
II. Hope Surges in Africa

Ethiopia Targeted for Destabilization

by Dean Andromidas

Aug. 6—On July 26, on the day Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed left on his first official trip to Washington, D.C., Simegnaw Bekele, the chief engineer of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam—one of the country’s most important Chinese-backed infrastructure projects—was assassinated. His body was found in his Toyota 4X4 in Meskel Square, the nerve center of Addis Abeba, with a gunshot wound in his head. Simegnaw had become a legendary figure in Ethiopia for his championing and managing not only of the Renaissance Dam project, but several others that have significantly increased the country’s power generation capacity. Addressing a gathering of the Ethiopian North American Muslim Foundation (BADR), in Virginia, Prime Minister Abiy stated: “The circumstances of his death—in daylight at the heart of our capital—are a provocation to shake our resolve.” He vowed that jus-

tice will be served.

The murder was a brutal show of force by powerful international interests determined to stop Ethiopia and all of Africa in their fight for rapid economic and industrial development by cooperating with China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Simegnaw’s murder was preceded by an assassination attempt against Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy on June 23 at a massive rally at the same location, in support of his reform policy (See “[Ethiopia: Dramatic Policy Shift Puts Regional Development at Center Stage](#),” *EIR*, Volume 45, Number 30, July 27, 2018).

Simegnaw was the leading engineer and architect of Ethiopia’s vision of creating an extensive network of large hydroelectric projects with the goal of making huge leaps in the country’s electricity generating capacity. When the reservoir of the \$4 billion (3.2 billion euro) Renaissance Dam is full, the hydroelectric dam will



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Engineer Simegnaw Bekele, Project Manager of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.



Juergen Ponto Stiftung

Juergen Ponto



Bundesarchiv

Hanns Martin Schleyer



Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft

Alfred Herrhausen



Bundesarchiv

Detlev Rohwedder

have the largest capacity in Africa, capable of producing more than 6,000 megawatts of electricity, providing a 50% increase in the country's installed capacity. It was financed in part by China. The Italian engineering firm Salini-Impregilo was the contractor. Electricity generated by the dam's turbines will power the expanding national railway network. The first stretch of that rail grid, which connects Addis Abeba to the Port of Djibouti, was built in collaboration with China.

The assassination of engineers and scientists—symbols of Africa's commitment to building mega-infrastructure projects with the intention of leapfrogging the continent into the industrial world—should be taken seriously by all the countries on the continent.

Founder of the Schiller Institutes, Helga Zepp-La-Rouche, has compared this assassination to those that took place in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, which targeted scientists, business leaders, and financiers who

were key figures in the growth and spread of Germany's nuclear industry, and who favored providing this technology to the developing sector. A short review of those targeted will confirm the parallel.

- In July 1977, the terrorist Baader-Meinhof gang, later known as the Red Army Faction (RAF), assassinated Juergen Ponto, director of Dresdner Bank. Just before his death, in an interview in the South African magazine, *To the Point International*, he called for the dismantling of racial discrimination in South Africa. He called for Germany and the other leading nations of Europe to cooperate with the nations of Africa in the economic development of the continent. He also called for the development of nuclear power in Africa, as well as a reform of the European financial systems to facilitate the extension of credit for development projects.

- The following September, Ponto's murder was followed by the kidnapping and murder of Hanns Martin Schleyer, Chairman of the German Employers Association.

- By the 1980s the same terrorist group was targeting scientists and engineers, paralleling the dismantling of Germany's sophisticated nuclear power industry. In February 1985, the RAF assassinated Dr. Ernst Zimmermann, Chairman of the Federal Association of German Aerospace Industries. He was also the head of the MTU of Germany, a leading aerospace company.

- In July 1986, the RAF assassinated Prof. Karl Heinz Beckurts, the head of Research and Technology for Siemens. He also headed the German Atomic Forum. Beckurts played a leading role in developing Germany's nuclear industry. He also assisted Brazil in developing its nuclear sector.

- Alfred Herrhausen, Chairman of Deutsche Bank, Germany's largest bank, was assassinated in 1989. His armored car was targeted by a remotely triggered roadside bomb. The assassination was attributed to the unheard of "Second generation RAF." No one was ever arrested, nor has any member of this phantom group ever been identified. Herrhausen was a key adviser to then Chancellor Helmut Kohl on important economic policy issues related to the economic collapse of East Germany and Eastern Europe after the disintegration of the Soviet



Xinhua

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

Union. He was also about to depart for New York City to deliver a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations. In segments of the speech which have been published, he intended to call for a debt moratorium for developing countries.

- In April 1991, Detlev Rohwedder was assassinated by a sniper. He headed the Treuhand, the German state organization responsible for selling or rehabilitating East German industrial enterprises. He was a key figure in the government's economic planning after reunification. This assassination was also attributed to terrorists. No arrest has ever been made in this crime.

These assassinations put an end to Germany's leadership role in the nuclear power and aerospace sectors, and served to lock Germany into the grip of the "Brussels consensus" of the European Union, which had policies targeting Russia and China, while maintaining a Malthusian policy towards Africa.

Simegnaw's assassination must be taken as a warning to all of Africa, and appropriate security measures must be taken. As for Ethiopia, his assassination is not likely to weaken the resolve of the political leadership. The ruling Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has its roots in a liberation struggle of the 1970s and 1980s against a foreign-backed and brutal military dictatorship. The EPRDF has a powerful

vision for Ethiopia to become a strong industrial nation. Ethiopia has chosen key aspects of the "China model" with its emphasis on building national infrastructure. This has already earned the country the reputation of being the "China of Africa."

Neither the assassination attempt against Abiy nor the murder of Simegnaw has stopped the forward momentum of the new government's reform policy that calls for peace and economic development in domestic and foreign policy.

On the day of Simegnaw's assassination, Abiy was already in the United States on an unofficial visit to meet with the Ethiopian diaspora, including leaders of the opposition Gunbot 7, in his effort to promote reconciliation and unity among all sectors of Ethiopian society. His mes-

sage included a call for the diaspora to contribute to the development of their homeland, including returning to participate in the hard work ahead. He especially took this message to the highly educated young professionals, including medical doctors, scientists, and engineers, whose knowledge and skills are needed back home.

Expanding the Circle of Peace and Development

As referenced in the *EIR* article cited above, all this occurs in a historic moment for Ethiopia, which has just re-established relations with Eritrea, twenty years after its bloody war of secession. Full diplomatic relations between the two countries were established during the visit of Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki to Ethiopia on July 14. Now, ambitious plans for economic integration have been discussed, including reconstruction of the highway between Ethiopia and the two Red Sea ports in Eritrea.

As a result of Abiy's region-wide initiative, the Eritrean President has moved to expand the circle of peace and development the two leaders initiated, to the rest of the war-torn Horn of Africa. Afwerki invited the President of Somalia, Mohammed Abdullahi "Farmajo" to Eritrea. Mohammed made an official visit to Eritrea on July



VOA

President of Somalia Mohammed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmajo).

28, the first for a Somali President. Prior to his invitation, Eritrea and Somalia had had very strained relations, because some of the armed anti-government opposition in Somalia was being supplied via Eritrea.

Speaking at a banquet in honor of the Somali President, Afwerki praised all three countries for overcoming the forms of subversion, including by the “misguided policies of powerful countries,” that have thrown the region into a quarter-century of chaos and suffering. Afwerki stated:



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But this epoch of crises, conflict, and instability is not inherently sustainable. As such, it is nearing its end. We are indeed entering a new, transitional, phase.

The people of Eritrea have demonstrated exceptional resilience to challenge and frustrate all forms of subversion directed at them. They have prevailed in spite of the transgressions and pressures to which they were subjected without let-up. The people of Ethiopia have triumphed over the politics of ethnic polarization and foreign subservience. They are marching forward at a rapid pace for the crystallization and consolidation of a correct national and regional policy framework. There is no doubt whatsoever that the people of Somalia will, as ever, be fellow travelers with the peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The Somali President was accompanied by his ministers of Information, Culture and Tourism, Transportation, and Construction, as well as the State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Wide ranging discussions were held on the development of bilateral relations. The presidents toured development projects in Eritrea. They signed a joint communiqué pledging to “forge intimate political, economic, social, cultural, as well as defense and security cooperation.” They agreed to “establish diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors, promote bilateral trade and investment, as well as educational and cultural exchanges.” They pledged to “work in unison to foster regional peace, stability

Port Massawa on the Red Sea coast of Eritrea, Jan. 10, 2011.

and economic integration.”

Earlier this month, President Mohammed Abdullahi hosted Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The two leaders signed accords for far-reaching economic cooperation. The two leaders also attended the opening of the first phase of the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone, which was established in cooperation with China.

The border dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti still has to be resolved to normalize relations between those two countries. Ethiopia has offered to mediate a rapprochement between them.

These developments are taking place in the developmental environment of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, in which all four countries are eager participants. In May, China opened a brand new Embassy building in the Eritrean capital, Asmara. All four countries are planning to attend the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing this September.

Economic Integration Marching Forward

With these four nations adopting a win-win approach to relations, the Horn of Africa is poised to become a powerful economic region. Ethiopia, with its large land area and 102 million population, is clearly the motor for rapid development. Somalia, with a population of 14 million, Eritrea with 5 million, and Djibouti’s 940,000, need an industrializing country like Ethiopia as their neighbor. The first steps to integration are already in planning. Since the sole port of Djibouti could never serve all of Ethiopia, the first step is to



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Port Berbera, the commercial capital of Somaliland, on the coast of the Gulf of Aden, Oct. 11, 2016.

Dr. Costantinos Berhutesfa stated, according to the *Ethiopian Herald*, that Assab can reduce the transportation costs of cargo shipments. He added that with respect to Ethiopia's tremendous potash resources in the Danakil Depression, the Assab Port is ideal for exporting this product, and for establishing a potash-processing plant.

The *Ethiopian Herald* also cited Assistant Professor of Development Economics, Dr. Teshome Adugna: "High transportation cost is one the major

create networks of roads and railways linking the coastal points of Somalia and Eritrea with Ethiopia's regions. This is already happening.

Within two weeks of Afwerki's return to Asmara from Addis Abeba, Eritrea announced the completion of the preliminary refurbishment of its two major ports—Port Massawa in the north of the country and Port Assab in the south. They are ready to again handle Ethiopia's import and export cargoes. Before the two countries went to war in 1998, the two ports were the main ports for Ethiopia. For the last 20 years, the ports have almost become inactive, since they were handling cargo for a country of only 5 million people, while Eritrea had been under sanctions.

The port of Massawa is ideal for handling cargoes to and from northern Ethiopia, especially the city of Mekele, the capital of Ethiopia's Tigray Regional State. New industrial zones are being developed there, as well as exploitation of mineral and agricultural resources. An Ethiopian delegation led by former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, and business people who went to Eritrea on the first flight to Asmara in two decades, visited the port.

Before the 1998 war between the two countries, Assab Port had two-thirds of Ethiopia's trade with the world, and had gone through some development, but declined after the war. It also hosts an oil refinery, which has been idle for years.

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setbacks of Ethiopia's export trade, and re-accessing Assab is instrumental in reducing the unit cost of products in the view to penetrate global markets." He said activating the idle oil refinery in Assab would give Ethiopia the opportunity to export processed oil to the world market at better prices.

Somalia also has good seaports. Port Berbera in Somaliland is a major, modern port that Ethiopia wishes to utilize. Ethiopia has acquired a 19% interest in the port, which is run by DP World of Dubai, and is committed to developing the "Berbera Corridor" that will connect Ethiopia to Port Berbera, including transport and energy infrastructure.

Somaliland is officially an autonomous region of Somalia, but it considers itself to be independent, a status that is not recognized by any other nation or international institution. As Somalia stabilizes, relations between the two will have a chance to normalize.

While Berbera is on the north coast of Somalia, there are three other Somali ports available. Port Bosaso is also on the north coast. Two ports are located on the southern coast—the Port of Mogadishu, serving Somalia's capital, which is already connected by road to Ethiopia, and Kismayo, south of Mogadishu.

Somalia now has a way out of its failed-state condition of the past. Its new government is preparing proposals for participation in the Belt and Road Initiative to be presented at the summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation to be held in Beijing in September.