EPRDF and changed it into Prosperity Party. The newly restructured party organization adopted its ideology, *Medemer*. As an idea, *Medemer* has its arguments. The main arguments of *Medemer* are its sources and the assumption that *Medemer* is the only mechanism for dealing with the country's multi-dimensional problems. According to the author, if we fail to apply *Medemer*, we will perish or rot. It further claimed that *Medemer* is a native philosophy derived from the country's history and natural law.

Paradoxically, however, as the author noted, Ethiopian history has limited historical and contemporary relevance, focusing on short-term protection and legitimacy. *Medemer* claimed, "Emperors in Ethiopian history were obsessed with resolving their immediate problems and failed to assure the country's prosperity" (p. 78). These appear to be the imperial apologist's expression. Hence, how could such a history be a source of *Medemer*? Furthermore, the author states, "Ethiopia is a developing country, and backward traditional heritage dominates the country, which is incompatible with the development of democracy" (p. 149). According to *Medemer*, the democratic norms and traditions outlined and explained are either negatively viewed or absent/poor in Ethiopia (p. 148-154). So, how could *Medemer* be derived from these conventional values? If that is the case, how does *Medemer* defend its current relevance?

The author claims that *Medemer*'s concept is the only way to pull the country back from the brink of turmoil and misery, poverty, and darkness. Nonetheless, whether *Medemer* is the right approach to handling the country's current difficulties is still contested. There is no proof that it fits the country's current multidimensional problems. As the author himself stated, various regimes tried to impose different ideologies without taking the political consciousness of the community into account (imperialism, socialism, the developmental state), and now it is *Medemer*'s turn. "If the author believes that Ethiopia should not be a laboratory where concepts are tested, I wonder why he wants to try *Medemer* Democracy on Ethiopia." Assefa (2019, no pagination) says. This forces the country into vicious circles of fragility, poverty, and chaos, which still degrades the country and makes it suffer from the devastation caused by political miscalculation and the armed conflict committed with regime change. The conflicts throughout the country and their accompanying consequences are indications of these (Human Rights Watch, 2021; International Rescue Committee, 2021; OCHA, 2021; UN, 2021; UNICEF, 2021; USAID, 2021).

Therefore, this article examined and analysed these and other *Medemer* arguments from an ideological perspective and in light of the country's current political situation. The article also attempted to pose some policy and political questions regarding the applicability of *Medemer* as a sole solution to the socio-political problems of the country.

Contending Arguments on *Medemer*

Medemer attracted numerous writers to provide their comments, criticisms, and reviews of the book based on their perspectives (Assefa, 2019; Linda, 2020; Desalegn, 2019; Mariam, 2019a, b). The above scholars and analysts provided constructive and critical reviews of the *Medemer* as a book and an idea. Scholars and elites have argued that *Medemer* is not just a book (Linda, 2020; United State Institute of Peace Panel, 2020; Mariam, 2019a & b). It is an ideology (a set of ideas), a political language, and a policy framework by which the government of the Prosperity Party rules the country. *Medemer* is a principle that governs the overall operation of government policies and functions (see United States Institute of Peace Panel, 2020).

Therefore, whether we like it or not, oppose it or support it, appraise it or depress it, select it or reject it, *Medemer* is an expression of political ideas. The argument of the author and his

government is that “*Medemer* is a philosophy, a way of life, an integrated set of ideas and thoughts applicable in every social, political, economic, and environmental setting and life” (see page 35). They call upon the universal applicability of *Medemer* (see speech made by Arega on the Panel of the United Nations Institute of Peace, 2020, Mariam, 2019a and b).

Some scholars, such as Mariam (2019a & b) and Linda (2020), consider *Medemer* as a solution to the persisting political, social, and economic problems of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the current conditions in various parts of the country show the escalation of the problems. Several international humanitarian organizations have indicated that Ethiopia is experiencing severe humanitarian crises. The conflict between the Federal government, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), as well as others that have arisen because of political tensions, has aggravated the crisis in the country (Human Right Watch, 2021; International Rescue Committee, 2021; OCHA, 2021; UN, 2021; UNICEF, 2021; USAID, 2021). So, why have the parties failed to overcome the political tension and friction with the so-called *Medemer* philosophy? Because of these circumstances, questions about the applicability of *Medemer* in the country have grown. Despite this, the government claim that *Medemer* is the only solution to every problem.

For instance, Mariam (20019a and b) provides an interpretive review of *Medemer* in two parts. He reviewed *Medemer* based on his personal reflection. He aimed to enhance the understanding of *Medemer*, particularly among English-speaking audiences. He also invited a critical review of the idea regarding its usefulness and applicability in Ethiopia and elsewhere. Nevertheless, the reviewer admits that the review is an expository one. His review is not a conventional academic review. Therefore, this article attempts to conduct a scientific analysis of the idea in order to contribute to the academic discourse of *Medemer*.

Contrary to the above conception of *Medemer*, some scholars such as Assefa (2019) and Desalegn (2019) make a critical review and indicate that *Medemer* is not only increment but also indicates decrement and sometimes shows extinction or nullification ($-2 + 2 = 0$). Moreover, Desalegn (2019) provides a critical review of the applicability of *Medemer* in light of the political reality of the country. He concluded that *Medemer* is not appropriate for the current political situation of the country and recommended tolerance as an alternative solution for the country’s political problems. In the words of Dinka (in providing a critical reflection on *Medemer* on a panel prepared by UNIP, 2020), considering the current situations in the country, concluded that, “*Medemer* is a hell for the ordinary citizen of Ethiopia”.

The above conceptions indicate that there are controversies in both the definition and application of *Medemer* in Ethiopian political discourses. This indicates that *Medemer* is not only a book but also a political idea and political language. Individuals are approaching, using, and defining *Medemer* in different ways the author did not even conceive it. This is the nature of politics and political terminology, that no one approached and analysed political terminology with a complete dispassionate manner. For instance, Mariam (2019a) sees *Medemer* as the philosophical equivalent of open-source software such as Ubuntu, which can be used or modified as one sees fit. Moreover, Assefa (2019: no pagination) clearly shows how different individuals define *Medemer* differently and put as follows.

Some say, *Medemer* means unity, togetherness, reconciliation, synergy, synthesis, consolidation, combination, or cooperation, but others say it is putting everyone in one melting pot to create homogeneous society out of heterogeneous society, unitary, elimination of identity and diversity by the means of aggregation, domination through combination or expansion, clustering, bundling, merging, or cannibalization.

Given the contradiction, *Medemer* is the motto of the Prosperity Party. For instance, one of the mottos of the Prosperity Party is that “*Medemer* is the way, prosperity is the end.” It is an integral part of the Prosperity Party’s political program and speeches. More directly, *Medemer* is the political language of the Prosperity Party. In politics, politicians use political language to get their audience to believe them. According to Heywood (2003), language serves as the primary communication tool in politics, whether spoken in gatherings, yelled at rallies, scrawled on posters and walls, or printed in books, pamphlets, and manifestos. Political language is primarily concerned with persuading people. It could also provide a basis that enables one to realize it, shaping their worldview and their attitude toward it. In politics, language is more than just a means of communication; it is also a means by which politicians manipulate and confuse political professionals, use it as a political weapon to express their propaganda, and place less emphasis on its precision (Heywood, 2003).

Moreover, George Orwell (1903–1951), as quoted in Jay et al. (2017:8), wrote, “political language could be used by politicians and their administration as instruments to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable.” Numerous scholars, politicians, activists, artists, and some common non-professionals assume that *Medemer* is a political language of government.

Despite the contradiction, *Medemer* is the policy and political framework of the ruling party. The author, without preservation, as he is the Prime Minister of the country and a leader of the ruling party, assumes greatest responsibilities to resolve numerous complex socio-economic and politico-legal problems in the country. The author is in the right position to prepare his political, social, economic, and policy framework that he thought would be a solution to the existing problems of the country, as the author himself briefly stated on page V (paragraph 2) of the book. This does not mean that *Medemer* is a cure-all and the only instrument for the current problems of the country, free of criticism. Moreover, it is said that the government is not on the right track to resolving the country’s social, political, and economic problems with the application of *Medemer*. Nevertheless, the author and his government recommended *Medemer* as a sole (perhaps the only) alternative to the country’s problems. Though numerous elites, political analysts and activists, and scholars on its relevance and workability for the existing problems of the country criticize *Medemer*, the government still hopes and preaches that *Medemer* is the sole redeemer of Ethiopia from vanishing (Assefa, 2019 and Desalegn, 2019).

Therefore, the article aimed at synthesizing the ideas of *Medemer* from an ideological point of view and indicating the ideological root of *Medemer*. Moreover, the article attempted to generate some political and policy questions regarding the applicability of *Medemer* in the existing complex socio-political, and economic problems in Ethiopia’s.

Methods and Materials

This article analyses *Medemer* from an ideological point of view and examines its applicability in the country’s political context. This article uses a qualitative approach to make a critical analysis of *Medemer*. The *Medemer* book is a primary source of data for this article. To conduct a critical and comparative analysis, ideas that have an ideological nature from the book were selected using the purposive method. For comparison, appropriate political ideologies were selected using the purposive sampling method. The selected ideologies were used to demonstrate how *Medemer*’s arguments are rooted in the chosen ideologies. In indicating the linkage between *Medemer* and ideologies, the article applied a comparative analysis. For comparison, the four selected ideologies are liberalism, conservatism, socialism, and fascism. A critical method of data analysis was used to examine the argument of *Medemer*, posing some questions about its applicability in Ethiopia’s political context.

Moreover, other secondary sources of data, such as books and articles written on ideological traditions, reviews made so far on *Medemer* by different scholars, articles, video files, and reports of *Medemer* and humanitarian institutions, were used as sources of data to substantiate and support arguments used in the analysis of data. In this article, the Amharic version of the *Medemer* book was used and translated with great care to prevent misinterpretation of the ideas presented in the book.

A brief Account of Political Ideologies

What is Political Ideology?

Everyone is a political thinker. We use political jargon in our everyday language, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The terms fascist, liberalist, conservative, feminist, and others are among the political ideologies used in our daily conversation. Even sometimes, we may commit mistakes in the interpretation and use of these terms. This is particularly so as political ideology is a highly slippery and contested political concept (Vincent, 2010; Heywood, 2019, 2003, and 2019; MacKenzie, 2003; Eatwell, 1993). French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy first coined the term “ideology” in 1796. For de Tracy, it referred to a new “science of ideas,” literally an “ideology.” His aim was a scientific study of ideas (Heywood, 2021, 2019 & 2003; Vincent, 2010), whose aim is “to establish a solid and unquestionable method by which correct ideas could be scientifically identified to foster the use of reason in the governance of human affairs for the betterment of society as a whole” (MacKenzie, 2003: 3).

De Tracy hoped that objective identification of the origins of ideas would become possible and that ideology would be given the same status as biology and zoology (Vincent, 2010; Heywood, 2019; MacKenzie, 2003; Eatwell, 1993). “Despite this high expectation, the original meaning of the term has had little impact on later usage of ideology” (Heywood, 2019; 2003: 6; 2002). This means that, contrary to what de Tracy claims, negative and pejorative interpretations quickly emerged, and until the 1960s, thinkers saw ideology as a political weapon to discredit competing or rival political ideas. Nonetheless, such negative interpretations of ideology led to the term’s limited use, as it excluded some political doctrines from its scope (Vincent, 2010; Heywood, 2019; 2003, 2002).

However, the modern use of ideology is substantially changed and the positive meaning of ideology evolved. For instance, Heywood (2003: 10 & 2002) states that later on “the term ideology has gained a wider currency through being refashioned according to the needs of conventional social and political analysis.” This has established ideology as a neutral and objective concept, the political baggage once attached to it having been removed.” An inclusive definition of “ideology” (one that applies to all political traditions) must therefore be neutral: it must reject the notion that ideologies are “good” or “bad”, true or false, or liberating or oppressive. This is a feature of the modern and scientific meaning of ideology in social science. Hence, this modern meaning treats ideology as an action-oriented belief system, an interrelated set of ideas that in some way guides or inspires political action. The purposes and roles of this coherent set of political ideas are to preserve, modify, or overthrow the existing system of power (Heywood, 2019; 2003; 2002; MacKenzie, 2003; Eatwell, 1993). Heywood (2021: 8 & 2019: 74) put that “All ideologies (1) offer an account of the existing order, usually in the form of a ‘world-view’, (2) provide a model of the desired future, a vision of the Good Society, and (3) outline how political change can and should be brought about.” The following figure shows characteristics of political ideology.

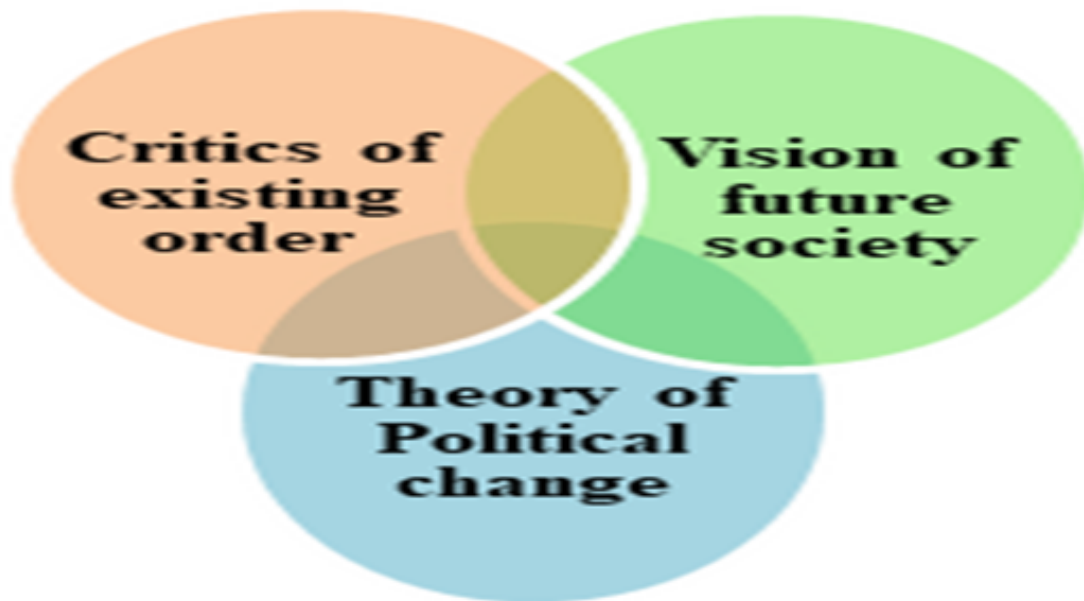


Figure 1: The Features of Ideology. Source: Hewood (2021: 8)

Given that the definition of ideology as a coherent set of idea, it at the same time, might lack clear shape and internal consistence as they are not hermetically sealed thought. Hence, ideologies are typically fluid set of ideas that make them to overlap with one another, which leads to emergence of hybrid ideological forms. Though the definition of political ideology is still contested and controversial in political analysis (Vincent, 2010; Heywood, 2019, 2003 & 2002; MacKenzie, 2003), “ideology must possess certain set of attributes, which constitute overt and implicit empirical and normative view about human nature, the process of history and socio-political structure” (Eatwell, 1993: 7).

Therefore, in this article, the modern definition of ideology, which is more positive, is used. To support a successful completion of this article, it deemed necessary to put a brief review of some major political ideologies such as Liberalism, Conservatism, socialism and Fascism. Here, one could identify the core characterizations or values of these Ideologies. Nevertheless, this does not mean that these ideologies are blindly rejecting one another. This is because, no ideology is an entire island in its own as ideologies are sharing different values from one another. The position and importance given to different values vary from one ideology to the other. In this manner, Alexander (2014:3) and Heywood (2021: 9) cited the work of Freedden (1996) which classifies political concepts that applied in ideologies as core, adjacent and periphery, states, “The ideologies share many core, adjacent and peripheral concepts, but they arrange and order them in different ways.”

Liberalism

With the dismantling of feudalism and the development of a capitalist society, liberalism emerged (Eccleshall, 2003; Heywood, 2021, 2003, and 2002). The rise of liberalism was linked to the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom, which spread later to other European countries and North America. Classical liberalism and social democratic liberalism are examples of liberalism (Heywood, 2021, 2003, and 2002; Walker and Rousseau, 2016; Vincent, 2010).

The basic themes of liberalism, according to Harrison and Boyd (2003: 202), are “the individual and his or her rights; an optimistic view of human nature; a belief in progress; a

commitment to freedom; limited government, the economy, and liberalism; and a commitment to internationalism.” Bellamy (1993) identified three important components of liberalism: philosophical (liberty, equality, individuality, and rationality); social (tolerance and a free-market economy); and political (combining the two).

Liberalism has common elements that characterize it (Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, and 2002). “It is characterized by a powerful moral thrust that is embedded in a commitment to a distinctive set of values and beliefs, which constitute individualism, freedom, reason, justice, consent, constitutionalism, tolerance, and diversity” (ibid., 2021: 22–30, 2003: 22–31, and 2002: 43–44). Generally, liberalism envisioned the creation of a society that protected individual interests (Heywood, 2021).

Conservatism

Conservatism developed as an ideology in response to the French Revolution and the Western ideal of liberal democracy (O’Sullivan, 1993; Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, and 2002; Eccleshall, 2003). It arose as a reaction against the sweeping economic, social, and political changes brought by the French revolution, and the pressure rose with the growth of liberalism, socialism, and nationalism (Alexander, 2014; Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, and 2002). According to Heywood (2003: 55; 2002: 46), “Conservatism harked back to the ancient regime and stood in defence of an increasingly embattled traditional social order.” Alexander (2014: 11) said that “the conservative, in general, distrusts argument because argument simplifies what should not be simplified.” This is why conservatism is known for what it opposes (Heywood, 2003, 2002).

Conservatism advocates a pessimistic view of the human condition. According to conservatism, the world has an abstract structure that is beyond the limited human capacity to conceive it (Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, and 2002; O’Sullivan, 1993). O’Sullivan (1993) stated that conservatism uses political realism to develop a theory of limits and a doctrine of a quest for limits. The conservative movement is categorized into radical reformist types based on its attitude toward change (Eccleshall, 2003; Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, and 2002; O’Sullivan, 1993). O’Sullivan (1993) has identified three types of conservatism: the reactionary school, the revolutionary school, and the moderate school. Heywood (2020, 2019, 2003, and 2002) also indicated the deep division in conservative ideology and identified different forms of conservatism as authoritarian, pragmatic, libertarian, social democratic, and new right conservatism. However, all conservatism shares a common theme: the desire to conserve. Heywood (2020, 2019, 2003, and 2002) identified some elements of conservatism as tradition, human imperfection, an organic society, hierarchy, authority, and property.

Socialism

Socialism arose as a reaction against the conditions created by western industrial capitalism. It opposes a liberal market society and originally had a hostile relationship with capitalism. Socialism aims to abolish the capitalist economy and replace it with a socialist-type society characterized by common ownership. Socialism, like other ideologies, ranges from the most radical (revolutionary) to the most revisionist. The most radical form of socialism is revolutionary socialism, which is anti-capitalism and aims to revolutionize the capitalist regime. The revisionist reformist socialism sees the gradual transformation and improvement of the life of the working class and the integration of working-class people into industrial society (Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, & 2002; Vincent, 2010).

Common humanity is the core of socialism. It views a human being as a social creature. Unlike liberalism, socialism assumes that communities shape individual life. Individual behaviour is the function of social and communal factors. Therefore, socialism prefers cooperation to competition (Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, 2002). The central theme of socialism is that no man is an island. Elements of socialism are community, cooperation, fraternity, social equality, need, social class, and common ownership (ibid.).

Fascism

Given the extreme complexity and ambiguity in the explanation and definition of fascism, different scholars such as Vincent (2010), Griffin (2008), Eatwell (2013), and Wilford (2003) provide their views regarding the idea of fascism. According to Eatwell (1993), some historians and social scientists consider fascism a nihilistic form of dictatorship with extreme nationalism that lacks a set of coherent ideas and purposes. Fascism derives from the bundle of rods that show authority, strength, and unity (Harrison and Boyd, 2003; Vincent, 2010).

In Eatwell (2013), Griffin (2007) held that “fascism appealed to people suffering from a sense-making crisis, a conclusion largely deduced from intellectuals’ comments about decadence and/or the isolation of the masses rather than the empirical study of public opinion.” This is to say that fascism relied heavily on political myths rather than political realities. It is argued that fascism stresses the quest for national rebirth as the mobilizing myth, with the central notion of the creation of an organically united national community (Griffin, 2008). Eatwell (2013) identified three important themes of fascism: the “new man,” “holistic nationalism,” and “a new third-way state.” Moreover, Wilford (2003: 122) stated that “while celebrating those aspects of the re-imagined past that fascist thinker considered inspiring, it also rejected other traditions and ideas that encumbered its primary mission: that of national redemption.” In this manner, fascism aimed at national renewal and rebirth.

Generally, fascism argued that modern society would face moral and cultural decadence, believing in the myths of a glorious past, national regeneration, and a struggle for dominance. Hence, fascism is a kind of palingenetic ultra-nationalism (Heywood, 2021, 2019; Griffin, 2012, and 2008).

Medemer in the Eyes of Ideologies

The main issue addressed in this part is indicating the linkage between *Medemer* and different ideological traditions. Therefore, this part attempted to answer the question: is *Medemer* a new philosophy or a fusion of different political ideologies. Just by looking at the word “*Medemer*” and based on its arguments, one could identify the ideological roots of *Medemer*. Though the author argued that *Medemer* is an endogenous philosophy, various ideologies provided the root idea and explanation of *Medemer* in detail. In conservative ideology, for example, it is clear that organicism is one of the principles explaining organic society (Heywood, 2021, 2003). However, it is not possible to criticize the internal aspects of a political idea by looking at a single term or word. Therefore, to make the essence of *Medemer* clear from a variety of ideological perspectives, it is necessary to look at some of its arguments in line with ideological traditions. In this section, some *Medemer* ideas are taken and compared to various ideologies.

Medemer and Ideologies

Is *Medemer* an ideology? As per the characteristics of ideology, it is possible to see the ideological nature of *Medemer*. The figure suggests that, for an idea to be an ideology, it needs to fulfil the

three characteristics of ideology. These constitute criticism of the existing order, a vision for the future of society, and a theory of change. To be categorized as an ideology, ideas should (1) offer an account of the existing order, usually in the form of a “world-view,” (2) provide a model of the desired future, a vision of the good society, and (3) outline how political change can and should be brought about (Heywood, 2021: 8, 2019: 74, 2003, 2002; MacKenzie, 2003; Eatwell, 1993).

Is *Medemer* fulfilling these three pillars? Yes, it fulfils the three pillars. First, *Medemer* criticizes the two opposing ideologies (liberalism and socialism). It also criticizes the ideologies previously tried in Ethiopia, including the developmental state, and indicates the failures of these ideologies when taking the educational status and living standards of the Ethiopian community into account (see pages 13–34). These indicate criticisms of the existing order. Second, *Medemer* envisioned the creation of Ethiopian democracy by building free, neutral, and strong institutions, state unity, citizen dignity, and prosperity. This represents *Medemer*'s vision of a good society. Third, *Medemer*'s theory of change emphasizes evolutionary or incremental change rather than revolutionary or radical change (pages 36–43). Therefore, *Medemer* could be justified as an ideology.

In the book of *Medemer*, the author clearly states that the idea of *Medemer* has gone through various stages of development with him and become a redeemer of Ethiopia (pp. II–V). This statement is a reflection of different political ideologies, but the author seems to think that the idea is his own. It is clear and to be hoped that the author of this book realizes that many different political ideologies explain and analyse the idea of *Medemer*. To understand the idea of *Medemer*, one can look at different political ideologies. Even though the author made no citation or quotation, the concept of the *Medemer* is considered a principle in different political ideologies.

The following table tries to show the linkage of the concepts of *Medemer* in different ideologies by taking different principles or elements of some major political ideologies. Then an attempt is made to indicate how the idea of *Medemer* is blended and synthesized in these ideologies. In the table, the page number on which each principle is presented in the book is provided.

Table 1: *Medemer* in Different Political Ideologies

S. No	Ideologies	Principles	Meaning of the principle	In <i>Medemer</i>
	Liberalism	Freedom	Condition in which people can develop their skills and talents and fulfill their potential.	Page 10, 91–96, 103
		Reason	The ability of an individual to make wise judgments and their capacity to solve their difference	Page 12, 103
	Conservatism	Organicism	The whole is greater than the sum of its part	Page 36–41 (3.1 part)
		Tradition	The accumulated wisdom of the past	Page VII, 10 & 36–41 (3.1 part)
		Human imperfection	Human beings are limited, dependent, and security-seeking creatures	Page 36–41 (3.1 part)
		Pragmatism	action should be shaped by practical circumstances and practical goals, that is, by what works	Page 60–61

S. No	Ideologies	Principles	Meaning of the principle	In Medemer
	Socialism	Community	Human being cannot stand on its own. Human identity is defined by social interaction	Page 36-41 (3.1 part)
		Fraternity	Human beings share a common humanity. Brotherhood-based bondage	Page IV, 37, 91-96
		Cooperation		Page 108, 143
	Fascism	Nation in Crisis	Claim that the nation has entered a dangerous age of mediocrity, weakness and decline, and cultural and moral decadence	Page IV, 41, 60, 236,
		The myth of National Renewal/Rebirth	Through their timely action, fascist can save the nation from such a decline Fascism was considered as "palengenetic ultra-nationalism"	Page . II -V; 41; 236

Note: (Abiy, 2019; Fascism, 2015; Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003 & 2002; Wilford, 2003; Vincent, 2010; O'Sullivan, 1993)

The above table indicated that the idea of *Medemer* is embedded in different political ideologies. Therefore, it is questionable whether the idea of *Medemer* is the homegrown philosophy. How *Medemer* linked to the ideology of Liberalism, Conservatives, and Socialism and fascism is the major question of this article. The aim of the following sub-headings is to answer this question.

Medemer and Fascism

As stated in the book, the argument that inspired the author to recommend *Medemer* to Ethiopia is to save the country from vanishing. Page IV reads as follows: "Ethiopia is a symbol of backwardness and poverty; its land is a land of war and blood; its people are a model of migration; our unwillingness and lack of cooperation have led the country to a vicious cycle of misery and chaos." This expression is analogous with fascism's "principle of the nation in crisis," which states that the nation will enter a profound crisis and decline. The book also stated that this would push the country to the brink of disaster, that the time to save the country from failure is now, and that the only way out is to use *Medemer*'s idea. This article exemplifies the fascist myth of national renewal or rebirth, palengenetic ultra-nationalism, which aims to create a new man after decadence (Griffin, 2012; Eatwell, 1993). Moreover, *Medemer* emphasizes an imaginary view of the past historical greatness and the glorious past of Ethiopia (page 236). This is rooted in what Heywood (2004) terms «reclaiming the past,» which aims at backward-looking change reflecting dissatisfaction with the present and depends on the idealized definition of history.

Again, on page 41, in the fourth paragraph, the author stated that if we failed to use *Medemer*, we would decay and perish. Moreover, although the author did not cite the fascist ideology, the expressions make it somewhat similar to the fascist ideology. This does not mean that *Medemer* is identical to fascist ideology, but it does mean that *Medemer* has some elements of fascist ideology. The expression fulfils at least two principles of fascism (the idea of a nation in crisis, decline, or decadence, and the myth of national renewal, national rebirth, or reclaiming the past).

In general, fascism believes that the state will enter a deep social, economic, and political crisis and lose its greatness. Therefore, fascist ideology will save the state from these deep-rooted problems (Heywood, 2021, 2020, 2003; Griffin, 2012). In a similar vein, *Medemer* assumed that his idea was what would bring Ethiopia out of the cycle of misery and chaos (page IV, 3rd paragraph; page 60, 3rd paragraph). More importantly, *Medemer*, like fascism, emerges out of political instability, social crisis, and economic crisis, which is a situation that leads to the revival of fascism and the emergence of neo-fascism in Europe (Heywood, 2003). The revolution exploded throughout the

country, aided by the EPRDF's weak democracy, resulting in the breakdown of the EPRDF and the emergence of the Prosperity Party. Another important characterization of *Medemer* that is linked to the nature of fascism is the aspiration for elitism and leadership, as both call for strong elite leadership. Additionally, *Medemer* provides no room for opposition or alternative ideas. As indicated under the explanation of the stage or level of *Medemer* based on the motivation and commitment of individuals in the *Medemer* process, individuals are categorized as passers-by, gusts, and residents.

Given the incorporation of fascist components, *Medemer* is substantially different from fascist ideology in that it calls for the development and application of democratic principles. Furthermore, unlike fascism, *Medemer* provides classification based on an individual's initiative and commitment to the *Medemer* idea, and it emphasizes the potential capacity of the human being as a whole without referring to biological characteristics. Fascism, on the other hand, divides people into three categories based on race (biological characteristics): creators of culture, bearers of culture, and destroyers of culture (Heywood, 2021, and 2003). However, *Medemer* believes that every human being has the inherent capacity to determine his or her fate. Moreover, *Medemer* explores the interconnectedness and contradictions of interests, which are the expression of the ideological domains of socialism and liberalism in different literature and are primarily hostile to fascism's ideology. Compromise is another point of departure between *Medemer* and fascism. In *Medemer's* view, compromise is one of the instruments by which *Medemer* is fulfilled (page 53), while fascism considers compromising a weakness.

Medemer and Conservatism

The author's conclusion is based on the critique of different ideologies adopted by different regimes in the country. This expression is rooted in conservatism and fascist ideology. Proof of this is the idea expressed on page VII, which states that the best solution to the country's long-standing problems is to nurture the good values that have accumulated in the country for centuries. This point is similar to tradition, a principle of conservative ideology that calls upon the superiority of the accumulated wisdom, tradition, institutions, and norms (Wilford, 2003; fascism, 2015; Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, and 2002).

Medemer contended that numerous claimants want to implement various ideologies in the country, including liberalism, social democracy, and ethnic-based nationalism, and some want to implement Leninist-Marxist ideology and the developmental state. Nevertheless, from *Medemer's* point of view, it is impossible to apply these ideologies given the generalization that the ideologies are tailor-made in advanced countries, where the political consciousness is very different from the Ethiopian people. The major thesis of *Medemer* here is that it is impossible to implement these western ideologies because Ethiopians lack political consciousness, having been far enough from education for a long time and still lingering with their daily lives (page 34). In other words, the Ethiopian people are sufficiently removed from the country's politics, and the country's political culture is unrelated to the political cultures of Western countries. This expression indicates that *Medemer* considers the masses to be apathetic. Nonetheless, the author did not specify which level of political consciousness or culture *Medemer* was aiming for. This by itself represents the conservative idea of limited human nature.

Moreover, in the book, from pages 36 to 41, the author states that individuals are unable to stand alone. People cannot live alone and need cooperation and assistance to protect their sovereignty. In conservative ideology, under the elements of human imperfection and organic society, it is stated that human beings are not self-reliant. The book also states that humans

are security-seeking creatures who need help and cooperation with others to protect themselves from danger. Such an idea is also expressed in the conservative ideology under the principle of human imperfection. According to this principle of conservatism, “human beings are thought to be psychologically limited and dependent creatures.” “In the view of conservatives, people fear isolation and instability” (Heywood, 2003). In this manner, *Medemer* shares the elements of conservative ideology.

Furthermore, *Medemer* provides pragmatic values (see pages 60–61). It calls for the application of pragmatic policies, programs, and ideologies that derive from the existing situation of the country. In addition, *Medemer* concluded that, as a pragmatic idea, aimed at the generation of ideas that could provide a balanced and sustainable solution for the complex and existing problems of the country. Pragmatism is one of the elements of conservatism, which states that practical circumstances and practical goals should shape action, that is, by “what works” (Heywood, 2021: 69; 2019: 86; 2002: 47). Like conservatism, *Medemer* emphasizes practical experiences with the aim of resolving the complex, realistic, and practical problems of the country. The above explanation is particularly expressed under «paternalistic conservatism» (Heywood, 2021).

Nevertheless, unlike conservatism, which is mostly apathetic toward change, *Medemer* is seeking change in the political, economic, and social spheres of the community. «Change and transformation» is a rote chant of the political elites of the government of the prosperity party.

Medemer, Socialism and Liberalism

As a principle, *Medemer* emphasizes the balance between competition and cooperation. Therefore, socialism and liberalism are commonly treated here. The author conceived that cooperation and competition as the nature of social life. This type of expression is rooted partly in socialism (cooperation), partly in liberalism (competition), and partly in conservative (human imperfection and organic society) ideologies. This section synthesizes the author’s arguments in terms of both socialism and liberalism. According to *Medemer*, everything is created from a collection of small parts, which indicates the interaction of social fabrics such as family, neighbourhood, society, and countries, which have the characteristics of socialism.

In creating a balance between cooperation and competition (between liberalism and socialism), the author emphasizes how people are interacting with their surrounding environment (the idea of environmentalism) to build larger and newer systems (i.e., a synthesis triad of the dialectical approach). Therefore, *Medemer*, to achieve the goal of balancing between competition (liberalism) and cooperation (socialism), brought different principles from the ideological traditions of liberalism, socialism, conservatism, fascism, and environmentalism, at least. Moreover, the author uses system theory and the dialectical method with the aim of creating a system that is larger, newer, and different from the parts that create the whole.

More specifically, in the idea of *Medemer* (page 12), «human beings have a natural tendency to competition (liberalism) and cooperation (socialism), and conflict (fascism) and peace (conservatism) are in the hands of the individual itself,» this indicated the freedom aspect of liberalism. Moreover, in the *Medemer* perspective, the human being has the capacity to use these tendencies to build and strengthen the behaviour it wants, which is rooted in the liberal principles of reason and rationality. Like liberalism, *Medemer* has a positive view of human intellect and capacity. However, according to *Medemer*, a human being could use their intellect and capacity for both good and bad purposes. Moreover, according to *Medemer*, human beings have free choice and the capacity to determine their fate (page 103). Furthermore, *Medemer* is an idea that influences social, economic, political, and all individual and social aspects of life and style (page 35).

Similarly, the author of the *Medemer* concludes that for the effective utilization of human capacity for the fulfilment of human desire, cooperation (i.e., the *Medemer*) is required. As stated on page 108 of the book, *Medemer*, like socialism, places greater emphasis on the accumulation of capacity (cooperation of efforts). Moreover, the political speeches of the members of the Prosperity Party indicated that *Medemer* is all about creating a brotherhood. Such discourse is an integral part of socialism under the elements and principles of fraternity and community, which stress the human being's capacity as a social creature. Socialism emphasized the capacity, willingness, and ability of human beings to act collectively in pursuing common goals (Heywood, 2021, 2019, 2003, and 2002). Despite the claim of a balance between competition and cooperation, *Medemer* prefers cooperation to competition (page 143, last paragraph).

Concluding Remark

The above interpretation indicated how *Medemer* brought different elements from some major ideological traditions and questioned the applicability of *Medemer*'s ideology. Ideologically, *Medemer* comprises elements of various political ideologies. Therefore, ideologically viewed, *Medemer* could be seen as a "blended ideology": an ideology that brought diverse ideas, principles, and thought from a number of ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, conservatism, and fascism (though the author made neither a quote nor a citation in the book). Hence, it is not an exaggeration or simplification to say that *Medemer* is a blended ideology. Moreover, *Medemer* brought multiple concepts, propositions, and ideas from different theories and models (System Theory, Incremental Model, Elite Theory, and Dialectical Method), to name a few.

Based on the preceding explanation of *Medemer*, speeches by government officials and elites, and reviews of the book by various scholars, the following *Medemer* elements could be identified. The book's author indicated and presented the following ideological elements while addressing various issues. The elements derived from various ideologies combine to form a single element, and the book uses pairs of opposing elements.

- Brotherhood (a watchword of the elites of the ruling party),
- Competition & Cooperation,
- Law of nature,
- Nation in Crisis and National Renewal,
- Organic society,
- Human potential capacity, human flaws, and
- Tradition and Reform
- Pragmatism

Medemer, in general, is a synthesis of ideas that brought together and integrated concepts and thoughts from a variety of major political ideologies and other theories. The way the author links these different ideological and theoretical concepts makes *Medemer* a blended ideology. Furthermore, the author employs system theory (pages 36–41) and the incremental model (pages 41–43, part 3.2) in synthesizing the concepts derived from the aforementioned ideologies. Moreover, the author emphasizes the importance of the interaction of human beings with their surrounding environment in maintaining the balance between competition and cooperation, which is rooted in the ideology of environmentalism or ecologism. This indicates that *Medemer* uses the dialectical method to synthesize competing elements of political ideologies and political thought to create a larger and different system.

Hence, from an ideological point of view, *Medemer* has drawn its core principles from different ideologies. However, it lacks its own core principles. The reason for this is the failure of *Medemer* to integrate important ideas from the existing ingenious knowledge that was practiced in Ethiopia. Despite the claim that *Medemer* is an indigenous or homegrown philosophy, it does not integrate concepts from indigenous knowledge and practices. Therefore, *Medemer*, as an ideology, drew its core and periphery from other ideological traditions and other theories.

As a result, *Medemer* could be the best example of the conclusion that an ideology is not an island in itself. *Medemer* brought more core and periphery values from different ideological traditions than any other ideology, making it one of the ideologies that justify how ideologies share their core and periphery with other ideologies.

As an ideology, therefore, is *Medemer* the sole and only solution for the current multi-dimensional problem of the country? Unquestionably, *Medemer* could be a primary solution for economic problems and problems with the quantitative nature of the country. Political, social, and cultural (particularly the quest for identity) problems are not as straightforward as economic problems that could easily be quantified. The additive tendencies of socio-political problems of the country are problematic on their own, let alone the problems. Hence, in reality, there is no clarity regarding the question of how the idea of *Medemer* could reconcile two or more opposing complex human interests (the quest for identity in Ethiopia, for example). In the current context of the country, how can the contradiction between the quest for multi-nationalism and mono-nationalism be reconciled with the application of *Medemer*? How can *Medemer* be a solution to the country's ethnic conflict? These problems have resurfaced in the country's politics and are still unresolved (the conflicts in the country are the result of the contestation over identity).

Now it is important to raise critical questions about how *Medemer* is different from other ideologies, considering the political consciousness of Ethiopians as claimed in *Medemer*. Is *Medemer* less difficult and less complex than other ideologies? Which domestic knowledge and practices of Ethiopian people were brought into the *Medemer* idea to make *Medemer* a homegrown or domestic philosophy and make it easy for ordinary citizens? How could the political consciousness of the community (as prescribed in *Medemer*) go hand in hand with the arguments and politics of *Medemer*? Why does the government fail to entertain the current political friction and diplomatic problems with the application of *Medemer*? Let alone ordinary citizens, why is the applicability of *Medemer* debatable among the political elites of the country?

These pressing political and policy questions remained unanswered by *Medemer* and questioned its applicability in the country's socio-political and cultural conditions. For instance, there is no attempt to build a government system by using indigenous knowledge that has been practiced for a long time in numerous communities in Ethiopia. Considering the book's claim about Ethiopians' political consciousness, *Medemer* is not a straightforward ideology, is not as easy as claimed, and is not less complex than other political ideologies. On top of this, rather than claiming that it is homegrown, indigenous knowledge is not well integrated into *Medemer*. Moreover, it is indeterminate which type of political consciousness (political culture: parochial, subject, or participatory) *Medemer* uses. Therefore, it is desirable to ask whether *Medemer* is a sole (perhaps the only) and universal instrument, policy framework, ideology, and mechanism for resolving the multiple, dynamic, and complex socio-political problems of Ethiopia. Any interested individual could conduct a further critical investigation or review of *Medemer* to answer the above political and policy questions and add value to the political and academic dialogue of the country.

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