

Exploring Prospective Members of Horn of African Integration and Importance of Natural Resources

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Abstract

Africa has a great history of countless tribulations for Pan-Africanism, continental, and regional integration. Yet, its path toward consolidating unity and progress is replete with foundational obstacles. Horn of African region is not any different from the greater Africa, it has its efforts to establish a well-integrated region, but as elsewhere, faced constant challenges, this article attempts to contribute to the ongoing debates on the viability of the proposed HOA regional integration. Moreover, this paper will critically analyze the main challenges towards the attainment of well-functioning regional blocks to redress the failures usually encountered in the process of integration, and present as well the available options and ways forward. However, for the well conduction of the study, a qualitative, and in-depth review on the existing literature will be relayed on. The study will further elaborate the possible methods, procedures and recommendation to overcome constraints and challenges encountered in the processes of integration.

Keywords

Regional Integration, IGAD, Horn of Africa, Coalition, Somaliland and Somalia

1. Introduction

Integration is a process on which two or more than two nation-states agree to co-operate and work closely together to achieve certain ends. The term integration has been used to describe a process as well as an end state of the process (Heinonen, 2006). For Etzioni, integration is the terminal condition, and not the process of getting there (Haas, 2020). Haas considers integration as a process for the creation of political communities, defined in institutional and behavioral

terms, a states also described persistently by others.

Both earlier and current scholars emphasized the procedural nature of the integration. Integration thus seems to be a process on which states engage themselves in cooperation with other nation-states, to be closer together than earlier. European Economic Community stated on the preamble of the treaty of Rome to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe (Graziatti, 1957). Hence, the dimension of getting closer is not limited to political or economic, it further can be, social, environmental, security, energy, and etc.

Regional integration is a multidimensional process which may take the form of coordination, cooperation, convergence and deep integration initiatives and whose scope extends not only to economic and trade issues but to political, social, cultural and environmental ones as well (CEPAL, 2024). Regional integration concerns on how national-states come to share part or all of their decisional authority with an emerging international institutions (Haas, 1970).

2. Importance of Regional Integration for Africa

Regional integration today holds a notable attraction allover the globe (Haas, 2020). The Post-independence era led the African countries to adopt the idea of regional integration, the importance of regional integration as accelerating and consolidating economic and social developments has long been acknowledged by decision makers (Tanyanyiwa & Hakuna, 2014). Regional integration is important to overcome the divisions which impede the flow of goods, services, people, capital and ideas, these divisions are constraints to the economic growth of developing nations-states (World Bank, 2022). Today's globalized and multi-polar world dominated by a trading blocks of Europe, North-America, China and South-east Asia has put Africa in a risky position of being marginalized, and thus presented Africa's regional integration an imperative (Tanyanyiwa & Hakuna, 2014).

Throughout the last half a century, newly independent African states entered into a number of regional agreements. According to Alemayehu, there is no African state which is not part of at least one regional association (Geda & Ke-bret, 2007). African Economic Community was founded through Abuja Treaty in 1991 (African Union, 2024), article 6 of the agreement encouraged the gradual foundation of continental economic communities, through cumulative phases, starting with regional free-trade areas, and custom unions, to further establish continental custom union, continental common market, continental economic and monetary union (Mangeni et al., 2014).

In correspondence to Abuja Treaty, African Union have recognized Eight regional economic communities, to be specific, Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD),

Southern African Development Community (SADC). These RECs are very crucial for the AU's work and closely serve as its building blocks (African Union, 2023).

3. Horn of African Region

Much ink has been split over to define counters which make up the Horn of African Region, According to Hassan, B. A., Glover, E. K., Luukkanen, O., Kanninen, M, Horn of Africa consists of eight countris, namely Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda (Hassan, Glover, Luukkanen, Kanninen, & Jammadass, 2019), but for Mengisteab and Bereketeab, Greater Horn of Africa Region comprises of eleven countries—Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda (Mengisteab & Bereketeab, 2012). Moreover, for some other initiatives, Horn of Africa is considered comprising of seven countries, which are; Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan (Horn of Africa Initiative, 2024). However, for the discussions of this paper Horn of African Region comprises of five states—Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia—and unrecognized *de facto* state of Somaliland (See Figure 1), it is because that the recent efforts of initiating and re-engineering new forms of regional coalition and more promising double tripartite initiations were under-construction by these countries; Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somali leaders met several times to discuss on what seemed new regional coalition, on contrast leaders of Djibouti, Kenya and *de facto* state of Somaliland met on their sides on what seemed forming counter-tripartite coalition, although their meetings were bilateral and not trilateral.



Figure 1. Horn of africa region. Source: ISIR Think Tank (2022).

4. Actual Organizations/Coalitions in Horn of Africa

Countries in the horn of Africa are part of variety of regional institutions, in-

cluding; East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Beginning with EAC, it composes of seven countries, out of the five countries the study focused only Kenya is part of this organization. Furthermore, COMESA is largest regional community in the continent which encompasses of 19 countries, including all the five countries of Horn of Africa, but not the *de-facto* state of Somaliland. Moreover, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development IGAD encompasses of eight countries—Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda—but this study is Omitted only to five countries of Horn of Africa, it is because of two causes. Firstly, the study focuses on Horn of Africa. Secondly, countries in the Horn of Africa were in contest competition for the last few years to form new regional collations, although none of their efforts were successful to produce new regional coalition.

Furthermore, Horn of African Countries are part of Indian Ocean Rim Initiative (See **Figure 2**), the third largest ocean, half of the world's container ships, one third of the world's bulk cargo and two thirds of the world's oil shipments are transported through this ocean ([Indian Ocean Rim Association, 2023](#)), it consists of 23 state members, including only Somalia and Kenya from Horn of Africa. Moreover, although the number of regional organizations which the countries of Horn of Africa are part of, yet they are eager to form new regional collations and allies, this is due to two main reason;



Figure 2. Indian ocean rim. Source: [Institute for Security Studies \(2021\)](#).

Firstly, regional organization didn't introduce the intended objectives. Although one of the prime goals for a regional organization is to bring regional cohesion in the longer run, yet these organizations are short-term goals oriented, for Aman ([Aman, 2020](#)), short term outcomes have been the prime consideration for IGAD without view to enhancing longer-term political integration, conflict prevention or regional stabilization, it is pointed by him that IGAD has not

achieved viable integration due to multiple complications including lack of clear orientation. According to Yitay, and Thobejane (Yitay & Thobejane, 2018) causes for failure of IGAD's integration process includes; lack of financial institutions, dependency on donor funds, weak transport infrastructure, and strict regulations against movement of people. Consequently, due to dual membership Horn of African countries fall in dilemma of choosing between IGAD and EAC, or between IGAD and ECAWAS, priorities of these organizations oftenly collide.

Secondly, due to intense economic competition between member of states, many times regional organizations serve as a means of economic superiority for a dominant member. Byier is on the view that Ethiopia's active engagement in the Horn integration is due to economic nationalism aimed at displacing Kenya as the strongest regional economy (Vanheukelom, Byiers, & Woolfrey, 2016).

5. Prospected Organizations/Coalitions in Horn of African Region

Ethiopia under President Abiy Ahmed have initiated a reconciliation with a long hostile country of Eritrea (*due to this reconciliation he won the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize*), and formed a tripartite coalition, consisting of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. According to the Eritrean State media, the tripartite agreement was targeted to enhance, the economic, social, political, cultural and security corporation between the parties (Getachew, 2022). However, Ethiopia's forgiveness and efforts to form new alliances is not for free, According to the ambassador of China to Ethiopia (Yifan, 2022);

“Ethiopia is enhancing its strategic tie-in with China, in a bid to build itself into the East Africa gateway for One Belt One Road”

China's One Belt One Road initiative consists of Silk Road Economic Belt, and a Maritime Silk Road (See **Figure 3**), the initiative connects 3 different continents, including Africa Asia and Europe (ZiroMwatela & Zhao, 2016), Djibouty and Kenya are planned to be the gateways to Africa, Ethiopia being the immediate neighbor of Djibouti, and having the potential of railroad connecting the two is planning to be the second in line gateway for 6 landlocked countries in east, central and west Africa, which are: South-Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso (See **Figure 4: prospected countries on which Ethiopia can be a gateway for**). Although, there are no built land Silk Road infrastructures, yet with the appropriate strategies and operable alliances Ethiopia can influence China's Silk Road Belt.

Anyhow, the tripartite agreement didn't result any effective working organization and its impact has decreased due to prolonged internal conflict of Ethiopia-Tigray and due to deselection of Mr. Farmaajo, the ex-president of Somalia. It is because leaders have chosen to construct their cooperation through personal channels, and avoided institutionalizing it (Aljazeera, 2022). Anyhow, the movement to keep the links and keep forwarding together is being kept, the newly



Figure 3. 21 Silk Road. Source: ZiroMwatela & Zhao (2016).



Figure 4. Prospected countries on which Ethiopia can be a gateway for.

elected president of Somalia, Hassan Sh. Mahmoud have paid a visit to Eritrea and signed a bilateral agreement to enhance the defense, security, diplomatic and political cooperation (Maruf, 2022).

In contrast to Ethiopia's coalition, alliance building and nominating itself as the most suitable strategic gateway to Central and west Africa, Kenya is key entry point and main gateway to west Africa and further to South and North America due to Natural Equatorial Bridge—a *traditional natural trade route between East and West Africa* (See Figure 5). China have signed a memorandum of understanding with African Union (AU) in January 2015 to connect all African countries with high speed rails, ports and roads. Equatorial Bridge was good starting point for connecting Africa (ZiroMwatela & Zhao, 2016), this route begins from Kenya, South Sudan, Central African Republic, and Cameroon.

In response to the tripartite agreement and alliance between Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea, Kenya have tried to deter by forming another tripartite alliance in the region, comprising of Djibouti and Semi-autonomous region of Somaliland,



Figure 5. Natural equatorial bridge. Source: ZiroMwatela & Zhao (2016).

it further granted political recognition to Somaliland by formally promoting its liaison office in Nairobi to a full consulate, and also to open a Kenyan consulate in Hargeisa (Ivudria, 2022). Although their alliance and cooperation were visible in verity of occasion, yet there were no official tripartite agreement between the two sovereign countries (*Djibouty, and Kenya*), and Somaliland, only there were bilateral agreements between Somaliland and Kenya to exchange offices and initiatediplomatic links (Opali, 2022), and further between Kenya and Djibouti to enhance their trade and bilateral ties (African Union, 2023).

However, these two regional tripartite corporations comes aimed a long history of distrust and unresolved boundary disputes. In illustration, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, and Djibouti and Eritrea have all border disputes (Demissie, 2022). According to Demissie, only if the tripartite regional bloc complement IGAD's mandate by avoiding overlapping mandates then it could strength the existing regional organization of IGAD, and be response to IGAD's failure to perform as an effective and regional bloc.

6. Importance of Natural Resources

Natural resources and resources at large play an important role in the growth of a country's economy, and urges its need of beyond border markets. Yet, resource rich counters are not drivers for regional integration (Carrère, Gourdon, & Olarreaga, 2012), It's due to the consideration that demand for commodities comes from the global market but not the regional markets (Isik, 2016), this concern necessitated for richer counters in the developing world not to be drivers for regional integration.

In the case of Africa, different scenario exist, natural deposits will always move beyond the borders of an individual country, and trans-border transportation infrastructures will be needed. Global experience shows that the development of such trans-border transportation infrastructures requires strong cooperation and coordination among all countries involved. In addition to that a legal and regulatory institutions to facilitate the shared use of these infrastructures is vital

(Isik, 2016).

African Union 2063 agenda campaigns for united Africa with highly integrated infrastructure that crisscrosses the entire continent and to found well connected continent which manages its resources through peaceful means (Nega, Ageba, & Seid, 2021). Thus its essential to found institutions whether regional or continental to smoothly integrate the infrastructures for more connected states and regions.

The mutual connection among the states in the Horn of Africa relates its geographical constitution, a number of states including some newly born land-locked countries are greatly intensifying their cross-border cooperation to ensure their access to energy, including water and energy (Byiers & Desmidt, 2016). Thus, in Horn of Africa, shortage in resources leads the countries to seek trans-border markets to access resources, and since none of the countries in the horn of Africa is self-sufficient in terms of resource its important to found institutions to guide trans-border interactions and as well provide needed infrastructures.

7. Conclusion

Integration is a process on which states engage themselves in cooperation with other nation-states, to be closer together than earlier. The Post-independence era led the African countries to adopt the idea of regional integration to accelerate and consolidate economic and social development, regional integration is important to overcome the divisions which impede the flow of goods, services, people, capital and ideas, these divisions are constraints to the economic growth of developing nations-states. Much ink has been split over to define counters which make up the Horn of African Region, yet for the discussions of this paper Horn of African Region comprised of five states—Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia—and unrecognized *de facto* state of Somaliland, it is because that the recent efforts of initiating and re-engineering new forms of regional coalition and more promising double tripartite initiations were under-construction by these countries. The reasons behind the formation of two tripartite blocks in the Horn of Africa are due to two causes, which are: Firstly, regional organization didn't introduce the intended objectives. Secondly, due to intense economic competition between member of states, many times regional organizations serve as a means of economic superiority for a dominant member. However, natural resources are vital elements that necessitate the trans-border interaction which promotes the need to establish regional blocks whether limited to three members or more than three states.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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