



The Role of Regional Powers in the Field of Peace and Security: The Case of Ethiopia

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- 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. This paper argues otherwise. Ethiopia, despite its constraints in terms of economic capacity and lack of internal political consensus, has emerged as a regional power capable of projecting its power beyond its borders.
- 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.
- 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.

Abstract

Ethiopia is increasingly described as a regional power in the Horn of Africa, in consideration of its military and diplomatic power and demographic size. Ethiopia's increasing engagement in regional peace and security issues further indicates that it has the will to lead and influence the region. However, its aspirations are neither explicitly acknowledged by the government, nor defined in its official foreign policy document. Ethiopia's position and status in the region are constrained by historical factors, the vulnerability of

neighbouring states, and Ethiopia's weak economic capacity. Yet, Ethiopia maintains a central position in the region and plays an important role in regional peace and security issues, serving for instance as a bulwark against Islamist extremist groups in the region—as a mediator and as a peacekeeper. Ethiopia has also managed to drive regional agendas through the existing regional and continental organizations, namely the Intergovernmental Authority of Development and the African Union.

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Abbreviations

AU	African Union
AUHIP	AU High-Level Implementation Panel
ADB	African Development Bank
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
CEWS	Continental Early Warning System
DOP	Declarations of Principles
DfID	Department for International Development
EEBC	Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defence Force
EPPF	Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
HDI	Human Development Index
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICC	International Criminal Court
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NDA	National Democratic Alliance

NIF	National Islamic Front
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization
PSC	Peace Security Council
SNM	Somali National Movement
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
SEPPDM	South Ethiopian Peoples’ Democratic Movement
SPLA	Sudan People’s Liberation Army
TPLF	Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UDJ	Unity for Democracy and Justice Party
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

The Horn of Africa is the most militarized and conflict-ridden region on the African continent. For many decades, armed conflicts have raged within states, between states, and among proxies—whether at the centres or the peripheries of the region. Among these conflicts are a failed state in Somalia, the continued stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the unresolved border conflict between Djibouti and Eritrea, persistent tension between Sudan and South Sudan and within South Sudan. Many armed groups—from Sudan’s Darfur region to Somalia’s vast ungoverned areas—also violently oppose the region’s governments.

Regional powers are generally assumed to contribute to stability and peace within their geographically defined spheres of influence. Ethiopia arguably lacks the economic capacity to be “fully” labelled as a regional power, such as Nigeria. Nonetheless, Ethiopia has been increasingly exerting influence in the field of peace and security in the Horn of Africa, using its incontestably prominent military and diplomatic powers. Currently, Ethiopia has a strong military presence inside Somalia fighting against Islamist extremist groups. Ethiopian troops are also deployed as peacekeepers in Darfur, Sudan, and in Abyei—a contested border area between Sudan and South Sudan. Apart from its military engagements, Ethiopia has been actively involved in the mediation process to defuse and resolve tensions between Sudan and South Sudan and within South Sudan, which indicates its growing importance in the region’s security affairs. Ethiopia has also been instrumental in containing Eritrea, which is widely perceived as a regional spoiler.

Given the dynamics of the changing circumstances in the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia’s enhanced role, the question of whether Ethiopia is a regional power is a valid and timely question. The subsequent sections of this study attempt to answer this question, by analysing Ethiopia’s potential status as a regional power and its implications for regional peace and stability. In the first section, definitions and indicators used to distinguish potential regional powers are discussed. The second section examines Ethiopia’s position in the region—more specifically, the basis of its hard and soft power. Moreover, in this section, Ethiopia’s interests, aspirations, and actions are closely examined. Ethiopia’s role in the field of peace and security in the Horn of Africa are dealt with in the third section. Finally, the conclusion summarizes and reflects the study’s main findings.

The principal sources of data used in this study are official documents and academic literature. In order to strengthen aspects of the data provided by these writings, the author interviewed experts on the Horn of Africa, policy analysts from research centres, academicians from universities, as well as top- and middle-level officials from the Ethiopian government, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the African Union (AU). The author also conducted field research in Khartoum, Sudan, and in Nairobi, Kenya.

2. The Definition of a Regional Power

A regional power is defined as a “state that is powerful (with regard to its material

resources or capabilities) in a certain regional geographic setting and which tries to exercise leadership in this regional setting” (Nolte 2010: 884). Material resources often refer to preponderance in military and economic capabilities, and in demographic size. Military power is central to the identification of a state as a regional power. The possession of sufficient military assets—including a large number of military personnel, consistently high military expenditure, wide experience in warfare and a sufficient domestic capacity to produce conventional weapons—are all important determinants of a state’s military capabilities (Lemke 2008, Vayrynen 1979).

Displaying economic strength—reflected in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP), purchasing power, technology, and industrial infrastructure—is also important for a state to be classified as a regional power (Prys 2010, Vayrynen 1979). States possessing both military and economic capabilities can effectively exercise control and influence regional security matters. However, states with military preponderance alone may “create a temporary zone of influence and control” (Vayrynen 1979: 350). Combining a state’s military and economic power with demographic size and diplomatic effectiveness further strengthens a candidate’s regional supremacy (Lyob 1993: 264).

States assuming a regional power position have the will or the pretension to take on a leading position, exert influence, and play a stabilizing role in regional security matters by engaging in peacekeeping and peacemaking activities. Such states also influence regional security issues using existing regional

governance structures (ibid., Flandes 2007). Some degree of internal political stability, however, is needed to exercise regional leadership.

To be distinguished as a regional power, recognition or acceptance of the potential candidate’s power and position by other states in the region is an important criterion. However, the rise and leadership of regional powers is often resented by other regional states. Triepel argues that “regional powers often face suspicion and, at times, hostility, and verbal resistance” (quoted in Prys 2010: 14). Such reactions may be due to fear, vulnerability, jealousy, disagreements, or historical factors. Hence, acceptance by secondary powers is expected to be based on a cost-benefit analysis; it is “founded much more upon utility or necessity, but above all, upon the realization of its own weakness” (ibid.). Recognition by extra regional actors and, especially, by global powers also matters for regional power projection.

Generally, a preponderance of material capabilities, a claim for leadership, and recognition are important criteria for a state’s classification as a regional power. From this perspective, relative rather than absolute preponderance in terms of material resources is important, as there are “big differences between the material capabilities of regional powers across the globe, and, second, as it is this relative preponderance over neighbouring states that matters in regional relations” (Prys 2010: 7). While states can be regional powers within their geographical proximity, their power could be less visible or insignificant at the global level (Wight 1978).

3. Is Ethiopia a Regional Power?

Geographically, the Horn of Africa is located in the north-eastern part of the continent. It 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. Thus, it qualifies as a region (Berouk 2011).

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 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: 4). Consequently, scholars are divided as to whether or not Ethiopia can be qualified as a regional power.

3.1. Constraints

3.1.1. Internal Economic Challenges

Ethiopia is a very poor country with very a low per capital income—even by the Horn of Africa standards. Although all of the states in the Horn of Africa rank at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI), Ethiopia's record is among the lowest in the region. In the 2012 HDI index, Ethiopia ranks 173 out of 187 states, while Sudan ranks 171, Djibouti 164, and Kenya 145 (UNDP 2013). Moreover, 39 per cent of Ethiopia's population lives in poverty. The unemployment rate in Ethiopia is estimated to be 17.5 per cent (Central

Intelligence Agency 2012). Ethiopians are migrating in large numbers to other African states, and especially to the Middle East, looking for economic opportunities. A high inflation rate and soaring food prices are also challenges the country faces.

Recovering from decades of intra- and inter-state conflicts, with an economy largely dependent on primary commodities, is a daunting task. Agriculture accounts for 42 per cent of Ethiopia's GDP and employs 80 per cent of its labour force; but agricultural productivity in Ethiopia is very low (African Development Bank 2011). Yet, over the last ten years, Ethiopia has registered staggering economic growth; and the economy is expanding rapidly. It is among the fastest-growing, non-oil economies in Africa, with a double-digit annual growth rate averaging 10.6 per cent since 2004—well above the Sub-Saharan Africa average (Geiger and Goh 2012). Comparatively, the real GDP growth rate in Kenya in 2012 was estimated to be 4.6 per cent (World Bank 2012). Ethiopia's GDP purchasing power parity has also increased from approximately 40.76 billion US dollars in 2004, to 118.2 billion US dollars in 2013 (Central Intelligence Agency 2013). The impressive Ethiopian growth rate has been attributed to massive public investment in infrastructure, commercialization of agriculture, and the increase in non-traditional exports. Ethiopia has also managed to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) from the world's emerging economies, such as China.

3.1.2. Internal Political Challenges

The ruling party in Ethiopia—the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)—currently faces security challenges

from a number of armed insurgent groups: the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and the Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front (EPPF). The ONLF and the OLF are ethnic-based armed groups fighting for the liberation of the Somali-inhabited area—with support and representation from the Ogadeni clan—and for an independent Oromo state respectively. Both groups have been launching low-level attacks. The only incident that caught the international community's attention was the ONLF attack on a Chinese oil exploration camp in the Somali region of Ethiopia in April 2007, killing civilians as well as Chinese oil exploration workers. In response, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) undertook a successful, but allegedly disproportionate counter-insurgency campaign (Lyons 2009, Cliffe et al. 2009).

The fighting capacity of the ONLF and the OLF has declined over the years, and they are divided among many factions. Their local support has also been shrinking over time because people in their areas of operation are exhausted from conflict (Interview with a Lecturer at AAU 2012). Nonetheless, their mere presence increases Ethiopia's vulnerability to external threats and foreign interventions. Dehez argues that, "exploiting local conflicts to counterbalance the power of neighboring countries has been a common practice in the Horn of Africa for decades" (2008). Apparently, the ONLF and the OLF are armed, trained, and financially supported by Eritrea. The EPPF was established and is still based in Eritrea with the overt objective of toppling the current government in Ethiopia.

Apart from armed insurgent groups, the lack of political consensus among different political forces is evident in Ethiopia. The EPRDF, which is a coalition of four political parties,¹ has governed Ethiopia for over two decades. The ruling party is primarily criticized for failing to have nurtured a genuine, inclusive, and functioning democratic political system. In fact, some positive developments have been observed since the EPRDF took power, including the adoption of a constitution comprising democratic and human rights principles, and the conduct of relatively free and fair elections in 2005. However, in the aftermath of the violently contested election in 2005, the ruling party narrowed the political space by enacting a series of laws, including: the CSO law, terrorism law, press law, and the electoral codes of conduct. Journalists, opposition party members, and supporters were jailed and forced into exile (Smith 2007). The 2010 election was less competitive and the ruling party won 99.6 per cent of the parliamentary seats.

For the last six or seven years, the ruling party has attempted to legitimize its hold on power through the promotion of economic development, and by showcasing Ethiopia's economic growth. Tesfaye Habisso argues that the political system in Ethiopia can be "equated with the mere imposition of hard power and authoritarian rule on the society with the sinister aim of perpetuating one-party rule under the guise of implementing

¹ The EPRDF is a coalition of four ethnic-based political parties, namely the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and the South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM).

socioeconomic and political policies and programs in order to achieve fast and accelerated economic development and to extricate the poor masses from the scourges of poverty and deprivation in a short period of time” (quoted in Desta 2011). The ruling party, therefore, has no intention of opening up the political space. This is quite evident when one looks at the EPRDF’s track record; none of the attempts to negotiate with the main armed insurgent groups and the opposition have materialized. On the contrary, groups opposed to the government—including the ONLF, the OLF, and Ginbot 7²—are labelled as terrorist groups under the anti-terrorism law enacted by the Ethiopian parliament on 19 June 2011 (Tekle 2011).

In the words of Mr Sebhat Nega, a former secretary general of the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and mentor to Meles Zenawi, “the armed insurgent groups believe that the current political system and regime are the worst and, therefore, they are not ready to compromise. Rather, they wish to achieve their objective through force, hence, they lost their political legitimacy and their cause is no longer appealing to the people” (Interview 2012). Regarding the weaknesses of opposition political parties in Ethiopia, Mr Nega attributes the problem to their lack of experience in party organization. In his view, organizing political parties is a fairly new development

in Ethiopia, and even the ruling party is a “work in progress”. He further notes that the opposition in Ethiopia lacks [a] coherent policy to solve inherent political problems, hence, lacks legitimacy (Interview 2012). However, Dr Negaso Gidada—the former president of Ethiopia and chairman of the opposition party, the Unity for Democracy and Justice Party (UDJ)—said that the opposition has no political space to develop, recruit new members, raise funds, and exert influence (Interview 2011). Other observers blame the political culture of Ethiopia, which encourages a zero-sum game. All of these factors contribute to the lack of political accommodation and political consensus on major internal, as well as foreign policy issues.

There have been calls for reform and reconciliation after the death of Meles Zenawi, the chief architect and policy originator of the EPRDF. Some see the coming of a new leadership to power as a window of opportunity to reform the system (Interview with ICG Horn of Africa political analyst 2012). The new leadership, however, appears to be more than determined to continue with the policies initiated by Meles Zenawi. In an interview with a member of the central committee of the TPLF, it was revealed that the ruling party would not wish to negotiate with opposition parties such as Ginbot 7, which according to him wishes to impose chauvinistic, narrow and repressive forms of administration (Interview 2012). Nor does the West, the champion of democratic principles and values, seem willing to push the Ethiopian government for more reforms. The ICG’s Horn of Africa political analyst argues that the West, especially the US, is comfortable with the status quo (Interview 2012). The fear of the unknown is holding the West

² Ginbot 7 is an opposition political party. Its founder, Dr Berhanu Nega, was a member of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) party, which was the main contender during the 2005 election in Ethiopia. Ginbot 7 was designated as a terrorist group by the Ethiopian government and is banned from participating officially in Ethiopia’s political process; it is based in the US.

back, because change could bring more uncertainties—as in the case of Libya.

Clearly, the presence of more than 80 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia has made the process of state building challenging. The ruling party tried to address the problem by introducing ethnic federalism and establishing ethnic-based regional administrations. The implementation of the federal system is obviously tainted with problems (Markakis 2011, Aalen 2002). The 2005 election was a clear manifestation that there are still sharp divisions on major political issues and political solutions. The lines of thinking in Ethiopia are divided between those forces who wish to focus on elements symbolizing a multi-ethnic Ethiopian nation, and those who wish to decentralize state power from the centre to ethnic-based regional administrations. Hence, identifying ways of redefining Ethiopia and creating an all-inclusive political system requires a political consensus through continuous and open dialogue. Although the democratization process in Ethiopia cannot be expected to be faultless, it can indeed be improved if there is political will. Impressive economic development gains have to be sustained by genuine reforms in the political system towards more democratization and good governance, because transparency, accountability, and rule of law are important elements in attracting FDI and in fairly distributing the fruits of development. The failure to establish a political system accommodating divergent interests could foment further insurgencies threatening Ethiopia's security, by increasing its vulnerability to external intervention and thereby becoming a challenge to its regional power projection.

3.1.3. Regional Constraints

The nature of conflicts in the Horn of Africa is often presented as a challenge for potential candidates to assume a regional leadership position. Conflicts in the region are often interlinked and thereby create security interdependence. In such a complex system, even smaller states attempt to challenge the regional power by creating alliances and counter-alliances or supporting proxies (Dehez 2008: 10). The resistance of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) and later Al-Shabab in Somalia, as well as Eritrea's invasion of Ethiopia and its continuing proxy war, show that smaller and weaker states and non-state actors—separately or jointly—try to counterbalance Ethiopia's power in the region. In the words of Sally Healy, Eritrea in particular "has found it hard to accept the reality of its weak international standing vis-à-vis Ethiopia" (2008: 14).

Ethiopia is also perceived as a »Christian« state despite having a large Muslim community, which makes it somewhat difficult for it to be accepted as a regional power by Muslim-dominated neighbouring states, such as Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia. Ethiopia's power and position are also constrained by extra-regional actors, such as Egypt, which has always followed an adversarial policy towards Ethiopia—the source of the Blue Nile and one of the main tributaries of the river Nile. Egypt's policy emanates from the belief that Egypt's monopoly over the Nile can only be maintained if Ethiopia is unstable and weak, thus it seeks to undermine Ethiopia's emergence as a regional power.

3.2. Opportunities

3.2.1. Military and Demographic Preponderance

Ethiopia has one of the largest and best-equipped militaries in Africa and in the Horn of Africa. The personnel strength of the Ethiopian military is estimated to be 138,000 (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2012). Irrespective of change of governments and ideologies, Ethiopia has always “set a high premium on its military institutions. The military has demanded a significant share of the state’s meagre resources” (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2003: 34). Currently, the share of Ethiopia’s defence budget stands at two per cent, but it has shown significant increase, especially in times of crisis. In 1990, the defence budget was 205 million US dollars, and 719 million US dollars in 1999, which was during the Ethio-Eritrean war. After the war, the budget share declined to 339 million US dollars in 2004. However, the defence budget increased again in 2011 and 2012 (Haile 2012; Adejumobi and Binega 2006). The budget increase shows that the Ethiopian government focuses on a sustained military build-up to respond to potential and real national security threats.

The Ethiopian military is equipped with tanks, armoured vehicles, combat aircraft, and helicopters—primarily imported from Russia, China, and Ukraine. In addition, the Ethiopian defence industry manufactures light weapons, heavy mortar, and artillery (Griffard and Troxell 2009, Weldemariam 2009). The Ethiopian military is battle-hardened due to Ethiopia’s long history of military tradition and conflicts, and the country’s large population gives its military a further advantage over the neighbouring

states. Ethiopia is the second most populous state in Africa, comprising one-third of the population in the Horn of Africa; the population is estimated to be over 91 million, which is more than twice the population of Sudan and Kenya (World Bank 2012).

Over the past two decades, Ethiopia has mobilized its military against two neighbouring states in response to national security threats: Somalia and Eritrea. In the case of Somalia, the intervention in 2006 was meant to deter Islamist groups from taking power and to support Somalia’s internationally recognized but fragile Transitional Federal Government (TFG). In the case of Eritrea, it was more defensive posturing in order to repel Eritrea’s aggression. During the war with Eritrea, Ethiopia mobilized over 350,000 troops. Ethiopia’s military victory in both cases proved that its military power is unmatched in the region.

3.2.2. Relative Political Stability

Over the past two decades, Ethiopia has emerged as a stable state in the Horn of Africa—despite the presence of armed insurgent groups, a poor human rights record, and a slow democratization process. According to Magnus Taylor, “in the last 20 years, Ethiopia developed from a warring state unable to feed itself, to a stabilizing influence within a turbulent neighbourhood” (2012: 2). State institutions—including the military, the police, and the civil service—are relatively strong and functioning at all levels of the government.

The EPRDF, the ruling party that came to power in 1991, has managed to dominate and maintain territorial and social control.

The EPRDF tightly governs Ethiopia using state resources—including all available intelligence and military resources. Some of the major businesses in transportation, communication, and construction are run by companies linked to the ruling party. The EPRDF further expanded its influence into the villages, through government bureaucracy and party organization tactics. Party structures are primarily used to deepen the ruling party's control over the regional administrations. All nine of the regional states are either controlled by the constituent parts of the EPRDF coalition or by affiliated political parties. The military officer corps is clearly dominated by former veteran fighters of the TPLF, ensuring loyalty to the ruling party. The EPRDF further commands the loyalty of the security services and the Federal Police (Lyons 2011).

The government has also been able to enforce territorial control, despite the existence of armed insurgent groups challenging the state's monopoly on violence. The opposition political parties and insurgent groups are not currently in a position to challenge the ruling party's power. Immediate threats posed by these groups have been skilfully thwarted. External threats posed against the government and the state from Somalia and Eritrea have been neutralized.

According to a senior EPRDF official, the ruling party aspires to stay in power for at least the next 50 years (Interview 2011). Although the death of Meles Zenawi—the architect of the current political system—may certainly lead to some political uncertainty³, the TPLF⁴ is still firmly in

³ See Rene Lefort 2014. Ethiopia a Leadership in Disarray. Ethiopian Review.com.

⁴ The TPLF is the dominant party within the four-party coalition of the EPRDF.

control of major portions of the economy and the security sector, ensuring the EPRDF's hold on power (Handino et al. 2012). The absence of a grave civil war over the past two decades has indeed given Ethiopia the opportunity to revamp its economy and project its power in the region. Nonetheless, like any other authoritarian system, the political future of Ethiopia is uncertain and unpredictable.

3.2.3. Leadership Claim

Unlike its neighbours in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is a very old state. It is a legendary state with a long tradition of independent statehood and statecraft. In fact, Ethiopia has never been colonized, except for five years of Italian occupation. Hence, it was active in the delimitation of its own borders and its successive and remodelled state institutions were and are still relatively strong (Mohammed 2007). Dehez argues that "Ethiopia has been a rather strong, independent, even imperial power well into the twentieth century", but during the Cold War Ethiopia seemingly "lost its historical exceptionalism" as it experienced civil wars, coups, and regional conflicts. Ethiopia has been trying to reassert its position and status in the region ever since (2008: 5).

An official from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, stressed that Ethiopia does not aspire to lead the region (Interview 2012). According to him, Ethiopia's foreign policy primarily bases itself on internal challenges and focuses on building internal capacities to reduce external vulnerabilities. Indeed, the Ethiopian Foreign Policy and National Security and Strategy document states that the greatest challenges to Ethiopia's survival

are poverty and internal political instability (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2002). According to the document:

...to bring about development and realize it in the framework of globalization, we need extensive market opportunities, investment and technical support. For some time yet, we will also need grants and loans to finance our development endeavours. We also require considerable technical and financial support to build and strengthen institutions of democratic governance, so crucial for the growth of democracy. Our foreign policy goal will be exactly this. Our diplomacy should be, in the main, that of economic diplomacy. (Ibid.)

Economic development and democracy are thus seen as the only solutions to restore Ethiopia's image, pride, and prestige. The foreign policy of the pre-1991 government of Ethiopia arguably "projected the pretense of having a capacity to achieve its goal anywhere" (Interview with MOFA official 2012). Such a policy is believed to have instigated suspicion and mistrust with the neighbouring states and is seen as a recipe for unnecessary regional conflict. Hence, Ethiopia's post-1991 foreign policy tends to be more defensive and lacks assertiveness—partly to rectify the previous government's so-called aggressive foreign policy. The ruling party in Ethiopia is also inspired by China, which claims that it has no aspiration to become a superpower.

In contrast to the official rhetoric, Ethiopia has been playing a greater role in the

region, both diplomatically and militarily.⁵ Cases in point include: Ethiopia's military interventions in Somalia; the deployment of its troops as UN peacekeepers in Abyei and Darfur; and Ethiopia's involvement in the mediation of the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan and within South Sudan. Diplomatically, Ethiopia has cultivated good relations with most of the neighbouring states and the international community, which gave it a leverage to influence regional agendas.⁶ The country's leadership has also shown more political will to influence regional security matters. The late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was very active and influential within the region. Alex de Waal stated that, although "all national policies of Ethiopia were framed around the conquest of poverty", the late Prime Minister Meles' political ambitions "extended way beyond poverty reduction to ensuring Ethiopia's prominence in the historically unstable Horn of Africa region" (quoted in Taylor 2012).

Ethiopia also plays a leading role within IGAD and is widely perceived to single-handedly dominate the regional organization. In fact, Ethiopia has been the chair of IGAD since 2008. Moreover, the peace and security division has always been headed by officials of Ethiopian origin—first by Daniel Yifru, then by Netsanet Asfaw, and currently by Tewolde Gebremeskel. Although IGAD's headquarters is based in Djibouti, most of its offices are located in Addis Ababa: the

⁵ Ethiopia's involvement in regional issues has especially increased following Eritrea's 1998 attack, Sudan's violation of Ethiopia's sovereignty in the mid-1990s, and terrorist attacks by Al-Ittihad in the 1990s.

⁶ Ethiopia has well-established diplomatic relations and networks as the region's oldest state and the seat of the African Union.

CEWARN office, IGAD Facilitator's Office for Somalia, the IGAD Parliamentary Union, and the Livestock Office. Ethiopia's dominance over the political arm of IGAD has given it the leverage to push its agenda(s) and influence regional security matters (Interview with Attala Hamad Bashir 2012).⁷

Ethiopia has also been very active within the AU. The country was among the first members of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) to be selected in 2003, and it served for two consecutive terms—that is, for six years. Ethiopia was chosen due to its status and position in the Horn of Africa and its role in promoting peace and security in the region, and was a dynamic and influential PSC member. Ethiopia has been influential in both PSC decision-making processes and the implementation of PSC decisions, especially on issues concerning Somalia (Interview with AU official 2012). For instance, Ethiopia was instrumental in lobbying the AU and mobilizing African states in order to deploy a peacekeeping mission in Somalia in 2007, and in the call for sanctions against Eritrea,

which was an unprecedented decision in the history of the AU. Since the end of Ethiopia's PSC membership in 2009, Ethiopia still has the leverage to influence the PSC's decisions in its capacity as the chair of IGAD. The late Prime Minister Meles was also vocal on continental matters including climate change, food security, and NEPAD. With regard to these developments, Ethiopia's desire to lead and play the role of a regional stabilizer is becoming more visible.

Medhane Tadesse rightly suggested that, "given its history and centrality in the region, characterized by uncertainty and incessant conflicts, the best way for Ethiopia is to position itself as a regional power" (2002: 166). Concerning how Ethiopia's perceived weakness or vulnerability had led to external aggression, the Ethiopian Foreign Policy and National Security and Strategy document stated that Eritrea invaded Ethiopia thinking that "it is unable to offer a united resistance and that it would break up under military pressure" (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2002). On a similar note, the UIC declared *jihad* on Ethiopia in 2006, partly with the perception that Ethiopia was irreversibly weakened by the post-2005 electoral crisis (Kidist 2011c). These realist considerations compel Ethiopia to position itself as a regional power.

⁷ Although the argument that Ethiopia dominates IGAD seems to hold, it is also blown out of proportion. This is because decisions within IGAD require the consensus of all its member states. Hence, the convergence of IGAD member states' interest also matters especially on sensitive regional issues. Ethiopia, for instance, managed to mobilize IGAD member states to support sanctions against Eritrea (for backing Islamist groups in Somalia), because Uganda has troops in Somalia fighting against Islamists who were responsible for the deadly attacks in Kampala in 2010. Kenya is entangled in a battle to contain threats of Islamist extremist groups which have their roots in Somalia. Djibouti is still embroiled in a conflict with Eritrea over their common and demarcated border. That said, Ethiopia is still powerful and has a key position within IGAD, and it has managed to lead and influence the regional organization.

3.2.4. Recognition

The issue of recognition is, by far, the most challenging to assess in the context of the Horn of Africa. None of the states in the Horn of Africa openly endorse Ethiopia as a regional power (Clapham 2007). Nonetheless, as argued in the definitions' section of this paper, such resentments or reactions are natural in the creation

and operation of a regional power. The relevant questions are: do the states in the region and other external actors recognize Ethiopia's role in the region? If yes, do they accept Ethiopia's position and role in the region due to their own weaknesses, out of necessity, or both? And, are the states in the region capable of balancing Ethiopia's influence?

Ethiopia acted in its own right as a regional bulwark against Islamist extremist groups. Ethiopia's military intervention in Somalia in 2006 to oust the UIC, and its continuing fight against Al-Shabab in Somalia demonstrate that Ethiopia takes the Islamist threat seriously. Ethiopia also serves as a regional police force, by sending peacekeeping troops to troubled states in the Horn of Africa, in Somalia, in the area between the two Sudans and to South Sudan. These measures all imply that Ethiopia has been a central and influential player in the security problems in the Horn of Africa.

Most of the regional states were not only unable to take on responsibility for peace and security endeavours; they were also not in a position to counterbalance Ethiopia's power and influence. Kenya defied its traditional »isolationist« role and launched a military incursion into Somalia in December 2011 to defeat Al-Shabab, which threatened its security by kidnapping tourists inside its territory. Kenya's military involvement in Somalia is believed to make the country an important security player in the region. Nonetheless the Kenyan forces—despite their professionalism—are less experienced and are too corrupt to replace or balance Ethiopia's role in Somalia (Interview with a Somali political analyst 2014). Moreover, Kenya has little security interaction with the other states

in the region, namely Eritrea, Djibouti, and Sudan. According to the ICG's Horn of Africa analyst, although the Ethiopian forces also incorporate corrupt army officials, Ethiopia delivers and is the most reliable partner to the West (Interview 2012). Furthermore, until it decided to join the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in November 2013, Ethiopia carried a disproportionate share of the financial and moral cost of intervening in Somalia, unlike Kenya. Although Kenya does not openly endorse Ethiopia's status as a regional power, it has been providing diplomatic and intelligence support to Ethiopia in the face of the common security threats posed by Somalia. It has officially supported Ethiopia's military interventions in Somalia and sanctions against Eritrea in this context.

Despite its potential, Sudan is not currently in a position to play a leading role in the region or to balance Ethiopia's power. It is weakened by a series of internal conflicts and its troubled relations with the region's newly independent state, South Sudan. Sudan requires time to recover from economic, military, and political crises in which it has been engulfed. In addition, Sudan lacks the vision or aspiration to lead the region, because it is more attracted to the Arab world than the Horn of Africa (Interview with a senior expert on Sudan 2012). Its policies towards the Horn of Africa were largely aimed at expanding Islam. Moreover, Sudan is still sanctioned by the US for sponsoring terrorism and terrorists (Sudan Tribune 2012). Furthermore, the president of Sudan, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, was indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2009 for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur; he lacks the international legitimacy necessary to play a leading role in the region

(Interview with EU official 2012). Regarding the issue of recognition, Sudan's acceptance of Ethiopia's involvement in Abyei indicates that there is some level of trust and acceptance of Ethiopia's central role in peace and security. President al-Bashir even declared that Sudan would not accept any forces other than Ethiopian troops to monitor peace in Abyei (ibid.).

Eritrea seeks to balance or contain Ethiopia's rise as a regional power, and had a strong ambition to lead the Horn of Africa. According to President Isaias Afewerki "he is better equipped and politically aware to play a leadership role", and "Eritrea is destined to undertake a central and focal role in the Horn of Africa" (Medhane 1999: 123). But, Eritrea is a very small and young state with a small population. Its diplomatic relations with the neighbouring states and the international community have also been problematic (Clapham 2007). The country's defeat after two years of a bloody war with Ethiopia further dashed its hope to emerge as a regional power in its own right, and exposed its inability to counter Ethiopia's power and position in the region. The fact that Eritrea failed to respond militarily to Ethiopia's recent military incursion⁸ is a vivid manifestation of its weakened position in balancing Ethiopia's power.

Regarding recognition by extraregional actors, the US is a powerful and a strategic ally of Ethiopia. The main security concern of the US in the Horn of Africa is terrorism. The US fears that Somalia could be a safe

haven for terrorist groups linked with Al-Qaeda. Ethiopia managed to counter Islamist groups from Somalia—including Al-Ittihad and the UIC—and is now combating Al-Shabab in large-scale military offensives. This has made Ethiopia a viable and a strategic ally of the US (Gibert 2006, International Crisis Group 2010). Dr Hassan Meki argued that Ethiopia managed to become powerful by cultivating the support of the US (Interview 2012). On a similar note, Ruth Lyob argued that, even during the previous administrations, "international legitimacy was an indispensable component of Ethiopia's regional supremacy" (1993: 261). Ethiopia's position and influence can indeed be maintained and enhanced by forging alliances with global superpowers. But at the same time, it should be noted that Ethiopia is often decisive, especially on matters concerning its national security.

The EU's main concerns in the Horn of Africa are piracy and terrorism, making Somalia its priority area of security engagement. Ethiopia has increasingly become a strategic partner of the EU in the attempt to stabilize Somalia and counter these threats (Interview with an EU official, 2014). That said the EU does not have a coherent and common position towards the Horn of Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular. The EU's policies and positions in the Horn of Africa are largely driven by the UK and Italy. According to Healy, the UK is grateful that "there is at least one country, Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa with functioning institutions, working intelligence and military power and also capable of playing a useful role in regional peace and security issues" (Interview 2012). In consequence, Ethiopia is one of the biggest recipients of aid from the UK. The Department for International Development (DfID) "will spend on average £331 million

⁸ In 2012, the Ethiopian forces attacked Eritrean military installations close to the Ethiopian border in retaliation for the kidnapping and killing of tourists in the Afar region of Ethiopia, which were allegedly orchestrated from Eritrea.

a year in Ethiopia until 2015” (Department for International Development 2012). And yet, in the words of a senior Horn of Africa political analyst, the UK and Italy wish to see Ethiopia’s influence and power contained or balanced, especially vis-à-vis their former colonies: Somalia and Eritrea (Interview 2012). In other words, they want Ethiopia to remain stable but relatively weaker, so that other actors can be part of the power play. At any rate, Ethiopia is perceived by the West as a relatively stable state, and as a useful and reliable surrogate in the Horn of Africa.

In conclusion, despite a number of constraints—some of which were listed above—Ethiopia can indeed be described as a regional power, given its military and diplomatic strength and influential role in peace and security issues in the Horn of Africa.

4. Ethiopia’s Role in the Field of Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa has recently seen dynamic changes and the region is in constant transition. Somalia, one of the region’s most troubled states, established a transitional government through surprisingly fair elections, and yet it is far from being stable. The breakup of Sudan into two states and the ensuing tensions have also compounded the region’s problems. Sudan is also in turmoil in Darfur and in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile areas. The past decade further witnessed border clashes between Eritrea and Djibouti and a continued stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The newly emerged state, South Sudan, is also

engulfed in a crisis. Thus, the Horn of Africa is still grappling with high levels of violent conflicts.

Ethiopia’s geostrategic position at the heart of the Horn of Africa, and the fact that it shares porous borders, as well as ethnic and historical links with all of the states in the region, makes it more vulnerable to conflicts in the region. As a regional power, Ethiopia has been increasingly willing to take on responsibility for peace and security endeavours in the Horn of Africa. The relevant question is: to what extent has Ethiopia been able to influence regional security issues? And, what were the implications of its actions for regional stability?

4.1. Military Interventions in Somalia

Somalia has always been considered a security threat to Ethiopia, despite changes in governments and ideology. The issue of the Somali-inhabited area in Ethiopia has dominated the history of Ethio-Somali relations. Two major wars between the two states over the Somali-inhabited area occurred in 1964 and 1977, with Ethiopia managing to retain its control of the area after both incidents. Although the claim over the Somali-inhabited area of Ethiopia declined over the years—partly due to the collapse of the Somali state in 1991—an anarchic Somalia poses new forms of threats to Ethiopia.

In the absence of a central government controlling the entirety of the Somali territory, Islamist extremist groups use Somalia as a safe haven and a launching pad to carry out terrorist attacks in Ethiopia and the region at large. Apart from the threat of

terrorist attacks, Ethiopia feels threatened by the prospect of emerging Islamist extremist movements and governments in neighbouring states, amid increasing religious militancy within Ethiopia (Erlich 2010). The danger of Somali and Oromo armed opposition forces using Somalia to channel weapons has also had an impact on Ethiopia's internal security. As a sworn enemy, Eritrea has been backing armed groups in Somalia as proxies for its long-standing conflict with Ethiopia. In fact, both Ethiopia and Eritrea have been supporting rival proxies in Somalia since 1998. It is also evident that the anarchic situation within Somalia and its porous border with Ethiopia—1,600 kilometres in length—has increased the proliferation of weapons and criminal activities in the latter.

Ethiopia's first military encounter in Somalia after the collapse of the Somali state was with Al-Ittihadal-Islamia in the 1990s. Al-Ittihad was a Somali fundamentalist movement, with the primary objective of establishing an Islamic state in Somalia by uniting all Somali-inhabited territories in the Horn of Africa, including the Somali-inhabited area of Ethiopia. It launched a series of terrorist attacks in Ethiopia in 1996, which led the group to its final days when Ethiopia responded by successfully attacking and dislodging its bases in Luuq and Buulo Hawwa—near the Ethiopian border—in late 1996 and in 1999 (Medhane 2002). Since then, Ethiopia has closely followed political developments in Somalia, and its military has repeatedly intervened to contain problems emerging from Somalia.

In 2006, the Ethiopian forces intervened in Somalia, advancing to Mogadishu and Kismayo, to oust the UIC. The UIC had links

with Al-Ittihad, and its military wing—Al-Shabab—shares similar ideologies with Al-Qaeda.⁹ Ethiopia was further alarmed by the UIC's alleged alliance with the ONLF, the OLF, and Eritrea. The UN Monitoring Group's report revealed that "Eritrea delivered at least ten arms shipments to the UIC between May 2005 to May 2006" (cited in ICG 2006: 20). Moreover, the UN stated that Eritrea had deployed 2,000 troops in support of the UIC (Ibid). Hence, the UIC was said to have posed a "clear and present danger" to Ethiopia's national security (Reuters 2006). The UN declared that as many as 8,000 Ethiopian troops may [have been] deployed in Somalia. It took less than two weeks for the Ethiopian forces to chase the UIC's militias out of Somalia and install the internationally recognized TFG¹⁰ in Mogadishu. Despite this initial victory, the Ethiopian forces were bogged down in a brutal insurgency with Al-Shabab forces, and the TFG was not able to consolidate its political, military, and administrative power. Ethiopia withdrew its troops in 2009.

The Ethiopian forces intervened again in 2011. This time, Ethiopia operated together with AMISOM troops in a somewhat combined offensive against Al-Shabab. The Ethiopian forces officially joined AMISOM at the beginning of 2014, increasing the number of countries contributing troops to six.¹¹ The Ethiopian forces took over Sector

⁹ Al-Shabab officially merged with Al-Qaeda in 2012.

¹⁰ The TFG was established in Nairobi in 2004 in a peace process organized under the auspices of IGAD.

¹¹ AMISOM contingents are composed of troops from Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Djibouti. Ethiopia is the third largest contributor next to Uganda and Burundi; it has deployed 4,395 troops.

3 and helped in Sector 4, where Djiboutian peacekeepers are in charge.¹²

Ethiopia's contribution to Somalia's stability is a mixed bag. Its 2006 military intervention was criticized by many as a mistake and counterproductive, because it seemingly resulted in allowing Al-Shabab to mobilize local support using nationalistic symbols and to gain more territory and power. Although Ethiopia successfully averted the immediate threat posed by the UIC, it was bogged down in a violent insurgency for two years, which caused civilian deaths and displacement. The intervention was costly to Ethiopia's image, troops, and economy (Kidist 2011c). Moreover, even though Ethiopia claimed that it intervened in response to the TFG's invitation and presented the intervention as driven by "self-defence, Ethiopia was seen as a hostile invader" (Moller 2009). Ethiopia's interventions in Somalia were also seen by some as an extension of American security policy (Interview with former Reuters correspondent 2012). Such perceptions raised questions about Ethiopia's intentions in Somalia.

Ethiopia made a strategic mistake by intervening conventionally, when it could have tacitly dealt with the radical elements of the UIC, namely the Al-Shabab. Although the UIC posed a threat to Ethiopia's national security, it was not imminent and the UIC militias were small in number and divided in terms of clans. Thus, instead of launching a large-scale conventional intervention, the Ethiopian government could have opted for a more covert counter insurgency operation;

attacking some selected bases and forces of the UIC as it did with Al-Ittihad (Kidist, 2011c). As rightly noted by Erlich (2010), Ethiopia cannot ignore the rising threat of Islamic radicalism in Somalia,¹³ but it needs to act carefully and wisely to avoid hostile relations with its large Muslim community and with Muslim-dominated neighbouring states.

On a positive note, Ethiopia's military intervention in Somalia in 2006 opened a window of opportunity for the deployment of AMISOM, which in turn gave some hope and impetus for the consolidation of the peace process and state building in Somalia. It also encouraged regional security cooperation, as Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, and Djibouti joined AMISOM. Ethiopia's military intervention in Somalia in 2011 has made a difference in pushing Al-Shabab out of its major strongholds. According to Jarle Hansen, "[t]he greatest defeats suffered by Al-Shabab were inflicted by Ethiopian forces" (2012: 4). A number of regions and towns in south-central Somalia—including Hiiraan, Beledweyne, Baidoa, Bay, Bakool, and Galgaduud—were liberated by and with the support of Ethiopian troops (The East African 2012). It is also playing an important role in establishing regional and local administrations in liberated areas, although the progress on the ground appears to be slow. The agreements and meetings that led to the establishment of the South West region and the Jubaland region were facilitated by Ethiopia (Interview with a Somali Political Analyst, 2014).

¹² Sector 3 incorporates Bay, Bokol and Gedo regions. These are areas closer to the Ethiopian border, see AMISOM's website (<http://amisom-au.org/>).

¹³ The first jihad, which came close to destroying the Ethiopian »Christian« kingdom in the 16th century, was waged by a Somali speaker named Mohamed Grang.

Ethiopia has definitely taken lessons from its 2006 intervention, and its military is now making a positive contribution to the stabilization of Somalia. The Ethiopian military has shown restraint, unlike in 2006, and less civilian casualties have been reported. Ethiopia has also limited its area of activity and is now operating under AMISOM. Ethiopia is also working with the local population to re-establish local civilian administrations in liberated areas (Interview with an EU official, 2014). Similar views were reflected by respondents working with aid agencies. Indeed, Ethiopia's presence is said to have improved the security situation and facilitated locals' access to aid (Interview with Development Alternatives Incorporated 2012). The Ethiopian military has also trained Somali soldiers to improve local security. Ethiopia's limited engagement in the internal political process is a departure from the previous approach of imposing itself on the Somali leadership and government. For instance, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed—the first president of the TFG—was widely seen as Ethiopia's stooge and was not popular in south-central Somalia. Hence, Ethiopia's recent engagement in southern Somalia is increasingly seen as constructive and positive. The international community, at least publicly, applauds Ethiopia for its role in Somalia and considers Ethiopia as a reliable and capable partner.

Ethiopia's role in Somaliland and Puntland is also seen by some observers as an indication of its positive engagement. Ethiopia is a close ally of Somaliland, which declared its independence in 1991, but has not yet been recognized by the international community. The relationship between Ethiopia and Somaliland goes back to the 1980s. Ethiopia provided military support to and a base

for the Somali National Movement (SNM), which fought against Siad Barre's regime in northern Somalia. Ethiopia also hosted thousands of refugees from Somaliland during the civil war. Unlike the southern part of Somalia, Somaliland emerged as a stable political system with a functioning government, a disciplined and regularly paid military and police, and democratic elections (Arieff 2008). A Somaliland official says Ethiopia is the first state that participated in Somaliland's state-building process and describes the relationship as strategic. Ethiopia has been providing military training for Somaliland's different security forces in order to consolidate the relative peace achieved there (Interview with a Somaliland Official 2012).

Ethiopia also established a close working relationship with the autonomous administration of Puntland. Again, relations between the two began in the 1980s when Ethiopia provided weapons and training for the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), led by Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, who later became Puntland's first president. Puntland was established as an autonomous region in 1998. According to a Puntland official, "Puntland's survival could have been seriously threatened if it wasn't for Ethiopia's support" (Interview 2012). He specifically said that Ethiopia's support was decisive during Puntland's fight against Al-Ittihad. Ethiopia has a strong intelligence presence in Puntland and it provides military training to Puntland forces. Ethiopia also opened a consulate in Puntland in 2010 (Interview with a Puntland Official 2012).

Ethiopia has benefited from the more orderly and peaceful situation within Somaliland and Puntland, both of which

serve as a buffer zone against the infiltration of Islamist groups into Ethiopia. Ethiopia shares a long and a relatively peaceful border with Somaliland. Geostrategically, Somaliland is close to sensitive areas in Ethiopia, including Jijiga, which is the capital of the Somali region of Ethiopia. Ethiopia therefore does not wish to see Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, become another Mogadishu. Ethiopia and Somaliland cooperate closely on security matters and exchange information and intelligence. Somaliland's government has been a staunch ally of Ethiopia and has participated in raids against fighters of the ONLF (Interview with a Horn of Africa political analyst 2012). Nevertheless, Ethiopia's secret renditions of the so-called terrorist ONLF fighters from Somaliland have been criticized. In terms of commerce, Ethiopian Airlines has daily flights to Somaliland and the World Food Programme (WFP) deliveries to Ethiopia are shipped through the port of Berbera. Consequently, consolidating relative peace in Somaliland is in Ethiopia's interests.

Both Somaliland and Puntland are widely perceived by Somalis as Ethiopian creations, based on the intention to balkanize Somalia. Because of this, many Somalis argue that Ethiopia only seeks a weak and disunited Somalia, which will not pose a security threat at any point in time. David H. Shinn, however, argues that "this would be Ethiopia's goal if the only alternative was a strong, united, and hostile Somalia. I believe, however, that Ethiopia is prepared to accept and may even prefer, a strong, united and friendly Somalia" (2006: 3). In other words, Ethiopia wishes to see a peaceful Somalia not for altruistic reasons, but because its security is closely linked with Somalia's continued security. Nevertheless,

it will take time to change the perception of the majority of Somalis about Ethiopia, as the name itself is deeply engraved in their minds as Somalia's "enemy par excellence". Ethiopia's recent positive engagement might help to moderate these perceptions.

Obviously, Somalia is not a problem that can be fixed with simple solutions. It is a place where the international community and the most powerful states have failed to find solutions for two decades—perhaps out of sheer neglect, or the failure to find the right panacea. Too many interests and actors are involved, and it is difficult to find a genuine partner to work with on the Somali side. Indeed, some of Ethiopia's actions fuelled the problem in Somalia. Ethiopia attempted to impose political solutions, supported warlords, and partly exploited "the war on terror" to its own advantage, which in turn undermined its credibility. Uganda and Kenya have also played similar political games. Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni deployed forces to Somalia to secure donors' support and mute Western criticism of his internal policies (Fisher 2012). Similar motives partly drove Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles to intervene in Somalia in 2006, and it seems to have worked in both cases (Woldemariam 2005). Kenya is also keen to create a buffer zone in Jubaland, the region in southern Somalia bordering Kenya. Despite these self-interested motives for intervention, Somalia's neighbours, especially Ethiopia, have real and legitimate security concerns and most of their actions can indeed be justified based on these grounds.

To end Somalia's numerous political, socio-economic and security problems—which have been ongoing for two decades—

requires a coordinated effort from all stakeholders. Although Al-Shabab has lost territory and is weakened as a conventional force, it still launches deadly suicide bombings in and outside of Somalia.¹⁴ According to an official from the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, the Somali branch of Al-Shabab is moving up to the northern part of Somalia, Puntland, and branching out to neighbouring states, such as Yemen and Kenya (Interview 2012). An informant from the UN said that Swahili-speaking Kenyans form the largest group of Al-Shabab's non-Somali legion (Interview 2012). Al-Shabab's Kenyan branch is also said to be very active in mobilizing funds for the group through Islamic charities. Al-Shabab will most probably continue to exist in one form or the other; as can be witnessed from history, even if Al-Shabab weakens or ceases to exist as a movement, there will be other groups or individuals who will carry its ideology forward. The road to peace is going to be rather bumpy and long.

Re-establishing an effective civilian administration and rebuilding state institutions in Somalia will also be challenging. There are dozens of local militias—organized and armed by clans or individuals—fighting for spoils in areas recaptured from Al-Shabab and the federal government is not willing to devolve power to regional administrations (Interview with a Jubaland official 2014). The international community—drawn by the threat of terrorism and piracy—has shown increasing interest in dealing with the problem by providing

financial, technical, and military support to the federal government. In Somalia, there is now a better partnership between AMISOM and the federal government forces (Interview with a senior expert on Somalia 2012). Despite these promising and positive developments, Somalia is still far from being stable. The constructive engagement of the neighbouring states, especially Ethiopia, is crucial to the stabilization of Somalia.

Ethiopia is a powerful driver of external engagement in Somalia, because it has an effective and well-entrenched intelligence network. According to a senior expert on Somalia, even the West—especially the US—is dependent on Ethiopia for reliable intelligence on Somalia (Interview 2012). The Ethiopian military also has the experience and the technical capacity to successfully execute military operations in Somalia, and it is well acquainted with the Somali terrain. Moreover, Ethiopia better understands the nature and objectives of most of the Somali political actors and the rules of the political game in Somalia. At any rate, Ethiopia's military and intelligence presence in Somalia over an extended period of time proves that it has an assertive Somali policy and that it is capable and willing to do what it takes if its national security is threatened. Although it is difficult to predict what will happen in Somalia, given the political dynamism and complexity of its politics and security, it is certain that Ethiopia will continue to cautiously and closely monitor political developments in Somalia.

To facilitate cooperation, understanding the context and elements of Ethiopia's concerns could be a good step forward on the part of Somali leaders. The latter need to show political maturity and acknowledge the need to seriously engage with Ethiopia,

¹⁴ Al-Shabab took responsibility for the terrorist attack at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya on 21 September 2013, in which over 60 civilians were killed.

not only for survival, but also to establish mutually beneficial relations. Unless there is a clear message from Mogadishu, Ethiopia will continue to suspect that the vision of a greater Somalia is still entrenched in the mindset of most Somalis. Thus, a marked change of discourse and dialogue is needed, and this requires great courage and determination. On Ethiopia's part, its leadership needs to carefully design and execute its policies towards Somalia to avoid misperceptions. Ethiopia also needs to deal with its internal vulnerability in the Somali-inhabited area and improve its cooperation with regional and international partners, in order to be perceived as a credible actor working for regional stability.

4.2. Peacekeeping Troops in Abyei

Ethiopia is the leading contributor of peacekeeping troops in Africa, and the fourth largest contributor in the world—only behind Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India (UN 2014). According to Solomon A. Dersso, “the provision of regional peace and security is a major political consideration in Ethiopia's provision of peacekeepers” and Ethiopia also “recognizes that participation in international peacekeeping enhances its regional and international influence” (2013: 3). Ethiopia has committed troops to peacekeeping missions in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Cote d'Ivoire, Darfur, and recently in Somalia and Abyei—a contentious border region between Sudan and South Sudan. Tensions in Abyei were flaring high in mid-2011 when Sudanese forces occupied Abyei (town). The belligerents signed a peace agreement on 20 June 2011 to demilitarize Abyei and let Ethiopian troops monitor the area (Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment 2011). Sudan and South Sudan

have also been at odds over sharing oil revenues, security, citizenship, assets, and the demarcation of their common borders. Both are engaged in mutually destructive activities by supporting armed proxies.

From 22 July 2011 onwards, Ethiopia deployed nearly 4,200 troops to Abyei under the name of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The UN mission is mandated to demilitarize Abyei and monitor peace. The peacekeeping mission in Abyei is unique in the history of the UN, as it is entirely composed of troops from one state, Ethiopia. An Ethiopian senior general is also providing both the political and military leadership of the mission. Moreover, Ethiopia is actively engaged in the AU-led mediation process between South Sudan and Sudan. The AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), supported by Ethiopia, played an important role in facilitating negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan on implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and on the post-independence issues.

Sudan and South Sudan have readily accepted Ethiopia's involvement in peacekeeping activities and in the mediation process. Ethiopia earned the trust of both states for many reasons. First and foremost, Ethiopia has been able to balance its relations with both states. Second, Ethiopia is the only state in the Horn of Africa that shares borders with both Sudan and South Sudan. There are ethnic groups that live on both sides of their common borders. Accordingly, conflict between and within the two Sudans could have both a direct and indirect spill over effect on Ethiopia, thus Ethiopia can be seen to have a genuine interest in peace in and between the two countries.

Ethiopia is often described as a midwife to the birth of South Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) was initially based, supported, and trained by the pre-1991 government of Ethiopia. When the EPRDF came to power in 1991, the SPLA was expelled from Ethiopia, due to the EPRDF's good relations with Sudan during its fight against Ethiopia's pre-1991 government. However, Ethiopia resumed its support for the SPLA, partly because it was concerned about the possible threat of a militant Islamic government in Khartoum, even before the National Islamic Front (NIF) started threatening Ethiopia's security (de Waal 2004). Ethiopia was said to be instrumental in the drafting of the Declarations of Principles (DOP) in 1994, which recognized the South Sudanese right of self-determination and later became the basis for IGAD's peace initiative, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (Interview with Attala Hamad Bashir 2012). After the signing of the CPA, Ethiopia—as a chair of IGAD—played an important role in the successful implementation of the CPA and the ensuing South Sudanese referendum. In the end, the combined effect of the policies and actions of Ethiopia and other regional and international actors led to South Sudan's independence in 2011. Hence, historical ties play an important role in the relations between Ethiopia and South Sudan.

Ethiopia provides military training to South Sudan's Army (Interview with a Horn of Africa political analyst 2012). The ICG reported that "South Sudan buys small arms and ammunition, uniforms and a variety of non-lethal items from Ethiopia, as well as refurbished tanks and equipment" (International Crisis Group 2010: 13–14).

Ethiopia has security concerns due to the fragility of the region's newest state, South Sudan. The influx of South Sudanese refugees into the Gambela region of Ethiopia could endanger the already fragile peace there. Therefore, it is important for Ethiopia to support South Sudan in terms of security; and security cooperation between the two states can be described as strategic.

Ethiopia also wants to benefit from South Sudan's emerging market and its oil wealth. Ethiopia and South Sudan have signed an agreement on trade and economic development, electricity, and transportation. Kenya and Uganda are also prominent in South Sudan's economy (ibid.): Kenya is highly involved in the banking system, and Uganda exports food items to the country. As a result, Ethiopia wants to boost its economic ties and emerge as a competitor in the South Sudanese market. Two roads connecting Ethiopia with South Sudan are currently under construction, with the expressed aim to improve bilateral economic ties (Interview with Tesfalem Weldeyes 2012). In general, the issue of undemarcated borders, the possibilities of economic cooperation, the Nuer rebellion, and the movement of militias in the Southern Blue Nile region are all important factors determining the depth and direction of the relations between Ethiopia and South Sudan.

At the same time, Ethiopia maintains good relations with Sudan. The relationship between the two states was tainted by hostility in the mid-1990s. Ethio-Sudanese relations deteriorated when Islamist groups, supported by the Sudanese intelligence services, attempted to assassinate Egypt's former president Hosni Mubarak in Addis

Ababa in June 1995. By the mid-1990s, Sudan had also fostered ties with a number of anti-Ethiopian armed insurgent groups including the OLF, the ONLF, and Al-Ittihad. According to de Waal, Ethiopia was “slower to move towards confrontation with Sudan than either Uganda or Eritrea, but when it did move, its role was potentially decisive” (2004: 202). Sudan’s behaviour led Ethiopia to carry out joint military operations with the SPLA. On the diplomatic front, Ethiopia and Eritrea, together with Uganda, had formed a hostile alliance against Sudan (Healy 2008: 11).

The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea was, however, a blessing in disguise for Ethio-Sudanese relations, because it opened a window of opportunity for rapprochement. Since then, Ethiopia has maintained good relations with Sudan (Young n.d.). Ethiopia does not wish to have another hostile neighbour that could join hands with Eritrea or support Islamist movements in Somalia. The destabilization of Sudan would also “likely draw in much of the region, including creating opportunities for Eritrea”, whose Sudan policy is somehow more driven by hostility to Ethiopia than anything else (International Crisis Group 2010: 13). A senior official from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also argued that Ethiopia does not wish to see its biggest and most populous neighbouring state, Sudan, degenerate into a crisis, because this would have serious repercussions for Ethiopia’s security (Interview 2012). The growing flow of refugees from the Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states into the Benishangul region of Ethiopia is already a source of concern for Ethiopia. Furthermore, Sudan is a big market for Ethiopian products and Ethiopia imports oil from Sudan at a favourable bargaining price (Verhoeven 2011).

For its part, Sudan fears that Ethiopia might pursue its previous hard-line, anti-Sudan approach (Interview with former Sudanese government official 2012). Sudan also recognizes the weight of Ethiopia’s influence in the region and its strategic links to South Sudan. Hence, Sudan seeks to improve its relations with Ethiopia. Apparently, neither of the two states supports subversive activities, as they did previously. If Ethiopia wants to destabilize Sudan, now would be the best opportunity, because Sudan is at its weakest point. Instead, Ethiopia has demonstrated its will to support Sudan by sending its troops to Darfur and Abyei in order to prevent further escalation of conflicts and estrangement of Sudan’s overwhelmed government.

Ethiopian troops in Abyei are said to be remarkably efficient and have managed to maintain security in the area. Despite logistical problems, Ethiopian troops were able to operate successfully and to communicate effectively with the locals says a respondent working with the peacekeeping mission (Interview with UNISFA Official 2012). Moreover, Sudan and South Sudan signed a cooperation agreement in Addis Ababa on 27 September 2012. The two parties agreed to resume oil production and demilitarize their common borders. Ethiopia’s contribution to easing tensions between the two Sudans is viewed as a very positive development. Nonetheless, both parties are still unable to agree on the issue of Abyei, and the disputed borders are not yet demarcated. Although the situation in Darfur has improved slightly, the situation in Blue Nile and South Kordofan remains highly volatile. A long history of marginalization and recrimination means that there has to be a sustained interaction to normalize relations between Sudan and South Sudan.

In ensuring this, Ethiopia's continued constructive engagement is vital. Indeed, Ethiopia has its own agenda in dealing with both Sudan and South Sudan, but it acts through formal and institutionalized channels and in cooperation with the international partners, which has helped it to earn international recognition.

4.3. Containment of Eritrea

The relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea degenerated into a fierce rivalry and bloody conflict in less than a decade, despite initial optimism following the independence of Eritrea. The secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1991 was celebrated as the beginning of a new era of peace and prosperity. However, the two states waged a vicious war between 1998 and 2000, which cost over 100,000 lives. In 2000, the two states reached an agreement to settle their border conflict through arbitration.¹⁵ However, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's (EEBC) decision to award Badme, the flash point of the war, to Eritrea was seen as unjust by Ethiopia, which had achieved military victory at great cost. Subsequently, Ethiopia called for dialogue to deal with the "anomalies and impracticabilities" of the borders' demarcation, while Eritrea urged the binding decision of the committee to be implemented without any prior dialogue. This has led to a stalemate in the conflict (Kidist 2011b).

¹⁵ The Algiers Peace Agreement between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Government of the State of Eritrea was signed on 12 December 2000, and is available at: <http://www.pca-cpa.org> [hereinafter Algiers Peace Agreement].

Following the war and disagreement over border demarcation, Eritrea pursued a foreign policy based on the twin pillars of "isolationism combined with opportunistic support for any armed insurgents opposed to Ethiopia" (Marchal 2004). Eritrea has been arming, as well as providing a base and training to armed insurgent groups fighting against Ethiopia, with the aim of compelling it to change its policies or even its leadership. Eritrea's foreign policy towards other Horn of Africa states has also been guided by its conflict with Ethiopia. Eritrea's invasion of Djibouti's northern territory in 2008 was also partly aimed at putting pressure on Ethiopia, because Ethiopia relies heavily on the port of Djibouti for almost the entirety of its imports and exports. On a similar note, Eritrea is using insurgent groups in eastern Sudan to pressure the Sudanese government not to pursue pro-Ethiopian, thus by default anti-Eritrean positions (Interview with a former Sudanese government official 2012). Eritrea further suspended its membership from IGAD in 2007, claiming that the regional organization was being used as a Trojan horse by Ethiopia. It seems that Ethiopia continues to be a consideration for President Isaias Afewerki's when he designs and makes foreign policy decisions.

Some observers blame Ethiopia for Eritrea's behaviour and destructive actions in the Horn of Africa. According to a former Sudanese Ambassador to Eritrea, Eritrea and Eritreans feel betrayed by the international community for not forcing Ethiopia to comply with the boundary commission's decision, and that therefore Eritrea is forced to take actions on its own and against all odds (Interview, 2012). Although there is a grain of truth in this argument, Ethiopia cannot be entirely blamed for Eritrea's aggressive and overtly negative roles in

the region. In fact, even before the war with Ethiopia and within the first five years of its independence, Eritrea initiated armed conflicts with Yemen, Djibouti, and Sudan (Medhane 1999). Justifying Eritrea's aggressive policy only within the Ethio-Eritrean context is therefore erroneous. Eritrea's actions and policies destabilized the region and beyond. Such belligerent behaviour has to be contained, and only Ethiopia accomplished this by effectively using its military and diplomatic ability.

Ethiopia was instrumental in the imposition of sanctions against Eritrea. It skilfully used its diplomacy to mobilize the support of the states in the region, the AU, and the UN Security Council to impose the sanctions. Eritrea also played into the hands of Ethiopia, as it rapidly lost international sympathy and risked international isolation with its blatant support of Islamist extremist groups in Somalia. The UN imposed sanctions on Eritrea in 2009 and toughened them in 2011. The sanctions included an arms embargo on Eritrea, and an asset freeze and travel ban on leading government officials. The UN further urged companies involved in gold mining in Eritrea to exercise greater vigilance and to ensure that funds from the sector are not used to destabilize the region (United Nations Security Council 2011). Eritrea is now increasingly isolated from the regional, continental, and international political scenes.

To some extent, the sanctions imposed on Eritrea have helped to contain its destabilizing actions in the region. According to an official from the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, Eritrea's support for Al-Shabab has declined significantly (Interview 2012). Eritrea has also shown an interest in re-engaging with regional

and continental organizations. It has sent a representative to the AU and indicated its intentions to resume its participation at IGAD meetings (Interview with an IGAD official 2012).

Eritrea's isolation may have favoured Ethiopia, as the latter has succeeded in circumventing international condemnation for failing to implement the EEBC's decision. Containment through sanctions or military actions, however, does not provide a lasting solution and cannot be fully effective. Eritrea has continued to support armed proxies against Ethiopia. Although Eritrea's military support to Al-Shabab has diminished, the regime has continued to transfer money to the Islamist groups through individual couriers (Interview with official from the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2012). The conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti is not yet resolved, although Eritrea withdrew from the areas around disputed borders after signing a peacedeal brokered by Qatar. Thus, a normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea is needed to broaden and strengthen regional cooperation in peace and security. Rapprochement with Eritrea would also enhance Ethiopia's legitimacy and acceptance in the region and, thereby, strengthen its position and status as a regional power. The continued attempt to weaken and destabilize each other by supporting insurgent groups and spreading mutually hostile propaganda could lead Ethiopia and Eritrea into a renewed vicious and unpredictable circle of conflict.

The interesting question is how the conflict and the ongoing stalemate can be resolved. Sebhat Nega argues that President Isaias Afewerki is "the sole obstacle to the normalization of relations between

Ethiopia and Eritrea” (Interview 2012). This argument may be true, as President Afewerki often resorts to the use of force rather than negotiation and diplomatic engagements.¹⁶ On the other hand, some Eritrean scholars argue that Ethiopia should relinquish Badme and carry out all of the boundary commission’s rulings without any prior negotiation. This could also help resolve the immediate causes of the conflict border. Yet, beyond these two irreconcilable views and short-term solutions, the normalization of relations between these two states requires a more comprehensive approach and political dialogue. The problems are complicated, because they concern sovereignty, pride, personalities, identity, economic interests, historical memories, as well as the competition for regional power. The wounds from the war on the peoples in both Eritrea and Ethiopia have not yet healed, and all of the issues related to the war or Eritrea’s secession are often overshadowed by emotions. Even more significantly, the governments of both states—and especially of Eritrea—are using the conflict as an excuse to weaken and destroy internal political opposition. Normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea would most likely expose President Afewerki’s authoritarian administration to both internal and external pressures. A continued stalemate, therefore, seems to be a deliberate policy choice pursued by the incumbent regimes. Hence, the chance for sober political dialogue is highly unlikely.

The analysis above shows that Ethiopia’s national interests are closely linked with

regional security. Ethiopia has been using its diplomatic and military power to deal with threats to its national security, its economic development and prosperity, and the region’s wider stability.

5. Conclusion

Ethiopia has one of the largest and most powerful militaries in Africa and is the continent’s second most populous state. Moreover, the relative political stability that it has witnessed over the last two decades has enabled Ethiopia to position itself as a regional power. Ethiopia is playing an active role in regional peace and security issues through diplomatic engagement, military intervention, mediation, and peacekeeping activities. Ethiopia has also managed to drive regional peace and security issues through IGAD and the AU. This involvement has strengthened its standing as a regional power. Ethiopia is, in fact, strategically placed to support regional stability, because it is located at the heart of the Horn of Africa and shares borders with all of the region’s states. The absence of other states willing and capable of replacing, or effectively balancing, its role and position in the region has further strengthened Ethiopia’s power and status. As a consequence, Ethiopia has effectively emerged as a regional power in the Horn of Africa, despite numerous constraints—including an obvious lack of economic capacity and the presence of numerous armed insurgent groups threatening its internal security.

By positioning itself as a regional power, Ethiopia has occasionally managed to deal with internal constraints to its regional power projection. Ethiopia’s decisive

¹⁶ See Berouk Mesfin (2009) and Girmay Essayas (2014).

military and diplomatic actions in the region have weakened internal armed insurgent groups—such as the OLF and the ONLF—and deterred some regional states from supporting these kinds of groups, which are considered threats to Ethiopia's national security. The imperative for economic development is also a driving factor for Ethiopia's active engagement in regional peace and security issues. Ethiopia earned the support and recognition of major international actors, notably the US, for serving as a bulwark against armed Islamist groups and for contributing to regional peacekeeping activities. Hence, Ethiopia has been one of the biggest recipients of aid. Although the impact of aid on economic development is controversial, Ethiopia is listed among those African states that are said to have put aid to effective use. Therefore, strengthening Ethiopia's position in the region is a necessity given its internal challenges and the complexity of security dynamics in the region.

As a regional power, Ethiopia has been dealing with immediate threats to both its national security and stability in the Horn of Africa. It is *realpolitik* for regional powers to act based on their national interests. The relevant question is thus whether or not their actions help stabilize the region. Among all of the states in the region, Ethiopia's power and influence is felt most in Somalia. Ethiopia has a strong intelligence and military presence in Somalia and its engagement is mainly driven by the objective to contain threats emerging from armed Islamist groups, which threaten the security of Ethiopia and that of the region at large. Ethiopia has intervened militarily in Somalia a number of times, which demonstrates that it has the capacity and the will to project force beyond its borders—if and

when it deems that its national security is at risk. Nevertheless, Ethiopia's contribution to Somalia's peace and stability is regarded with suspicion in Somalia, mainly due to historical animosities and doubts about Ethiopia's motives for intervention.

The consolidation of peace in Somaliland and Puntland is considered a requirement for peace and stability in the region. In light of this, Ethiopia's engagement in and contribution to stability in these two areas should irrefutably be seen as a positive development. Although it might not be appealing for those who criticize Ethiopia's role in Somaliland and Puntland, a Balkanized and anarchic Somalia poses more danger to Ethiopia's national security. Concerning the situation in southern Somalia, however, the problem is very complex and difficult to deal with. Indeed, some of Ethiopia's actions and interventions in the past have exacerbated the conflict. However, through its recent military and diplomatic support to the Somali Federal Government and AMISOM, Ethiopia has gained more recognition for its role in Somalia and is increasingly perceived as a contributor to Somalia's stability. Nonetheless, sustaining recent military gains and consolidating the Somali Federal Government's power requires cooperation among all stakeholders.

The troubled relationship between Sudan and South Sudan and the crisis in South Sudan constitutes another challenge for regional stability, and Ethiopia's security in particular. Shared borders and ethnic links, the smuggling of weapons, and the problem of refugees will constitute serious security threats to Ethiopia if the conflicts escalate further. Accordingly, Ethiopia has been actively engaged in resolving tensions within South Sudan and between the two

states. The deployment of Ethiopian troops in Abyei and Ethiopia's active involvement in the mediation process between the two states and within South Sudan testify to this. The Ethiopian troops in Abyei have greatly contributed to stabilizing the area, while Sudan and South Sudan have reached agreements in Addis Ababa to resume oil production and to demilitarize their border areas. Ethiopia has proved to be a stabilizing force in Sudan and South Sudan and its continued engagement is crucial, because there are still a number of sensitive issues to resolve.

Ethiopia's position towards Eritrea has often been subjected to extensive criticism. Eritrea is said to have been "punished" due to Ethiopia's power and influence in the region. The continued stalemate is also seen as a recipe for regional instability. At the same time, the behaviour and actions of the Eritrean government have not been able to win the international community's sympathy. Eritrea's support for Islamist extremists in Somalia resulted in international isolation, condemnation, and finally sanctions. Its actions, therefore, had to be contained and Ethiopia played a big role in this regard. A sustainable solution, however, requires the two states to establish some form of normalized relationship through dialogue, since the root causes of the conflict go beyond issues of leadership or border demarcation. Yet, the chances for this to happen appear to be very limited—but not impossible—because the relations among the political elites and the peoples of these two states are tainted with deep-rooted emotions; even so, they are also bound by historical and cultural ties.

The establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia, the relative peace

in Puntland and Somaliland, the peaceful secession of South Sudan, the agreements reached between Sudan and South Sudan, the relative stability maintained in explosive Abyei, and the containment of the disruptive acts of the Eritrean government are positive developments in the region, and Ethiopia has greatly contributed to these achievements. Nonetheless, Ethiopia has so far served as a fire fighter and is chiefly engaged in temporarily containing security problems in the region, mainly due to its lack of superior economic capacity. Moreover, changing patterns of amity and enmity in the historically unstable Horn of Africa make it more difficult for Ethiopia to follow a long-term strategy of mutual security cooperation. Given its recent constructive role in both Sudans, as well as in Somalia, Ethiopia is expected to play a greater role as a regional stabilizer in the future. But to do so, it needs to put its own house in order and to urgently deal with the problem of Eritrea in order to gain more credibility and recognition among regional and international actors. Moreover, Ethiopia needs to consolidate the economic gains it has made over the past few years by initiating political reforms towards more democratization, genuine reconciliation, and good governance.

These political reforms are necessary to consolidate its power position in the Horn of Africa. The political dynamics in the Horn of Africa are changing very quickly. The death of Ethiopia's influential Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, a new leadership in Kenya operating under the cloud cast by the ICC, growing political instability in Eritrea, and the tendency towards radicalization in Sudan will all have serious implications for regional stability. There is a growing fear that Ethiopia's role in the region may not be

sustained after the death of Prime Minister Zenawi. However, Ethiopia's policies are unlikely to change in face of the persistence of threats to its national security and regional stability. It may take time until Ethiopia's new leadership gains political experience and polishes its technical and negotiating capacity. Ethiopia also has a great deal of support from the West to sustain its position and role in the near future.

On a final note, being a regional power is not a problem in itself, rather it is the kind of behaviour a regional power exhibits—whether imperialist, hegemonic, or cooperative—or how it wishes to execute its policies, which determines the actions and reactions of neighbouring states. When a regional power plays a positive or cooperative role in the region, the chances for regional stability are often high.

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The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia coordinates the work of FES on security policy in sub-Saharan Africa in the Horn of Africa and wider Eastern Africa region and, together with the FES offices in Abuja and Maputo, at the continental level. As a political foundation committed to the values of social democracy, FES aims at strengthening the interface between democracy and security policy. FES therefore facilitates political dialogue on security threats and their national, regional and continental responses.

In the framework of its regional programme on **security policy dialogue in the Horn of Africa**, FES Addis Ababa seeks to contribute to creating an open and inclusive debate on the politics and international relations of the Horn of Africa and the development of regional cooperative responses to security crises in the region. The aim of FES work in this policy field is to increase transparency and thereby trust between political actors and also experts in the region, providing a forum for them to address competing interests in areas in which these (potentially) hinder a cooperative approach to regional security crises. The FES Addis Ababa publication series 'Horn of Africa Security Dialogue' aims to contribute to this dialogue by making relevant analysis widely accessible.

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