

Ethio-Eritrean Rapprochement and Its Implication for Regional Cooperation and Integration in the Horn of Africa

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ABSTRACT

One of the new improvements in the Horn of Africa is the internal political reform in Ethiopia and the rapprochement between the two nations. The purpose of this research is to examine the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries and the implication for regional integration in the HoA. The relationship between the Horn countries has been characterized as hostile and dominantly by mutual interference and proxy war. The paper has attempted to accomplish this goal by examining regional integration, which has been a component of the African strategy to combat fragmentation and strengthen the continent's position in the global political economy. IGAD, as the regional organization, was rearranged in 1986, with integration as the key focus area. Accordingly, in terms of research methodology, a qualitative approach was employed. Primary and secondary data are used in an investigation. Theories like Functionalism, Neo-Functionalism, realism and institutionalism were used to support the analysis. Generally, the study finding reveals that the internal political reform in Ethiopia has brought closer relationships and might make it easier for the Horn countries to integrate as a region.



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INTRODUCTION

The Horn of Africa is one of the continent's most unstable regions (Mukerrem, 2016). Almost every state in the region engaged in inter-state and intra-state fighting, and states experienced civil war in the region. Furthermore, Horn countries have faced numerous shared conflicts for the sake

of grazing land, water, resources and ethnic group (Kidanu, 2011:10-13). The Ethiopia–Eritrea war of 1998–2000 contributed to regional instability in the 1990s. (Healy, 2011:19).

Regional integration is a crucial regional agenda that different factors have hampered in the horn region. According to Bruce (2016:4), "regional integration in the Horn of Africa is particularly challenging due to the web of the long run, inter and intrastate conflicts, rivalries, alliances and anti-alliances that shape relationships among countries." Furthermore, the legacy of conflict in the HoA continues to obstruct the execution of regional economic combination plans envisioned for IGAD as a component of the future African Economic Community. (Healy, 2011:43). Thus, the region lacks any meaningful attempt at economic cooperation and regional integration (Tewodros & Halellujah, 2014:7).

Thus, the region has also registered the most significant shift in regional relations among nations. One of the most remarkable achievements recorded in the region is the Ethio-Eritrean rapprochement¹ under the guidance of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The new leaders who took power in April 2018 came up with the idea to install peace between the two countries. On 5 June 2018, Ethiopia announced the acceptance of the once rejected decisions of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission and called Asmara for peace talks (Bereketeab, 2019). After this positive response and successive meetings between the two countries' leaders' summit diplomacy, the political landscape of Ethiopia-Eritrean relations showed dramatic change.

The research objective explores the ramification of the rapprochement for regional cooperation in the region. Does the paper address the implication of the rapprochement for regional cooperation and integration? However, the researcher attempted to review the existing literature in the pre-rapprochement era; they focus on the origins of war, the consequences of the conflict and the 'No War, No Peace' stalemate, and how other states could take a lesson from the consequences of the terrible relationship between the two nation. On the other hand, Studies conducted a post-rapprochement deal with what the region benefits from Ethiopia-Eritrea relations, the potential Security significance of 2018 Renewed Diplomatic Relation of the HoA and Reconciliation between Ethiopia and Eritrea and its effects on each country's economy.

As seen above, none of them considered the implication of the rapprochement for regional integration. Moreover, no comprehensive study organized examines how the conflict hampered the regional cooperation agenda and the potential contribution of the political reform for regional integration.

This research methodology is qualitative; it emphasizes personal knowledge and practice (Karina, et al., 2012:9). Qualitative methods seek to comprehend a phenomenon and its underlying causes and actors in great detail. (Kamasak et al., 2017:7). Thus, the qualitative approach helps analyze human behavior, attitudes, and leaders in determining inter-state interactions. Therefore, a qualitative approach helps analyze the diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and Eritrea. An

¹ The word rapprochement derived from the French word named rapproche meaning to bring together. According to 1828 Merriam Webster definition, rapprochement means the establishment of or state of having cordial relations. Literally, the rapprochement used to imply establishing of cordial relations, as between two countries. This means the state of reconciliation between two countries. Rapprochement is all about the restoration of diplomatic relations.

explanatory research approach will support the study. This approach is carried out to determine the degree and kind of cause-and-effect relationships and evaluate the effects of certain changes on current norms and processes. (Zikmund et al. 2012).

The paper used primary and secondary data, with primary data being obtained through in-depth interviews with pertinent people and figures. (AU, IPSS, MWIE, KMU, MoFA, IGAD, and MoTI.) The secondary data would be acquired from pertinent literature such as journals, books, publications such as newspapers, periodicals, and closely relevant news and, more importantly, organizational publications of the UN, AU and IGAD.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The subsection deals with a review of related literature to trace critical issues and develop themes relevant to the specific problems under study. Accordingly, it starts with briefly looking at the global experience of the selected regional integration scheme highlighted. The second subsection, regional integration efforts in Africa, is presented with an attempt to link with the topic.

Development of regional integration

Regional integration programs evolved in the mid-1980s, the need for integration paved the way to the establishment of regional block such as; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), European Union (EU), North America (NA) and Latin American (LA) countries (Mweendwa, 2014:32). Therefore, the EU is often considered as the "gold standard" and the best model of regional cohesion for the rest of the world (Börzel, 2009:6).

ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) was basically an energy-led initiative as a landmark in European cooperation as it represents the first organization after World War II. Accordingly, states decided to assign local decision-making consultants in the coal and steel sectors to a new institution (Rittberger & Locker, 2012:1). Thus, the six European countries Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands signed the Treaty of Rome to establish the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, and started a customs union in July 1968.

On the other hand, in Asia, regional organization structure attempts have been recognized by various sources. The arguments can be divided into four categories: Economy, geopolitics, identity, and local politics. (Katada, 2009:4). However, based on the common interest among member countries of South-East Asian for stability and economic development, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded in Bangkok on 8 August 1967 to bind members in collaboration and take up joint attempts for growth. The founding members were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, known as the ASEAN-5. They were joined later by Brunei (1984), Vietnam (1995), Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar (1997) and Cambodia (1999) (UNDP, 2006: 8).

Finally, the regional integration scheme established regional blocks such as; the EU, ASEAN, NA and LA countries. Its objective is to build a "super-national unit," Subsequently, the arrangement promotes peace and stability, facilitates the process efficiently and builds a new image. The models play a pivotal role for the entire world in the history of regional economic integration and cooperation, especially in the weakly integrated region HoA.

Regional Integration Arrangements in Africa

The dynamic nature of global trade due to the globalization of the world economy has increased the demand for economic cooperation and integration among African countries to gain significant benefits. According to the United Nation conference on trade and development (UN, 2008), African regional cooperation/integration has been revitalized due to two main developments: first, the overthrow of the apartheid state in South Africa, which facilitated the liberalization of political and economic relations in the region, and second the evolvement of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union and the initiation of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in 2001.

The Pan Africa movement of the 1950s and 1960s was the major pushing factor behind African integration that called for the liberation of African states and the end of colonialism. There are five regional blocks across the continent, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), East African Community (EAC) and Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD); since 1996, IGAD (Solomon, 2014:3).

Regional Integration block in the Horn of Africa

Intergovernmental Authority on Development/IGAD

IGAD was established in 1996 as the successor of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), which was formed in 1986 as a response to the severe drought and desertification in the countries of the HoA. The renewal of IGADD was needed to enable the institution to act in evolving sub-regional problems such as conflicts and civil war to find an instrument for their resolve to address the economic challenge through economic cooperation and integration (IGAD, 1996b). In this regard, the Speech of Heads of state and government on the renewal of IGADD states the need to extend cooperation among the countries of IGADD so that the sub-region plays its role in the regional and the entire parts, integration as stated in the Abuja Treaty (IGAD, 1996c). Despite the above, most research revealed that IGAD, as a regional organization, registered good performance in peace and security but was weak in regional integration schemes.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research is based on the region's conceptual and theoretical frameworks and concepts; regional integration and cooperation are successively reviewed. The theoretical basis includes functionalism, neo-functionalism, institutionalism, and realism are supports the study. In a recent debate, most researchers concluded that there are no 'natural' or 'scientific' regions; this is the challenge of defining a geographical area. However, many academics address the issue by focusing on regional organizations and regional economic frameworks. (Söderbaum, 2007).

The Latin word "regio," which means "to steer," is the source of the English term "region." As a result, the term "regio" originally meant government rather than the physical demarcation of a region by a border. While it became associated with the verb "regere," which means "to rule" or "to guide,." According to (Langenhove, 2013:3), the term region can refer to "geographical space

socio-economic interaction, organized rule and cultural characteristics." However, most authors agree that the region includes a specific geographic closeness and shared interdependence (Vukovic and Kochetkov, 2017).

Thus, the HoA lacks a precise definition both as a "political concept" and a "physical entity" (Tafesse, 2002). The political geography of the HoA mainly consists of seven countries, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda (Kidane, 2011:7). Some writers take members of IGAD as HoA. Recognizing the above description, the researcher used HoA for the purpose of this article to mean a member of IGAD.



Figure 1: Map Horn of Africa countries

The common usage of the term "integration" is very confusing. According to the Oxford dictionary definition, integration means "forming parts into a whole" this definition is vagueness. If we look at the history of regionalism, we can see that the term has been used to mean various things. Since the European Common Market was established in 1957, "integration" indicated at least three things. "Political unification, economic unification, economic and political cooperation (Nye, 1971)." In addition, mainstream scholars use words like "integration" or "cooperation" interchangeably.

Therefore, one of the most standard definitions of integration (Nye, 1971:25) refers to the process through which state actors in various national settings are persuaded to change their behavior, interests and institution needs their demand nexus to the national boundary." As Haas (1958:11) defines integration as a process, the ideas resemble the insight of interests of the actors playing in the process. Hence, various occurrences or events cannot be compared to one another; regional cooperation, regional integration, regionalization, and regionalization are all contentious concepts used differently across disciplines and even within them.

BRIEF APPRAISAL OF THE RAPPROCHEMENT

Ethiopia is one of the countries that experienced such political development pre and post-2018 reform. There are several reasons for people's dissatisfaction. The major one is; unequal participation of the citizen in the political and economic system, internal displacement, states of regional economic disparity, the expansion of the Addis Ababa master plan to the Oromia zone, corruption and ethnic-based politics. Thus, the government could not address these crises efficiently, and Ethiopia's political change began in 2015. Belay (2019:41:51) stated, "The new government has implemented tremendous reforms that have resulted in domestic political liberalization and significant changes throughout the area." The Algiers Agreement characterized the war as a border conflict, assuming that the leading cause of the fighting was a disagreement over the shared border. However, the rapprochement between the two addressed the deadlock. Therefore, the current rapprochement is a landmark for changing the past practice, which has led to a new platform for local and foreign policy implications without changing the system (Belay, 2019:41).

The settlement between Ethiopia and Eritrea has the main reason that Regional integration in the Horn has been impeded. Thus, reconciliation between the two has strengthened the relationship between Eritrea and Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia, Eritrea and Kenya, and the South Sudan peace agreement. As a result of the rapprochement, Eritrea now has the opportunity to make peace with Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, and Kenya. These relationships could potentially promote political cohesiveness, trust, and unity, particularly in achieving regional cooperation and development for countries of the region and also has regional ramification (kidanu, 2020).

RAMIFICATION FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION SCHEMES

The political deadlock between the two hampered the regional peace and stability dynamics and shadowed the regionalism program. According to my informant, the internal political reform directly ushered to reconciliation with the Eritrean government and implications for the stability of the entire continent. Regional integration promotes trade and investment, which positively affects member states' cooperation in different aspects. Similarly, the significant development of domestic political change in Ethiopia is rapprochement with Eritrea, which also positively impacts neighboring countries. This situation breaks the sour relations of the region, which has favorable implications for peace, stability and regional integration. Therefore, the sub-section addresses the resumed diplomacy has been a potential contribution to altering the on-hand integration efforts in countries of the region into a more comprehensive regional cooperation agenda beyond the rapprochement, which has created opportunities and challenges

Advancing peaceful relations /Absence of Hostility

The Ethio-Eritrean border crisis, which lasted from 1998 to 2000, strained relations between the two nations and resulted in severe regional political unrest. Destabilized action and an increase in proxy warfare inside the third state in the region are seen as crucial foreign policy tools that characterize the aftermath of the two-nation agreement and the region at large (Amanuale, 2019). Thus, proxy conflict in the third state was the old age norm of the two nations, using Somalia as a battlefield (kidest, 2011). However, the rapprochement ends such kinds of relationships and

potential implications for the peace and stability of the region. As Amanuale, (2019:74) noted, following the rapprochement, the security situation in the region and within Somalia will shift significantly in favor of stability.

One of my informants argued that the rapprochement new in the region's diplomatic history has amicably changed HoA countries' relationships. The region had experienced destructive types of diplomacy in the past but now relatively peaceful relations. He furthered that soft diplomacy brings good relation and complex diplomacy pave the way to evil. In the same vein, Costantinos noted (2019:9), "Leaders of Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti who have never come face to face to build peace in the Horn, have now been invited by the fascinating Prime Minister Abiy now that the HoA nations have pledged to make peace." Therefore the new rapprochement opens the possibility of rewarding regional economic and security dynamics (Mosely, 2018:4). Functionalism and Neo-functionalism, the main theoretical contribution, was the concept of spillover. Functionalism is a response to the rise of global interdependence, and by emphasizing issue management, it seeks to transcend political boundaries without contesting them.

Creates alternative Port

Ethiopia is the only nation in the Horn with a shared border with everyone else. (Heally, 2014). Physical integration and connectivity have been and continue to be key elements of cooperation between the countries of the HoA (mosley, 2020:13). Geographical interdependence is one of key driving essential to strengthening the development of seaport transportation routes, shared water resource management, pastoral land administration, and energy security (Tewodros and Halellujah 2014:8-9).

The outbreak of the border war between the two in 1998 diverted all the trade Ethiopia passed through Eritrean (Massawa and Assab) ports to Djibouti (Styan, 2013:5).). As Mormule (2016:1) argued, "on the post-1991 period, the fact that almost 90 percent of Ethiopia's imports arrive via to the port of Djibouti both countries are enhancing their inter-connectivity in the areas of hydropower supply, railway, trade, and military cooperation, among other things".

Ethiopia used Assab and Massawa ports for several years before Eritrea became independent. Following the independence, Ethiopia became landlocked and entirely depended on Djibouti port. Thus the rapprochement created another option for Ethiopia to access the sea and reaches international trade. Ethiopia and Eritrea also have another physical connectivity project that would require extensive external assistance but is essential for the development of the two countries the development of and restoration of Massawa and Assab harbor. In addition, the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments agreed to work together to develop Assab and Massawa harbors. The Italian government supported the plan and the railway construction from the harbor of Eritrea to Ethiopia cities (Ibid).

Infrastructural linkage

Infrastructure development is one of the key drivers of regional integration; landlocked Ethiopia is searching for alternative physical connectivity of transport networks to immediate neighbors to the global market (Mosely, 2020). Since the historical relationship between Ethiopia and Djibouti

is a landmark for the region, which aims to facilitate trade between the two nations, the jointly owned Addis Abeba-Djibouti railway has continued to play a significant role in the relationship between the two nations. Infrastructure development by the region has significant implications for the regional integration process; the Ethiopia-Djibouti railway was pioneered.

As of Djibouti, another project that enhances the relation of the region's member states is the LAPSSET Corridor. The initiation is prepared under the Kenya Vision 2030 strategy framework; critical features of the plan include attracting private investment, focusing on the development of the nation's infrastructure, including roads, trains, ports, airports, rivers, and telecommunications, to link various regions of the nation (Müller, et. El.2021).

As my informant currently, the LAPSSET- a big region project that facilitates urbanization and improves cross-border trade- promotes socio-economic interaction and potentially stabilizes the sub-regions bad relationships. Hence, infrastructure development attracts investors, creates job opportunities for youth, and minimizes migration for a better life. Equally, another informant discusses that infrastructure has played an important role in facilitating trade and investments, further improving people-to-people relations. Recently the Horn of Africa implemented several infrastructure projects; Berbera corridor (Somaliland – Ethiopia), Nairobi - Addis Ababa corridor (Isiolo – Moyale – Addis Ababa road): Juba corridor: and Djibouti – Addis Ababa corridor, all these create the foundation for physical interconnection.

The LAPSSET corridor creates access to sea and infrastructure linkage for landlocked countries, improving social interaction, economic interdependence, and trade and industry development in different sectors. He furthered recently that it is under construction, Ethiopia delivers 40 000 hec. Land to develop port areas a state makes this type of compressive development of Port to enhance good relations and create mutual trust between states.

Enhance Energy-Led Cooperation

The power connectivity program is one of the major projects that integrate the region in mutual coexistence approach. It has significant implications and spillover and spillback effect to improve the stormy relationship of the region and has a significant role in bringing the expected peace and stability. The following are the region's power interconnection systems: Ethiopia-Djibouti, Ethiopia-Somalia, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Kenya-Somalia, Djibouti-Somalia, power system interconnection, and Ethiopia-Kenya (HoAI, 2021). The sub-region is the continent with the most diversified energy production potential from renewable sources (hydro, geothermal, wind, solar etc.) and non-renewable (oil & gas). The energy resource potential capability differs from state to state. This will positively affect regional energy cooperation efforts by considering their comparative advantage and mutual benefit. Still, the region suffers from utilizing its potential for social and economic development. This shows the paradoxical nature of the region; possibly, the region is among the lowest electric power utilization rates in the entire globe (EIA, 2019). Therefore the following are the future opportunities for the HoA power system connection.

My key informant argued that Ethiopia's current level of energy cooperation is interconnected with Djibouti (around 80 MW) and Sudan (around 100 MW). The Power Exchange is not as significant compared to the potential we have. However, the enormous power interconnection Project with

Kenya and beyond is in the completion stage. Once this project is completed, up to 2000 MW of power can be exchanged between neighbors and beyond like Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. There is a plan to interconnect with Eritrea, Somalia (Mogadishu), Somaliland (Berbera), and South Sudan. In the same vein, informant energy confirmed that the current energy-led cooperation in the region could be facilitated by establishing a new regional arrangement after the restoration of diplomacy between the two countries. The initiative enhances the current state of international collaboration in the energy sector and plans for energy-driven integration.

Functionalism presupposes the importance of an institution as a vehicle to facilitate the process for the creation of shared institutions between or among participating members is necessary. This emphasizes the development of institutional ties for joint collaboration throughout time. Moreover, the theory incorporates the "principle of ramification," which is the spillover effect. Based on shared needs and interests, cooperation between states is quite likely. These encouraging developments and chances for energy-led collaboration in the region are signs of further energy and economic integration in the region in various forms.

THE CHALLENGES TO TRANSFORMING THE RAPPROCHEMENT TOWARD INTEGRATION

Despite the positive achievements of the Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement and subsequent opportunities briefed above, the rate of regional cooperation in the Horn region is not going as planned. The Horn of Africa countries were expected to benefit considerably in the Ethio-Eritrea political rapprochement. Thus, the regional economic cooperation process did not bring the expected result. Instead of growing civil war and political instability, which is directly linked to the regional integration schemes by devastating attempts, countries of the HoA region suffer the same old problems.

Political unrest

The Horn of Africa is one of the most unstable regions inter-states and intra-state war, a civil war based on ethnic fragmentation was the historical legacy and norms of the region. Apart from this, the region's geopolitical competition and highly militarized nature have security implications for the sub-region. The unpredictable nature of the region and the bad relationship creates mistrust between states. Therefore, the Ethio-Eritrea war destabilized the peace and stability of the region and hampered regional integration efforts. However, sustainable peace pushes states to cooperate and work to manage shared resources. In the same vein, my informant strongly supports the above view, and internal reform is incapable of securing prolonged peace in the country. Instead, it pushes the security of the country to another complication. Since there is still local insecurity in the northern parts of the country, he furthered the border tension between Ethiopia and Sudan, which is without any speculation of negative implications for the regional integration process.

Another informant supported the mentioned view; although regional integration is a long-term process, they need to build a culture of peace that will allow for the socio-economic foundation to be sustained. Therefore, peace and security remain the real threats to integration into the HoA. The potential for peace cannot be seen in isolation from the growing regional economic cooperation drivers.

Ethnic tension

After 27 years of TPLF/EPRDF, the dominant political figures, Ethnic based politics, drive the country's political system. After TPLF lost its ruling position within the party, the OROMARA alliance was tactically defeated, resulting in the nomination of Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D.) as the new Head of the party. Therefore, the normalization process is not free from suspicions and challenges; the geopolitical and strategic competition among the world's great powers in the sub-region creates friction between the nations, which directly influences the domestic politics of Ethiopia and faces Ethnic based conflict (Estelle, 2018). Therefore such a trend is likely to intensify after the reform because the stability of the region as a whole is intimately related to Ethiopia's stability (Dr. Yonas, 2019).

During essential informant interview expertise MoFA the reform comes internally from the EPDRF party, so most higher officials are working in the previous TPLF dominant system. So they refused the recent political transition and are working against the current regime. The tense ethnic extremism is becoming a critical challenge of the reform that is the result of the federal system

Between 2017 and 2019, there was a high aggravation of Ethnic based clashes between regional states and a spillover effect in thousands displaced and forced from their homeland.

In particular, along the border, there was racial violence in Somalia and Oromia. Ethiopian Tigrayans were driven out of Amhara and other regions, while Amharas were driven out of Oromia and Benishangul. Approximately 970,000 people were displaced by violent clashes between the Oromo and Gedeo ethnic groups in the western Guji and Gedeo zones of adjacent Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (Dr. Yonas, 2019:13). Moreover, On January 2019, at least 2.33 million but closer to 3 million people had been internally displaced (Ibid). Thus, ethnic federalism was one of the country's significant challenges after the rapprochement, which hampered the sociological aspects of the people.

Weak Sub-regional Institutions

Countries in the Horn region have been engaged in formal regional integration activities since they established IGAD and revitalized it in 1986. The organization needed to be revitalized for IGAD to respond to new regional issues such as inter- and intra-state conflicts and solve economic challenges and poverty through close economic integration and collaboration (IGAD, 1996b). Regionalism is a multi-dimensional process beyond the economic aspect and encompasses cultural, social and political. Hence the achievement of any integration project is determined by the integration of social, economic and political elements (Mwendwa, 2014:74). Economic integration directly depends on the presence of stability and peace interstate and intrastate conflict management and resolution were added by IGAD as new priority areas for the sub-region (IGAD, 1996d). Hence, regional cooperation basically tackled regional conflicts in the sub-region (Yonas, 2012).

My key informant argued that regional institutions are vehicles to bridge the integration process because of the trance boundary nature of state cooperation and the multi-dimensional nature of the

current integration program. He furthered this when we examined the work of IGAD in regional integration; first, the conflicting interest of member states in the region and overlapping of membership makes IGAD weak in regional integration.

Despite this, there have been some achievements in the areas of peace and security, such as programs in South Sudan, Somalia, and Sudan. Likewise, an informant from the IGAD security program agreed with the above ideas; yes, the integration agenda of IGAD failed because of a lack of focus in the program. The theory that supports the above argument is institutionalism. The primary assumption is that states collectively have a right to develop and use the shared resource these processes of shared choice through which incompatible interests are reconciled in the cooperation process.

Overlapping of membership

Many IGAD nations belong to multiple regional organizations, each with its own set of goals and objectives, development levels, development trends, political structures, and philosophies. All IGAD countries, except for Somalia, are members of COMESA. However, only four—Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda—have acceded to the COMESA free trade zone (IGAD minimum integration plan, 2010). Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Djibouti are members of CEN-regional SAD's groups (the Community of Sahel-Saharan States). The Arab League includes Somalia, Djibouti, and Sudan (Abdi and Seid, 2013:19).

According to my informant, incompatibility of interest and double memberships are crucial challenges for regional cooperation and integration. This ushered to poor funding of schemes by donors. So the sub-region will future assignment tends to establish a solid regional block. Similarly, another informant strongly supported the above view double standard of States in diverse sub-regional groups makes it harder for those states to pool their resources and establish suitable institutions.

Member states political will

The Head of the state is the leading actor in the integration process, which is manifested by states' political commitment. The execution of summit meetings highly needs political will (Thobejane, 2017:10). According to Asante (1997) cited at Tesfaye, 2002:81). "If a government is unwilling or unable to play an active, positive role, then the government itself can be considered a barrier to development--regional cooperation and integration where the most crucial factor is strong and sustainable political commitment to keep to the agreed regional agenda."

Lack of trust is a feature of the regional long past bad relation; for instance, the road between Ethiopia and Somalia, Djibouti or elsewhere countries was conducted through the bilateral agreement between the two states. This indicates that if countries are committed, they will move forward in the cooperation process. Thus implementation of bilateral treaties needs bilateral will and consent.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded the renewed diplomacy between Ethiopia and Eritrea in the multilateral framework of the regional integration program in the HoA. It should be apparent that the purpose of this research is to determine the nature and breadth of the current political reconciliation between the two; and how the issue might influence regional cooperation plans in countries of the region. The study assumes that the re-established bilateral relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea will be significant and plays a pivotal role in regional integration attempt in the HoA.

Therefore, this study views the existing opportunities to transform the rapprochement towards regional integration as on the rise and seems for further regional integration in different forms; improve the peace and stability of the region, create alternative Port, Infrastructure development, creates alternative ports and enhance Energy-Led Cooperation. On the other hand, the rapprochement is not free from challenges political instability, ethnic tension, weak institution, overlapping of membership, political will, and lack of harmonization of policy are the fundamental problem of the regionalism agenda of the region.

Finally, based on the empirical discussions, the study concludes that internal political reform was crucial. Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement positively impacts the HoA's regional integration plans as a crucial foundation upon which regional integration might be constructed. t. Realizing the ethnic tension, social, cultural and religious sensitivities affairs integration could bring political stability and economic prosperity to the region.

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