
REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA: THE ROLE OF ETHIOPIA AT THE CENTER OF INTEGRATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze regional integration in the horn of Africa as well as to assess the role of Ethiopia in the region, as hegemonic state. The study would also identify the challenges and opportunities of regional integration in the region. This study is qualitative study and it used secondary sources such as journals, books, policy documents, research outputs and reports were employed for this study. This study tried to describe the concept of regional integration as well as the success history of regional integration. This study argues that regional integration could be viable in the region with the reviving power of Ethiopia in the respect of political and economic aspects. Ethiopia is big state in the region with the large number of population and relatively stable political system. This study argues the role of Ethiopia in integrating the horn of Africa via economic and infrastructure integration is ongoing project. The new government led by Prime Minister Abiy started the integration to precede one path beyond energy led integration by creating peace deal with Eritrea and taking a leading role to integrate the region. The study shows that if the horn of Africa integrated, there will have success in economy; politics there could have something new in the regional socio-economic development under the leadership of Abiy government initiative. The study also describes about the challenges related with integration in the region as well as the number of opportunities which could be applicable in the horn of Africa.

Key words: Regional Integration, Ethiopia, Horn of Africa, Cooperation

1. Introduction

Horn of Africa consists of countries in northeastern part of Africa, for some people, the Horn of Africa constitutes Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea. This description is simply attributed to the geographic shape when one looks at the map of Africa. For others, however, the Horn of Africa includes other countries, such as Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya (and sometimes Tanzania) Fisher (2014) cited in (Solomon, 2016). This conception of the greater Horn of Africa involves other issues of connectivity (such as security, economy, etc.) beyond the geographic shape of this particular region. This description is more or less consistent with the existing regional development initiative established by the States of the region (Sisay, 2006), that is, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, the Horn of

Africa refers to a geographic region that embraces all the countries mentioned above, excluding Tanzania.

The Horn of Africa is the most volatile region in the world. The volatile nature of the region is related with different socio-economic and political factors. Lack of regional economic cooperation and integration is one of the vital factors of the volatility of the region (Endalcachew, 2014). The region is very fragile and known by the conflict region next to Middle East in the world. It is characterized by interstate and intrastate conflicts; famine, drought and desertification have long been defining features of the region. The source of conflict in the region is that of colonial boundaries, undemocratic leadership witnessing in the region, underdeveloped economy and other socio-economic and political factors were among the source of conflict in the region.

It is obvious that horn of Africa is strategic area where large political powers of the west want to have military zone there. The region is the most important and strategic area for Africa and global economy. The world's developed countries have their own interests in the region because of the region is one of the strategic area where different countries in the region shares Red sea, Indian ocean and its proximity to Middle East. It is a bridge between Africa and the Middle East, as well as a gateway to the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. This makes different world powers interested in the region to build their military base in the area mainly in Djibouti and Somalia (Sisay, 2006).

The horn region is characterized by diverse population with regard to culture, tradition, ethnic group and religion. The history of the region indicates that the region is conflict prone area not as such cooperative and integrative area. The very objective of this study is to analyze the regional cooperation in the horn of Africa, its successes, challenges and opportunities as well as the hegemonic role of Ethiopia in integrating the region. Different studies are made in the horn of Africa regarding regional cooperation and integration. However, no comprehensive study has been conducted on the hegemonic role of Ethiopia under the new leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

Horn of Africa has been struggling with different political, economic and social problems. The prevailing problems in the horn of African countries are almost similar basically; backward political administration, interstate and intrastate conflicts, environmental problems like desertification, erosion, drought and famine are among the problems prevailing continuously in the region. The solution to address the existing problem is working in collaboration in institutional matters. In this aspect having the great potential and opportunity in the region; it lacks cooperation and integration. A little effort and emphasis is given in this activity to integrate the horn of Africa.

Today, there are political leaders who believe integration is basic in the region and it could be one of the means to change the history of the region. The new prime minister of Ethiopia would play something in this aspect why because new government of Ethiopia thinks beyond the box that the east Africa should integrate and to have better bargaining

power in the international relations. Ethiopia has better opportunity to play the hegemonic role in integrating the region because the country has the benefit of population and geography. Therefore, Ethiopia has the role in integrating east Africa in general and the horn region in particular.

2. Conceptual Clarification of Regional Integration

Regional integration can be defined as different thing for various people. Regional integration has been defined as an association of states based upon location in a given geographical area for safeguarding or promoting of the participants economically, socially, politically in a given neighborhood whose terms are fixed by a treaty or other arrangements. In addition to that, it refers to the process of states coming together to sign agreements where they agree to cooperate in certain areas common to them; this process is seen between the governments of the region.

As it is cited in Tanyanyiwa, Vincent Itai & Hakuna, Constance 2014 As the famous Shona saying goes "literally translated to mean "one finger cannot destroy a louse", it means there is much benefit to be derived when people come together in pursuit of a common purpose. The concept of regional integration can be viewed in the same way; hence regional integration can be generally defined as the coming together of nations to attain a common goal.

There are a number of conceptual problems concerning integration. And the most basic problem is the definition of integration. This is exactly pointed out by Sullivan (1987) cited in (Tesfaye ,2002) who states: Some view it as a level or situation that nation- states reach and then maintain, others view it as an ongoing process that ultimately is never-ending. As a result, for some the state of integration is a well- defined "point" that can be empirically established, usually by the formation of a union. For others, there is no "point".

Regional integration can best be defined in the way that breaking up of all barriers that is obstacle for cooperation in the region between the member countries. It could be defined as also harmonizing the socio-economic policies and laws between three or more countries to have economic, social and better technological advancement between them. In other words, it is defined as a process by which neighboring countries are creating an agreement in order to develop cooperation through common institutions, rules and laws.

Regional integration agreement can range from political, economic as well as environmental issues in the aspect of supranational or intergovernmental and mixture of the two. Regional integration can work from the lower level to the upper or sophisticated unification of states. Hence, regional integration has six levels from the lowest level to highest respectively as follows. These levels are preferential trade area, free trade area, custom union, common market, economic union and political union. Traditionally, regional integration is referenced with the creation of free trade area, custom union and economic union. Nowadays, it is becoming as creating supranational institution which is

above the single state to make decision among the member country and pooling sovereignty; for instance European Union (EU) is good example. Most of regional integration institutions in Africa are more of intergovernmental confederation for common advantage rather than creating supranational institution.

3. Regional Integration in the Horn of Africa

Horn of African region has little experience of regional integration via politically, economically, socially and environmentally. The region is characterized by its economic dependence, political instability, lack of commitment for political leadership and democratization and poor communication and transaction among member countries in the region (Tesfaye, 2001).

Three of the members States of the IGAD, namely Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda are landlocked. While Ethiopia joined this status after Eritrea seceded in 1991 (formally in 1993), South Sudan became the newest landlocked member of IGAD in 2012, after it seceded from Sudan in 2011. The fact that Ethiopia, the most populous country in the sub-region, South Sudan and Uganda are landlocked has been a motivating factor for member states of the IGAD to develop certain terms of cooperation or integration, both in the form of bilateral and multilateral arrangements (Solomon, 2016). In the region Ethiopia large country but landlocked country, the country uses Djibouti as a door for import and export. In this aspect, Ethiopia and Djibouti are cooperating together for their mutual benefit, where Djibouti gets big amount of its income through rent of port and Ethiopia uses port of Djibouti to move its goods.

Regional integration in the horn Africa is the recent agenda where states in the region do not have much history of integration. One of the regional economic communities in east Africa as intergovernmental experiences of integration in the region is called Intergovernmental Authority on Development with the familiar abbreviation of IGAD. IGAD is the youngest regional organization even in African Union. IGAD emerged in 1986 by its former name IGADD with the narrow mandate of intergovernmental authority on drought and desertification as response for severe drought, desertification and famine prevailing in the region. IGADD was transformed to IGAD and various concerns of cooperation emerged via IGAD. According to (IGAD, 1996) the priority areas of integration of IGAD in the region are basically;

- ✓ Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and Humanitarian Affairs;
- ✓ Infrastructure Development (Transport and Communications);
- ✓ Food Security and Environment Protection.

IGAD has various objectives in accordance with the principles of African union and it is one of the eight regional economic community recognized by African union. As the region is known by conflicts and poverty IGAD has prioritized the issue of poverty and conflict resolution as an agenda of cooperation in the region. All the eight horn region countries are

the members of the particular organization IGAD and working cooperatively since its emergence. Having the objectives IGAD is working in the region for mutual cooperation and interdependence among the countries of the region.

4. Success History of Integration in the Horn of Africa

The region is not that much known by success history of integration rather it is more of known by conflict, backwardness, maladministration and undemocratic system of governance. Now a day there are promising regional organization and promising activities are taking place in the region under the leadership of IGAD. IGAD as one of the sub-regional organization in the horn of Africa it has worked on various economic, social and peace related issues. One of integration agenda of the region is connecting neighboring countries via infrastructure and working on peace and security of the region. As the region is poor in infrastructure and there is the problem of stability in the region regional organization are highly concerned to connect horn of African countries.

There is certain achievement in the region that countries are interconnected together via infrastructure. In this regard infrastructure development can be considered as one of the success of integration on the horn of Africa. It is known that Ethio-Djibouti railway become operation since the time of Menelik II of Ethiopia. The old Ethiopia-djibouti railway was collapsed from old age, lack of maintenance, mismanagement and various factors.

Nowadays, Ethiopia and Djibouti are actively running to cooperate via infrastructure especially construction of new modern railway lines. They established Joint Railway Commission in new form. The two countries are to be interconnected through two modern railway lines which are under construction: Addis Ababa (Sebeta)-Dire Dawa-Djibouti line and Mekele-Weldya-Semera-Tadjourah line. The Ethiopian Government is working on the projects as part of its plan to construct nearly 6000 kilometers of railway network as set in the Five-Year Growth and Transformation Plan (2010/11-2014/15). The Addis Ababa–Dire Dawa-Djibouti project is in the list of top priorities of the Government of Ethiopia. It has a significant social, political and economic importance to the country (Seyoum, 2012) cited in (Urgessa, 2016). It is the busiest corridor handling most of Ethiopia’s import-export trade activities. This line is under trial operation a year ago and it will be fully operational soon. The construction of this line reduces the travel time from Addis Ababa to the Djibouti port by more than fifty percent and will contribute to the economic development of hinterland Ethiopia. In the longer term, this rail link will serve as a key component of the proposed trans-continental East to West African Railway Network.

The Mekele-Weldya-Semera-Tadjourah railway line will connect the north and north-western regions of Ethiopia to the port of Tadjourah in Djibouti. It has a total length of 675km and gives alternative Port access thus contributing to the economic development of the north and north-western parts of Ethiopia (Seyoum, 2012) cited in(Urgessa, 2014). This line is part of segment of longer corridor that will be further extended to the west

interconnecting the railway networks of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Sudan. Hence, it connects Djibouti with the North Sudan via Ethiopia fostering sub-regional interconnection (Seyoum, 2012). This line is under construction and the opening of this corridor will enable Ethiopia to open additional corridor for its import and export activities.

With regard to the road infrastructure to connect the horn region and feasibility study was conducted and funded from different donors in the region. Some of the projects are materialized, others are under construction and some others are not implemented because of finance. The projects planned by IGAD at beginning are the Isiolo-Moyale road linking Nairobi and Addis Ababa; the Dobi-Galafi-Yoboki -a triangle connecting Djibouti-Assab and Addis Ababa; Ali-Sabieh-Dire Dawa road which connects Addis Ababa with Djibouti and Gondar-Humera-Barentu-Gedarif road, covering several sections which would connect Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea (IGAD Report, 1998 cited in (Medhane Tadesse, 2004).

With regard to peace and security related issues the region has various success histories. One of the achievements is handling the case of Somalia and Sudan. IGAD has handled the conflict in Somalia and Sudan, through such processes it has witnessed progress in the countries. In resolving conflicts between Sudan and south Sudan IGAD have played its major role and it played and playing similar role in Somalia. Now a day IGAD is also playing its role in resolving and preventing conflicts in one of the region in south Sudan.

Finally, the last but not least is the peace agreement which was taken place between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Ethiopia and Eritrea stayed the time of no peace and no war for decades, but this condition is solved after the change of the leader of Ethiopian government prime minister Abiy Ahmed. Prime minister of Ethiopia has convinced president of Eritrea and the long stayed history of conflict between two countries finally ended.

5. Hegemonic Role of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa

Ethiopia is a country in the horn of Africa having large number of population and large size of geography in the region. Having the large number of population and the strategic location Ethiopia had not played the maximum role expected from it. Ethiopia is largest country in the world which is landlocked country with the second largest population in Africa next to Nigeria. It is a multi-ethnic nation that constitutes of 40 percent of the population of the Horn. It is also the current home land of important pan-African organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Ethiopia can serve as anchor on which a free trade, foreign investment, and related regional economic cooperation and development activities can be implemented in the future (Sisay, 2006)

In some instances Ethiopia had played the hegemonic role in securing peace in neighboring countries like in South Sudan and Somalia as one of the dominant figure in IGAD security mission. Ethiopia is a country known in Africa by its security mission in

different parts of the world. The countries where Ethiopia was participated in security mission are like Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Burundi, Liberia were among the countries where Ethiopian military had worked in peace and security issues of Africa.

Among the major sectors, Ethiopia has connecting the horn of Africa is energy led integration with Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan. In the future this integration will comprise other countries in the region. Now a days Ethiopia is constructing one the largest dam in Africa which could generate 6000MW to boost integration in the region. Even before, the realization of grand renaissance dam Ethiopia has sold electricity to Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan gets hard currency from this countries. Djibouti gets 35 MW, Kenya gets 60 MW and Sudan gets 100MW electricity from Ethiopia (Tesfa-Alem, 2014). This shows at the center of integration Ethiopia is playing hegemonic role in the region.

Now a day Ethiopia is taking a leading role in integrating the region, mainly after the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took power in Ethiopia and come up with the philosophy of “Medemer” in Amharic and translated as coming together or synergy. Medemer is Prime Minister Abiy’s philosophy of inclusiveness. As prime minister presented in Switzerland Davos in world economic forum about the philosophy of “medemer”, he stated that Medemer is people centered having three interdependent pillars. These three pillars of Medemer are;

1. Vibrant democracy
2. Economic vitality and
3. Regional integration and openness to the world.

From the three pillars of the philosophy the third pillar is concerned about integrating the region. This shows how far the new leadership of Ethiopia has given emphasis to integrate the horn of Africa. In this aspect Ethio-Eritrea peace process was one of vibrant action taken by prime minister of Ethiopia. After Ethio-Eritrean not-disclosed peace process the region is getting connected together under the leadership of prime minister of Ethiopia.

In this case in November 2018, president of Eritrea, president of Somalia and Prime minister of Ethiopia met together in Amhara regional state in Gonder and inaugurated different development projects in the country. They discussed on the issue of integrating the region. In other time President of Sudan, President of Djibouti, and Prime minister of Ethiopia met together in oromia regional state in Jimma and inaugurated industrial park of Jimma and did similar action what they did in Gonder and Bahir dar.

In March, 2019 President of Kenya with Ethiopian Prime minister meets together and inaugurated Debre Birhan industrial park and went together to Eritrea to work on regional issues. Three leaders’ president of Kenya, Prime minister of Ethiopia and President of Eritrea discussed on the possible ways of integrating the region. After discussing in Asmara; Ethiopian Prime minister and Eritrean President went to South Sudan to meet

President of the state. They discussed similar issues in Juba to make south Sudan part of integration and to make the state free from the conflict in the country.

Ethiopia is also taking a mediatory role between the border contention between Somalia and Kenya. Prime minister of Ethiopia is mediating two countries to reduce their differences. Three leaders meet in Nairobi; under the mediation of prime minister of Ethiopia they agreed to solve the border conflict prevailed among them peacefully. This shows that Ethiopia is trying to bring the horn of African countries together. Ethiopia has this hegemonic role to be played in the region with regard to conflict resolution, trade, energy, transport, communication, custom and other issues where cooperation and integration is viable in the region.

6. Challenges of Integration in the Horn of Africa

Horn of Africa has a number of challenges in the process of integration in the region. Among the challenges which play its part for weak implementation of the scheme in the region are the following;

6.1 Inter-state and Intra-state conflicts.

The IGAD sub-region (particularly the Horn of Africa), has a long history of conflict and poor political relations means that military rather than economic considerations tend to dominate national security debates. Member states in the sub-region have been deeply involved in warfare with one another and have consistently worked to undermine or rearrange one another's regimes. The imperative to weaken hostile neighbors by all means possible undermines prospects for mutually beneficial economic integration (Chatham House, 2011).

6.2 Overlapping membership and policy difference

Almost all African RECs have overlapping membership and offer competing institutional frameworks for the creation of the African Economic Community. Not surprisingly, horn of Africa faces similar challenges. For example, two members of IGAD, Kenya and Uganda, are also members of the East African Community (EAC), formed in 1967 by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. All IGAD members except Somalia are members of the COMESA. Five IGAD members, Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia and Kenya, have joined the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (Chatham House, 2011). It is challenging to work on various cooperation schemes and countries are simple becoming member of different regional cooperation schemes with different policies; they are challenged to implement overlapping policies.

6.3 Lack of Commitment of Governments to enforce agreements

This issue is related with unwillingness to share sovereignty across countries but particularly for new states emerging from a costly and devastating war (such as Eritrea and

South Sudan), sovereignty remains highly prized and jealously guarded. Thus, a combination of military priorities and economic nationalism is likely to prove a stronger driving force than regionalism (Solomon, 2016). States which are participating in regional cooperation schemes in the horn of Africa are not committed to mainstream the agenda of regional integration to entertain with their domestic policies.

6.4 Weak Regional Institutions

Regional institutions are essential inputs for the achievement of regional integration. “Effective regional institutions are critical for the sustainability and effectiveness of any efforts at improving regional integration and economic co-operation” (ADF, 2002) cited in (Urgessa, 2014). Furthermore, it is argued that: “successful regional integration would depend on the extent to which there exist national and sub-regional or regional institutions with adequate competence and capacity to stimulate and manage efficiently and effectively the complex process of integration” (Asante, 1997) cited in (Urgessa, 2014). However, in the Horn of Africa the regional institutions responsible for integration are weak and ineffective. In the sub-region IGAD is acknowledged to provide institutional framework for economic integration.

6.5 Influence of Foreign Powers

The influences of external powers are sometimes responsible for undermining efforts at regional integration. The influences and intervention of extra-regional powers especially Egypt and some Arab countries share the blame for the fracturing of regionalism in the Horn of Africa (Odock, 2013). Egyptian politics have been structured around its desire to control the source of the Nile, and therefore sought to isolate Ethiopia and prevent an alliance of the states in the Horn from emerging to challenge its sub-regional hegemony (Medhane, 2004). Since independence, Djibouti has maintained close relations with France and the Arab world, receiving significant foreign aid and development assistance from both sources. When Djibouti is integrated with other regional countries the benefit of other foreign powers would be under question and reduced. Therefore, foreign powers are exhaustively working to be as an obstacle for regional integration.

7. Opportunities of Cooperation and Integration in the Region

The region has various opportunities to integrate through economic and political aspects. Among the major opportunities where the horn countries can integrate are through energy led integration which could be led by Ethiopia. Connecting the horn countries through road infrastructure is also another aspect of integrating the region. Where Ethiopia is still taking the role to connect border countries through road construction which is like Addis Ababa-Khartoum is a good example and the ongoing project of Addis Ababa-Nairobi is considered as another major opportunity to integrate Ethiopia and Kenya.

Another opportunity which can be viable in connecting regional integration is via free trade zone of horn of Africa. What is suggested here is a movement toward a creation of a

Horn of Africa Free Trade Area (HAFTA), a first stage of economic cooperation which can be established independently or within framework of the existing regional institution such as IGAD. IGAD has administrative institution the so called secretariat and this secretariat has its own economic cooperation division through this framework it is possible to ensure free trade area (Sisay A 2006). There is mutual cooperation between Ethiopia and Djibouti as well as Ethiopia and Sudan. For example, Ethiopia and Djibouti currently benefit from mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Ethiopia gets access to the port of Djibouti via a jointly owned railroad, and Djibouti benefits from revenues generated from Ethiopia's use of the port. The opportunity of economic cooperation is that there exists some infrastructure such as roads that connect most of the states of the Region to build on. A free trade area can also benefit from the existing initiative of IGAD established by the states and supported by international development institutions, donors, and other partners. Indeed, for a successful interregional trade to be viable, it must be complemented by public and private investment. Domestic and foreign private investment is especially crucial to maximize the benefits from a free trade area.

This approach of free trade zone of horn of Africa can take place between Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and Eritrea as the major actors.

Moreover, there is some diversity among the states of the greater Horn if Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan are included, with some complementarity for a viable inter-regional trade for the benefit of Region. A narrowly defined "Horn of Africa" free trade area that excludes Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan may not have much inter-regional trade benefits and complementarity. For example, Ethiopia is potentially rich in agricultural and livestock products. She has revealed comparative advantage in such products. The Sudan has discovered petroleum in its Southern Regions, and there are natural gas potentials in Somalia. Kenya has the most developed manufacturing base from which it can benefit (Sisay A, 2006).

8. Concluding Remarks

Horn of Africa is known by its interstate and intrastate conflicts in the region. The region is considered as one of the volatile region in the world next to the Middle East. To change such hostile situation in the horn various economic, social and energy led integration should take place. Countries in the region, directly creating cooperation, with others via trade, transport, energy and on the other aspects of integration. The region has not that much success history in integration but it is at the infant stage. There are various opportunities that integration can be viable in the region like what Ethiopia is playing to integrate the region by energy and other infrastructures. Ethiopia as one of the country in the region having various advantages it has to play but it has not played yet the opportunity that the country have at hand.

There is beginning of integration that Ethiopia is playing its role in integrating the horn via infrastructure particularly, energy led integration with Djibouti, Sudan and Kenya is the

ongoing project that Ethiopia has begun and implementing. It will broaden after the realization of grand renaissance dam of Ethiopia. In the long run Ethiopia will take the leading role in integrating the horn of Africa.

Horn of Africa has various challenges that accounts for weak performance of regional economic integration in the horn of Africa. Among the challenges; conflicts, poor economic status, foreign influence, weak institutions, lack of commitment of government in the region are recorded as the basic challenges of regional integration. Having this if the government in the region works together and committed to enforce the agreements and free from foreign influence in the long run regional economic integration would be viable and different opportunities are open for the countries.

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