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Institute for a Community
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人类命运共同体研究院



Majestic Beginning of Bilateral Relations between Ethiopia and Pakistan



Advocate Zaildar Ahsan Shah, Managing Director, Elaan Consultancy and Advisor on International Relations, Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF), Islamabad

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Introduction:

Ethiopia, a landlocked country located on the Horn of Africa, enjoys a well-balanced geographical position with Addis Ababa, also known as "New Flower," as its capital situated close to the center of the nation. Ethiopia holds a significant historical legacy as one of the world's oldest nations, with its borders evolving over millennia. Its

population is notably diverse, primarily divided along linguistic lines, with approximately 100 languages categorized into four main groups:



Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic, and Nilotic. The country's most valuable asset lies in its agricultural land, despite facing challenges like soil erosion and deforestation. Ethiopia's exports are predominantly agricultural, with coffee being a major foreign exchange earner, along with khat, hides, skins, live animals, oilseeds, and gold. Modern manufacturing contributes about one-tenth of Ethiopia's GDP, primarily catering to domestic consumption. Machinery, transport equipment, and chemical products are significant imports, along with food products and fuels.

On the other hand, Pakistan, situated in South Asia, is a densely populated and culturally diverse nation. With Indo-Iranian languages predominantly spoken, Pakistan has historical and cultural ties with neighbouring countries like Iran, Afghanistan, and India. It gained independence from British rule on August 14, 1947, with a predominantly Muslim population setting it apart from its larger south-eastern



neighbour. Pakistan features diverse landscapes, from the towering Pamirs and the Karakoram Range in the northwest to the flat Indus River plain in the south. It is historically significant as part of the Silk Road, with landmarks like the Khyber Pass facilitating the flow of external influences into the subcontinent. Pakistan's mountainous regions, including peaks like K2 and Nanga Parbat, offer challenges to mountaineers, and the Indus River is home to the ancient site of Mohenjo-daro, a cradle of civilization. Pakistan's economy has diversified over time, with agriculture now contributing one-fifth of the GDP and manufacturing about one-sixth. Trade and services sectors are the largest components of the economy and have experienced significant growth. Pakistan's economic structure aligns more with middle-income countries in East and Southeast Asia than with less prosperous nations in the Indian subcontinent. The country has maintained consistent economic growth since gaining independence.

Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Ethiopia have laid the groundwork for collaboration in limited areas, owing to geographical and cultural differences. The common ideological ground between Islamabad and Addis Ababa, particularly in relation to Islamic history, provides confidence for exploring Ethiopia's multidimensional trading potential.

This article aims to explore the cultural and economic histories of Pakistan and Ethiopia, as well as their bilateral relations post-independence. It provides a comprehensive understanding of diplomatic engagements and trade interactions between the two nations. Additionally, it highlights Pakistan's commitment to

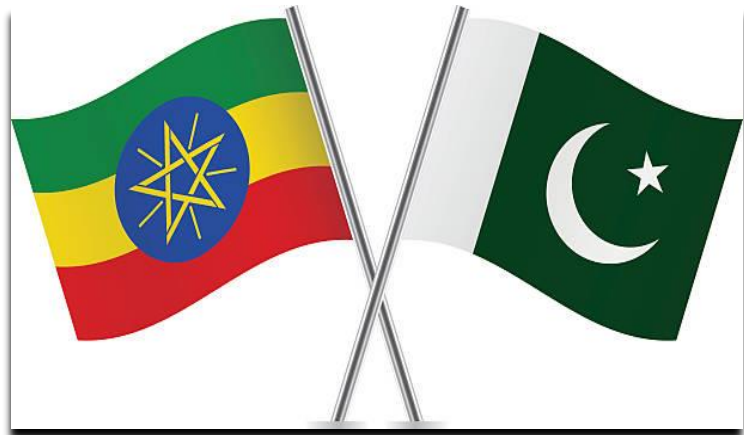
engaging with the African continent, in line with its "Engage Africa" policy, which seeks to strengthen political, economic, and cultural ties with African countries.

Pakistan- Ethiopia Relationship:

Pakistan and Ethiopia have maintained diplomatic relations since 1958, founded on mutual respect and cooperation across various fields. Pakistan established its resident mission in Ethiopia in 1973, preceding a visit by former President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

This engagement aligns with Pakistan's "Engage Africa" policy, aimed at strengthening political, economic, and cultural ties with African nations. The

relationship's evolution has seen consistent diplomatic dialogues, collaborative efforts in international forums, and partnerships in agriculture, education, and healthcare.



Recent developments highlight a shared commitment to deepening these ties, promoting mutual development, and leveraging each country's strengths for the betterment of their populations and the region.

A significant milestone in bilateral relations occurred with the official inauguration of the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad on May 11, 2023. This event signifies both governments' determination to strengthen interstate relations, especially in the face of global political challenges. Ambassador Mesganu Arga, the Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, attended the embassy's inauguration. They emphasized their commitment to a

comprehensive cooperation framework encompassing the economy, trade, investment, healthcare, education, climate change, and security. The primary goal of this initiative is to foster strong people-to-people connections between Pakistan and African nations, with a focus on cultural ties. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce jointly initiated the Engage Africa Initiative by hosting an international conference in Islamabad in November 2019, signaling Pakistan's commitment to engaging with African countries across various dimensions.

Ethiopia gained greater importance in Pakistan's economic strategy in 2019 with the "Look Africa Initiative" by the Ministry of Commerce. Six commercial sections were relocated from Europe to Africa, recognizing Ethiopia's significance as one of Africa's prominent economies. Pakistan aims to boost trade, particularly with leading African economies like Addis Ababa. Following the embassy's inauguration, the Pakistan government emphasized enhancing bilateral relations with Ethiopia through the

establishment of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP). The Pakistan-Ethiopia Business Forum was jointly established to facilitate direct trade



mechanisms between Islamabad and Addis Ababa, featuring over 150 investment opportunities. This forum sets the foundation for strong trading relations. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce. Ethiopian Airlines



initiated flights from Karachi to Addis Ababa, enhancing connectivity and opportunities for Pakistan's engagement with the African continent.

Given these developments, there is potential to explore untapped trading opportunities in various sectors to address critical economic challenges in both countries. The embassy's inauguration marks the beginning of a new chapter, emphasizing political coordination for dual-sided economic development. Both governments should now align official statements with concrete practical measures, a task that should be manageable.

Ethiopian New Year:

On September 10th each year, Ethiopians commemorate their New Year alongside National Unity Day. Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula in Islamabad explains that this day serves as a recommitment to values such as "love, forgiveness, unity, and harmony," which are deeply cherished and seen as fundamental to their national identity. This celebration also highlights Ethiopia's genuine wealth and strength, rooted in its incredible diversity.

Enkutatash, which translates to "gift of jewels" in Amharic, represents the Ethiopian New Year. This tradition has a history spanning nearly 3,000 years and is associated with the Queen of Sheba from ancient Ethiopia and Yemen. According to biblical accounts found in I Kings 10 and II Chronicles 9, the Queen of Sheba embarked on a journey to visit King Solomon of Israel in Jerusalem. During her visit, she presented King Solomon with an extravagant gift, including 120 talents of gold (equivalent to 4.5 tons), along with a rich assortment of unique spices and precious gemstones. Upon



her return to Ethiopia, her chiefs greeted her with "enku," signifying jewels, as a means to replenish her treasury.

- **Origins of Ethiopian Calendar:**

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's beliefs, it is held that God created the world 5,500 years before the birth of Christ, and the current year is considered to be 2016 years since the birth of Jesus. Following this timeline, we are presently in the year 7516 of an eight-thousand-year cycle, known as "Amete Alem" in Amharic, which translates to "the time of the world." This era is calculated to have commenced in 5493 B.C. It's important to note that the Ethiopian calendar is not the sole calendar system used within Ethiopia. Due to the country's cultural diversity, various beliefs and calendar structures exist among different ethnic groups. For instance, the Oromo people have their distinct calendar system, with origins that can be traced back to the works of Enoch, predating even the time of Moses, and present in both Ethiopia and Egypt.

- **7 Years Behind The Rest of The World**

The disparity between the Ethiopian calendar and the more commonly used Gregorian calendar may appear intricate, but the rationale behind the 7-year gap is quite straightforward. In the Ethiopian calendar, it is believed that Jesus Christ was born in the year 7 BC. Consequently, the Ethiopian calendar commences counting years from that point onward, while many other calendars, including the Gregorian, designate the birth of Jesus as taking place in 1 AD. The historical basis for this difference lies in the influence of the



Roman church, which propagated the Gregorian system in many countries.

Ethiopia, in contrast, remained relatively unaffected by external influences and continued to rely on its ancient calendar, resulting in a 7-year variance.

- **The calendar consists of 13 months in an year**

Although the Gregorian calendar is the prevailing choice globally, especially in Western nations, it's worth recognizing that Ethiopia is not the only country with its distinctive calendar system. What distinguishes the Ethiopian calendar is its incorporation of 13 months. In Ethiopia's calendar, every month comprises 30 days, and the last month, called Pagume, usually extends to either five days or six days during a leap year. As a result, the total number of days in a year remains consistent, but the organization of months differs from the more common 12-month arrangement of the Gregorian calendar.

- **Christmas in January**

If we were to convert the Ethiopian calendar to the Gregorian calendar, Christmas would occur on January 7th. In Ethiopia, Christmas is actually celebrated on the 29th of Tahsas, and the manner in which it is observed has some unique elements, although there are also significant similarities in the festivities.

- **Noon is at Six O'clock in the morning**

Calendars serve as instruments for time measurement, and while they divide days, each specific day is further broken down into hours, minutes, and seconds. However, in Ethiopia, there's a distinctive aspect to the measurement



of time because what we typically recognize as noon doesn't correspond to the conventional concept. In Ethiopia, noon is equivalent to 6 am.

Ethiopia still follows its ancient calendar system, which typically doesn't cause major inconveniences for travelers because of the calendar difference. In recent years, many Ethiopians have become familiar with the Gregorian calendar, and some use both calendars interchangeably. It's noteworthy that Ethiopia is one of the few countries globally that retains its unique calendar system. This uniqueness leads to the celebration of certain important holidays on dates that differ from the rest of the world.

Conclusion:

The deepening of Pakistan-Ethiopia relations is built upon a comprehensive strategy that encompasses economic cooperation, educational interactions, the promotion of cultural understanding, and a united front in pursuing common goals. With their historical ties as a foundation, both nations are on the brink of elevating their relationship to new levels.

Ongoing initiatives like the Business Forum and the launch of direct flights between Karachi and Addis Ababa, combined with their dedication to fortifying economic ties, position Ethiopia and Pakistan on a trajectory of mutual growth, prosperity, and the enrichment of cultural exchanges. The collaborative partnership between these two nations underscores the potential that arises when countries work harmoniously towards a shared vision of progress.



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Furthermore, this collaboration will open up new avenues for growth and development. Pakistan and Ethiopia are poised to make substantial strides in the future, which will have a positive impact on their citizens and contribute meaningfully to the international community.