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TITLE: THERMIDOR IN ETHIOPIA? AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATIONS BETWEEN ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

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ABSTRACT: The shift to a strategy of agricultural commercialisation is a central and yet contradictory aspect of the development policy embarked on by Ethiopia since the 2000s. In this paper we characterise this conjuncture as a ‘Thermidorian situation’, which describes the attempt of post-revolutionary elites to consolidate their power in the context of the neoliberal global economy through selective and original strategies of political and economic liberalisation. The paper discusses recent reforms of agricultural extensions, co-operatives, micro-finance institutions (MFIs), agricultural micro and small enterprises (MSEs), and presents the argument about the inherent contradiction of the agrarian policies in contemporary Ethiopia. The article concludes that despite the current emphasis on market liberalisation, for the ‘Thermidorian’ elite in power economic considerations are still subordinated to political and ideology imperatives.

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