

Full Length Research Paper

The promise of regional projects for Africa's landlocked countries: Focusing on Ethiopia

Ebssa Wakwaya

Political Science and International Relations Program, College of Social Sciences, Wollega University, Ethiopia.

Received 10 December, 2012; Accepted 25 December, 2014

Landlocked countries face significant development challenge merely from their geopolitical position. This is magnificent specifically in terms of their access to the sea. However, some argue that regional arrangements can be promising in solving at least such specific challenge in their development endeavor. In this context, this article reviews real and potential challenges and prospects Ethiopia has to deal with at three levels: domestic, regional, and international levels. Thus, by relying on secondary data sources and qualitative research method, it highlights the major concerns and developments in the Horn of Africa by focusing on IGAD and COMESA and how different factors at different levels interact to work against or for the success of such projects. Approaching the issue from this angle, it argues that despite the challenges that seem distinct in this specific region, there is new development in this regard that seems promising. However, the sustainability of even this relative success is still dependent on the proper coordination of the dominant actors at all levels than the unilateral commitment of specific state in the region.

Key words: Landlocked countries, regional projects, regional integration.

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is currently the most populous landlocked country in the world (Dehez, 2008). Concerning the general situation of the state, the current foreign policy of Ethiopia maintains, "[t]here can be no doubt that the attainment of speedy economic development, democratization and peace is fundamental to the survival of our country which finds itself in a state of object poverty and backwardness" (MOI, 2002:1) However, the relationship between being landlocked and the level of development in general remains a controversial subject. For example, Mackellar et al. (2000:1) argue "[t]hirty years ago,

blaming problems of economic underdevelopment on geography (or climate) would likely have led to accusations of environmental determinism." Whatever the case, being landlocked matters, as it has dramatic effect on countries rate of growth in most cases as opposed to the cases of Switzerland and some developed countries.

Conversely, most authors agree that there are different options for landlocked countries to solve their peculiar problems. For example, the recent study conducted by ECA acknowledges that being landlocked is a major obstacle, especially in Africa's context. However, it

Email: ibsawak321@gmail.com

Authors agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

continues to argue that: “[Landlockedness] is not destiny. There are practical solutions to many of these problems, including comprehensive approaches to transit corridors, regional integration efforts, legal and regulatory reforms and institutional and administrative overhauls.” (2010:242).

Similarly, Faye et al. (2004:49-52) list down the possible way forward for landlocked developing countries. These include particular emphasis on developing the internal transportation infrastructure, regional integration strategies, and focusing on sectors less dependent on transport costs like development of service industries. This also seems in line with the broader categories made by Mackellar et al. (2000:5-6) on the policy implications emanating from neo-classical and endogenous growth theories respectively. The former’s policy prescriptions revolve around solving transportation problems, while the latter tends to focus on shifting sectors to high- tech and service industries.

However, this study is limited to explore whether regional integration efforts can solve the problems of Africa’s landlocked states with specific focus on Ethiopia. It attempts to do so by looking the process within the general post cold war global environment. In this regard, Yang and Gupta (2007:400) point to the renewed push (both in scope and in depth) in recent years as occurring “against the back drop of increasing regionalism worldwide.” In short, it is within this broader context that they argue there is positive relationship between these regional trade arrangements and the interest of especially Africa’s landlocked countries to get access to the sea.

METHODS AND APPROACH

The primary method employed in this paper is based on deductive approach, as it primarily aims at exploring how regional projects can solve the stated problem based on ‘National interest Model’. As such, it employs a qualitative research method depending on secondary data. Generally, these include books, journals, conference proceedings, magazines, official policy documents, and other relevant unpublished materials both from institutional and individual sources. Then, objective and meticulous analysis follows based on these diverse sources with different points of view on the subject under study.

Over all, this is approached from two angles based on states as focal point. Primarily, it focuses on some peculiar conditions of the region, as this is the actual environment where the project is supposed to function. Then, as any effort in regional integration is heavily influenced by international/global environment, it re-considers the regional efforts within this broader system. However, the central focus of the analysis at all levels is the state; because it assumes that they continue as the major actor even within the contemporary diversified actors at different levels. Finally, this can be also better understood by considering both continuities and changes at all levels with all their manifestations.

Theoretically, it is also based on a ‘National interest model of integration’ as developed by Duffy and Feld. In short this is based on the national interest of the ‘chief actor’-the state in particular (Duffy and Feld, 1980:509). According to this model, regional integration from its lowest form to the highest form is seen from the nation’s foreign policy goals. The significance of this approach rests

on its concern with ‘intervening variables’ at three levels of analysis: internal- state, systemic- region, and macro systemic- global system (Duffy and Feld, 1980:510-13). Expanding the concern to the broader approach, Jervis (1999) reflects on the current misunderstandings on explaining the causes of Realists and Neo-liberal institutionalists. In short he dismisses the tendency to look at the former as institutional pessimists and the later as institutional optimists. Rather, in line with Duffy and Feld (1980:55-62), he stresses on states’ goals. Generally, it is based on this assumption that he identifies three kinds of institutions in this regard. These are institutions such as: standard tools, innovative tools, and as causes of changes in values.

On the other hand, some still focus on the profound changes this process may imply. For example, Lindberg and Scheingold (1970:iv) argue that the initiative of this project in Europe has “pioneered striking departure from both the goals and methods typically pursued by states.” They further argue this may have a substantial impact on their domestic politics and the world at large. Whatever the case, even the experiences of the most successful regional integration efforts in the contemporary world-EU, witnesses both the changes and continuities as Moravcsik (2010:27) points: “The EU is succeeding because its policies are not based on idealism but on the recognition that a union of diverse nation can find realistic ways to work together”.

Accordingly, this study primarily follows this approach in identifying the situations under study at all levels. Then, Deutsch’s Communication theory seems important to complement the primary approach, at least to understand the diverse explanations of the situation in this information age (Hettne, 2003). Moreover, it has also considerable explanatory power to understand domestic realities on which our primary approach must be based. However, this is not to mean this is the approach that gained acceptance without any challenge. Especially, in recent decades some writers aggressively argue that the demise of state is real; let alone the agreement on the meaning of national interest (Ohmae, 1995; Beck, 2003). On balance, the position held here is that still state and national interest is crucial determinant, although in more complicated form and under different power relations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Africa’s records in regional integrations

To begin with the general African context, it is paradox that largely African efforts in regional integration are still weak despite its status as “a pioneer of regional integration” (Yang and Gupta, 2007:400). The major challenges to establish successful regional integration in Africa begins with the lack of some background conditions. Generally, these include mutual relevance of the units, compatibility of values and some joint rewards, mutual responsiveness, and common identity or loyalty (Deutsch, 1978). Most of these can be also related to the colonial history and the nature of state formation by itself. Again, the irony is that some of the regional integration initiatives also traced their origins to the colonial powers; including SACU, which was established in 1910 (Yang and Gupta, 2007). Of course, the fact that most transportation routes were developed to connect colonies to port remains a point of major criticism as opposed to the present efforts to have this access in various ways.

Concerning the contemporary realities, one major

problem for successful regional integration is the duplication of these efforts and the overlapping membership. This is in short the situation dubbed 'African galaxy', while in reality, most of them remain weak. In sum, these problems revolve around both the design and implementation of these initiatives. Therefore, as most authors argue, the solution to the contemporary challenges of Africa's regional integration efforts may be better looked at in closing the gap between political rhetoric and actual implementation (For example, Alemayehu and Haile, 2003; Mistry, 2000).

Beyond these difficulties, the more recent revival of interest to deepen regional integration efforts may help to solve the vulnerability of Africa's land locked countries. For example, the recent 'Almaty programme of Action', can be seen as promising for Africa's landlocked countries. However, the role of Africa's regional organizations in this effort must be conceived within the general "global framework" as can be seen from the role allotted to them. Specifically, this was when African landlocked and transit countries met in June 2008, in Addis Ababa to review the progress of UNS 'Almaty Programme of Action' (UNECA, 2010). Overall, whether or not this initiative can be mainly attributed to these regional organizations, a number of trade transit corridors have been developing across the continent with varying degrees of success. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that these regional institutions are also important actors; at least in implementation of these projects.

IGAD and COMESA Vs Ethiopia's Prospect to Access Regional Ports

Until very recently, IGAD was heavily preoccupied with matters of security despite its broader mandate from the outset. However, even within this specific area its record has been mixed. The major reason for the weakness of IGAD to perform effectively its mandate is undoubtedly the nature of relationship among member states (Sarbo, 2010). Generally, Ethiopia seems to have more influence compared to other members in influencing IGAD. Beyond different arguments for and against this conclusion, the conformity between Ethiopia's reading of the region and the overwhelming pre-occupation of IGAD on peace and security is another important indicator.

Conversely, COMESA is the organization with more economic orientation. However, the tendency of Ethiopia, and generally other horn states, to be marginalized even within this broader region is one problem (AfDB, 2009). In principle, the policy of Ethiopia towards other African integration efforts including COMESA is to support them fully. However, the justification for such moves seems weak at least in short term. For example, it claims '[i]rrespective of the opportunities that may or may not be available for development, Ethiopia should support the establishment of strong economic ties, given the obvious

long term advantages." (MOI, 2002:110). However, in practice the prevalence of concern on revenue loss is evident like it is the case in most African states.

Over all it is difficult to think of the possibility of having access to regional ports by Ethiopia with in such arrangements until recently. Therefore, Ethiopia's approach has been largely to secure port access through bilateral relations with Djibouti. However, there are also some indicators to move beyond this approach at least to port services. For example, the policy document refers to past experiences on the problem of bilateral agreements with Eritrea. Then, looking to the future, it stresses the need for international arrangements if there is possibility to use Eritrea's ports again in the long term. However, still it is not clear on the precise form of this "new type of port utilization agreement" that is "internationally guaranteed" (Mol, 2002:7). Moreover, the later developments that led to Eritrea's withdrawal from IGAD in 2006 (Ewing, 2008) may also pose another challenge to this new approach.

Whatever the case, it is just after only a year of the publication of the policy that U.N came up with 'Almaty program of Action' in 2003 (UNECA, 2010). The general objective of this program is to solve the problems of less developing land locked countries within the 'global framework' (UNECA, 2010:243). In this chain, one can reconsider the early skepticism on the role of regional organizations before the meeting of Africa's landlocked and transit countries in 2008.

Subsequently, after evolving from IGADD to IGAD, after over twenty years, and exactly at the time its EWARN is being criticized as "lacked strategic direction" (Burgess, 2009:109), IGAD declared slightly: "[the IGAD strategic plan for 2009-2013] aims at repositioning IGAD as a development institution in the Horn of Africa through regional integration" (IGAD, 2009:11). In addition, this new departure has indicated indirectly that it is still at a very early stage, and its pre occupation with security matters was not only outsiders' criticism:

[The plan] aims, among others, at establishing a free trade zone in the region that would strengthen IGAD to effectively extend its programmes to other areas like trade, infrastructural development, information communication technology (ICT), development of social affairs and macro-economic convergence." (IGAD, 2009:11)

Generally, after this 'newly acquired identity, one important decision on this most relevant subject is the approval of the proposal on 'priority projects' in regional transport inter connectivity in 2009. In parallel, similar developments are also underway by COMESA. Accordingly, IGAD's new plan declares, "since all members of IGAD are also members of COMESA, the plan underscored the importance of working in collaboration with other RECs" (IGAD, 2009). However, still, whether these projects are entirely related to this

new commitment of IGAD and COMESA is questionable. For example, the Kenya-Ethiopia project is now already in its second phase. Whatever the case, beyond these continuities in some respects, what is clear now is the new tendency to approach the issue at regional scale.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the current status of formal integration in the region has moved one step ahead in terms of providing option for landlocked states. However, the following specific example in this regard clearly demonstrates both the continuity of prominent role of member states and the change in terms of RECs engagement. This is implementation arrangements of 'Mombasa Nairobi-Addis Ababa Road Corridor project phase II' (AfDB, 2009).

Generally, this arrangement laid down three executing agencies for the implementation of this project. The first is "the executing agency and the components of the project" located in respective jurisdictions of these countries (AfDB, 2009:12). Here, the major authority rests on the relevant national authorities of both countries that reflect the continuing role of national authorities. Moreover, the specific motivations of both countries reflect how each country perceives its national interest within such projects. "For Kenya, the project will improve access to Northern Kenya and enhance integration with the rest of the country." On the other hand, "[f]or Ethiopia, the road will also provide a cost effective alternative out let to the sea" (AfDB, 2009:18).

Beyond this division of labor and particular motivations, it is in the second arrangement that one can see clear regional approach. In this regard, it provides a joint regional project coordination committee (RPCC). Here, representatives of IGAD and COMESA are included as members to enhance close cooperation and cross-border coordination "for the project to achieve its long term development impacts" (AfDB, 2009:13). However, higher officials of both states co-chaired this arrangement as well. Finally, the third arrangement is concerned with "aid harmonization" and the issues of governance that involves actors beyond the region (AfDB, 2009).

Briefly, more recently IGAD and COMESA seem to acquire new mandate to play active role in transport facilitation, both individually and in cooperation. However, the continued prominent role of individual states also demonstrates the enduring relevance of national interests to affect regional integration efforts. Whatever the case, the recent trends in formal integration efforts indicate the growing promise of regional integration efforts to provide another opportunity for the region's landlocked countries like Ethiopia to have new option to access high sea.

Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa within global/international context

As this is the region with our specific interest, it deserves more attention. Accordingly, in addition to reflecting on

the major trends, this section attempts to reconsider the contemporary developments based on some emerging explanations. To begin with, there is no consensus among different authors on the nature, scope, and implications of colonialism on the Horn of Africa. This is especially true regarding Ethiopia. While some tend to focus on changes exclusively, others continue to stick on continuities (Asafa, 2004; Teshale, 1995; Holcomb and Sisai, 1990). However, it is important to balance this approaches. In short, the legacy of the past is real and inescapable as it manifests itself in different ways that needs to be viewed against the changes at different levels of international or global system.

This is mainly required because of two major reasons. First, it is based on states as a unit of analysis and driving force in regional integration. In this regard, there seems no dispute among most authors on 'colonialism as state maker' in modern sense. Second, the History of Ethiopia as landlocked country is closely connected to colonial period transactions. In other words, it was during this period that Ethiopia took exactly its current geographic form as a landlocked country. Similarly, Ethiopia's rail link to the then French Colony of Djibouti was established in parallel (Work, 1935).

Turning to the major implications of this major historical even, it is often cited that the nature of emerging boundaries, social and political relations at different levels have disrupted the natural economic and cultural situations of the region in one way or another (Belachew, 2009). However, it is also important not to exclude the legacy of the long standing conflicts based on religion resources, identity, or power in general. So, it is valid to conclude that the present conditions of the region are the cumulative effect of multidimensional interactions at different levels. However, different interpretations of these experiences remain the major source of obstructions for significant constructive cooperation in the region so far. In parallel, it is also important to note the impact of continuing role of external powers with often competing or/and conflicting interests in subtle ways.

To reflect on the more recent regional context, it is important to begin with the contemporary observations of some scholars. With the demise of the bipolar international order, there is diverging views on the contemporary world order. However, generally they revolve around the unipolar moment of the United States and the multipolar world order (Nye, 1968; Dehez, 2008; Shaw, 2000). Beyond this, in more recent years some also extend to argue that 'other' new form of world order is emerging. For example, Haass (2008) argues for 'non polarity' as the emerging world order. Similarly, Zakaria (2008) argues that the present state of the world in general and the position of US in particular are changing in significant ways.

Regarding the specific nature of these changes, Buzan (2003) argues that the contemporary world can be seen within the major competition/ ideological 'war' around the

world among the three main economic grouping. Generally, these include EU, NAFTA, and the emerging East Asian block embodied with different value orientations and levels of institutionalization. On the other hand, expanding the concern to the broader international environment, even traditional realists like H. Kissinger also propose for the need of new international system. Accordingly, he singles out two “unprecedented Sources” of the contemporary security challenges (Kissinger, 2004:39). In his own words, these are:

terror caused by acts until recently considered a matter for internal police forces rather than international policy, and scientific advances and proliferation that allow the survival of countries to be threatened by developments entirely within another states territory (Kissinger, 2004:38)

Based on this, he recommends that the U.S “have to lead an effort to define and then maintain an international system that reflects the new revolutionary circumstances” (Kissinger, 2004:38). However, the precise nature and magnitude of this role is lacking in the above proposal. Then one may consider it against the following remarks by Zakaria. First by pointing to the ‘rise of the rest’, he argues that this reality “ensures America a vital, though different role”. This is explained as follows:

American influence is strengthened by the growth of dominant regional powers. These factors are often noted in discussions of Asia, but it is true of many other spots on the globe as well. The process will not be mechanical. As one of these countries rises (China), it will not produce a clockwork-like balancing dynamic where its neighbor (India) will seek a formal alliance with the United States. Today's world is more complicated than that. But these rivalries do give the United States an opportunity to play a large and constructive role at the center of the global order (Zakaria, 2008:233).

The major themes of these explanations also conform with the other dimension of this trend that focus on the growing roles of civil society (Clark, 2003). In other words Zakaria's explanations on what it takes to be ‘the global broker’ in today's world- involving both the government and the society in setting the agenda, defining the issues and mobilizing coalitions as the major source of power (2008:234) may also better explain the current era.

Then, based on the above emerging explanations, it helps to reconsider the new dynamics in the Horn of Africa by using two specific examples. The case of Sudan is obviously becoming one battle ground for the contemporary dominant powers. On one hand, the U.S is interested in Sudan by suspecting it as supporter of terrorists including Al-Qaida (CSOPNU, 2011). In addition, Sudan's oil resource is another important factor that attracted U.S. Consequently, the approach of U.S in Sudan is mainly to support the establishment of

independent south Sudan “as a buffer against the spread of Islamic extremism in the Greater Horn” and as “an opportunity to access the oil resources.” (CSOPNU, 2011:20).

On the other hand, China's involvement in Sudan is largely conceived as initiated by its interest to secure access to natural resources, mainly oil. For example, according to Shinn (2005:7), “Sudan became China's first major overseas oil development project.” However, as he argues China is also the major supporter of Sudan in international forums despite its massive domestic human rights violations (Shinn, 2005). Finally, the divergence of China's and Western conception of sovereignty in recent years may also impact on these regional efforts. Generally, the following conclusion on the general dynamics in contemporary ‘Sudan is instructive. “China's interests in Sudan should be viewed in a global perspective as part of its grand plan to set a stage to challenge the U.S global leadership and Sudan's geo-political position.” (CSOPNU, 2011:22).

More importantly, the case of Ethiopia seems more complex and less clear. To begin with China's involvement, David Shinn argues “China sold large quantities of military equipment to both (Ethiopia and Eritrea) during the conflict but has been careful to protect its more important investment with the much more populous Ethiopia” (Shinn, 2005:9). In this regard, it is possible to identify the inclinations of Ethiopia. On one hand, it tends to follow China as more relevant model in terms of development policies, political and human right issues (Shinn, 2005) on the other hand, it claims “the policy we have adopted in connection with peace and security of our region is consistent with that of the U.S.” (MOI, 2002:147-8). However, others predict that China will bypass governments and will engage at local levels following the crisis in Somali regional state on its oil project (Dowden, 2007). Finally, Ethiopia's strategic significance as another ‘stage’, is expressed by David Shinn, former ambassador of U.S to Ethiopia, as follows, “Addis Ababa is also the headquarter of the African Union, making it a useful location for China and others to stay in touch with delegations from throughout Africa” (Shinn, 2005:9).

Then, in this emerging context it is important to reconsider Ethiopia's approach to the region by focusing on how it has changed or not. From the outset, the contemporary policy of Ethiopia begins by intense criticism of the previous policies and claims the major departure. It is better to use the original words:

Former governments pursued external relations and national security policies that disregard internal problems that were fundamental to our national condition. Rather, the effort was to focus on the outside world and to look in from the outside, as it were... It should also be noted that the foreign policies of past governments were, in part, founded on a ‘siege mentality’ which considered the

country to be surrounded by enemies.” (MOI, 2002:1-2).

Based on the above remarks by the contemporary policy, it is fair to expect the major departure from the past. Moreover, this must be the case when it particularly emphasizes the need “to be free of emotions in analyzing the situation” in the context of Horn of Africa (MOI, 2002:57). However, the summary of its analysis indicates less departure in terms of result if not in the process:

In sum, the value of our neighbors- in the medium and short term- is limited to port service... (in this condition), the role of our neighbors, both positive and negative, on our development is limited. Similarly their positive impact on our democracy building process is limited. But in the negative sense they could believe in our vulnerability and by promoting religious extremism and narrow ethnic sentiments, they could disturb the peace and our development and democratization efforts.” (MOI, 2002:60)

Generally, from the above summary, the relevance (significance) of Horn states is asserted to be minimal, except in one area from four expected impacts. Again, that immediate relevance is that they could negatively influence peace. On the other hand, the positive value expected in this period is claimed to be “limited to port service”. The problem is, if not considered as based on European experiences that may be irrelevant in this context, ‘Mutual relevance’ has been considered as a major pre-condition for effective integration (Deutsch, 1978). Furthermore, other ‘background conditions’ including compatibility of values, some joint rewards, mutual responsiveness, and generalized common identity appears largely remote in this context.

More specifically, Ethiopia’s policy towards the region seems more security oriented, while at the same time acknowledging that civil society is becoming “new forms of inter-country interchange” (MOI, 2002:55). Therefore, this multiple characteristic is more likely to emanate from its third base of the policy-globalization. In short, it argues, “[w]e cannot attain development and democracy by closing our doors and taking refuge in our mountains. It is only when we accept the fact that we have no choice but to enter the global economy” (MOI, 2002:19). Conversely, Clark is critical of the decision by many governments to “accept defeat and go with the flow.” Then, he expects civil society at national level to pressure governments “who embrace globalization uncritically.” (2003:79-80).

Ultimately, the major question remains what kind of regional integration can be expected and achieved within this general environment, and when regionalism as theory continues to be debatable concept either as ‘stumbling block’ or ‘stepping stone’. More importantly, the promise they may provide landlocked countries in the context of Horn of Africa is influenced by these interacting factors at various levels in one way or the other.

Reflections on the factors that can determine the prospect at different levels

This discussion is primarily based on states as the major actors in regional integration efforts. Accordingly, it begins with exploring the implications of state formations in the region that was closely related to European colonialism. The developments during this period were certainly the major factor that affected the whole region in different ways (UNECA, 1994). For example, despite the dominant argument that Ethiopia was largely immune from the impacts of colonialism, it was exactly at this period that it expanded its territory to the south, while at the same time it also became landlocked country (Amare, 1989; Wuhib, 1997). Thus, the legacy of the past on the present regional conditions is real; as its one contradictory effect-the developments of new roads that aimed to connect most of these, while also making independent Ethiopia landlocked may indicate. Similarly, the consequent developments in international/global environment since then have continued to impact on the region in various ways. Accordingly, the present multidimensional crisis in the region seems to require coordinated regional efforts; as opposed to isolated desperate attempts to solve specific country’s peculiar challenges.

Accordingly, the establishment of formal regional integration arrangements like IGAD and COMESA may provide some hope for the region. These institutions, however, to large extent remain weak to carry out their responsibilities effectively (UNECA, 2004). When one considers IGAD in this light, its pre-occupation with security issues is often interpreted as resulting from Ethiopia’s influence. Actually, this also conforms well to Ethiopia’s formal policy reading; and how Ethiopia conceives her interest in the region. Beyond this specific role of Ethiopia, the continued conflicting relations among member states remains the major source of obstruction for any significant and constructive regional approach in the Horn of Africa. The case of COMESA is also almost similar, except for its economic orientation, in contrast to IGAD’s pre-occupation in security areas. Nevertheless, Ethiopia’s commitment in COMESA remains marginal compared to the case in IGAD. Then, the major question here is, what is the relevance of these organizations for the region’s landlocked countries like Ethiopia?

Overall, it is only after the more recent period (2008), that one can reasonably expect any solution from these arrangements for the specific problems of landlocked countries. However, even this recent development is largely based on the ‘global’ initiative by U.N- ‘Almaty program of Action’. Whatever the case, whether the recent declaration of IGAD to ‘re-position’ itself as regional integration institution was related to this global development or not, there are some indicators that these institutions recently begin to provide some hope for the region’s landlocked countries. For example, the recent

approval by IGAD of some transport corridor projects to connect the states of the region to regional port facilities can be cited as one indicator. Similarly, COMESA is increasingly becoming active in the development of various corridors throughout the region. More importantly, the new effort to coordinate different regional projects like the Mombasa-Addis Ababa project by IGAD and COMESA indicates the new progress in this direction (UNDP, 2007). However, this should not underestimate the continued prominent role of states within these regional institutions as well.

Therefore, within this new context, one can fairly conclude Ethiopia's prospect to have access to the regional ports (*sustainably*) largely depends on the following major factors. First, as the contemporary foreign policy of the country correctly puts, it must "move from the internal to what is external, doing [its] home work first" (Mol, 2002:3). However, this declaration must be accompanied by genuine commitment and honest intention that recognizes the potential consequences of present actions. To give one specific example, even though being landlocked affects every citizen in one way or the other, it is, after all, a group that engages directly in import and export trade who seems with higher stake in this transaction. One visible problem in this regard is, despite the formal policy's dedication to 'economic diplomacy', and its provision that "[m]embers of the private sector must play a key role" (Mol, 2002:54), there are still some indicators on the prevalence of divisions at home; even at this specific level (Young, 1998).

In short, beyond the enduring ethnic, cultural and regional problems that are not yet effectively resolved, there are some indicators on the emergence of a new layer that may exuberate the problem of national cohesion. For example, based on USAID's BizCLIR project, Hamilton (2009) points to the rising mistrust between public and private sector as one major problem. Furthermore, Leonard (2009:7) extends to point the link between "all the meat-exporting companies based in Addis" and the ruling party, and their exclusive ownership as the major problem in this sector; as he also associates this to the difficulty of using Djibouti ports in this case.

Similarly, the protracted argument for and/or against using regional ports as viable option indicates that consensus is still marginal even on this basic issue. While the formal policy seems to support such approach, significant proportion of the country's elites continue to argue Assab, if not Eritrea must belong to Ethiopia. However, while having one's own port is undoubtedly the best option, it is also important to note that many countries that have their own ports depend to a certain extent on others for different parts of their country; especially when they have large size. For example, one may consider the dependence of Tanzania and Sudan on Kenya's port of Mombasa, for certain parts of their country even when they have their own ports that provide service for others (UNDP, 2007). Therefore, looking for

different options is not reserved to landlocked countries. Whatever the case, having or not some degree of common understanding may also determine the sustainability of such moves. Finally, one may add internal infrastructural development as obviously crucial element that is predominantly domestic preserve. In this regard, one Ethiopian official concedes the significant challenge faced by landlocked Ethiopia and the importance of investing in the construction of major highways that links it with neighboring countries like that of the recently opened Ethio-Sudan highway (African Review, 2013). In sum, resolving these domestic complications and closing the gap between formal commitments and actual implementations is certainly the basic step in this endeavor.

The second level at which these factors must be looked at is regional level. Generally, these revolve around political, economic and institutional factors, at both regional scale and the specific case of the potential service providers. To begin with, in Ethiopia's current formal position, it is important to point at one fundamental contradiction that may work against the realization of this objective. This is the downplaying of the relevance of regional states to Ethiopia's "development and democratization" except in providing port service while also focusing on that they can pose security threats (Mol, 2002:60). Conversely, its assertion of "pivotal role" in IGAD seems in stark contradiction to the conventional approach to regional integration; that requires thinking and designing at regional scale even when designing domestic policies (Counlibaly et al., 2009). Certainly, this is so, not mainly because of its assertion, given its relative power and potential in the region; but it is when looked from such undiplomatic claim and anti-thetical approach to regional integration: "[w]hether by design or not, the success of Ethiopia's development would benefit neighboring countries, and not just in relation to ports" (Mol, 2002:61; emphasis added).

However, all together, the difficult political, economic, and cultural terrains of the region are also the major constraint for constructive institutional and infrastructural developments in the region (Mesfin, 2002; Getachew, 2010). The same can be said on the reliability of Ethiopia's dependence on regional ports so far. Here, it is possible to highlight the major factors with particular examples. First, as Faye et al. (2004) argue, political challenges remain the major obstacle to Ethiopia's reliable access to the sea. This can be seen at different stages. For example, from how it changed the status of Ethiopia from 'a maritime country' to 'landlocked country' in the first place; and then how the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea affected Ethiopia's option to access the sea; and, even how Eritrea involved in Djibouti and how it attempted to obstruct Ethiopia's access to the sea more recently (Ewing, 2008). Generally, even when there is no direct confrontation, peace and security of potential transit state may also affect the prospect of Ethiopia in this direction; as the case in Somalia may also testify.

In addition, the general economic and cultural conditions of the region seem far from being ripe for smooth societal interdependence, which is less political and may trigger broader integration as functionalists argue. Therefore, the nature of relationships among the region's member states is more likely to affect the prospect of the newly emerging hope for the region's landlocked countries within such regional frameworks; as Eritrea's recent withdrawal from IGAD because of the exuberating regional misunderstandings may signal (Sisay, 2002). On the other hand, the independence of South Sudan as a potential new landlocked country may further enhance the regional approach to solve the specific problems of the region's landlocked countries, depending on the nature of regional relations it will develop.

Finally, the third level- international/ global environment is crucial determinant; especially, in such regions like the Horn of Africa, where states are less able even to function as state with relative independence. Here, the role of global actors, both individually and in concert, is more likely to affect the prospect of less powerful landlocked countries like Ethiopia in important ways (both positively and negatively). For example, the initiative of UN's 'Almaty program of Action' by itself has its root in 'global framework'. Then, the recent achievements by RECs like IGAD and COMESA, and their future prospects must be understood within this framework. On the other hand, the recent competition between Iran and Israel on 'Southern Waters of Red Sea'- around Assab may also pose unexpected/unpredictable challenges for Ethiopia and the region at large. One specific challenge in this transaction is its possible impact on the cultural dynamics that may further complicate the political situation of the region that remains the major obstacle for Ethiopia's access to the sea.

GENERAL CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

Generally, Ethiopia's prospect to access regional ports depends not only on the efforts of formal regional organizations. Without undermining the recent accomplishments of these organizations, it is safe to conclude that the prospect of Ethiopia to access regional ports on sustainable bases also depends on the effective resolutions of the challenges and careful exploitation of opportunities at all levels. This must also take in consideration the long-term implications of current actions as opposed to the exclusive pre-occupation on the domestic and short-term interests.

Accordingly, further research could expand the limited understanding by using different approaches. For example, these may include focusing on the roles of different interest groups and the diverse communications in community building- both to regional integration and to the challenges of landlocked countries. However, the concern of this paper is mainly limited to formal aspects

of regional integration and the promises it may provide for landlocked countries like Ethiopia. On the other hand, most of the emerging literatures tend to focus exclusively on informal aspects; while the proper understanding of regional integration in the contemporary world seems to require balancing both aspects (Hattene, 2003). As such, this study may contribute to balance this deficit and hope to remind responsible actors the danger of this temptation- ignoring the formal aspects at almost exclusive obsession with the informal transactions in this specific region and beyond.

Acronyms

AfDB:	Africa Development Bank
Biz CLIR: Reform	Business Climate Legal and Institutional
COMESA:	Common Market for East and South Africa
CPA:	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSOPNU:	Civil Society Organization for Peace in Northern Uganda
EAC:	East Africa Community
IGAD:	Inter Governmental Authority for Development
IGADD:	Inter Governmental Authority for Drought and Development
MOI:	Ministry Of Information
NAFTA:	North American Free Trade Area
RECs:	Regional Economic Communities
RPCC: Committee	Regional Project Coordination
RTA:	Regional Trade Arrangements
SACU:	South Africa Customs Union
SADC:	South Africa Development Community
USAID: Development	United States Agency for International
UN:	United Nations
(UN)ECA: for Africa	United Nations Economic Commission
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program

Conflict of Interest

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Africa Development Bank (2009). 'Mombasa- Nairobi- Addis Ababa Road Corridor Project: Phase II', Project Appraisal Report, June 2009.
- African Review (2013). 'Ethiopia- Sudan highway opened for traffic' 17 January 2013.
- Alemayehu G, Haile K (2002). 'Regional Economic Integration in Africa: A Review of Problems and Prospects with a case Study of COMESA', Regional Economic Integration. pp.1-25.
- Amare T (1989). 'The Determinants of the Foreign Policy of Revolutionary Ethiopia', J. Modern Afr. Stud. 27(3):479-502.

- Asafa J (2004). 'The Process of State Formation in the Horn of Africa in Comparative Perspective', In: Asafa Jalata (ed.), *State Crisis, Globalization and National Movements in North-East Africa*, London: Routledge pp.1-29
- Beck U (2003). 'The Silence of Words: On Terror and War', *Security and Dialogue*, 34:3.
- Belachew G (2009). 'Ethiopia Nationalism: an Ideology to Transcend All Odds' *Africa Spectrum* 44(1):79-97.
- Burgess S (2009). 'Stabilization, Peace Building, and Sustainability in the Horn of Africa', *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Spring pp.81-116.
- Buzan B (2003). 'Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post Cold War World' In: Soderbaum F and Timothy Shaw (eds), *Theories of New Regionalism*, Palgrave: Hound mills, pp.140-159.
- Clark J (2003). *Civil Society and the Battle for Ethical Globalization*, London: Earth Scan.
- Counlibaly S, Andrew R, Vivien F, Uwe D (2009). 'Depending Regional Integration', in *Africa's Infrastructure: A time for Transformation*, pp.143-161.
- Dehez D (2008). 'Ethiopia: A Hegemon in the Horn of Africa Region?', Unpublished Conference Paper for BISA Annual Conference.
- Deutsch K (1978). *The Analysis of International Relations*, (2nd edn.), New Jersey: Prentice- Hall, Inc.
- Dowden R (2007). 'China's Healing Power', *TIME*, 170(6):13.
- Duffy C, Feld W (1980). 'Whither Regional Integration Theory?', in Feld, Werner and Gavin Boyd (eds.), *Comparative Regional Systems*, New York: Pergamon Press pp.500-520
- Ewing J (2008). 'Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil: Implications for Peace and Security in a Troubled Region', *Institute for Security Studies. Situation Report*, 1 December 2008
- Faye M, John M, Jeffry S, Thomas S (2004). 'The Challenges Facing Landlocked Developing Countries', *J. Hum. Dev.* 5(1):31-68.
- Feld W, Gavin B (1980). *Comparative Regional Systems*, New York: Peramon Press.
- Getachew B (2010). 'Port of Assab as a Factor for Economic Development and Regional Conflict'. Conference Paper on: *Good Governance, Peace, Security, Sustainable Development in Ethiopia and Horn of Africa*, Washington, DC: AFE and ENPCP, (April 9-11, 2010).
- Haass R (2008). 'The age of Non Polarity. What Follow U.S Dominance?', *Foreign Affairs*. (<http://www.Foreignaffairs.org>).
- Hamilton B (2009). *Cross- Border Trade in East African Courtiers: Shared Issues and Priorities for Reform*, USAID: Biz CLIR Project
- Hettne B (2003). 'The New Regionalism Revisited' In: Soderbaum, F. and Timothy Shaw (eds.), *Theories of New Regionalism*, Palgrave: Hound mills, pp. 22-42.
- Holcomb B and Sisai I (1990). *The Invention of Ethiopia: the Making of a Depending Colonial Empire in Ethiopia*, Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Jervis R (1999). 'Realism, Neoliberalism and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate', *International Security* 24(1):42-65.
- Kissinger H (2004). 'America's Assignment', *News Week* 144(19):38-43.
- Lindberg L, Stuart S (1970). *Europe's would be Polity: Patterns of change in the European Community*. Englewoods : Prentice Hill Inc
- Mackellar L, Andreas W, Julia W (2000). 'Economic Development Problems of Landlocked Countries', *Transition Economics Series*, Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies, p.14.
- Mesfin A (2002). 'Problems and Prospects for a Horn of Africa Confederation', Paper Presented in International Conference on Prospects for a Horn of Africa Confederation, Florida: The Institute on Black Life of the University of Florida
- Mistry P (2000). 'Africa's Record of Regional Co-operation and Integration', *African Affairs*, No 99
- Moravcsik A (2010). 'In Defense of Europe', *Newsweek*. June7. 160(23):24-27.
- Nye J (1968). *International Regionalism*, Harvard University Press
- Sarbo D (2010). 'The Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa: the Case of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)', Unpublished Material, Global Economic Governance Programme, university College of Oxford.
- Shaw T (2000). *Multilateralism in Multicultural Perspectives*. New York: United Nations University.
- Shinn D (2005). 'China's approach to North, East, and Horn of Africa', *China's Global Influence: Objective and Strategies*, Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. Dirksen Senate Office Building.
- Sisay A (2002). 'Prospects of Regional integraton in the Horn of Africa' Conference paper on Prospects For A Horn of Africa Confederation, Florida: The Institute on Black Life of the University of Florida. November 14-15, 2002.
- Teshale T (1995). *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*, Lawrenceville: The Red Sea press.
- Work E (1935). *Ethiopia: A Pawn in European Diplomacy*, New Concord: Olin.
- Wuhib M (1997). 'Land- lockedness and Dependency on Coastal Countries: The Case of Ethiopia', *Geopolitics*. 2(1):56-68.
- Yang Y, Sanjeev G (2007). 'Regional Trade Arrangement in Africa: Past Performance and the Way Forward' Oxford: Black Well Publishing Ltd, pp.399- 431.
- Young J (1998). 'Regionalism and Democracy in Ethiopia', *Third World Quarterly* 19(2):191-204.
- Zakaria F (2008). *The Post-American World*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

CITATIONS

- CSOPNU (2011). *Implications of the Referendum in Southern Sudan on Peace, Security and Reconstruction process in Northern Uganda*, Kampala: CSOPNU.
- IGAD (2009). *IGAD Strategic plan for 2009-2013*. IGAD.
- MOI (Ministry of Information) (2002). *Ethiopia's Foreign Relations and National Security Policy and Strategy*, Addis Ababa: Ministry of Information, Press and Audiovisual Department.
- UNDP (2007). 'Introduction and Overview', *Trade, Trade Facilitation and Transit Transport Issues for Land Locked Developing Countries*, Conference paper, pp. 8-9.
- UNECA (1994). 'From Conflict to Concord: Regional Cooperation in the Horn of Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*. 21(59):88-93.
- UNECA (2004). 'Measuring Progress on Integration', *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*, UNECA Policy Research Report.
- UNECA (2010). 'The Development of Trade Transit Corridors in Africa's Land Locked Countries', *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*, pp. 241-265.