

Full Length Research Paper

Ethiopia's growth and transformation plan and its implications for synergic sum effect contextualized into regional cooperation in the horn of Africa

Assefa Leake Gebru^{1*} and Yemane Zeray²

¹Department of Politics, East China Normal University, China.

²Department of Political Science, College of Law and Governance, Mekelle University, Ethiopia.

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The East African region, in which Ethiopia is located, is commonly known as the Horn of Africa. It is branded for its economic underdevelopment and political instability. The region is economically poor, politically unstable and very volatile security wise. In lieu of this, it is prudent to describe the region as one that represents one of the most complex sub-regions in Africa. To resolve these and associated problems, states of the region are contributing a lot. Interallya,, Ethiopia is striving level best possible individually and collectively via the regional framework. However, its role has been much challenged for its weak economy. Given this as it may, it's now in a good track record of fast economic growth that sets the foundation for its transformation plan to get realized in the near future. In lieu of this, if its objectives stated under the second growth and transformation plan (GTPII) are achieved, it will add a momentum in Ethiopia's regional role. But what is to be contributed? How? In which and what manner can the state is expected to play to the best of the regional scenario, are some of the very fundamental questions that the research is going to address throughout the research process. To address these questions and arrive at its research objective, the researchers have employed a proper methodological approach in terms of crafting theoretical paradigms, research design, techniques of data collection and analysis. Within this theoretical approach, the study has gleaned secondary data sources, and analytically examine them in a triangulated research design (descriptive, evaluative and document analysis). Hence, the study has examined Ethiopia's trend in a broader manner and explored viable prospects in redressing the Horn's much trouble pertaining to the nexus of security-peace-development challenges. According to the findings of the study, thus, Ethiopia will have the greatest propensity to play as a regional hegemony by complementing its missed link. Among others, it will create a new window of opportunity for increased interstate economic relations and viable conflict resolution approaches.

Key words: Regional cooperation, horn of Africa, Ethiopia, hegemony.

INTRODUCTION

States in the Horn of Africa region, encompassing Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya and

*Corresponding author. E-mail: visitassie@yahoo.com.

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Uganda, are well known for their interwoven challenges to human survival. Economic underdevelopment, political instability and human insecurity describe the overall mood of states in the region. This has got its own contribution in making the regional scenario dismal (It is imperative to note that, the subjective aspects of states do share objective similarities emanating from the economically unviable, politically unstable and even security wise volatile mood of the states' in Horn of Africa region).

To rectify these interwoven problems, states leaders of the region have spent ample time and resources in crafting regional cooperative venture, to which the rejuvenation of inter-governmental authority for drought and desertification (IGADD) is a case in point. The implication is quite vivid: regional cooperation schemes, which are venerated in common via shared values and institutions, are plausible remedies to address common problems thereby ensuring peace-security-development in the region. This is evident from IGAD's establishment document, and its strategy.

Notwithstanding their novel moves for cooperation, yet there is limited achievement. Given this, as it might be, Ethiopia's constructive role (though much challenged) for practical and sensible regional cooperation was always prominent and worth of value. Its commitment in rectifying politico-security challenges of neighboring states like the case in Sudan and Somali attests this facet. And in the last five years, Ethiopia has exercised its first phase transformation plan and very recently started the second phase which is believed to contribute its share in rectifying the regional challenges of peace-security-development nexus. The First and second development plan are designed out of Ethiopia's achievement in economic development and lessons gained from the past ten years in which Ethiopia has registered a double digit economic growth. Hence, if the ongoing national plan, for growth and transformation is realized, it will set a momentum for a more accelerated economic growth at home with multiple implications to the regional scenario.

It is proper, thus, to argue that there will be synergic sum effect to the regional context if such positive development in Ethiopia is realized in the upcoming five years. Given this and other potential sources of power leverage¹ of Ethiopia, it is cogent in helping the researcher to develop scenarios and predict trends in which Ethiopia is to play for regional cooperation in addressing the triple challenges of security-peace –development in the region. It is within this general claim that the research project is going to explore the general implications of the ongoing growth and transformation plan to the IGAD's regional context.

In lieu of this, Ethiopia's past and current roles are analytically examined *vis-a-vis* the challenges and prospects of the development plan thereby draw

implications for a viable regional cooperation. This project work shall, thus, indicate possible scenarios that reinforce the existing strengths, and weaken the restraining factors. Hence, the findings of the study shall prove invaluable addition to the Ethiopian government's relentless efforts to maximize its propensity at home thereby to increase the synergic sum effect in addressing the exigencies of regional cooperation in the study area.

Statement of the problem

It is common Knowledge that regional cooperation blends a unique opportunity for geographically contiguous states. This is to serve them as a strategic thinking, and as a general approach to respond to national, regional and international existing challenges and anticipated threats. This is true especially in today's world of globalization in which states cannot solve national and regional problems independently.

Currently, states are doing what they had not been able to do previously for the attainment of their national goals and interests through their respective cooperative venture (Glassner, 1993). This signifies regional cooperation indispensable approach in addressing common problems and cultivating mutual benefits. For instance, if we look at this from economic point of view, regional cooperation helps in contributing to the expansion and straightening of material, technological and financial bases by coordinating states relatively limited economic resources and potentialities (ibid).

Likewise, regional cooperation is instrumental in addressing challenges of peace and security. This is illustrated, for example, in Southern and Western African regions in which respective constellations are playing important roles in building regional peace and security architecture. This has also its own irreplaceable effect in promoting economic cooperation and regional integration agendas in the upcoming future. Leaving aside the chicken-egg paradox², peace and security are important priority issues for regional economic development endeavors.

On a similar fashion, for peace and security to avail in a given region, gradual economic cooperation is vital. In this regard, Gebretsedkan (2005) has eloquently argued that regional economic cooperation has the greatest propensity to gradually create interdependence among states of a particular regional configuration that ultimately make causes of violence powerless. It is in due of these multiple advantages that states in the IGAD region (the

¹ This can be seen in terms of its military and diplomatic capability, its geographic proximity with about 5 states in the region- namely, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, its peacekeeping experience in many trouble spots of the world and its high propensity to achieve its millennium development goals and the ongoing national development and transformation plan.

² Regional peace, security and economic development are interconnected and correlated but it seems difficult to identify the right causality. While the correlation between lack of peace, security and economic decline/poverty is well established, yet the direction of causality remains to be unclear. In this regard, conceptualizing the nexus may be the right response to such paradoxes as "no development without peace and security and no peace and security without development". For further in-depth analysis of this paradox see Saundry, peter(2007)" regional cooperation for peace and development in Africa"

Horn of Africa) have spent ample time and resources to create a viable regional cooperative venture.

In this respect, their commitment in the establishment of various organizations can be reckoned as a testimony. Notwithstanding this, there is limited achievement that, in point of fact, can be ascribed to different factors. To mention few, lack of hegemonic state -equipped with diplomatic-political, military and economic capability; and the competitive nature of their economies take the lion's share. Yet, currently Ethiopia is envisaging a unique economic development that best helps in it's strive to arrive at its desire of playing regional hegemony. It is yet, contested from its neighbors.

In sum, this study will examine Ethiopia's ongoing plan and action pertaining to its challenges, prospects and subsequent implications in which Ethiopia is to play its part in helping arrive at a doable regional cooperation in the Horn of Africa. In view of this, the research project, hence, is intended to discover and examine how the ongoing transformation plan in Ethiopia will help address the basic stumbling block of regional cooperation in the study area.

Research objective and basic questions

The research intends to assess the ongoing growth and transformation plan of Ethiopia in light of its synergic sum effect to the regional context. Hence, the research will; to examine Ethiopia's economic achievement and the ongoing national plan in light of its prospects for a hegemonic role player in the region, to analyze the missed link in Ethiopia's endeavor for regional cooperation and to develop scenarios and implications from Ethiopia's transformation plan into regional importance. To provide a proper understanding of the issue at hand and arrive at its research objectives, the study attempts to address the following research questions, with specific thereof: Is Ethiopia committed for regional cooperation? What historical evidences can show its commitments? What roles has Ethiopia played in initiating and enhancing regional cooperation in the Horn region? What are its achievements and predicaments so far? What was the missed link in Ethiopia's efforts for a feasible cooperation in the region? What implications for regional cooperation can be drawn if Ethiopia's transformation plan is realized? How?

METHODOLOGY

First and foremost, a thorough and critical literature review will be conducted in relation to the notions of regional cooperation in areas of peace-security-development. To give the analyses a practical touch of reality, the research significantly requires to look in to the subjective aspects of states thereby examine the objective reality at the regional level. In lieu of this, thus, the study has scrutinized the issue at hand as being guided with the following methodological approaches. The research has employed liberal pluralist interdependence theory, and the functionalist approach in regional

cooperation. This is to capitalize the practical application, and importance of regional cooperation. Besides, taking into account the nexus of security- peace -development in a given regional context, the postclassical realist assumption of state behavior in regional cooperation is considered as both a paradigm and framework of analysis. This will help to indicate how viable regional cooperation is dependent on a leading sub-regional powers' quality: readiness, commitment and capability. Within this theoretical approach, the study has used only secondary data sources and analytically examined in a triangulated research design: Descriptive, evaluation and document analysis.

A great deal of effort is being made to glean secondary data sources. In light of this, academic papers, official dispatches, research outputs, were consulted. With this, emphases were given to cross check sources for their credibility with regard to the writings of authoritative scholars in the subject at hand. Besides, in search of objective judgments and opinions related to the study, relevant non-governmental organisations (NGO's), and pressure groups were consulted through their publications, and information and research outlets. This has helped principally in developing a scenario pertaining to the synergic sum effect of Ethiopia growth and transformation plan to the regional context.

The research is made to be qualitative in its approach. Though it was imperative to look for primary sources, given the financial and time constraints, it has faced, it's being made to solely depend on secondary data sources. This may debilitate the quality of the study, yet a great deal of effort is exerted, and a due care is being made to forestall the degree of its influence.

Description of study area

Horn of Africa region is located in the Eastern tip of the African continent that looks like a horn, and intrudes to the Indian Ocean. The countries that make up the Horn of Africa region include Djibouti, Somalia, Eritrea, The Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda, where Ethiopia is at the heart of the region. The Horn of Africa covers an area of 5.2 square kilometer, and a population of more than 170 million. The horn of Africa is a region of ethno-cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Christianity and Islam are the major religions that co-existed for centuries, yet diversity of religious practices ranges from relics of ancient form of Judaism, indigenous African beliefs to animism. In terms of identity and modalities of social organization, heterogeneity is a common characteristic of the region in all states but with some degree of caution on the Somali state.

The region is known for its structural heterogeneity reflected in diversified modes of production, and production relation owing to the rural-urban, pastoral and agricultural as well as eco-zonal divides of highlander and lowlander population that depend on subsistence economy.

Politically, it is a region of rampant intra and interstate hostilities, belligerency and spontaneity that are ascribed to factors associated with modality of power- interplay and mutual intervention in the affairs of one another, that most often do not aggravates human insecurity in the region.

These shades influence in debilitating to use the regions available potential leverage pertaining to its strategic significance. Given this regional image, the study will focus

on Ethiopia's ongoing development plan with regard to its synergic sum implication to the aforementioned region to stimulate a newly concerted cooperation for mutual benefit. Hence, the study is to be undertaken in Ethiopia- a vibrant nation in terms of both its national development endeavors, and significant contribution to the regional cooperation. The country has an estimated population of more than 80 million, and an area of 935,183 square miles.

The regional scenario and the place of Ethiopia

The Horn of Africa is located in the far northeast region of Africa that constitutes its own sub-system within the wider African continent. There is no agreement on the exact boundary of this sub-region. However, Kassahun (2013), argues that the attributes used to identify regional sub-systems tend to take into account "geographic proximity, regularity and intensity of interaction between actors, internal and external recognition of group of states as distinctive area consisting of two or more countries" qualify to be a region.

In this sense, all member states of IGAD are used as forming the Horn of Africa's regional sub-system. Geographically speaking, thus, the Horn of Africa comprises seven states: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan. There are tribal, cultural, historical, economic, political, and security ties among these seven countries. This broader definition is both purposive and more appropriate for successful economic integration that reflects the diversity and greater economies of scale as well as consistent with the existing regional cooperation initiative established by the states of the region (Kassahun, 2013).

Including the aforementioned states, the region is known for its shores bordering the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Due to the Horn's prime access to major sea routes, it has been a high traffic area for trade for many Arab and far Eastern territories.

Over the last four decades, the Horn of Africa has been wracked by major conflicts in Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea (IGAD, 2008) and, to a lesser extent, Djibouti. Conflicts in individual countries are often compounded by inter-state conflicts of varying degree, and intensity which take place at different times. Moreover, recurrent droughts resulting in famine, and other troubles, among them environmental degradation and economic hardship, are expressed in the impoverishment of broad sections of the populations. Cross-border violence even beyond state level carried out by rebels can easily escalate into inter-state tensions, and the Horn of Africa presents the best examples of this devastating pattern.

The Horn of Africa have been plagued with border disputes, civil unrest and droughts, as well as other natural and man-made calamities that often result in economic repression, civilian casualties, human rights violations and famine (Woodward, 2013). Due to such adversities,

countries in this region have also been hindered by various forms of oppression, unstable infrastructural development and displacement of the population. Besides, ethnic conflict has had dramatic effects on political and regional stability throughout the Horn region (Attilio, 2013). Though there have been efforts made to improve democracy and human rights in the Horn of Africa, inadequate living standards, fuelled by the repression of democracy, combined with repressive military regimes as well as international intervention, has unfortunately marred the regional atmosphere for a long period of time in history.

The region's most devastating conflicts, however, are intra-state conflicts, which conceptually are of three types, although in reality they are often hard to distinguish. The first are inter-communal conflicts, which are fought among ethnic, clan and occupational groups; for instance; pastoralists vs. sedentary farmers. These conflicts are generally fought by communities over land, water and livestock (in the form of cattle rustling) and are often provoked by resource scarcity, resulting from a rapidly deteriorating environment and fast-growing populations. The second type is the one-sided conflict, which entails atrocities perpetrated by governments and rebel groups against unarmed civilian populations for a variety of reasons. The third and perhaps the most devastating type of intra-state conflict the region has experienced consists of 'civil wars' and chronic strife between the state and organized political groups, which are mostly ethnic- or region-based (Kassahun, 2013; Woodward, 2013). Such conflicts have attributed to the internal political structure and nature of economic distribution.

The complexity and interconnectedness of intra- and inter-state conflicts and the concomitant pervasive insecurity ravaging the region make the Horn of Africa to be the most conflict-ridden region in the African continent. This has rendered the task of building durable and meaningful peace and security in the region and beyond making it extremely difficult (Menkhaus, 1999). At the root of these intra- and inter-state conflicts and insecurity is the crisis of the state. The precarious state-building process has rendered the state crisis-stricken. State crisis in turn gives rise to conflicts and insecurity at home and beyond.

More to the point, the Horn of African states' foreign policies have been characterized dominantly by mutual intervention through backing one another's political oppositions. The reciprocal interventions using intrastate protagonists remain one of the major instruments of foreign policy among the countries of the region. This strategy is aimed at weakening actual and presumed adversaries with the hope of strengthening their bargaining position in their dealing with each other (Kassahun, 2013).

Therefore, pursuing regional foreign policy through proxy forces in neighboring countries has been the normal pattern of relations for decades in the sub-region. The logic of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' forms the basis for interstate alliances between states and among

non-state actors in the Horn (Williams, 2011). This activity has proved persistent over time, and has survived radical political reconfigurations, including regime changes (ibid). This in itself is a prominent ground in cursing the horn of Africa region as the worst of its kind for human life.

In general terms, these bitter conflicts and insecurities are historical, socio-economic, domestic, intra-regional and international factors and underdevelopment coupled with poor political power interplay. External interventions, driven by competing national, economic, political, security and strategic-linked interests connected to the war on terror and concern about piracy, render the conflicts intractable.

Despite some semblance of regional stability, compared to previous years, there are still many challenging issues in the Horn of Africa, such as the issue of pervasive poverty, inadequate access to social services, and conflict-prone government policies. Combined with the regions vulnerability to drought and civil unrest, the Horn of Africa has produced some of the largest numbers of refugees worldwide (el-affendi, 2005).

In spite of the engagement of many local, national, regional and international actors in the attempt to mitigate the conflicts, no significant results have been achieved as might so be deemed required. The methodology of international intervention and the politics of conflict resolution, which stress global strategic, security, political and economic interests, have not only proved lacking, but have also skewed the process of state-, peace- and security building to the regional importance.

The piecemeal approach to conflict resolution quite often emanating from geo-strategic expediency is another factor that perpetuates conflict in the Horn of Africa. Interlinked conflicts and insecurities demand holistic, historicized, multidimensional and multidisciplinary analyses, regional approaches and mechanisms which are missed in the horn's regional scenario for long. Given this as it may, regional frameworks are initiated since the mid of 1980's in the region. In light of this, the subsequent section will examine the trends in the making of regional approach, which is of a recent phenomenon to the horn's regional sub-system.

Constellational trends in the Horn of Africa

For long, the Horn of Africa region has been heavily impacted by wars and conflicts, poverty and cyclic droughts all with pervasive human casualties. Since the period of African year of independence, the region has experienced several devastating inter-state wars, including the Ethio-Somali wars of 1964 and 1977-78, the Kenyan-Somali war (1963) and the Ethio-Eritrean border war of 1998-2000. It has also witnessed destructive cross-border communal conflicts often triggered by environmental degradation, and facilitated by porous borders, which are not always respected or even recognized by pastoral communities, especially those who

belong to ethnic groups split across national boundaries (Assefa, 2005).

On top of this, the region has experienced mutual intervention in the internal affairs of one another like the case in between Ethiopia and Sudan, during the military government of Ethiopia, the long existed cases of this kind in between Uganda and Sudan. Proxy wars are also common to the region, the very recently proxy was the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in the land of Somali is a case in point (ibid).

All these and similar contexts depict the undesirable regional image of the horn of Africa, and put people's and states of the region in the same boat. Thus, to address such gloomy images and human casualties, states of the region have crafted regional cooperation scheme which is venerated in common. The establishment of IGADD and its revitalization is a case in point. This is particularly true; when the need to overcome above stated regional challenges was recognized, member states have rejuvenated the then Inter-Governmental Authority for Drought and Desertification (IGADD) to become the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 1996 (Musso , 2013).

The regional constellation was entrusted with the task of promoting conflict-resolution and stability as a prerequisite for inter-state cooperation in areas of security, peace and development agendas. Among African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), IGAD is comparable only to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for its acting as a regional peace-maker and not just as a forum for economic integration agendas alone (Abbink,2003).

According to Woodward (2013), the regional body has been set up for the Horn of Africa seeking in its own way to reflect comparable regional developments as somewhere else in Africa, such as ECOWAS and SADC (South African Development Community). It is also possible to argue that in spite of its limitations, it is now recognized as an international organization working alongside the African Union, the European Union and the United Nation as being representing the interest of the regional states.

Since its revitalization the regional organization, IGAD has embarked on two mediation efforts: Peace process in Somalia, and the negotiations between the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A (South Sudan Liberation Movement/Army). In the first case, its initiatives have lapsed several times, but the latter. IGAD-led negotiations between Sudan, and the SPLM/A has succeeded against all expectations, resulting in the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement in 2005, after years of intermittent talks, and help South Sudan declare its independence in 2011 subsequent to the popular referendum held in Juba, its capital.

With this exception, the constellation looks to be inept for variety of reasons. In most of its cases, IGAD is known for its ineptitude and shortcomings, and charged with a responsibility for securing peace, security and economic

development in line with its mandate. According to Kasahun (2013), the incompatible hegemonic interests and aspirations of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt and Libya supported by their respective allies and sympathizers are detrimental to efforts attempting to lay the ground for the realization of a viable security arrangement and cooperation in the Horn of Africa within the framework of IGAD. Besides, lack of regional hegemony and incompatible economic systems, and the monoculture nature of their economy rendered the regional cooperative scheme inept. However, there are good prospects in Ethiopia that it can fill this level gap to the best of the regional setting.

In line with this, Berouk (2011) and some scholars in the Horn of Africa argue that the region lacks a clear regional power, and that it is characterized by contested leadership. Kenya, the region's economic power, lacks the hard power to assume a leadership position. Although Sudan has the potential, it is grappling with numerous unresolved internal armed conflicts. Ethiopia is arguably constrained by lack of economic capacity. Despite this, other scholars argue that Ethiopia is "the most powerful and dominant power" in the Horn of Africa (Dehez, 2008; Berouk, 2011). Such contention pertaining to Ethiopia's position as to whether it qualifies to be a regional power, and will play a leading role in the region or not, need a separate treatment which is the main objective of this study.

In light of this, thus, the subsequent section will look into the Ethiopia's national context thereby indicating the prospects that Ethiopia can play in light of its ongoing development efforts, and its growth and transformation plan. Besides, it will kindle on the overarching challenges that debilitate Ethiopia's constructive role in the regional framework.

Ethiopia's national context in light of its regional role

Ethiopia is one of the oldest independent nations in the world. It has long been an intersection between the civilizations of North Africa, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. Unique among African countries, Ethiopia was never been colonized, maintaining its independence throughout the high days of colonialism. It is the second largest country in the Horn of Africa and shares borders with Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, South Sudan and Kenya.

Ethiopia was one of the poorest countries in the world, afflicted by decades of social upheavals, wars, poverty and famine inflicted from its misguided policies. This has been the whole mark of the state of Ethiopia lingering afresh memory in the mind of many Ethiopians. This is particularly true up until the beginning of 1990's. In line with this, Assefa (2015) has argued that until 1991, natives and foreigners alike and the international community in general had viewed Ethiopia as the mythological Pandora's box of many unknowns and evils. This is true

as the country has remained in a state of deep rooted economic quagmire, political crises and social upheavals with concomitant effect on the lives of its population.

Thus, the period 1991 is, thus, a land mark in the Ethiopian history as it has ushered a multifaceted development and fundamental shift in policy orientation and development strategy. Since, the demise of the military rule, the nations and nationalities of Ethiopia have entered into a new phase of political economy accompanied by a new optimism for a multifaceted economic development, peace and democracy. This is also the guiding principle of its foreign policy objectives and direction. The government, with its unwavering commitment to drive the country out of the long awaited and deep rooted economic quagmire, designed and implemented a doable National strategy reflected in both its foreign and domestic policy, and able to register a double economic growth in the last 12 years.

At this moment, Ethiopia has become one of the world's fastest-growing economies, and its GDP per capita has risen on an annual basis. The country, which was known among the outside world as the world's most impoverished nation, where periodical drought and famine were claiming the lives of many citizens, has managed to attain faster economic development in less than two decades changing its image for the good (Ministry of Information, 2015). Not only Ethiopia has been able to achieve sustainable development but also been able to join the ranks of the world's fastest economies like China (ibid).

According to Klosowicz (2015), after the fall of the military dictator, Ethiopia is commonly perceived by independent observers as one of the most stable African countries. This view seems to be shared by tourists, who come to Ethiopia in large numbers every year. The capital city itself, with the modern airport and the growing modern district along Africa Avenue, makes a good impression on new comers. The very fact that Addis Ababa is home to the seats of the key regional African organizations, including the African Union (AU), and diplomatic missions of nearly all the significant countries of the world, adds to the reputation of the country. These entire factors make Ethiopia appear to be one of the safest and most dynamically developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with its political stability likely to have a positive influence on its neighbors (ibid). In light of this imperative shift, the subsequent part will look into the economic, political, military, and diplomatic efforts of Ethiopia from the vintage point of implications to the regional framework of cooperation.

Economic development endeavors and its Implications

It is evident that Ethiopia has witnessed previously unseen economic development, accompanied by various changes in the political culture and environment at many levels of the state. Social and religious development have

oscillated between respect and understanding. The growing economic potential and influx of foreign capital drives the development of the country's infrastructure, in particular, the construction of roads (African Development Bank Group, 2011). The economy has experienced significant growth over the past decade, averaging 10.8% per year from 2003/4 to 2012/13 compared to the regional average of 5.3%, and was the 12th fastest growing economy worldwide (The World Bank, 2015). The growth and transformation plan (GTP), launched late 2010, is the government of Ethiopia's response to address its multifaceted development challenges. The GTP is borne out of the government's vision to propel Ethiopia into middle income country status by 2025.

A number of international economic institutions predict that in the next few years Ethiopia will experience intensive growth. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ethiopia is the fastest growing African economy among the non-oil producing African countries. Currently, the country is negotiating its membership in the World Trade Organisation, and the government has been making efforts to ensure that it has the best possible image among investors (Maasho, 2013). The economic diplomatic effort, which is part of the massive campaign targeted at making 'Ethiopia as one of the middle income economies in the world', will be further intensified so as to help accelerate the ongoing diverse economic development programs in general and the ongoing growth and transformation plan in particular. Such moves have helped Ethiopia to play its constructive role in relation to members of the IGAD region.

For instance, neighboring countries are keen to import renewable energy from Ethiopia because it is cheap and most of them are utilizing energy sources that do not compound the problems of climate change. In this regard, Ethiopia has already begun supplying electricity to Djibouti since May 2003 EC. By doing so, it has become the first East African country to export power to abroad. The 283-km long Ethio-Djibouti Electric Power Transmission Project was inaugurated in October 2011. The 230-kilo volt power transmission line enables Djibouti to receive 35 megawatt of electricity.

Ethiopia in return will get foreign exchange earning amounting 1.5 million US dollars per month (Government Communication Affairs Office, 2012). The construction of the double-circuit line, which was launched in September 2007, was completed in mid-2011. A memorandum of understanding providing for the supply of electric power to Kenya has also been signed between the governments of the two countries earlier.

According to EEPCo (Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation), the installation of an electric power line stretching from Ethiopia to Kenya has been launched and is currently in progress (ibid). Ethiopia's dream of becoming a hydroelectric superpower has also continued, as well as the realization of gigantic water projects, despite the extreme costs. The great renaissance dam is likely to

have significant consequences beyond the regional level, likely affecting relations between Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia (Klosowicz, 2015).

Ethiopia is expected to generate sufficient power in the next five years to enable it to honor electric power to demand from its neighbors. The country has signed initial agreements to supply 500 mega Watt to Sudan. Emphasis will also be given to other infrastructural developments consisting of road, energy; air and railways transport facilities, and health and education institutions, among others, during the remaining years of the implementation of the GTP. Here comes not only Medhane (2005) assertion of Energy-led integration but also infrastructural development integration in the horn of Africa to come true.

For any regional and sub-regional cooperation to be doable, it demands the provision of roads and transportation channels. Seen from this perspective, roads are being built across the country; the railway line which connects Addis Ababa to Djibouti is being rebuilt, and all the key cities are actually huge construction sites. Ethiopia plays an important role as a key air carrier in Africa (Star Alliance, n.d.).

Ethiopian airlines is among the top three largest African airlines, with an excellent reputation for safety, which earned it the membership in Star Alliance in 2011 (ibid). Looking all this hopeful moves and concomitant scenarios from Ethiopia have a vivid implication for Ethiopia to fill level gaps in regional cooperation challenges. Supporting this scenario, Woldegebriel (2013), has argued that Ethiopia's recent promising economic performance offers hope for its people, and the country is increasingly attracting aid, trade and investment. It recently added a new area of focus on regional integration in IGAD through internal infrastructure development, and the export of hydroelectric power and water concessions to neighboring countries, adding impetus in helping Ethiopia's role and drive for a regional power. This approach may constitute a major improvement in addressing the shortcomings of Ethiopia's regional diplomatic practices.

In remarks made during a meeting with Prime Minister Desalegn, US President Barack Obama (Mehari, 2014) has pointed out that the "enormous progress in a country that once had great difficulty feeding itself, it's not only leading the pack in terms of agricultural production in the region, but will soon be an exporter potentially not just of agriculture, but also power because of the development that's been taking place there." This in itself will kindle a flicker and window of opportunity in addressing loose economic ties born of monocultural economy of the region.

According to Klosowicz (2015), in addition to the economic success, which is quite impressive for sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia may also boast of a growing political position, not only in the Horn of Africa, but also across the continent. The country is also a home to Major African and international organizations (the African Union, as well as the realization of gigantic water projects, despite the extreme costs. The great renaissance dam is likely to

the UN Economic Commission for Africa). Apart from playing a crucial role in international relations, it is a key ally for Western countries, particularly the US and Europe in the fight against terrorism and extremism in the region (Mehari, 2014; Klosowicz, 2015).

This is imperative to easily deduce an implication that the country is to play in the future undertakings regional cooperation and integration agenda in its region.

Military mighty and its implications

Given its relative economic development at home and the support rendered on the part of the major powers in the name of fight against terrorism, it was able to build a strong military force which is capable of not only defending its sovereign independence, but also helping boost in its peace keeping effort in the region and beyond. The American support provided to Ethiopia, such as financing, training and equipment, has been changing the Ethiopian armed forces at a faster pace (Ploch, 2010).

Here, value adding might tend utopian, but even with its own resources at hand it has able to manage a relative military strength in the last ten years, with a viable prospect to further strengthen its regional might along with the success of its growth and transformation plan.

According to the Global Fire Power (World Military Strength Ranking), Ethiopia is currently the strongest Sub-Saharan country in military terms and the third strongest country in Africa after Egypt and Algeria, ranking higher than South Africa (Global Fire Power, 2014). Given that the ranking takes into account 40 factors in determining the position of each country in terms of military strength, it is cogent to trust the outcome of the ranking. Besides, Ethiopia is also the second most populous African country, which obviously translates into military potential if the need comes.

Ranked first in sub-Saharan Africa, third (next to Egypt and Algeria) in Africa and fortieth in the world, Ethiopia's military strength and role in regional peace and security, and its impressive track record in peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and mediation efforts create a favorable condition for it to become the main hegemonic role player state to the best of the region and beyond. The share and contribution of Ethiopia in peace keeping mission is rising from time to time.

According to Mehari (2014) a total of 12 247 troops (4395 troops in the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and 7852 in UN missions, Ethiopia is the biggest troop-contributing nation in the world. This is indicative of not only Ethiopia's military strength but also its readiness and commitment to play a constructive role in promoting peace and security in its area of concern. This is also founded upon its foreign policy strategy and objectives.

As the third contributor to UN peacekeeping missions in, for example, Darfur (UN-AU Mission in Darfur), Abyei (UN Interim Security Force for Abyei or UNISFA) and South

Sudan (UN Mission in South Sudan), Ethiopia's focus has been on peace and security in Africa. This has a far reaching implication for its constructive role to play in the regional scenario. Here, one can imagine the possible role that it could play if its ongoing growth and transformation plan is realized. Summing up this assertion, Kidist (2014), has the following to say;

Ethiopia's military power, population size, relative internal stability and diplomatic strength have enabled it to position itself as a regional power and to drive regional peace and security initiatives. Ethiopia has also been able to influence regional security agendas through sub-regional and regional organizations. The convergence of Ethiopia's interests and those of its western partners further give Ethiopia legitimacy in its regional role and status. At the same time, other states in the Horn of Africa have been unable to balance Ethiopia's position in the region or gain the same level of recognition for their role in peace and security.

Diplomatic endeavors' and its implications

Ethiopia's diplomatic tradition and its regional position is attributed to its sense of statehood. It has been founded on age long written historical accounts, dating seven centuries back, and on Ethiopia's awareness that it is the only African state which had not been colonised by European powers. The latter factor has a highly symbolic meaning for Africa as a whole, which is reflected, for example, by the fact that upon gaining independence many African countries chose the Ethiopian colors for their national flags (Klosowicz, 2015). Since the high days of African independence, Ethiopia is committed for the African continental organization.

Currently, its foreign policy is guided with the objectives of promoting sustainable development, democratization and promoting peace and security. The government of Ethiopia strongly believes that ensuring national security and peace could be questionable unless supported in particular by the prevalence of regional peace and stability and by good relations and co-operations from the countries neighboring Ethiopia and other countries of the continent (Government Communication affairs office, 2012). One of the strategies that is instrumental in minimizing potential threats endangering the peace and security of the nation, and in ensuring its sovereignty is establishing good diplomatic relations and friendly cooperation with neighboring countries based on mutual interest and benefits (ibid).

Pursuing strategies capable of enhancing sub-regional, regional and international political and diplomatic understandings and friendly cooperation is therefore the focus areas of the country's foreign relations and national security policy and strategy. Thus, the country gives greater consideration to have strong ties with its

neighboring countries and pursues appropriate policy towards them. By taking into consideration the importance of such diplomatic ties, the Ethiopian government is pursuing strategic directions in which neighboring countries can play a positive role in the country's political, social and economic development situations and vice versa (ibid).

Accordingly, the government has established strong political ties with all countries of the sub-region with the exception of Eritrea. In addition to the establishment of strong relations with the countries, the government has been engaged in activities that will ensure the peace and security of the sub-region thereby help the sub-region attain development and prosperity as part of its commitment to the region. Ethiopia plays a crucial role in the activity of supporting the efforts towards strengthening the capacity of IGAD to ensure peace and security, as well as political and economic cooperation. Ethiopia has continued playing prominent role towards the strengthening of IGAD and AU and enhancement of their activities geared on ensuring peace and stability in the African continent and ensuring the maintenance of the interest of the region in the international forums.

The significant contribution that Ethiopia has made in finding a lasting peaceful solution to the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan was also a testimony for this. Ethiopia has also been playing a significant role in the efforts launched to resolve peacefully the civil war in Darfur, Sudan by sending its peacekeeping forces to the conflict area. Ethiopia has also been playing significant role towards consolidating its relations with regional and international organizations comprising the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the IGAD and the Arab League, etc around the world (government communication affairs office, 2012).

The friendly relations and co-operations which Ethiopia has been building with various countries and international organizations around the world, based on mutual interest and benefit, are getting expanded and strengthened from time to time in the last two decades. The country's diplomatic and political ties with many countries in the world are getting high places worldwide. The building of strong solidarity and diplomatic ties by Ethiopia with foreign countries has enabled it to transform from political insignificant to an influential nation in the world. According to Mehari (2014), for Ethiopia to become a hub for regional integration in the IGAD region a shift of focus to economic and trade diplomacy in the region is required, as is the case with other regions, without undermining the importance of its role in regional peace and security.

Cognizant of the imperatives, Ethiopia has therefore signed comprehensive co-operation agreements with Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Yemen, Nigeria and South Sudan, reflecting its close relations with both close and distant African and Arab countries (ibid). However, at a regional level, IGAD is a key regional institution through which Ethiopia pursues its regional objectives. Since 2008,

Ethiopia has been the chair of IGAD. As one of the leading founders and main architects of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Ethiopia's rich history served as the seedbed for pan-Africanism. This in itself has also a blatant implication: let alone for the weak and fragile states of the horn state's region, Ethiopia is playing a prominent role in the African continent. In sum, given Ethiopia's relative stable politics at home, well established diplomatic ties, relative military strength and well recognized track record in its economic development, it could play a regional power's role in the horn of Africa thereby leading the region to the good.

Conclusion

According to this ongoing national plan, step by step measures are to be taken to lay a firm foundation for industrialization, though agriculture is still to lead the economy to the coming five years too. The implication is quite vivid: after five years industrialization will lead the national economy in which agriculture is to play a supportive role.

This significant paradigmatic shift in Ethiopia's economic policy has its own rampant implication in filling the exigencies for regional cooperation in the Horn of Africa (IGAD) region. For long, Ethiopia has led the region in a more creative political thinking and adaptation to the emergence of international trends. This is true as the country is implementing its second phase growth and transformation plan born out of its exhibited experience of a decade's long double digit growth rate. Regional powers generally contribute to stability and peace within their geographically defined spheres of influence.

The Horn of Africa region is said to lack a clear regional power for a long time in history. This study argues otherwise. Ethiopia, despite its constraints in terms of economic capacity, has played a prominent role emerged as a regional power capable of projecting its power beyond its borders.

Due to lack of economic capacity, Ethiopia has only managed to contain regional security challenges temporarily. However, by emerging as a central and influential security player in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia has managed to secure the development assistance that it desperately needs to boost its economy and deal with the numerous internal and regional constraints to its regional power projection.

To consolidate its regional power position and receive more recognition and credibility, Ethiopia needs to improve its internal political condition and increasingly play a more constructive role in the Horn of Africa. According to Klosowicz (2015), Ethiopia is clearly the dominant state in the Horn of Africa, as seen both in the narrower and broader perspective. Only Sudan can be compared to Ethiopia in certain respects, yet it is no match for the latter in population terms (38 million), military power, not to

mention its influence and prestige both in regionally and internationally.

The other countries: Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and South Sudan are much smaller and weaker, with the overall population of 109 million, that is, slightly over 10 million more than Ethiopia. If the Horn of Africa was to be narrowed down to Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Djibouti, the predominance of Ethiopia would be huge, both in terms of the territory (40% of the region's area) and the population (85% of the total population in the region).

Being the most powerful country in the region, Ethiopia should, theoretically, control the regional environment. Ethiopia and Djibouti has maintained a relatively stable political environment, which has allowed for peaceful relations with Ethiopia, Somalia and other international partners. Djibouti has also become a host to many refugees and asylum seekers, as well as an international hub for port access.

Undoubtedly, Ethiopia plays a key role in the security complex of the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia, which is located strategically and is the most populous country in the region, enjoys sufficient authority among the countries in this region. Addis Ababa is also an important international actor, especially with regard to combating international terrorism and extremism. It enjoys the backing of the EU and the U.S., with the latter considering it an ally and one of the 4 states crucial for the U.S. interests in Africa. Ethiopia aspires to play a leading role in major regional initiatives, and undertakings aimed at stabilizing and integrating the region, and it takes an active part in peacekeeping and stabilizing missions.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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