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**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ETHIOPIA'S MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY IN  
THE PRE- AND POST-BRICS ADMISSION PERIODS: CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES**

**BY: GETNET SISAY**

**JUNE 2024**

**ADDIS ABABA**

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**BY**

**GETNET SISAY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY, FOR PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS  
(POLITICAL SCIENCE)**

**JUNE 2024**

**ADDIS ABABA**

## **Declaration**

I GETNET SISAY DEMELASH do hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and that all sources of materials used have been duly acknowledged. I also solemnly declare that the thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Arts (MA) Degree in Comparative Politics (Political Science), and it has not been submitted, partially, or in full, by any other person for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate in any other university/institution.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Dedication**

*This work is dedicated to my beloved family members who went through all the difficulties of helping me reach where I am now.*

## Approval Sheet

Department of Political Science and International Relations

Approved for Defence by Thesis Advisor

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As member of the Examining Board of the Final MA Open Defence, we certify that we have read and evaluated the thesis prepared by **GETNET SISAY**, entitled as **A Comparative Analysis of Ethiopia's Multilateral Diplomacy in the Pre- and Post-BRICS Admission Periods: Challenges and Opportunities**, and recommended that it be accepted as fulfilling the thesis requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts in Comparative Politics (Political Science).

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| Name of External Examiner | Signature | Date  |

## **Acknowledgments**

I owe my particular thanks to Bayuligne Z. Bahru (PhD), whose penetrating questions taught me to question more deeply. I am grateful for him for enlarging my vision of science and providing coherent answers to my endless questions.

I also forward my heartfelt gratitude to the key informants. I offer my enduring appreciation to staff members of the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institute of Foreign Affairs who participated in the focus group discussion and in interviews. Diplomatic staff members in Ethiopian missions in New York, Moscow and Geneva, respectively, also deserve my earnest appreciation. Moreover, I want to bestow my thankfulness for staffs of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of BRICS member countries and their missions based in Addis Ababa, and those working in Ethiopian government institutions for providing me the necessary information and support.

Above all, special thanks are owed to the Department of Political Science and International Relations of AAU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Missions abroad, the Institute for Foreign Affairs, and other Ethiopian government institutions, for their all-rounded support including the provision of relevant materials for my study.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| AECT   | Association for Educational Communications and Technology |
| AFCFTA | African Continental Free Trade Area                       |
| AGOA   | African Growth and Opportunity Act                        |
| AI     | Artificial Intelligence                                   |
| AIIB   | Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank                      |
| AMISOM | African Union Mission in Somalia                          |
| AU     | African Union   |
| BASIC  | Brazil, South Africa, India, China                        |
| BRIC   | Brazil, Russia, India, China                              |
| BRICS  | Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa                |
| BTTC   | BRICS Thinks Tanks Council                                |
| CIF    | Climate Investment Funds                                  |
| CRA    | Contingent Currency Reserve Arrangement                   |
| CRC    | Committee of the Rights of the Child                      |
| CSW    | Commission on the Status of Women                         |
| DPM    | Deputy Prime Minister                                     |
| DW     | Deutsche Welle  |
| ECOSOC | Economic and Social Council                               |
| EEA    | Ethiopian Economic Association                            |
| EFY    | Ethiopian Fiscal Year                                     |
| EHRC   | Ethiopian Human Rights Commission                         |
| EMDCs  | Emerging Markets and Developing Countries                 |
| EU     | European Union  |
| EUDR   | EU's Regulation on Deforestation-free Products            |
| FANSPS | Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy |
| FAO    | Food and Agriculture Organization                         |
| FDI    | Foreign Direct Investment                                 |
| FGD    | Focus Group Discussion                                    |
| FM     | Foreign Minister  |
| G7     | Group of Seven  |
| G8     | Group of Eight  |
| G20    | Group of Twenty   |
| G77    | Group of Seventy-Seven                                    |
| GCC    | Gulf Cooperation Council                                  |
| GDP    | Gross Domestic Product                                    |
| GEF    | Green Climate Fund  |
| GERD   | Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam                           |
| HICs   | High Income Countries                                     |
| IBSA   | India, Brazil, South Africa                               |
| ICAO   | International Civil Aviation Organization                 |
| ICCPR  | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights      |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| ICHREE  | International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia |
| ICTs    | Information Communication Technologies                       |
| IDA     | International Development Association                        |
| IFA     | Institute for Foreign Affairs                                |
| IFIs    | International Financial Institutions                         |
| ILO     | International Labor Organization                             |
| IMF     | International Monetary Fund                                  |
| IMO     | International Maritime Organization                          |
| IODG    | International Organizations Affairs Directorate General      |
| IPE     | International Political Economy                              |
| IPEA    | Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada                     |
| IPU     | International Postal Union                                   |
| IR      | International Relations                                      |
| ITU     | International Telecommunication Union                        |
| LDCs    | Least Developed Countries                                    |
| LIO     | Liberal International Order                                  |
| MDBs    | Multilateral Development Banks                               |
| MENA    | Middle East and North Africa                                 |
| MFA     | Ministry of Foreign Affairs                                  |
| MIP     | Multiannual Indicative Program                               |
| MoU     | Memorandum of Understanding                                  |
| NAM     | Non-Aligned Movement   |
| NATO    | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                           |
| NBE     | National Bank of Ethiopia                                    |
| NDB     | New Development Bank   |
| NEBE    | National Electoral Board of Ethiopia                         |
| NGOs    | Non-Governmental Organizations                               |
| NIEO    | New International Economic Order                             |
| NISS    | National Intelligence Security Service                       |
| OEC     | Organization for Educational Cooperation                     |
| OECD    | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development        |
| OHCHR   | Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights          |
| ORF     | Observer Research Foundation                                 |
| OSC     | Organization of Southern Cooperation                         |
| PartNIR | BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution               |
| PTT     | Power Transition Theory                                      |
| RIC     | Russia, India, China   |
| SCO     | Shanghai Cooperation Organization                            |
| SDGs    | Sustainable Development Goals                                |
| SMEs    | Small and Medium-sized Enterprises                           |
| TASS    | Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union                         |
| TJP     | Transitional Justice Policy                                  |
| TPLF    | Tigray People Liberation Front                               |
| UAE     | United Arab Emirates   |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| UK     | United Kingdom   |
| UN     | United Nations   |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development               |
| UNEA6  | The Sixth Session of the UN Environment Assembly                 |
| UNECA  | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa                    |
| UNEP   | United Nations Environment Programme                             |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change            |
| UNGA   | United Nations General Assembly                                  |
| UNHRC  | United Nations Human Rights Council                              |
| UNSC   | United Nations Security Council                                  |
| UNSG   | United Nations Secretary General                                 |
| UPR    | Universal Periodic Review  |
| US     | United States  |
| USAID  | United States Agency for International Development               |
| USD    | United States Dollar   |
| WB     | World Bank   |
| WBG    | World Bank Group   |
| WEF    | World Economic Forum   |
| WFP    | World Food Program   |
| WHO    | World Health Organization  |
| WTO    | World Trade Organization   |
| WWII   | Second World War   |

## Abstract

*Today's multilateralism is in a deep crisis attributed largely to the lack of readiness on the part of the established system for reform, the increasing complexity of global challenges, and the problem of regulatory scale. Thus, answering the question of how the global South (majority) asserts its interests amid repeated failures to reform global institutions is crucial. As a country from the global South, Ethiopia has been an ardent supporter of a reinvigorated multilateralism through thick and thin. Its multilateral diplomacy is also at a historic juncture as it officially joined BRICS in January 2024. This historic decision has garnered much attention and become contentious. This study thus sought to appraise the challenges and opportunities of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy from 2018-2022; to examine the driving and enabling factors for Ethiopia's BRICS membership; and to analyze Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the post-BRICS admission period vis-à-vis the previous period. The study employed a qualitative research design. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources mainly through interviews, FGD, and document review. The analysis reveals the following findings. First, Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the first period was a mix of key achievements and challenges. In the period from 2018-2020, Ethiopia succeeded in diplomatic battles. Whereas from 2020-2022, its multilateral diplomacy was 'challenged' and preoccupied with mainly the northern conflict. Second, Ethiopia's foreign policy and economic calculations, BRICS' openness to accepting new members, having a similar agenda with BRICS on global governance, undue external pressures and other reasons drove Ethiopia to join BRICS. The enabling factors include its rich history of and devotion to multilateralism, being one of the largest diplomatic hubs, the right representative of Africa in terms of economy and demography, and robust historical bilateral relations with BRICS members. Third, comparing Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the pre- and post-BRICS admission periods, data reveals that BRICS membership is a natural continuation of its longstanding foreign policy and its strong devotion to a polycentric global order which BRICS would be midwifing. Ethiopia's BRICS membership shows its growing 'insertion' into the international community after a downward spiral during its pre-BRICS membership years. Ethiopia displayed defensive diplomacy during the first period, but relatively assertive and offensive diplomacy during the second. Ethiopia's BRICS membership is not a 'paradigm shift' and does not signify a change in its foreign policy. The findings suggest the need to conduct further studies to illustrate the impact of Ethiopia's BRICS membership on its multilateral diplomacy.*

**Keywords:** BRICS | Multilateralism | Multilateral Diplomacy | Multipolarity | Global Governance Architecture

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

The world system for the last 500 years has been mainly driven by the West. The system was dominated by the 'core' countries of the developed world. Chiefly after the end of World War II, liberal internationalism shaped global politics bringing about the liberal international order (LIO). According to Kumar, *et al.* (2023, p.17), "the United States, its allies, and some of its client states formed the 'core' of the [LIO]. These included Western Europe, Canada, Australia, US allies in Europe, as well as Japan, in Southeast Asia and Latin America." The Bretton Woods institutions namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in which allied powers wield permanent veto power, were instituted to maintain the pre-eminence of the LIO. During the post-WWII era, liberal internationalism influenced these institutions.

The bipolar system involving the stiff confrontation between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union brought about security alliances of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact established in 1949 and 1955, respectively, to keep the balance of power in favour of the rival powers. NATO and the European Union (EU) were the central pillars of liberal internationalism in practice in contrast to the proletarian or socialist internationalism of the Soviet bloc. On the other hand, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was founded in 1961 by developing countries seeking to remain independent and neutral.

Following the end of the cold war, a unipolar international system came into being with US' unparalleled dominance over the international system. The US became the only hegemon and the 'core' of the LIO thereby it propagated the economic ideology of neoliberalism. The Washington Consensus policies - a set of economic policy prescriptions promoted by the Bretton Woods institutions and the US Department of Treasury, were considered as the universal panacea for economic stagnation and distress across the developing world. Financial assistance by international financial institutions (IFIs) to crisis-wracked countries was conditional on the adoption of neoliberal economic reforms. The US started actively pushing countries to shift to market economies, and adopt competitive electoral politics.

The post-cold war global governance system, however, was in shambles both internally and externally. Internally, established in 1945, the UN's institutional structure and culture fail to reflect the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The UN could not keep pace with the rapid globalization and change. "This stunted institutional development has led to its marginalization, with states looking elsewhere to solve the world's most pressing challenges...the UN will slide into irrelevance unless it adapts to the times" (Trent & Schnurr, 2017, p.15). Over the past seven decades, the effectiveness of the UNSC to respond to international security challenges has also been constrained due to disagreement among its permanent members.

Moreover, Kumar, *et al.* (2023, p.30) shed light on the fact that "the Washington Consensus' global legitimacy came under serious threat following the 2008 financial crisis. Ironically, some of the loudest voices in opposition to the Washington Consensus have come from the advanced Western world". In the same vein, Hurrell (2018, p.91) argues that "[t]he challenge to the Western-centred global order now seems to come from the heartland of that order". More particularly, Moreland (2019, p.1) points out that "the US, the system's imperfect cornerstone, scorns a growing number of multilateral institutions and norms each day".

Externally, the factor of rising/emerging powers, defining features of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global governance, comes into play. Dominating global economic growth, the global South gradually gains influence on global governance. Emerging powers are in a position to redefine global governance and influence global institutions, and to question the hierarchy within the LIO. The West strives for re-westernization and to maintain the US-led unipolar order. China and Russia try to de-westernize and create a multipolar global order. Duggan, *et al.* (2021) stress, alternatively, the necessity that emerging powers should get a commensurate political influence on global governance with their robust growth. As well, transnational issues have become far too complex for a single multilateral institution to tackle. These factors call for the importance of new international cooperation among like-minded states.

As a result, countries disappointed by the existing global order were compelled to rely on informal gatherings to negotiate issues of mutual concern rather than the 'institutionalized' multilateral organizations. Emerging powers call for new institutionalization through regime shifting and regime creation. This culminated in the formal establishment of BRIC by Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2009. The latest BRICS, adding South Africa, seeks to contest the Western-dominated international order in both political and economic aspects so that not only emerging powers but also the global South in general can benefit.

As a country of the global South, Ethiopia has a rich history of multilateralism owing to its long history as an independent state. Being a member and founder of many international institutions, it is an ardent supporter of multilateralism. It is also the third largest diplomatic hub. It has historically relied on multilateral diplomacy to promote its national interests, and to exert influence at regional and global levels. As a staunch devotee of the principle of collective security, Ethiopia is proud of its age-old contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. It joined the Alliance for Multilateralism with the firm belief that only cooperation helps everyone solve common challenges.

This aside, Ethiopia also had an unfortunate experience with multilateralism. The League of Nations left Ethiopia behind when Italy's aggression in 1935 went unpunished and Ethiopia's appeal 'remained without an answer.' These days too, particularly after 2018, international organizations and mainly the UNSC repeatedly tabled Ethiopia's issues before exhausting all available local remedies and platforms. The UNSC's deliberations on Ethiopia's internal affairs related to the northern conflict contradicted the principle of subsidiarity and the customary international law of exhaustion of local remedies, and with due consideration of the domestic jurisdiction – the law of the land. Not only this, the UNSC repeatedly tabled the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), a purely developmental project that does not fall under its ambit. The IFIs and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) have also put undue pressure on the Ethiopian Government and its internal affairs.

As things stand, Ethiopia recently joined the BRICS family. The issue has thus garnered much attention and has become quite contentious. The ongoing debates encompass the driving factors that motivated Ethiopia to join the forum; the factors that enabled Ethiopia to qualify for membership amidst an increasing interest in joining the forum by a number of countries; the challenges and opportunities of Ethiopia's BRICS membership vis-à-vis its foreign policy approach to multilateralism; and others. Degye, et al. (2024, p.17) also affirm that "there is no common understanding on the reasons why Ethiopia had applied to join the BRICS". Hence, the subject is timely and worth deeper investigation.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In view of the international system, Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (FANSPS, 2002, pp.19-20) identifies globalization as one of its pillars within the context of the existing LIO (unipolar order). However, Ethiopia's draft revised Foreign Relations

Policy (MFA) (September 2020, p.50), calls, like countries of the global South, for reforms in the UN system and the IFIs, as well as for a multipolar global order that benefits all. The draft revised policy (pp.8-9) recognizes the evolving shift in global governance accompanied by the rise of emerging powers which will ultimately lead to a multipolar order. However, the existing international institutions are yet to make the necessary reforms to address the needs and challenges of the fast-changing global realities.

With their growing economic influence, emerging powers are in a position to redefine global governance and influence global institutions. BRICS which constitutes emerging markets and developing countries is also such an institution that promotes the agenda of the global South towards reform or change in the current global order into a multipolar order. BRICS, taking into account the diverging interests of its members, seems to follow three distinct tracks *vis-à-vis* the global order. These are reformist thereby maintaining the *status quo* with reforms to the legitimacy deficits of the institutions; undecided in which the institutions serve countries to navigate safely in the wake of an uncertain or turbulent world; and transformational which seek to establish a new system of global governance.

Despite being a strong advocate of multilateralism, Ethiopia has also gone through some unfortunate experiences. Particularly after 2018, international organizations, mainly the UNSC, IFIs and the UNHRC, have placed undue pressure on Ethiopia's government and its internal affairs, whereas BRICS members have provided support to Ethiopia's cause. The BRICS, during the 15<sup>th</sup> Summit, echoed that the maxim of 'African solutions to African problems' "should continue to serve as the basis for conflict resolution" (XV BRICS Summit, August 2023). This goes in line with the principle of subsidiarity and the exhaustion of local remedies.

Amidst these, Ethiopia officially joined the BRICS family on 01 January 2024, exactly 100 years after joining the League of Nations, following the invitation during the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit in August 2023. The West doubts that Ethiopia's BRICS membership would mean a change in its foreign policy and position, that is, an anti-western move and a resort to a new form of unilateralism. This was evident during the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa hearing on Ethiopia on 30 November 2023. The West also considers the BRICS as a geo-strategic than a geo-economic forum.

Ethiopia, on its part, upholds that its BRICS membership should not be misconstrued as a move away from its traditional partners. Its membership rather serves the purposes of diversifying its partnership, facilitating its active participation in South-South cooperation and pursuing

economic partnership. In his address to the House of People's Representatives on 14 November 2023, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, while addressing the issue of BRICS, pledged that Ethiopia would continue to cooperate with all countries of the world. The National Bank Governor and Ethiopia's Sherpa, Mamo Esmelealem, during his address to the BRICS meeting in South Africa from 02-03 December 2023, underlined that BRICS is 'not in competition with any bloc of countries or multilateral institutions'.

Moreover, in its conversations with Western diplomats on the intention to join the BRICS, the Government asserts that the long-held policy of 'constructive neutrality' would remain one of the cardinal principles of Ethiopia's diplomacy. It also points out that it does not entertain any idea of supporting anti-Western coalition, and its strong position has been 'to reform, not destroy, the current international order' to make it more inclusive and representative to reflect the current realities. Addressing a panel discussion alongside the 2023 Doha Forum, Ambassador Mesganu Arga, State Minister of MFA, contended that Ethiopia's BRICS membership "does not signify a new policy approach nor a change in its foreign policy orientation; and it has nothing to do with closing one door while opening another". He further noted that BRICS is not about replacing Ethiopia's strong and traditional partnership with the West; and that "BRICS is not anti-west or anyone" (MFA, 22 December 2023).

Alternatively, it is imperative for a rapidly growing economy like Ethiopia to increase its global influence in equal measure. International institutions, such as BRICS, are mechanisms to ensure the growing influence of countries on the international arena. The question then would be how Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy and its strong commitment to multilateralism would be influenced after it joins BRICS. The FANSPS asserts globalization in the context of the unipolar order as one of its foundations. In contrast, Ethiopia's newly devised 'pragmatic' foreign policy (MFA, September 2020, pp.4-9) emphasizes the need to multiply partners as its key pillars or foundations, which is implicitly indicative of a change in its multilateralism.

Considering Ethiopia's long-held commitment to multilateralism and the institutions that drive the existing global order, it is important to comparatively look into how its admission to the BRICS would affect its foreign policy approach to multilateralism. As international cooperation involves opportunities and 'some cost', there is also a need to assess the potential advantages and challenges BRICS membership would bring to Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy. As Ethiopia's BRICS membership is a recent event, this unexplored subject matter worth investigation.

Overall, this study presents a comparative analysis of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy during the pre- and post-BRICS admission periods, 2018-2022 and 2023-2024 respectively.

### **1.3 Central Argument of the Study**

The central argument of the study is that Ethiopia's admission to the BRICS family signifies a continuation of its long-established multilateral diplomacy.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.4.1 General Objective**

The overall objective of the study is to comparatively analyse Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the pre- and post-BRICS admission periods, and the associated opportunities and challenges.

#### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To appraise the achievement of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy between 2018 and 2022;
- To examine the driving and enabling factors for Ethiopia's BRICS membership; and
- To analyse Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the post-BRICS admission period *vis-à-vis* the previous period, and the associated challenges and opportunities.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

#### **1.5.1 Core Research Question**

How does Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the pre- and post-BRICS admission periods be described?

#### **1.5.2 Specific Research Questions**

The research attempts to address the following questions:

- How can the achievement Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy between 2018 and 2022 be described?
- What factors drove and enabled Ethiopia to join the BRICS family?

- What does Ethiopia's post-BRICS admission multilateral diplomacy look like as compared to the previous period?

## **1.6 Research Design**

The study employs a qualitative research design as the core concepts of multilateralism are unpredictable to handle quantitatively. Due to the inevitable time limitation, the research used cross sectional design in its time frame. The fast-changing environment in international relations ensures the research allows room for flexibility and adaptability to change.

### **1.6.1 Research Approach**

Qualitative research approach is used to describe and assess the meaning individuals and institutions ascribe to the issues under investigation. Thus, the research process involves emerging questions and procedures; data typically collected from the participant's subjective assessment and understanding of the issue; and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. It also comprises semi-structured questions, interview and document data, text analysis, and themes and patterns interpretation. The research is of a flexible structure rendering the complexity of a situation. Overall, the study attempts to deal with the issue inductively. It is a function of researcher's insights and impressions, and generates results in non-quantitative form so that they are not subject to rigorous quantitative analysis.

### **1.6.2 Research Method**

The research employs a comparative method to comparatively analyze the foreign policy practices before and after Ethiopia's BRICS membership. Freeman (1873) as cited in Lijphart (1971, p.687) stated that the comparative method involves 'the formulation of analogies between the political institutions of times". Yalem (1974) also presents some comparative analyses of international institutions. Comparative method helps to analyze Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy from 2018-22 and 2023-present in terms of opportunities and challenges. The units of analysis (cases) are international institutions and the diplomatic machinery.

### **1.6.3 Sources of Data**

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included interviews, focus group discussion (FGD), official documents, reports and policies. Secondary

data originated from multiple sources such as books, journals, articles, archival documentation, and other relevant electronic resources. Various literatures and theories were referred in order to make the analysis more elaborated and to give the research a theoretical base. The data is principally qualitative and soft data, but it also includes numerical facts. The researcher's involvement in BRICS meetings and events is also another source of data.

#### **1.6.4 Sample Design**

As the study employs a qualitative design, the plan for data collection is based on an 'emergent design' whereby decision was dependent on preceding information. This necessitated non-probability sampling approach. This sampling design was of interactive rather than distinct sequential steps with simultaneous analysis of data.

##### **1.6.4.1 Sampling Procedure**

A non-probability sampling procedure, also known as deliberate, purposive or judgment sampling, was employed. The procedure did not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population has of being included in the sample. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007, p.249) claim that samples "should be chosen because of their own unique value" to the issue. The procedure was vital to have conversant and information-rich samples from different experiences. Thus, participants with demonstrable experience and expertise were selected purposively from various institutions that work on foreign relations. The judgment of the researcher, therefore, played an important part in this sampling design.

##### **1.6.4.2 Sampling Frame and Sample Size**

Given the resource constraint, the sampling frame includes stakeholders selected purposely – officials and experts from Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Embassies of BRICS member countries based in Addis Ababa; Ministries of Foreign Affairs of BRICS countries; and scholars from Think Tanks such as the Institute for Foreign Affairs (IFA). Yet, as Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007, p.242) note, the sample size in qualitative research should not be too large that it is difficult to extract thick data; and it should not be too small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation. Moreover, because studying all the research population in the sampling frame is not feasible and entails high cost, few respondents were selected based on their experience. However, the researcher could not reach selected samples from Ethiopia's Ministries of Defense,

Finance, Trade and Regional Integration, and staff members of international organizations based in Addis Ababa for various reasons.

In view of this, a total of 20 samples were taken from these institutions for interview and FGD. Due to their closeness to the issues, most of the samples were drawn from Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The samples were drawn from MFA, particularly from the International Organizations Affairs Directorate General (IODG) (10), the Directorate General for American and European Affairs (1) and the Directorate General for Middle East, Asian and Pacific Affairs (1); Ethiopian Embassies in New York, Geneva and Moscow (3); Ministries of Foreign Affairs of BRICS member countries (3); Embassies of BRICS member countries based in Addis Ababa (1); and a scholar from IFA (1).

### **1.6.5 Instruments of Data Collection**

The study employed key informant interview, FGD and document review data collection techniques or instruments. As the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) (2001) puts it, interview helps get deeper information with a lower non-response rate. It was ideal to address questions posed by the study as it promotes more flexibility in investigation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via face-to-face, telephone and WhatsApp calls. Regarding the FGD, seven participants from the IODG of MFA (experts from the desks of BRICS (3), Peace and Security (1), Human Rights (1), WTO (1), and IMF and WB (1)) were involved. Moreover, document review ensured the study is intensive, and it includes books, summit statements, agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs), journals, researches, reports, policy documents etc. The techniques add depth and multiple insights to the analysis by enhancing the validity and credibility of the results. The researcher's participation and experience in BRICS meetings and events also helped to enrich the analysis.

### **1.6.6 Operationalization**

Data was collected through four different procedures. First, a document review guideline with six major questions was prepared to collect literature. Secondly, the in-depth interview had five sections comprising questions on Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy, BRICS, and challenges and opportunities of Ethiopia's BRICS membership. Thus, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The participants were contacted at the outset and rapport was made. Then detail

clarification was given after they gave their informed consent. Then interview guides were administered in their convenient time. They were assured full confidentiality to their information. Data was retained with voice recorder. An FGD with seven participants took place in MFA's premise for a duration of 90 minutes. All participants were asked to give their informed consent before schedules were sent to them via e-mail.

### **1.6.7 Data Analysis**

A qualitative data analysis was conducted to find linkages between the research outcomes and research questions. Throughout the analysis, the researcher remained open to new insights. Triangulation of data was possible using multiple methods and analysis techniques. Telephone follow-up allowed confirmation of unclear responses and evaluation of data quality. This supplementary data helped to authenticate key observations or check a fact.

The analysis begun during the interviews and continues during transcription when recurring themes, patterns and categories emerge. Data was prepared in a way easy for analysis. The raw data was examined to detect errors and omissions. Audio data was transcribed and translated. The data was read time and again to develop categories and codes. This is coding - the process of assigning symbols to answers so that responses could be put into a limited number of categories or classes. The codes were used as major themes. The themes were employed to condense the findings. There was classification - arranging data in classes on the basis of common characteristics, and tabulation - arranging the same in some kind of concise and logical order. Overall, the data passed through transcription, coding, categorization, and thematic analysis.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

In the main, the study serves as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Master of Arts Degree in Comparative Politics. It could also be used as reference material for those who have an interest in conducting any further inquiry into the issue. The study would pave the way for new insights for scholars, diplomats, policy makers and the general public, as this is inarguably the first work to analyze the implication of Ethiopia's BRICS membership to its multilateral diplomacy. It could as well serve as an input for foreign policy decision making in crafting Ethiopia's strategies towards the expanded BRICS family.

## **1.8 Scope of the Study**

Temporally, the study spans from 2018, when the incumbent Government came into power and a revision of the existing foreign policy has begun, to mid-2024 - end of the study. Spatially, the study covers the UN system (UNSC, UNHRC and Bretton Woods Institutions – institutions which specialize on the three pillars of the UN), the expanded BRICS and Ethiopia’s diplomatic machinery as its units of analysis. It involved staffs of Ethiopia’s diplomatic machinery, ministries of foreign affairs and missions of BRICS countries and the UN system.

## **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

The research needed to reach out to international organizations and all BRICS member countries, however, funding problems hindered it. Keeping in mind the time and financial constraints, the results of the analysis were not generalizable as the small number of cases could offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of the findings. Moreover, the researcher could not reach some of the key informants as planned due to their tight schedules, lack of willingness and other reasons of their own. Some key informants from foreign missions and international organizations showed little interest in cooperating.

The study could not also establish a causal effect of Ethiopia’s BRICS membership for its multilateral diplomacy afterwards. Besides, while Ethiopia only began its informal engagement with the BRICS in 2023 and formal engagement as of January 2024, active engagement has been/is being conducted on this platform. There is yet a lack of literature to provide a comprehensive overview of Ethiopia's BRICS engagement and its impact since it is a relatively new phenomenon. Despite this, the researcher's position in Ethiopia's BRICS secretariat and participation in BRICS meetings and events offered opportunity to fill this gap.

## **1.10 Ethical Considerations**

All participants of the study were treated as per the ethical standards of research. Although there were no identifiable risks for participating in this study, a couple of considerations were kept in mind when dealing with the participants. All ethical considerations were taken into account in each stage. Every caution was taken to ensure that all the participants in the interview feel safe, comfortable, and have the freedom to withdraw from the study if they felt they need to.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter briefly presents the available theoretical and empirical literature in international cooperation and/or multilateralism. While the theoretical review covers approaches of multilateralism and/or international cooperation, the empirical review sheds light on features of today's multilateralism, and Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy. The major sources for the review include books, journal articles, researches, reports, foreign policy documents and other internet sources.

#### 2.1 Conceptualization of Multilateralism

Today's global challenges ranging from peace and security to climate change to energy sustainability to polarized politics to geoeconomic warfare to rising cost of living and economic downturn, require global indivisibility. Such transnational issues involve many countries simultaneously as they often cannot be dealt with effectively within the national arena. Caporaso (1992, p.599) posits that "costs and benefits spill into the external arena. These external effects are frequently so great that domestic goals cannot be accomplished without coordinated multilateral action". This calls for international cooperation.

Multilateralism is relatively a new concept in world politics and extensively used in the post-WWII era. The notion of multilateralism involves global community, and international and regional institutions. As found in El-Ghalayini (2017), different theorists equate it with global governance, internationalism, international politics and world order. It is also used interchangeably with international cooperation. International cooperation involves the coordination of policies and behaviours of states for a common good and mutual interest. It is "a situation where parties agree to work together to produce new gains for each of the participants unavailable to them by unilateral action, at some cost" (Zartman & Touval, 2010, p.1). The association of states can bring about gains - material gains as well as 'improved security, status or freedom of action', and the 'imposition of constraints on other actors.'

Keohane (1990, p.731) defines multilateralism as "the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through *ad hoc* arrangements or by means of institutions". Multilateralism "covers three institutional domains - international orders, international regimes, and international organizations" (Ruggie, 1993, p.12). For Wijk, *et al.* (2020), it consists of

formal organizations, *ad hoc* arrangements, international law and regimes which together form an international rules-based order. International institutions are “persistent and connected sets of rules, formal and informal, that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations” (Keohane, 1990, p.732).

International institutions comprise both international inter-governmental organizations and international regimes. While international regimes are institutions with explicit rules, agreed upon by governments, bureaucratic organizations, according to Keohane (1990, p.733), assign specific professional roles to their employees. International regimes refer implicit or explicit “principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (Krasner, 1982, p.188). In light of this, multilateral institutions are multilateral arrangements with persistent sets of rules which distinguish them from other forms of multilateralism, such as *ad hoc* meetings and short-term arrangements. Nevertheless, international cooperation can occur inside and/or outside of international institutions. Yet, international institutions facilitate the greatest amount of cooperation as they serve to better coordinate policies and positions.

Though multilateralism has different interpretations across different societies, the Western interpretation is based on liberal internationalism. Ikenberry (2018, p.11) identifies five conditions including openness in terms of trade and exchange, commitment to a rules-based set of relations, some form of security cooperation, the idea that power politics can be ‘tamed’ by building stable relations in pursuit of mutual gains, and liberal internationalism will foster the spread of liberal democracy. In contrast, the non-Western interpretation asserts that the present liberal rules-based order is an instrument for promoting Western interests and should be changed. International institutions should adapt in ways that reflect non-Western interests and values. The non-western world “question the legitimacy of Western dominance and reject Western values and the West’s interpretation of international law” (Wijk, *et al.*, 2020, p.27).

Moreover, Wang (2000, pp.476-477) comes up with two types of multilateralism - nominal and qualitative. Taking Keohane’s (1990) definition, the nominal notion refers coordination of national policies in groups of three or more states. In contrast, qualitative multilateralism, for Ruggie (1992), refers to an institutional form which coordinates behaviour among three or more states on the basis of three 'generalized' principles of conduct - non-discrimination, indivisibility, and diffuse reciprocity. While non-discrimination entails that all parties are treated similarly,

indivisibility considers an attack on one to be an attack on all. Diffuse reciprocity implies that states rely on longer term assurances of balance in their relations.

Wijk, *et al.* (2020, pp.18-19) also identify two sorts of multilateralism - instrumental and functional. While major powers tend to practice instrumental multilateralism, smaller powers are more likely to engage in functional multilateralism. For major powers, multilateralism is a way to achieve some degree of hegemony. They believe that international institutions and the international rule of law should in all instances serve their interests. Instrumental multilateralism asserts that cooperation is difficult to attain because states have divergent interests difficult to align easily. In functional multilateralism, cooperation is mutually beneficial, generates peace and prosperity, and can be sustained by creating institutions.

Smaller states cannot make policy decisions in the same fashion as major powers as they lack the necessary power. Hence, through multilateralism, “small and middle powers can restrain more powerful nations and gain additional influence” (Wijk, *et al.*, 2020, p.19). This is based on the belief that multilateralism pays in the long run as opposed to the great powers’ view of multilateralism in terms of an immediate cost-benefit calculus. Likewise, Kagan (2002, p.4) sees multilateralism as a ‘weapon of the weak’ because only nations lacking power to impose solutions on others seek multilateral fora. The incompatibility of functional and instrumental views of multilateralism largely explains the present tensions among various powers.

## **2.2 Theoretical Understanding of Multilateralism**

International institutions are instituted for various reasons. Sperlich (2016, pp.5-10) identifies some of the rationales including dissatisfaction in the existing global governance, unfairness of the rules that institutionalize the existing order, limited representation in the global governance architecture, the problem of regulatory scale whereby transnational issues have become far too complex for a single multilateral institution to tackle, seeking opportunity to multiply influence and power worldwide, to reduce the increasing influence of other powers, to hold each other in check, competition for strategic economic partnerships, among others. Miller (2021) also underlines three reasons why members participate in international institutions - these forums become channels of information-sharing, represent their interests, enhance members’ reputations and help them build consensus on shared norms and ideas.

Positing that a plural conceptualization of multilateralism than a singular understanding more accurately reflects the complexities of the issue and adds more explanatory power to it, this

research takes into account four major mid-range approaches to multilateralism and international relations. This mix of theories would help to have a deeper understanding of the concept of multilateralism, the rationales for the creation of international institutions, and the motives of actors to engage themselves in international relations. The theories are explained as follows:

### **I. The Individual Approach**

The individual approach theorizes that states “enter into contractual relations with other states in a rational, self-interested way” (Caporaso, 1992, p.604). Multilateralism involves states, state interests, capabilities and strategies by which to interact with others. States engage in strategic interaction to maximize their utility functions. Like theories of realism, neorealism and game theory, this paradigm explains social behaviour by appealing to characteristics of individual actors, particularly preferences and capabilities, and their strategic environments. It focuses on the state actors’ instrumental behaviour whereby “each state actor within the multilateral regime aims to minimize transaction cost, minimize risk and uncertainty while achieving best outcomes” (El-Ghalayini, 2017, p.54). It asserts that “cooperative behaviour among many players can emerge as a result of self-interested strategic interactions and can do so within a class of games that is itself non-cooperative” (Caporaso, 1992, p.630).

There are several specific models under this approach. Tylor’s K group, for instance, argues that “cooperation amongst a relatively large number of players is 'less likely' to occur than cooperation amongst a small number” (ibid, p.609). This is because, with more actors, there are plural interests. Tylor also claims that transaction cost increases with an increase in actors. “The costs of identifying the relevant others, of discovering their preferences and strategies, and of devising policies that are capable of discriminating among defectors and cooperators all go up” (ibid, p.609). He thus suggests ‘conditional cooperation’ - the strategy of cooperating on the condition that others cooperate, for effective cooperation in large groups.

Scholars such as Keohane (1990), on the other hand, brings the political economies of scale to point out that multilateralism is cost effective compared to other forms such as bilateral relations. The marginal costs of handling a bilateral agreement within a multilateral organization, for instance, will be lower than the average cost. Thus, for Keohane, multilateral institutions lower transaction costs making it cheaper for governments to negotiate agreements. Multilateral activity without an organization to facilitate and enforce agreements “brings up all of the problems that haunt international political cooperation: absence of trust, weak and unreliable

information, incentives to defect, and renegeing on agreements when it is convenient” (Caporaso, 1992, p.610).

Multilateral institutions, for Caporaso (1992), provide administrative help, an ongoing forum in which representatives of different states can meet, a set of rules and procedures for dealing with problems, valuable informational services that facilitate multilateral contact, collect information, standardize conceptual categories, codify rules and practices, and attempt to increase the transparency of both cooperative and defecting moves. Overall, “in a world of zero transaction costs, there would be no need for international institutions, multilateral or otherwise. It is the recognition of positive transaction costs that leads us to inquire about the role of institutions in solving problems of exchange” (ibid, p.611).

Yet, Martin (1992) brings forth the contrast of ‘cooperation’ and ‘collaboration’ games to highlight the importance of multilateralism. “In coordination games, actors have a strong incentive to reach an agreement and do not have an incentive to depart from... The constellation of interests given by coordination games does not require a strong, centralized, multilateral institution to enforce solutions, since the temptation for opportunistic behaviour is small to non-existent” (Caporaso, 1992, p.611). In contrast, in collaboration games such as prisoners' dilemma, “there is a strong incentive to defect and a consequent need for monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to prevent unilateral defection” (ibid, p.611). Martin thus argues that norms ‘are likely to be dysfunctional for collaboration problems’ because norms of diffuse reciprocity and indivisibility require unconditional cooperation.

To conclude, under the individual approach, cooperation is instrumental and ‘an outgrowth of individual desires, capacities, and choices.’ However, Caporaso (1992) identifies the limitations of this approach to include underrating the embeddedness of cooperative habits, shared values, and taken-for-granted rules, and the absence of a historical (narrative) approach which as a result discourages the exploration of counterfactuals.

## **II. The Power Transition Theory (PTT)**

The PTT, first proposed by Organski in 1958, considers changes in the power balance in world politics happen systematically. It divides states into two groups - those that support the status quo, and revisionists. In the existing global order, Konyshv and Sergunin (2022, p.103) claim, the West enjoys the advantages of the established world order (status quo), whereas states

dissatisfied with their place and role in the international system are considered revisionists – they favour radical changes in the existing international order.

PTT considers four possible reasons for the establishment of international cooperation. First, national power comes from cooperation with other countries. Alliances offer the opportunity to multiply influence and power worldwide in order to enforce common interests such as improving bargaining power at the multilateral level, the expansion of regional influence, the ensuring of access to markets and natural resources, financial cooperation, and the filling of the ‘geopolitical interstice’ to usher in the post-unipolar world. The second reason for forming international cooperation is to reduce the increasing influence of major or dominant powers. Thirdly, there are times when countries ‘hold each other in check’. In today’s global context, no emerging country is allowed to become a super power alone, for instance, to form a bi-polar world with the US. Finally, competition in establishing free trade areas and economic partnerships results in the formation of counter-international cooperation regimes.

Empirically speaking, Kumar, *et al.* (2023, p.17) argue that “as the LIO and its foundational idea, liberal internationalism, come under increasing duress, the alternative modes of global governance...are likely to gain prominence”. Unlike the unfair prescriptive application of rules and values of the existing global order, emerging powers attempt to employ fair, horizontal, and inclusive approaches that lure the global South long prejudiced by this order.

In a different note, the prescriptive Washington Consensus model is strongly challenged. States also cooperate to coordinate their policies to effectively challenge such unfavourable development models. As per Kumar, *et al.* (2023, p.8), China, Russia, and other states witness a model where the state remains a dominant actor in the economy. As a result, the Beijing consensus conforming to state-led growth and characterised as ‘state-capitalism’ emerged as a viable competitor to the Washington Consensus. The model that has been championed by China and followed by Russia is to retain strategic sectors with the state and liberalise the remaining sectors. In this regard, the declaration of the 2013 Durban BRICS Summit recognizes the important role that a state plays in the economy. Such a policy is “antithetical and a threat to the neoliberal policies of the West” (*ibid*, p.8).

The concept of peaceful co-existence is another key perspective. BRICS countries want integration into the world economy and global governance systems on an equal basis. The updated interpretation of the peaceful coexistence concept by BRICS is that “countries with different economic and sociopolitical systems can coexist peacefully; the dominance of one or

several countries in world politics is unacceptable; preference should be given to soft power tools, while military force should be used only as a last resort” (Konyshev & Sergunin, 2022, pp.108-109). Yet, peaceful coexistence cannot embrace the entire complexity and diversity of BRICS and its international activities.

### **III. The Institutional Approach**

The institutional approach, like the individualist approach, focuses on the identities and powers/capacities of individual states. It, however, gives the ‘interaction repertoires’ of states - communication, learning, persuasion and self-reflection, a special emphasis. It incorporates social structure in which shared beliefs, norms and identity commitments are present. It focuses “not only on individual choice but on how the choosing agent reflects, discusses, trusts and distrusts, tries to build consensus, alters others' perceptions of the world, and... uses [its] capacities... to identify problems, solve them, and shape the environment” (Caporaso, 1992, p.613).

However, this approach “does not treat preferences as exogenous, and does not understand social relations - including multilateral relations - solely as products of individual self-interested calculations” (ibid, p.605). The approach underlines ways in which institutions can shape preferences. Institutions provide information, increase trust, reduce uncertainty about the actions of others, and promote norm adherence. “[N]orms are not treated as utilities (second-order utilities) but as prescriptions lying outside of preference structures” (p.625).

States increase their cooperation or effective multilateral activities in different ways. The ability to coordinate policies through a pre-play discussion and persuasion is one. Discussion increases cooperation “without any help from a leviathan or central enforcement agency... or other narrowly self-interested reasons” (ibid, p.614). It may help alter preferences, create a feeling of shared identity, encourage norms, or facilitate promising behaviour.

Unlike realist theories of international relations which hypothesize that agents (individuals, states) have preferences (or national interests) and act on them with resources (endowments, national capabilities) at hand, in the institutional approach, “norms, beliefs, and rules occupy a more central position” (ibid, p.624). Norms, promising and group identity are very relevant factors in defining multilateralism thereby strengthening cooperation.

The approach also stresses the importance of enduring structures and patterns of rule as it seeks to explain individual behaviour with reference to ‘institutional facts.’ Yet, it “is not primarily

about non-rational, habit-driven, unthinking behaviour... [T]he identities, preferences, beliefs, and behaviour of micro-units are given a structural determination. [It] attaches primacy to institutions, norms, and roles that shape and constrain, as well as facilitate, certain kinds of activity” (ibid, p.623). Therefore, ‘agency’ is given a structural determination. “Institutions are treated as a level of organized complexity: they are distinct from the sum of individuals composing them, ... and always reflect a tension between the desires of individuals and the needs of institutions” (ibid, p.623).

Moreover, institutional theorists do not view rules, norms, and habits of cooperation exclusively as something external to agents (states). Instead, according to Caporaso (1992, p.626), they recognize that “these practices are often constitutive of the identities and powers of agents in the first place. They also recognize that institutions are not necessarily chosen on a rational basis but instead are the products (residual products) of unconscious trial-and-error activity, coupled with selective pressures in the environment”. The state of nature is not considered as an appropriate starting point because if states are characterized only by interests and strategies, cooperative outcomes will not occur. Shared understandings regarding the rules of the game, the linkages between choices and outcomes, and the nature of agents involved in the game are important preconditions. “Shared understandings and communicative rationality are as important as instrumental rationality” (ibid, p.631).

In conclusion, the institutional approach comprehends the emergence of multilateralism as “a product of the power, resources, and beliefs of important actors and the reproduction of multilateral institutions in terms of organizational inertia, socialization to system norms, and adaptation to the needs of the institution” (ibid, p.632). Overall, with respect to multilateral activity, institutionalists heavily emphasize the discursive, deliberative, and persuasive aspects of communication and argument. The interstate system is a forum as well as a chessboard; and its actors debate, argue, justify and signal moves.

#### **IV. The Post-Positivism School**

The post-positivist school considers that international cooperation and institutions strengthen the positions of states on the world stage and elevate their international status. In their status-seeking policies, Konyshv and Sergunin (2022, p.112) claim, states apply various methods - from mobility and competition strategies to different types of creativity. Countries manage to create their images as constructive and peaceful states, preferring cooperation to confrontation while

respecting international rules and their international partners. Through such institutions, states manage not only to avoid complete international isolation, but also to actively influence international developments, both regionally and globally.

Konyshev and Sergunin (2022, pp.109-111) identify four postpositivist schools that explain the creation of international institutions. The first school is Status Theory which addresses policy motives related to self-esteem, reputation, dignity, fame, sympathy, and other emotional and psychological categories that introduce an element of unpredictability into the political behaviour of leaders, social groups, and states. In this regard, Larson and Shevchenko (2010) claim, states seeking to improve their international standing may try to pass into a higher-status group of states (mobility strategy), compete with the dominant group (competition strategy), or achieve pre-eminence in a different domain (creativity strategy).

The second school is the Theory of Global Regionalism which asserts that some institutions manage to form a common transnational agenda. For Kumar, *et al.* (2023, p.xvii), BRICS, for instance, is unique as it does not represent a typical region consisting of a set of states that are geographically close to each other and form a single historical, economic, political, and socio-cultural community. Thus, it belongs to 'global regions' which are based on functional, network-type, identity, multi-actor, and multifactor principles rather than on geographical proximity. Such regions have a cross-cutting nature. They easily permeate various levels - local, regional, and global - to create a completely different type of world politics.

Thirdly, Economic Integration Theory asserts that increasing globalization and technological progress lead to freer trade and movement of economic factors, and to deeper integration over time. Originally, as per Sperlich (2016, p.2), the concept was based on economic cooperation between natural partners. But since technological progress has reduced transaction costs, intercontinental and global economic integration has also become important recently.

Finally, Varro and Lagendijk (2013) discuss various strands of the 'relational perspective' on regions. The 'relational view' goes beyond the notion of 'territorial contiguity' to conceptualise a region in an increasingly globalised world. Such geopolitical imagination has for instance resulted in strategic regionalization for the BRICS *vis-à-vis* the West. The defining relational element of the BRICS, in this regard, is that it has become capable of providing some semblance of global governance to the developing world.

Overall, the explanatory power of each of the above approaches complement rather than exclude each other. In an interdisciplinary approach, they form the foundation for studying the complex phenomenon of international cooperation and institutions.

## **2.3 Review of Empirical Studies**

This section presents a brief empirical overview of literature on the nature of today's global governance and multilateralism, and Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy.

### **2.3.1 Global Governance and Multilateralism: Recent Trends and Developments**

The post-WWII globe is mainly governed by liberal internationalism. The end of the cold war then heralded an unparalleled US dominance over the international system. "The US actively pushed states to shift to market economies, join the US-dominated Bretton Woods institutions and adopt competitive electoral politics" (Kumar, *et al.*, 2023, p.17). The LIO has emerged as the dominant paradigm of global governance since then. The organizing principles of liberal internationalism are free markets, rules-based interaction among states in multilateral institutions, practicing representative democracy, and pursuing reform and progress. As per Konyshv and Sergunin (2022), the dominance of the Western powers is formalized in the present system of international institutions and regimes, and driven mainly by the UN and its broader system. The UN system comprises funds, programs and specialized agencies such as the IMF, the WB, and the UNHRC, with their own governing body and budget.

The wanton propagation of economic neoliberalism after 1991 "led to the implementation of the 'Washington Consensus' policies" (Kumar, *et al.*, 2023, p.21). Western democracies and IFIs advocated the policies as 'universal panacea' for economic stagnation and distress across the developing world. The disbursement of financial assistance by the IFIs to countries undergoing economic crisis was made conditional on the adoption of such policies.

However, the current global governance is an order in deep crisis facing both external and internal pressures. French and German Foreign Ministers Jean-Yves Le Drian and Heiko Maas, respectively, assert that "the multilateral order is experiencing its perhaps gravest crisis since its emergence". Externally, the international system dominated by the US-led LIO's ideational, material, and institutional architecture comes under increasing duress and faces opposition from the global South. Haibin (2013) argues that emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs) gain a gradual 'greater influence over the international decision-making process'.

Duggan *et al.* (2021, p.470) emphasize that “there is a widening gap between the actual role of (EMDCs) in the global system and their ability to participate in the decision-making processes of global institutions”. Many developing countries believe that “the North has traditionally been the normative and legal trendsetter in international institutions, with the South being on the ‘receiving end’ of those norms and rules” (Zartman & Touval, 2009, p.65).

Moreover, EMDCs have started to resist Western liberal policies “from humanitarian interventions to financial deregulation, and objected to conditionality requirements” (Haibin, 2013, p.7). Moreland (2019, p.1) also avers that, assertive EMDCs “are seeking to reshape multilateralism, challenging the foundational liberal principles that have guided the post-Cold War multilateral order”. EMDCs have, as well, tried to grow their influence within the LIO, and to lay the foundations of new structures of global governance that favour their interests. Duggan *et al.* (2021, p.470) also argue that, there is “growing cooperation among EMDCs in the form of South-South cooperation” against the existing order. The growing influence of EMDCs was matched by a trend in the fragmentation of global governance, and their “efforts to strengthen trans-regional cooperation and connectivity” (Duggan *et al.*, 2021). Parallel institutionalization by some platforms also threatens the existing order.

Still others factor in the global geopolitical rivalry for the crisis. Moreland (2019) argues that “the unfortunate return of great-power competition, so noticeably dampened during the preceding decades, is eroding the very foundations on which the multilateralism of the post-Cold War era stood” (p.1). The author continues to argue that it is the multilateral system that can unstiffen the power politics in resort to avoid the challenges thereof.

Internally, the key institutions of the LIO become toothless and defy reform. For instance, the UNSC, the cornerstone for global peace and security, proved mostly ineffective “to respond to breakdowns in international security... due to disagreement among its permanent members” (Kumar, *et al.*, 2023, p.22). Besides, UNSC permanent members failed to offer EMDCs due consideration for a seat and rearrange the asymmetric power structure and the skewed representation. The West’s reluctance to cooperate in reforming institutions contributes to the problem. The slow pace of governance and quota reform at the IMF is also another manifestation of this weakness. Thus, as Duggan *et al.* (2021, p.470) assert, “the traditional global governance system is in crisis, visible by the repeatedly failed efforts to modernize” the existing institutions.

Moreover, the intra-Western criticisms of the existing global order and its institutions is another sign for the crisis. Moreland (2019, p.1) states that, “across the globe, multilateralism appears in

crisis. Scepticism of the benefits of a multilateral order grounded in underlying liberal principles is manifesting throughout the Western world”. The US walked away from some multilateral institutions during the Trump administration, and clashes with the ideals of the multilateral order as it abides by, violate or change the rules as it wishes. The US violated international law and ignored international institutions when it waged war in Kosovo, Iraq and other countries. Moreover, “the Washington Consensus’ global legitimacy came under serious threat following the 2008 financial crisis. Ironically, some of the loudest voices in opposition to the Washington Consensus have come from the advanced Western world” (Kumar, *et al.*, 2023, p.30). Similarly, Hurrell (2018, p.91) concludes that “[t]he challenge to the Western-centred global order now seems to come from the heartland of that order”.

Overall, Bohler-Muller (2014) avers that, though multilateralism is the most egalitarian form of international cooperation, and multilateral institutions have the potential to provide EMDCs with an equal voice in international relations, multilateralism, in its present form, reflects Western preferences. This explains “why the non-Western world, aided by the global power shift, seeks to change the system both from within and by creating alternative structures. As the multilateral system reflects global power distribution, multilateralism is challenged by global power shifts, different value systems, and alternative views on multilateral cooperation” (Wijk, *et al.*, 2020, p.23). Thus, in the context of these challenges and as EMDCs started to flex their muscles and ‘question the hierarchy that exists’ in the LIO, the establishment of effective global governance necessitates the reform of global institutions to accommodate the interests of EMDCs.

### **2.3.1.1 Defining Feature of Today’s Global Governance**

The increasing role of ‘rising’ and ‘emerging’ powers and markets has become the defining feature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global politics. According to the Economist’s (2017) special report, Antoine van Agtmael, a World Bank economist, was the first to coin the term ‘emerging market’ in the 1980s referring promising stock markets in the developing world. Yet, an ‘emerging market’ is not necessarily an emerging/rising power in terms of political weight or influence. For Waltz (1993, p.50), rising powers are countries that could realistically become great powers scoring a better mix of “the size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence”.

Recent works of Fonseca *et al.* (2016) and Xing (2019) also associate the concept of rising or emerging power with a country’s capability for upward mobility. Fonseca *et al.* denote it as a

country “with a set of material and ideational attributes along with a specific political behaviour, a reformist or revisionist activism in international order...usually marked by not belonging to the hegemonic *status quo* values” (p.61). They also made reference to an ‘ascent power’ which is “able to make a hierarchical transition to the core in international politics and economics, and... observes a positional improvement in the distribution and accumulation of global wealth and converts it into political power” (ibid). In contrast, Milani *et al.* (2017), as cited in Xing (2019), stress that emerging powers should not necessarily be considered as ‘the new challengers to the West and the *status quo*’ and experience dynamic economic growth. Instead, “the foreign policies of these countries may go through changes both in terms of foreign policy strategies and in terms of their ambitions in the global system, and economic growth may, at times, falter” (p.4).

Xing (2019, p.1) also defines rising/emerging powers as those “perceived to be in the process of increasing their share of global economic and political power comparatively faster than that of the rest”. Xing relates emerging power, rising power, the earlier ‘intermediate states’ category of international relations or international political economy, as well as the ‘semi-periphery’ concept of the world system theory. He also associates these concepts with BRICS.

The international system is in transition. Schweller (2014), found in Xing (2019, p.9), argues that “[t]he world is seen as entering into ‘the age of entropy’, in which international politics is transforming from a system anchored in predictable, and relatively constant, principles to a system that is, if not inherently unknowable, far more erratic, unsettled, and devoid of behavioural regularities”. Hurrell (2018) and Xing (2019) attribute this change in international relations to the increasing diplomatic activism and successful catch-up by emerging countries. The formation and consequent activities of IBSA, BASIC and institutionalization of BRICS, are instances. Former Brazilian FM Celso Amorim describes the current international system as “a time of ‘multipolarity with no multilateralism’, i.e. rising powers were eager to strengthen their voice” (Becard, *et al.*, 2019, p.137). Any decision to accept or resist the established order or create a new world order seems to depend on the roles emerging powers decide to play.

The existing order’s lack of readiness and failure to lay a clear foundation to accommodate emerging powers with necessary modification is regrettable. Mahrenbach (2019, p.69) opines that, “acknowledging emerging states simply seek the same privileges - and forum flexibility - which established states have enjoyed for years” would enhance the emerging-established state cooperation and diversify the existing system. In his interview with Deutsche Welle (DW) News

on 03 January 2024, Guntram Wolff, a scholar from the German Council on Foreign Relations, questions the West's readiness to concretely consider the interests of the global South, as follows:

*The key question is that what is it we can offer to these countries so that these countries aligned and stay interested not only in western values...? So, the question is, do we still have something to offer to the global South? We need to support the global South... But what is it we actually offer and we want to concretely bring to the table to these countries that is in their interest but that is also of in our interest? There [are] no so many concrete policy ideas out there.*

In this regard, Norwegian Foreign Minister Eide asserts that “there are 8 billion people on the planet, 7 billion of those are not in the West. So, we better start listening, start engaging and better form new types of dialogue looking sort of more into who are the people we can work with to drive things forward” (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2024).

On the contrary, Ikenberry (2011, p.57) argues that emerging powers do not oppose the existing order and they are beneficiary. ‘The struggle over international order today is not about fundamental principles. China and other emerging great powers do not want to contest the basic rules and principles of the LIO; they wish to gain more authority and leadership within it’. The embracing of the *status quo* in Chinese foreign policy behaviour; the fact that China is coming out winner of today's globalization; China's active participation in the existing organizations; and Chinese success in economic growth are presented as showcases for this argument.

However, this argument does not seem to be tenable as it centres in on China without taking the broader global South into consideration. It also ignores China's ‘financial multilateralism’ in which it founded and contributed to the formation of AIIB, NDB and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership trade agreement. These mark the ‘border-line’ of its status as a ‘revisionist power’ challenging Bretton Woods institutions and its role in the existing global system. But it is undeniable that “the shift of the world economy from ‘unipolar’ toward ‘multipolar’ has not been translated into changes in hegemony (authority and influence) within multilateral organizations such as the WB and IMF. Consequently, policy coherence at the global level becomes problematic in this fragmented institutional milieu” (ibid, p.103). Bernal-Meza (2019, p.120) also adds a layer into this counter-argument stating that, “the changes in the global economy can be understood through the new relations between the semi-periphery and the periphery and the East-South relations, such as those developed by China with Africa and Latin America”.

Notwithstanding these, Xing (2019, p.6) highlights the ‘binary choice’ faced by both the existing and emerging powers in which “the existing powers are struggling to assimilate the emerging

powers into the existing order, while the emerging powers are endeavouring to benefit from challenging and changing the established structure”. Not only this, besides the crisis the established multilateralism faces both within and outside, the non-western world pushes further to establish a multilateral system considerate of its values and interests.

The ongoing change in international relations implies, on the one hand, that power is diffusing away from the West as emerging powers are becoming far more consequential actors, both globally and regionally. There is an evolving global order where power is diffused. The world is fragmenting, de-globalizing and retreating thereby geopolitical contestations become its defining features. There are deficits in global governance, security, and development. This is a visible sign of the crisis of multilateralism including the UN system. Observer Research Foundation (ORF) (2021) further attributes the increasingly evident crisis in global multilateralism to several factors including the increasing complexity of global challenges and the cross influences across domains that are clearly beyond the scope of the multilateral mechanisms.

On the other hand, the change informs the importance of reforming global governance institutions so that they remain effective, legitimate, and able to accommodate the aspirations of emerging powers. The hegemonic control of the existing global governance institutions resulted in ill-designed multilateral institutions that are not responsive to global challenges; are ineffective and non-inclusive; and face trust deficit. “[L]arge parts of the world have sought to reject or revise the Western-dominated order because it was built around their marginalization and around structured patterns of hierarchy” (Hurrell, 2018, p.95). Ambassador Tekeda Alemu (2024), in his article published by Amani Africa, has summarized the UNSG’s views on the dysfunctions of the UN, in the New Agenda for Peace, as follows:

*There is disappointment among nations and people over the failure of governments and international organizations to deliver for them. As a consequence, he stresses, lack of trust in the potential of multilateral solutions has been growing... There could be a way out of this situation which nonetheless can be achieved only if the benefits of international cooperation become tangible and equitable, and states manage to overcome their division and seek pragmatic solutions to their problems. This ... ‘demands that we look beyond our security interests’ ... ‘Building [a] new multilateralism must start with action for peace; not only because war undermines progress across all our agendas, but because it was the pursuit of peace that in 1945 states united around the need for global governance and international organization’... the UNSC has become dysfunctional. Even earlier, the Council has never been fully functional.*

The non-Western world also perceives the established multilateral institutions, which liberal values undergird, as non-inclusive. Moreland (2019, p.11) adds that, “[t]hen, as now, the builders

of those systems understood that while their values may be universal, those values were not universally embraced by governments”. Referring how the Chinese economic success is opening the room for multipolarity and alternative values, Xing (2019, p.105) posits that ‘universal norms and values’ “are conventionally defined by the existing powers alone, and the rise of China is making them ‘non-universal’ - open, less rigid”.

ORF (2021, p.7) summarizes the existing realities of global governance as follows:

*Despite several efforts over the last two decades to reform multilateral institutions, not much has been achieved towards serving the needs of developing countries and mitigating impending global challenges. The financial crisis of the 2000s, Brexit, the retreat to protectionism and rise of inward orientation, bilateral trade wars, sanctions, unilateral actions hampering multilateral processes have led to a weakening of public perceptions on multilateralism, a trend that seems irreversible. While global inequalities in access to finance, technology, resource mobilization and trading capacities are multiplying, climate change and security challenges have also intensified.*

Xing (2019) characterizes the emerging world order as an ‘interdependent hegemony’ whereby “new historical transformations (new contexts, such as globalization and the rise of new emerging powers) are generating new social and political forces that are shaping new politics, institutions, and ideas in a dialectic and dynamic nexus” (p.103). Interdependent hegemony implies “a dialectic process of mutual challenge, mutual constraint, mutual need, and mutual accommodation. Countries and country blocs (existing and emerging powers, existing and emerging international institutions) are intertwined in a constant process of shaping and reshaping the world order in the nexus of national interest, regional orientation, shared economic and political agendas” (ibid, pp.113-114).

The Russian FM Sergey Lavrov, during the first Sherpas and Sous Sherpas meeting on January 2024, underlined that international relation is in an inevitable deep transformation reflecting the need to develop a more democratic and fairer multipolar world based on the diversity of the modern world and the right of every nation to determine its future. He also pointed out that “new powerful centres of economic growth and political influence are rising. This is not happening because the West is doing everything in its power to preserve its domination ... which they have enjoyed for 500 years”. What Lavrov interchangeably calls the ‘golden minority’, ‘golden billion’ or the West is trying to preserve the *status quo*, for the ‘global majority’ recognize its ‘privileges’, and to promote the ‘rules’ the West made as the basis of the world order.

Norwegian FM Eide admitted that the existing world faces a deep crisis of the credibility of the institutions that has been exacerbated by the double-standards of the West in responding to different crisis situations, Ukraine and Gaza, for instance. He argues that the West has “hesitated to use the same type of language against the violations of international humanitarian law... Gaza is a symptom of a deeper divide” (WEF, 2024), as has been the case in Russia-Ukraine crisis.

The overall existing reality seems to call for a plural and competitive multilateral system that serves the values and interests of both world systems. Moreland (2019) argues that ‘layered and flexible’ multilateralism is effective in such a complex world. Hurrell (2018, pp.96-97) also states that “hybridity becomes the rule, not the exception... Far from socializing emerging states into a single logic of responsible global governance, relative success brings with it a natural desire for recognition - and for recognition of what is different, distinct and exceptional”. Emerging powers seek pluralism and recognition of diversity.

Moreland’s ‘competitive multilateralism’ has three key dimensions. The first is multilateralism as ‘facilitating cooperation’ for the very reason that transnational challenges - the serious range of ‘problems without passports’ - may threaten all, but they do not exist in a geopolitical vacuum. The second is multilateralism as ‘supporting conflict prevention’. It is about de-confliction of serious conflict among the great powers. The third is multilateralism as ‘spaces for competition’ whereby it necessitates preparedness for sustained competition among the different values involving multilateral institutions. A ‘retooled multilateralism’ can thus be “a powerful force to continue some collaboration on shared challenges; create off-ramps for crises that risk spiralling into conflict; and compete with authoritarian regimes selectively within existing institutions and via new ones to uphold democracy” (ibid, p.19).

Notwithstanding the above arguments, international institutions provide a platform to a flexible, inclusive and responsive global system. Hurrell (2018, p.92) opines that “[f]or emerging countries, institutions are logical ‘paths to power’ both as domains for voice and as constraints on the powerful”. Ambassador Mesganu, State Minister of MFA, in his address to the 2023 Doha Forum, posits that “[informal multilateral forums] are of enormous significance for everyone to make preparation and strategic adjustment in approaching and facing this polarized world situation with greater understanding and wisdom, setting aside the prevailing assumptions of framing the world in binary terms”. Yet, Hurrell (2018, p.92) underlines that “in a world where the most powerful can either seek to create alternative institutions or choose simply to walk away from existing institutions and multilateralism, such pathways to power will inevitably be

undermined. For realists this is unsurprising, as power has always been primarily about hard power - that is, military and coercive power”.

To conclude, managing the rising influence of emerging powers and reforming multilateral institutions is becoming decisive to establish a fairer world order cognizant of current realities.

### **2.3.2 Taking Stock of Ethiopia’s Multilateral Diplomacy**

Ethiopia has a long and complex history of multilateralism, born out of its independence. It is not new to international diplomacy and institutions. It is a founding member of the UN and many other international organizations. It has historically relied on multilateral diplomacy to promote its national interests. It is also the third largest hub for multilateral diplomacy, and an ardent supporter of multilateralism. Its staunch devotion to the principles enshrined in the UN charter, and particularly of collective security, epitomized by its age-old and weighty contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. It also joined the Alliance for Multilateralism with a firm belief that ‘only cooperation helps everyone solve shared challenges.’

Notwithstanding this, Ethiopia had also an unfortunate experience with multilateralism. The League of Nations left Ethiopia behind when Italy’s aggression in 1935 went unpunished. These days too, international organizations, and mainly the UNSC, have got easier to table Ethiopian issues. The UNSC’s deliberations on Ethiopia’s internal affairs related to the northern conflict plainly violated the principle of subsidiarity and the customary international law of exhaustion of local remedies, and due consideration of domestic jurisdiction. Not only this, after 2018, the UNSC repeatedly tabled the GERD - a purely developmental project that does not fall under its ambit. The IFIs and the UNHRC have also put undue pressure on the government.

Though the international community is failing it by the day, Ethiopia neither loses trust in nor reverts to its commitment to global values. Mr. Gedu Andargachew, former Ethiopian FM, once said, “despite its painful experience during its membership in the League of Nations, Ethiopia has never lost confidence in multilateralism” (Samia, 2021). Ethiopia, like countries of the global South, has for long been and is now calling for a reinvigorated multilateralism, reforms in the UN system and the IFIs, as well as a multipolar global order that benefits all.

Against this backdrop, Ethiopia has officially joined BRICS on 01 January 2024 following the invitation during the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit in Johannesburg in August 2023. Considering Ethiopia’s long-held commitment to multilateralism and the institutions that drive the existing

global order, it is to be seen how its BRICS membership would affect its foreign policy approach to multilateralism.

## **2.4 Gap Identification**

Following Ethiopia's BRICS membership since January 2024, the West has been dubious that Ethiopia's BRICS membership would mean a change in its foreign policy, that is, an anti-western move and a resort to a new form of minilateralism shunning out its longstanding position on multilateralism. The West also considers the BRICS as a geo-strategic than an economic forum. Ethiopia, on its part, upholds that its BRICS membership should not be misconstrued as a move away from its traditional partners. It also holds the view that BRICS is not about replacing or substituting Ethiopia's traditional partnership with the West; and that 'BRICS is not anti-west or anyone'.

Considering Ethiopia's long-held commitment to multilateralism and the institutions that drive the existing global order, it is important to comparatively look into how its BRICS membership would affect its foreign policy approach to multilateralism. As well, as international cooperation involves 'new gains' and 'some cost', there is a need to assess the opportunities and potential challenges Ethiopia's BRICS membership would bring to its multilateral diplomacy. Overall, as Ethiopia's BRICS membership is a relatively recent event, the subject matter is a new and an unexplored area worth investigation. Therefore, this study presents a comparative analysis of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy during the pre- and post-BRICS admission periods, 2018-2022 and 2023-2024 respectively.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PHENOMENON OF BRICS

As a major theme of the study, this chapter mainly deals with the *raison d'être* of BRICS. It gives an extensive coverage to the purposes, challenges and prospects of the BRICS platform.

#### 3.1 Introduction

The existing institutions at the centre of global governance face legitimacy and trust deficit. According to Hampson and Heinbecker (2011, p.301), “many developing countries have long felt disempowered by international institutions and feel that they have not received commensurate benefits from their participation in post-World War, global multilateral economic, financial, and trading arrangements”. They believe that the global South is on the ‘receiving end’ of the normative principles and architecture of the global political, economic and financial architecture. The authors further argue that emerging powers “would like to see a better representation of Southern values and interests in global summitry and in the major decision-making organs of the UN and Bretton Woods system” (p.301). The authors further claim that challenges associated with the existing global governance seem likely to require new forms of multilateral diplomacy - especially unilateralism. They also urge sensitivity to the needs and wishes of EMDCs. Therefore, the inefficiency of the existing global order and institutions is driving the emergence of new international institutions like BRICS.

Jim O’Neill, an economist at Goldman Sachs, was the first to coin the term ‘BRIC’ in reference to ‘the impulse for collective action by the leading states of the global South dates to the late 1990s’. The term was used in his publication ‘*Building Better Global Economic BRIC*’ in 2001 where he foresaw the fast-growing economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China surging ahead of the economies of the West. The roots of the current iteration of the BRICS coalition can also be traced back to informal discussions among the senior cabinet officials of Russia, China, and India that started in the late 1990s.

During his visit to India in 1998, Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, launching a doctrine of multipolarity, floated the idea of a triangular alliance between the three countries - RIC. Initiatives like the RIC in 2002; India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA) in 2003; and the G7 ‘Outreach Five’ started taking shape to vent their collective aspirations for influencing global

governance. RIC and IBSA ‘did not just precede the formation of BRICS but prepared much of the ground for the future coming together of the five countries.’

On the other hand, Kumar, *et al.* (2023, p.2) argue that “the political foundation of BRICS was laid before the much-celebrated Goldman Sachs report. Politics preceded the economic rationale of the association. Many of the collective forums mentioned earlier emerged in the 1990s when these states were viewed as unstable economies”. Hence, India and Brazil had initiated liberal reforms but were vulnerable to economic and financial vicissitudes. Russia’s economy was in deep turmoil. It was amidst this turmoil that forums like IBSA and RIC were conceived. In 2003, French President Jacques Chirac took the initiative to invite India and Brazil to the G8 summit in Evian. Then, informal discussions among the representatives of the five nations - the ‘Outreach Five’ - at the G8 summits laid the groundwork for the eventual formation of a separate BRICS group. The first formal meeting between foreign ministers of the BRIC states took place in 2006.

BRIC countries’ leaders met at the Tokyo Summit in 2008 which is often taken as a precursor to the formal Yekaterinburg meeting in 2009. “The financial crisis of 2008 proved to be a turning point for BRICS. Unlike the non-Western origins of earlier crises, it had its epicentre in the US and Europe. The crisis infused new impetus into an organisation like BRICS” (Kumar, *et al.*, 2023, p.3). This was an inflection point after which significant diplomatic energies and material resources were devoted by BRICS to fashion a cohesive response to global problems. As a result, “from 2008 onwards, various BRIC ministerial meetings took place, and in 2009 the first BRIC Summit was held” (Duggan *et al.*, 2021, p.471).

Geographically located apart, all BRICS members, save Russia, share a similar colonial past and are critical of Western dominance in global governance. As they are the most powerful states in their respective regions, their influence goes far beyond their borders. Kumar, *et al.* (2023) point out that what brought them together was politics. In fact, there is no strict separation between BRICS’ political and economic objectives. Yet, BRICS seeks to contest the LIO in both these aspects so that not only emerging powers but also the global South in general can benefit. BRICS states pursue common interests such as improving their bargaining power at multilateral level, expanding regional influence, and ensuring access to markets and resources at national, regional and multilateral level. To this effect, BRICS embarked on parallel institutionalization in the formation of the NDB and the CRA which came as alternatives to western institutions.

The expanded BRICS covers 47% of the global population, 37% of global GDP, 36% of the global landmass, controls 43% of petroleum, 50% of food production, and 38% of industrial

products. More than 40 countries showed interest in joining, of which 25 submitted formal requests. Several agreements were also concluded to enhance cooperation in BRICS. There are about 30 legal frameworks that guide cooperation under the BRICS platform.

According to Bohler-Muller (2014, p.267), “despite the differences among and between its members in terms of history, culture, political systems, economic structures, resource endowment, and levels of development, BRICS member states view these differences as a demonstration of the diversity of the world’s civilizations”. There are many commonalities among them, including their common long-standing history of geo-political and economic relations of solidarity, support, and mutual cooperation, notably embedded in the legacy of international fora such as the UN as well as the Bandung Conference of 1955. There is therefore a recognition that the diversity of the member states opens up the possibility for deeper cooperation for mutual benefit, drawing on the comparative advantage of each country to collectively complement and build on one another’s strengths.

BRICS is gaining a bigger place by attracting the attention of many developing countries and countries of the global South. This is a testimony that the forum is becoming an alternative geo-economic multilateral platform. Besides, in contrast to the 1990s when strict conditionality like structural reforms and trade liberalisation were imposed for receiving northern aid either bilaterally or through the IMF, the South-South cooperation that BRICS promotes is based on ‘horizontality, solidarity, non-conditionality and mutual benefits.’ Few works including by Konyshov *et al.* (2017) and Sergunin *et al.* (2020) try to interpret BRICS theoretically as an embryo of an alternative economic and political world order. As well, BRICS is regarded as “a challenge to the presently established international order” (Sperlich, 2016, p.5).

## **3.2 BRICS: A Rising Pole for a Multi-Polar Order**

### **3.2.1 Genesis and Rationale**

Many studies of the origins of the BRICS commonly mention reports on the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China published throughout the 2000s by Goldman Sachs. Yet, Damico (2017) is of the view that there were pioneer efforts of analysing the four countries in different parameters. He argues that the most famous precedent for the report of Sachs could be ideas of ‘monster countries’ and ‘whale countries’ coined by George Kennan, American historian and diplomat, in 1994, and Roberto Macedo, an economist, respectively. Following such analyses of

economists, the Foreign Ministers of Russia, Brazil and China and India's Defence Minister held a special separate meeting to agree to develop diversified cooperation on a four-party platform in 2006, on the sidelines of the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. In 2009, the first-ever summit of the four countries was held in Yekaterinburg. Skak (2019) affirms that this interstate association was created by the Russian initiative.

In elaborating the genesis of BRICS, Degye, *et al.* (2024) refer back to the failure of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) which was intended to reform the IFIs, redistribute wealth between developed and developing nations, and enhance economic sovereignty and South-South cooperation. However, these primary objectives were not realized. The wealth gap between the high-income countries (HIC) and the least developed countries (LDCs) is rather increasing. Besides, the decision-making power at the WBG and the IMF is still in the hands of a few member states. According to Degye, *et al.* (pp.8-11), in the WBG, the top five, top ten and top 20 countries have 37, 52 and 69.3% of the total votes respectively. Likewise, in the IMF, the top five, top ten and top 20 countries take the share of 38.1, 52.6, and 68.7% of the share respectively. In other words, as per Kumar, *et al.* (2023, p.42), "the combined voting share of BRICS countries in the IMF is only 14.15%, while the US vote share is 16.15%; [thus], it can block any proposal since at least 85% is needed for approval."

Therefore, NIEO's failure is believed to have led emerging powers to reform the existing institutions and/or to look for alternative institutions. "Formation of the BRICS is the first of its kind initiated to play this role in the international economic system" (*ibid*, p.28). BRICS members have been vocal about their growing frustration at the lack of reforms in the UN system. Baumann (2017, p.58) also argues that the 2008 global financial crisis informed the need for a reform of global governance "to reflect the new multi-polar setting, with the rise of the developing world in general and the major emerging economies in particular". The shock exposed the inadequacy of the IFIs to deal with the crisis. Seconding this conception, Bernal-Meza (2019, p.122) avers that "BRICS emerged as a political-diplomatic mechanism constituted at a time of redesign of global governance, when the perception of a deficit of representativeness and therefore of the legitimacy of the structures created in postwar was becoming increasingly acute".

Overall, the disproportionate domination of global governance by the West and thereof dissatisfaction by the global majority, the quest for increased political influence commensurate with economic growth, states' pursuit of upward mobility, and the inefficiency of the global

governance architecture, among others, are considered factors for the formation of alternative cooperation platforms. The evident discontent among the rising powers of the existing system arises from two sources - their perceived unfairness of the rules that institutionalize LIO and their limited representation in the influential nodes of the global governance architecture.

BRICS states are also conscious of their historical subjugation to Western imperialism in varying degrees. This common historical experience proved to be a formidable glue in voicing their dissatisfaction over existing global governance mechanisms. As the transnationalism of the BRICS nations is not rooted in their shared cultural ties or geographical contiguity, the most obvious commonality that ties them together is their shared experience with some variant of colonialism/imperialism by some of the European powers and the US. The US-led Western coalition also handed Russia a defeat in the Cold War. In line with this, the threat of unipolarity and unilateralism also remains at the core of BRICS cooperation, especially concerns regarding certain powers dominating global institutions or bypassing international organizations in pursuit of their geopolitical interests. Attempts to impose a post-Cold War hegemonic global order by the use of military force, regime change and sanctions without a UN mandate also pushed emerging powers, including BRICS countries, to come together to build a multipolar order.

Moreover, BRICS countries have experienced significant economic growth over the past decades. Yet, their political voices in global governance have not grown on par with their economic surge. For Duggan *et al.* (2021, p.470), “there is a widening gap between the actual role of EMDCs in the global system and their ability to participate in the decision-making processes of global institutions... [T]heir political voices remain limited since the existing global system has remained mostly unchanged”. Likewise, Baumann (2017, p.23) affirms that BRICS countries “exhibit less fiscal problems than most industrialized nations, and they are all foreign lenders in net terms. All of them... are also creditors of the US. And with a total contribution to [IFIs] of over USD 80 billion, it is expected that the BRICS will push for a reform of the decision-making process in these institutions”. Thus, besides questioning the hierarchy that exists in the institutions of the LIO, there is a quest, among the global South, for countries like China, Russia, India, Brazil, South Africa, and other countries with a rising economic clout, to play a more significant role in global governance.

Moreover, Keohane’s (1990) concept of ‘contested multilateralism’ may also explain the origin of BRICS. They argue that countries dissatisfied with existing institutions resort to threat, exit, or even creating alternative institutions. Unable to alter the *status quo*, dissatisfied states engage in

a multilateral contest in two principal forms - 'regime shifting' and 'regime creation'. Through regime shifting, unhappy states either take recourse to 'parallel-institutionalisation' or create a new one. In the same vein, ORF (2021) asserts that the rise of BRICS triggered an important shift towards multipolarity and putting significant pressure on the existing hegemony in multilateral institutions which resulted in an evident crisis in global multilateralism. This goes in line with Xing's (2019) equation of emerging powers with BRICS, as stated earlier, and their role in revealing the inefficient and unjust nature of the existing global architecture.

Not only this, in terms of status-seeking strategies, states seeking to improve their international standing may try to pass into a higher-status group of states (mobility strategy), compete with the dominant group (competition strategy), or achieve pre-eminence in a different domain (creativity strategy). Forums like BRICS thus offer the opportunity to multiply influence and power worldwide. This power is used to enforce one's interests and improve geostrategic position. In this regard, common BRICS interests include improving bargaining power at the multilateral level, expanding regional influence, ensuring access to markets and natural resources, financial cooperation, and filling the geopolitical interstice to usher in the post-unipolar world.

More importantly, the bigger source of uncertainty in the LIO arises from the problem of regulatory scale. Transnational issues requiring interstate policy coordination have become far too complex for a single multilateral institution to tackle. This is a plausible explanation for the increasing reliance on informal gatherings, such as BRICS, to negotiate issues of mutual concern rather than the 'institutionalized' multilateral organizations. Thus, BRICS is instrumental in alleviating challenges that our globe faces. Still others argue that platforms such as the BRICS allow holding each other in check. No emerging country shall become a super power alone to form a bi-polar world with the US. That is why the need multipolar system, to avoid the repetition of history, is the core of the BRICS.

In general, the aforementioned factors pushed the developing world to look towards other alternatives including informal groupings such as BRICS. Ethiopia's BRICS Sherpa Mr. Mamo, during BRICS Sherpas' meeting in Durban, explicated that the existing international system has put certain corner of the world at a disadvantaged position, particularly the global South. BRICS, thus, provides a platform for the members to socialize, share information, and voice their dissatisfaction over the unrepresentative nature of many of the institutions.

The purposes of BRICS, as outlined in all the summit declarations, include strengthening and promoting a multipolar or polycentric world order that is fair, inclusive, representative, effective,

and creates equal opportunity for all countries; promoting cooperation to stand in unison against all odds of the globe; pursuing significant reforms and balanced representation within the global political, financial and monetary governance architecture; establishing new and complementary institutions such as the NDB; strengthening multilateralism - addressing the internal and external factors of the crisis of and the inclusion of the values and interests of the non-western world thereby forming plural multilateralism; and supporting the countries of the global South to maintain their economic growth rates and their choice of development path.

BRICS indicates the rise of a multipolar world that is prepared to challenge conventions. It is emblematic of a global system that might eventually be more egalitarian in nature. BRICS is essential for the perpetuation of an alternative narrative to the existence of multiple global systems. BRICS also seeks to see a reformed and reinvigorated multilateralism. It is a unifying force for the East and the South thereby ending the passive role of these regions in global affairs. Aspiring to be a responsible and constructive player in global political affairs, it stands to rehabilitate multilateralism through global governance reform. In this regard, Russian FM Lavrov, according to Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) (2024), posits that BRICS “is powerful enough to shape global agenda, by consistently defending interests of the global majority, presenting its vision of how a future world order would look like”.

Stating the purpose of BRICS, Korybko (2024) affirms that its goal is “the creation of a multipolar discussion club and economic integration platform... Its primary purposes are only to facilitate dialogue between different civilizations and promoting their members’ cooperation on accelerating multipolar processes in order to stabilize the global systemic transition”. As well, President Putin, in his address on the start of Russia's BRICS chairship, stated that his country will “focus on enhancing *foreign policy coordination* among the member countries”. This goes in line with the very definition of multilateralism or international cooperation stated earlier.

### **3.2.2 Institutionalization and Fundamental Principles**

One of the important aspects of BRICS is its institutionalization. BRICS is a relatively novel, informal multilateral forum with a low degree of institutionalism. Even so, it has outlined its principles, values and rules. Its fundamental principles include mutual respect and understanding, sovereign equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness, strengthened collaboration, consensus-based decision making in which every member has a veto power, and working on the principle of a common denominator. These principles and values make BRICS an international regime.

Xiujun (2020, p.61), however, argues that “BRICS is one of the international organizations”. BRICS aims to revisit the contemporary understanding, knowledge and institutional arrangement of the global order, and to contribute to the decision of the future global order. One of the particular features of BRICS is its informal nature as denoted by lack of a constituent treaty, a secretariat, and the payment of arrears. Yet, in all its summit declarations, BRICS stresses the centrality of global institutions such as the UN, the WTO, and the G20.

The increasing process of institutional densification is expressed through the establishment of the NDB, CRA and about 50 working groups so far. As stated earlier, through regime shifting and regime creation, dissatisfied BRICS countries engaged in parallel-institutionalisation in the formation of the NDB and the CRA - examples of the new form of multilateralism. The summit declaration of the 2013 BRICS meeting in Durban stated the importance of BRICS’ institutionalization through the NDB, which Vadell and Ramos (2019, p.75) claim was ‘the first sign of a coordinated challenge to Western supremacy in the world economy from developing countries’ since the NAM and the demand for a NIEO in the 1970s.

As well, BRICS has about 30 legal frameworks (agreements and MoUs) facilitating and further solidifying the institutionalization process. There is also an increasing intra-BRICS cooperation in various areas at ministerial, senior official and expert levels. Despite the differing foreign policy positions in several areas, this indicates that BRICS becomes an important forum for ‘discussing the prospects of geopolitical evolution.’ For Kapoor (2020), in a time of an evolving world order, a continued format for discussion among emerging powers has been ‘worth maintaining’. Moreover, the direct influence of host countries on the outreach process worth mentioning as they often invite allies to BRICS meetings, thus strengthening the institutional densification of BRICS. BRICS members are also issuing joint statements alongside various global meetings. Instances are the statements issued at the sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA6) meeting in Nairobi, ECOSOC meeting in New York, and others.

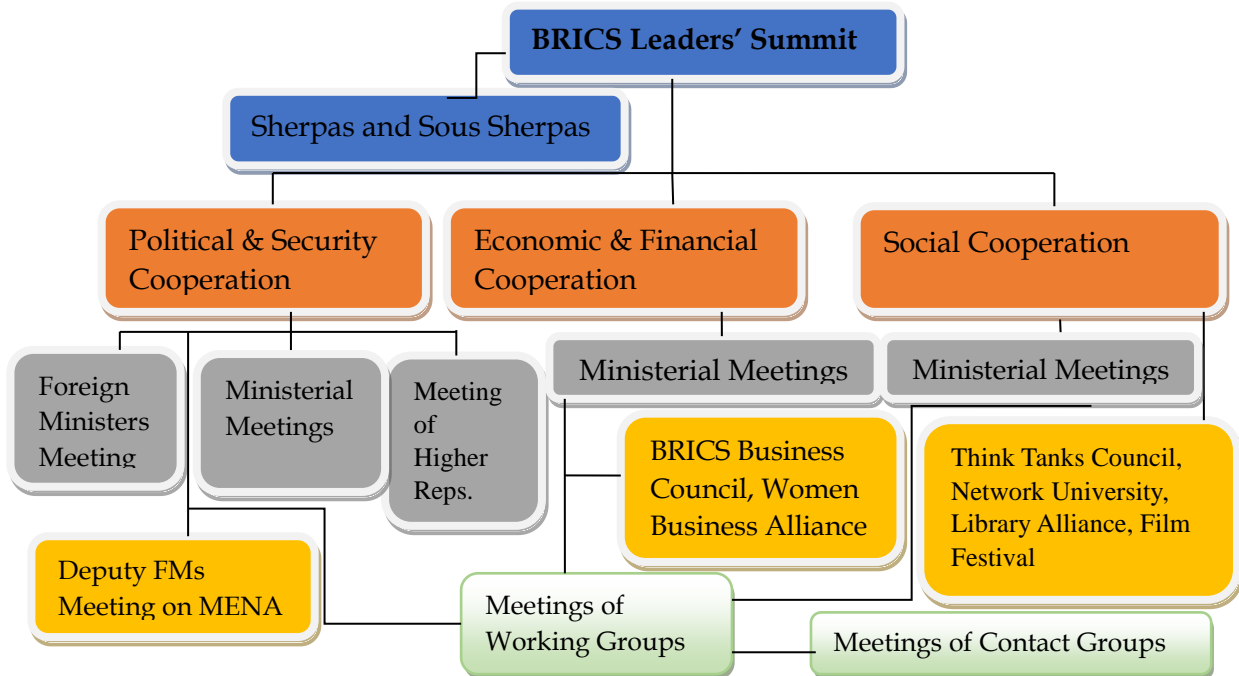
The annual Summit of BRICS leaders is the ultimate decision-making body of the institution. The sherpas<sup>1</sup> facilitate each nation’s BRICS involvement representing their leaders. Sherpas table agendas; prepare communiqués and statements; and meet three to four times per annum. Ministerial portfolios engage in various working group meetings. BRICS’ Deputy Foreign

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<sup>1</sup> The word ‘Sherpa’ comes from Sherpa people who act as guide in the Himalayas. It was used for the first time to describe the ascent of Mount Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary (29 May 1953) with the assistance of Nepal’s Norgay Tenzing (Sherpa). Sherpa is literally a guide. Today, there are Sherpas in the G20, G7, BRICS and IBSA. Sherpas are appointed by Heads of State to oversee preparations for Summit level meetings.

Ministers and Special Envoys convene to discuss geo-political issues of the Middle East and Northern Africa region.

**Diagram I - A Pictorial Presentation of the BRICS Working System**



Discussing the principles of BRICS *vis-à-vis* sovereignty and non-interventionism, BRICS is pivoted around the need to challenge Western interventionism. Its members favour upholding the non-intervention norm in international law. BRICS nations take a dim view of doctrines like R2P that run counter to the Westphalian norms of sovereignty, non-intervention, and territorial integrity. This cautious posture can be explained by their history as victims of external power interventions - a process that resulted in the adoption of strict interpretations of sovereignty.

BRICS does not represent the whole of the global South, but it is the most significant organization in the global South in the post-cold war era. There are certain overlapping rhetorical themes between the ideological perspective represented by BRICS and the broader multilateralism of the global South represented by NAM. Historically, the 1955 Bandung Conference, NAM, the formation of UNCTAD in 1964, and the NIEO in 1974-75 tried to create solidarity among the South. NAM's declaration prioritized inviolability of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. As well, BRICS advances global South solidarism, which privileges non-interference in the internal affairs of states over other norms of international law.

Concerning strategic competitions, BRICS promotes de-escalation; calls for dialogue; stands for a healthier and more stabilized relationship; and calls for integration and continued engagement

among rival powers. “In political terms, the BRICS agenda is not confrontational; it is an attempt to claim ‘a place at the table’ with the Western powers, a stronger voice, and greater participation in existing institutions” (Vadell & Ramos, 2019, p.87). BRICS enhances strategic partnership among members to promote peace, sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Members of BRICS have divergent orientations, but they work on the principle of a common denominator. For China and Russia, BRICS is an instrument to offset the prominence of the West, particularly the US. The meaning of BRICS for Russia, for instance, is summarized by Nizhnikau (n.d.), in his publication in the *BRICS Wealth Report 2024*, as follows:

*Having ruptured political and economic ties with the West, Moscow is actively re-orienting itself towards political and economic partnerships with the global South... [T]he global South has assisted in alleviating Western economic pressure on Russia... Russia’s foreign policy thus aims to utilize the rise of non-Western regional powers and increase cooperation between multiple integration centers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The idea of the ‘integration of integration’ - as a loose unity of alternative regional orders - is seen by the Kremlin as a natural step towards the substitution of old formal and informal institutions... the re-establishment of a ‘democratic multi-polar world’... Since February 2022, Russia’s economy has performed better than was widely anticipated. BRICS and the global South have greatly facilitated Moscow’s ability to withstand Western pressure aimed at isolating Russia economically.*

However, India, South Africa and Brazil do not share the ‘revisionist dreams’ of Russia and China in containing the West. They are reasonably satisfied with their elevated status where they are viewed as vital poles in emerging multipolarity. Their motives are limited to reforming multilateral institutions, enhancing South–South cooperation, and taking up the common causes of transnational challenges. There are also differences on the nature of BRICS as an economic or political forum. Explaining the views of UAE of its BRICS membership, the country’s Senior Diplomatic Adviser to the President, Anwar Gargash, said “we are looking at it more from a geo-economic foreign policy perspective... we look at it mostly from the perspective of having more friends, more bridges, more economic opportunities rather than basically a rejection of something and an adoption of something else” (WEF, 2024). While the economic agenda of BRICS is a priority for China, Russia plays a central role in the security agenda.

With regard to developmental philosophy, BRICS is seen as an ideological challenge to the logic of the Washington Consensus. The Beijing consensus conforming to state-led growth and characterised as ‘state-capitalism’ emerged as a viable competitor to the Washington Consensus. On the issues of fiscal discipline, the autonomy of central banks, and the stability of prices,

BRICS states have shown the astuteness to abide by the virtues of the Washington Consensus. BRICS encourages role of the state in economic transition. Without just and fair conditions, crony capitalism is likely to prosper in emerging countries. The eThekweni Declaration of the 2013 Durban BRICS Summit acknowledged the important role that state-owned companies play in the economy. Likewise, in contrast to the 1990s, when strict conditionality like structural reforms and trade liberalisation were imposed for receiving northern aid either bilaterally or through the IMF, South–South cooperation that the BRICS promotes is based on horizontality, solidarity, non-conditionality and mutual benefits.

### **3.2.3 BRICS’ Vision of Multilateralism and Global Governance**

It is quite important to look into the nature of the forthcoming global order in order to understand BRICS’ vision. In this regard, while Ikenberry (2018) insists the LIO continues to stay, Kissinger (2015) argues that the unipolar world is reshaped into a multipolar world order. Contrary to both Ikenberry and Kissinger, Acharya (2017) contends that the future world order will not be the current LIO nor will it be a multipolar order; rather, it will be a ‘multiplex order’ in which liberal values and institutions will coexist with other values and institutions, and globalization will be driven increasingly by the East and the South.

Buzan (2011) also argues that there is a shift away from hegemonic global order to a ‘de-centred globalism’ in which there are regionalized orders with great powers. This implies that there would be an ‘interdependent hegemony’ in which established/hegemon and emerging powers will constantly reshape the hegemony and the world order through consensus on competing interests. Xing (2019, p.99), likewise, argues that “the world order is entering into an era of interdependent hegemony, implying that the sources to feed and maintain the areas of structural power and monopoly are no longer dominated exclusively by the US/West, and that they are, to a large extent, dependent on the inputs from emerging powers”.

Accordingly, countries in general and BRICS members in particular seem to have three different views (tracks) of the upcoming global governance or order - ‘inside reform’ or *status quo*, dual track, and ‘outside options’ or transformational. The Power Transition Theory (PTT) conceives that while the West enjoys the advantages of the established world order or the *status quo*, states displeased with their place and role in the international system favour radical changes (revisionists) in the existing international order. Hence, while Russia and China are revisionists, Brazil, India and South Africa have ‘moderate’ revisionist ambitions. Vadell and Ramos (2019)

describe Brazil and South Africa behaving as ‘norm-takers rather than norm-makers’. The cooperative statecraft of BRICS seems to take various forms, varying from pressure for ‘inside reforms’ of multilateral institutions, to ‘outside options’ by creating new multilateral institutions.

As per the first track, BRICS stressed the centrality of the UN in international governance. BRICS is committed ‘to multilateral diplomacy with the UN playing the central role in dealing with global challenges’, and to the reform of IFIs since its first summit in 2009. The agenda of reforming the UN system and IFIs was long pronounced by Africa and the global South. It is not global governance per se but its skewed features in favour of the West that are contested by BRICS. According to Bohler-Muller (2014), faced with a revisionist agenda from platforms such as BRICS, a question arises whether established powers are up to the challenge of reforms to global governance, in a manner termed as ‘institutionalized power transitions.’ Institutionalized power transitions present a political alternative for cooperative reform. For institutionalized power transitions to take place, established powers must be ready to play the ‘reform game’.

BRICS seeks to work within the existing LIO and its affiliated institutions such as the G20. Yet, the paradox of BRICS is that it challenges the same system that it wants to retain. Zondi, *et al.* (2022) opine that there is convergence of interests among BRICS members on the importance of reform to the existing international institutions. “BRICS is reformist rather than transformational, but being reformist is also an option in the pursuit of a more progressive world system. It is an alternative to the *status quo*, which has failed billions around the world and disadvantaged the global South” (ibid, p.3). UAE’s Senior Diplomatic Adviser to the President, Anuar Gargash, also states that “it is time to criticize the extreme versions of liberalism because to some liberalism itself has become a religion in many ways. So, we need moderation in the system; we have to accept diversity to deal in the system. Don’t expect a new San Francisco conference to set up the new world but we need to work in small bits to address many of the issues because we all have an interest in a global order that governs our relationships” (WEF, 2024).

The second track involves swaying between the existing order and pursuit of a new order. Countries desire to join institutions to promote their interests through multilateral engagement, strategic autonomy, and principled neutrality. Their ultimate purpose to join platforms is to promote their national interests through multi-alignment and complex balancing than to joining a specific forum *per se*. The second and third BRICS summits also recognized that ‘the world is undergoing major and swift’, and ‘complex and profound changes.’ BRICS thus can serve as, as per Kumar, *et al.* (2023), an ‘institutional parachute for safe landing in a turbulent atmosphere’.

Similarly, BRICS is viewed as a ‘balancing coalition’ or strategy in a transitional and highly uncertain world. Indian Minister of Women and Child Development, Smriti Zubin Irani, in a panel discussion alongside the 2024 WEF, said “BRICS is a place to be in expanded version when you want to ensure that we become one of the bridges between the global north and global South”. Zondi, *et al.* (2022, p.3) also point out that while BRICS “cannot be said to be a radical bloc fully committed to breaking the current world order, it, however, is not committed to maintaining the *status quo*... BRICS has failed to present itself as a bloc of radical countries committed to a fundamental break with the capitalist world system. Instead, it seems they are wedging their space for themselves in the capitalist system while challenging its Western order”.

Xing (2019) elaborates China’s double-track strategy of modifying the existing international institutions and setting up new financial institutions as an instance. He posits that China is changing its position ‘from a passive rule-follower to a proactive rule-maker’. China operates both within existing institutions to enhance its position, for instance increasing its votes in the Bretton Woods institutions, and when this option does not give it the expected result, it creates its own institutions or participates in the establishment of new institutions, such as the NDB, AIIB and others. Likewise, a study by the Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA) reveals that factors that had driven Ethiopia to apply and join the BRICS, in the perception of experts, include the expectation of ‘power shift from West to East’, among others.

The third is a transformational view. There are works, mentioned in Sergunin *et al.* (2020), that interpret BRICS as an ‘embryo’ of an alternative world order. BRICS countries also reiterated support for a ‘multipolar world order’, ‘transformations in global governance’, and ‘the strengthening of multipolarity’ in previous summits. BRICS, for some others, is an extension of the struggle for the change of the global order during the cold war period. Hurrell (2018, p.93) claims that the global South had struggled against Western-dominated imperialist global order of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. BRICS is seen as an ideological challenge and antithetical to the logic of the Washington Consensus and neoliberal policies of the West. A study conducted by Sperlich (2016, p.24) in a PTT framework associates the BRICS with a global change from a uni- to a bi- or multipolar (polycentric) world. Vadell and Ramos (2019) also posit, as stated above, that BRICS is ‘the first sign of a coordinated challenge to Western supremacy in the world economy’. BRICS has been the main opposing force to Western powers in global negotiations.

Empirically, as found in Bernal-Meza (2019), Brazil’s President Lula “decided to follow a policy that counterbalanced the power of Western powers, and Brazilian diplomacy gave preference to

the adoption of multipolar and anti-hegemonic positions” (p.120). BRICS has also developed alternative institutions like the NDB and CRA which “seek to create new normative platforms that are alternatives to Western ones like the OECD or G7, thus enhancing the role of BRICS countries as ‘rule-makers’ in the international system” (Kumar, *et al.*, 2023, p.48). For Xing (2019, p.8), these institutions “are now part of IR and IPE vocabularies, symbolizing a growing phenomenon of the changing world order in which the system is no longer ruled and governed by the US-led postwar treaties. This phenomenon is interpreted and termed... as an emerging world order characterized by ‘interdependent hegemony’”. They also strive to bring about a multi-centric international economic order in which the interests of many countries are embedded.

### **3.2.4 Challenges in BRICS**

Though it is at its infancy, BRICS has both internal and external challenges. Internally, BRICS is weak with limited internal institutionalization and the tendency to operate as an issue-based body. Besides, as KII<sup>2</sup> explains, BRICS is not a ‘monolithic platform’ being an interplay of diverse interests and perspectives, which would at time be difficult to manage.

The other challenge is the asymmetrical power relations within BRICS, and the tendency that some members attempt to unfairly exploit the platform. For instance, Russia and China may tend to manipulate BRICS as an instrument for geopolitical balancing in the context of its confrontation with the West, and as a tool to expand its sphere of influence *vis-à-vis* its competition with the US, respectively. As Russia sees BRICS as an alliance that is becoming ever more radical and revisionist, China seems to guarantee a future course correction for the benefit of more holistic geo-economics. Not only this, due to the huge asymmetry in economic, demographic and military capability, and the fundamental political-economic incompatibility, powerful members, such as China which represents about 75% of BRICS GDP, may flex their muscles, dominate BRICS and threaten its egalitarian spirit. Pendersen (2019) argues that, with its economic clout, China may contribute more resources in the set-up of institutions such as the CRA thereby take a larger say in the affairs of such institutions.

The tendency in the intra-BRICS reproduction of the archaic North-South relations is considered as another critical challenge. Baumann (2017) contends that “there is a clear predominance of investments in natural resources. This tends to perpetuate the kind of North-South relationship that characterized the intra-BRICS trade in recent years, with China demonstrating dominance in

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<sup>2</sup> A key informant with a position of Director at MFA interviewed on 09 May 2024 at MFA

the manufacturing market and a significant degree of diversification in exports... this is not a very stable relationship in the long term” (p.51). Backing this argument, Bernal-Meza (2019) fears that this would maintain the *status quo* of the world political economy and result in the weakness of the BRICS affecting its capacities as an emerging power. Zondi, *et al.* (2022) also argue that not only the difference in the size but also the nature of economies from country to country would contribute to the development of the core-periphery relations. Opposing such views, Xing (2019) argues that though there are some symptoms such relations, the economic relations in BRICS, especially between China and other developing countries, rather solidifies not only the South-South but also the North-South relations than creating dependency.

The other key challenge in BRICS is the lack of harmonized vision, among members, of the forthcoming global order. There seems to be a dual-track strategy whereby Brazil, India and South Africa seek greater influence and voice within existing institutions by securing a permanent UNSC seat, whereas BRICS creates alternative forms of cooperation as ‘exit options’ as in the case of the NDB. As well, China acts as both “a revisionist emerging power with respect to setting up an alternative global financial architecture, and as a *status quo* power with regard to safeguarding the global free trade system and rejecting the enlargement of the UNSC” (Xing, 2019, pp.9-10). This dual-track strategy may thus weaken BRICS.

The other related internal challenge raised by scholars is the lack of coherent agenda among members. Xing (2019, p.9), in his analytical work, quoted a scholar saying BRICS members “have basically nothing in common whatsoever, except that they are called BRICS... But in all other respects, their interests and values, political systems, and objectives are substantially diverse. So, there’s no reason whatsoever to expect them to agree on anything substantive in the world, except that the existing dominating powers should cede some of their influence and power. That’s the one thing they have in common”. This being an overstatement, it looks convincing that BRICS does not have a holistic grand strategy or vision on all aspects of cooperation in spite of the presence of specific strategies in particular fields. Kapoor (2020) also shares the absence of common interest and collective multilateral strategy.

There are also visible differences among members regarding the renaming and expansion of the forum. Russian President Foreign Policy aide Yury Ushakov (2024, March 5) informed the media that, after BRICS’ recent and major enlargement during the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit, “it was also agreed to keep unchanged the name BRICS... even after the enlargement. This allows us, among other things, to further emphasize the continuity of our work in the association, as well as the key

role of the founding countries”. But this would apparently create a disquiet among the new entrants. Likewise, there are visible differences on the choice of partner countries as was a difference on the choice of member countries. BRICS leaders, during their Johannesburg meeting, have tasked the Foreign Ministers to further develop the BRICS Partner Country model and a list of prospective partner countries and report by the next Summit in Kazan as stated in article 92 of the Johannesburg Declaration II. Accordingly, Sherpas and Sous Sherpas have, at least thrice, deliberated on the model including their latest discussion on 22-23 April 2024 in Moscow. Yet, visible differences in positions are observed on some of the guiding principles to identify partner countries, and the status, role and list of prospective partner countries.

As well, in one of the discussions where the researcher was part of, Ethiopia and Egypt have pronounced the same position regarding the reform of the UNSC as opposed to Brazil, India and South Africa. The draft model presents Brazil, India and South Africa as BRICS-endorsed prospective UNSC permanent members. Whereas the three countries argued that this was ‘the language of BRICS’ quite for long, and new BRICS members should respect, Ethiopia and Egypt defied this criterion and proposed a general statement in accordance with the Ezuwilini consensus and Sirte Declaration that stipulate the AU’s position, or including all non-UNSC permanent members of BRICS in the list. The Ezulwini Consensus, adopted in 2005, is a common African position on the reform of the UNSC in which Africa demands two permanent seats and additional three non-permanent ones. Therefore, it is Africa to decide which countries should take the UNSC permanent seat, not BRICS. This difference has brought a hot debate.

Externally, one of the major challenges is the West’s misperception that BRICS is an anti-West bloc. The US, for instance, as stated in its 2022 National Security Strategy (The White House, 2022), seeks to outcompete China and contain or constrain Russia. Thus, the US perceives that China and Russia may use BRICS as a vehicle against Western interests. The misperception is further heightened with the inclusion of countries such as Iran to the forum. This would damage the integrity of the forum and the bilateral relations of member countries with their counterparts in the West. Zondi, *et al.* (2022, p.8) opines that “[t]he idea of BRICS as anti-West undermines the view of BRICS being pro-something, including being pro-global reform, pro-progressive change, pro-South, pro-equity and so forth”. Bohler-Muller (2014) also warns against this view as it ‘could lead to a fragmented global order rather than furthering the multilateral agenda’ by creating needless defensiveness on the part of the West. Some members of the US Congress and Senate further went to the extent of cautioning countries not to join the ‘anti-US axis.’

In addition, some assert that, external powers such as the US may take advantage of BRICS' underbellies of limited internal institutionalization and low level of formality. Thus, the bilateral ties of the US with individual BRICS members would be consequential. It may create a vacuum for a possible interference of the West in the internal functioning or the fate of the platform. This is why Zondi, *et al.* (2022) stress the need to deepen internal cohesion and cooperation in functional policy areas and consolidate overall coordination in the absence of central institutions.

BRICS countries have also a long way to go in promoting democracy and human rights, and realizing equitable development. BRICS countries "have half of the planet's poor within their borders" (Baumann, 2017, p.22). Thus, it requires them a lot to achieve these goals. Overall, BRICS needs to take agency in these and other issues of global importance.

### **3.2.5 Prospects of BRICS**

Notwithstanding the afore-mentioned challenges that would cause negative prospects on the future of BRICS, this section discusses the promising prospects of the forum.

BRICS is enlarging itself fast. It is getting a gradual consolidation through a more institutionalized collaboration between members with the creation of new agendas, working groups, and issue-area institutions. These are horizontal and technical expansions. The NDB is the premier Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) set up by EMDCs for EMDCs providing them with alternative and complementary source of finance. BRICS meetings are also increasing every year. India hosted 161 meetings in 2021; China hosted 166 meetings in 2022; South Africa hosted 200 meetings in 2023; and the meetings that are/to be taking place in Russia in 2024 are about 256. This is another indicator for BRICS' consolidation.

As well, there is an increasing interest from the global South for BRICS membership. The first attempt to expand BRICS was made in 2010 when South Africa was invited to be a member. The formal discussion of BRICS expansion afterwards can be traced from the 14<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration in which leaders promoted discussions on BRICS expansion process and stressed the need to clarify the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedures for the expansion process on the basis of consensus. Thus, the second expansion took place in 2023 whereby six countries were invited for membership. Since the 2023, about 29 countries have shown interest to join BRICS. This is, according to Ambassador Minelik, Advisor to Ethiopia's FM and Chair of Ethiopia's BRICS Senior Officials Technical Committee, a 'vote of confidence

for what BRICS has been doing'. South African President Ramaphosa also affirms that the expansion of BRICS will 'securely place BRICS as the foundation of a multipolar world'.

As well, the inclusion of five new members as of 01 January 2024 is a strong indication of, as per Ushakov (2024, March 5), the growing authority of BRICS and its role in international affairs. The expansion paired some of the world's largest energy producers with some of the biggest consumers among the developing world. Today, BRICS comprises 47% (3.65 billion) of the global population, 37% (USD 28.6 trillion) of the global GDP, 36% of the global landmass, 43% of the global petroleum, 50% of the global food production, 38% of the global industrial inputs, and 25% of global export. Before the recent expansion, BRICS held "approximately three-quarters of the world's international foreign exchange reserves" (Baumann, 2017, p.22). With this, Ushakov points out that BRICS has already surpassed the G7 in purchasing power parity. FM Lavrov, as found in BRICS Russia 2024, asserts that "an irreversible historical process has been set in motion, and the numbers are there to prove this point, among other things... No one can stop these processes. The trends are there, and experts understand what this means". This in turn is expected to bring about a commensurate increase in influence.

Not only this, BRICS countries' high growth performances and rising prospects, significant economic sizes, internal markets, and differing production structures can translate into a greater voice in global affairs. BRICS consists of largest oil and gas exporters, and it is rich in commodities (resource rich states). It has unparalleled connectivity and infrastructural development potential. It has massive manufacturing base and production capacity, and a growing prospect for technological and digital revolution. It is a central node of innovation, entrepreneurship and talent. There is also a huge agricultural modernization. It offers alternative development financing through the NDB. All these attributes allow member states to diversify their external relations, and the geo-economizing of the developing world.

Internal and external coordination among members also give BRICS a brighter future. Members have better coordination in international platforms. Equally notable for Baumann (2017) is the political clout of BRICS countries in international security. Russia and China, are permanent members of the UNSC. The other four, including Ethiopia, are among the most vocal advocates of the reform of the UNSC, and they present themselves as prospective candidates for permanent seats. "Although it is not often possible to build common positions on specific issues, coordinated efforts in various multilateral forums are increasing" (ibid, p.57). BRICS members are active protagonists in the politics of their respective regions, and have an active voice on

agendas related to other developing countries. “It is difficult to identify a global agenda issue that does not rely on the outstanding performance of some of the BRICS members” (ibid, p.56).

BRICS’ global influence is also growing gradually. Pendersen (2019) avers that though the establishment of the CRA and NDB could be seen as an outcome of BRICS’ failure ‘in reforming the governance structure of the existing Bretton Woods institutions, their demands for changes in the institutions have not been completely ignored’. In this regard, he adds that, China and India have had their voting shares increased in IMF and WB, and their economists fill the position of the bank’s highly profiled chief economist which has always used to be a Western economist. The Director General of the WTO from 2013-2020 was also a Brazilian - Roberto Azevêdo.

Concerning views associated with the civilizational and cultural diversity challenges, there are contradictory arguments. For Huntington (1997), based on his civilizational perspective, ‘there will be clashes among BRICS countries because their cultures and civilizations are heterogenous’. Baumann (2017, p.51) also posits that “[t]he differences among [BRICS members] give way to scepticism of a more consolidated and sustainable relationship”. For Katzenstein (2010), “civilization is not monolithic as assumed by Huntington, but pluralistic, and it does not tend to engage in clashes but rather to pursue ‘inter-civilizational encounters and trans-civilizational engagements”. Yang (2019) subscribes to the latter argument that “civilization is pluralistic as there is great diversity within each of these countries” (p.48) thereby the diversity may create new perceptions and understandings of the global political economy. It is this plurality that paves the way for a multipolar global system BRICS envisions.

Having divergent interests and foreign policies does not mean that BRICS members cannot forge cooperation. Sensitivity to them is rather important for greater growth. Also, BRICS is not a platform created to settle bilateral differences of its members. There are various mechanisms outside BRICS to resolving bilateral issues. It is thus the natural consequence of multipolarity where plurality than homogeneity brings plethora of opportunities to be tapped. In addition, there is no any multilateral organization whose members have no divergent interests, including the UN. BRICS promotes a plural world that comprises many worlds, and this is its unifying goal. Ambassador Mesganu, State Minister of MFA, during the 2023 Doha Forum on BRICS, stressed the importance of diversity as an asset than a liability in a multipolar world. Data also reveals that the people-to-people ties among BRICS members is increasing. For instance, in 2021, only 21% of BRICS meetings focused on the social aspect of the relations. However, this figure has increased to 25%, 29.5% and 27%, in 2022, 2023 and 2024, respectively.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ETHIOPIA'S MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

This chapter discusses Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy under the incumbent regime in two separate periods – in the country's pre- and post-BRICS admission periods. Primary and secondary data sources are employed to augment the discussion.

#### 4.1 Ethiopia's Multilateral Diplomacy (2018-2022)

Ethiopia's internal situation from 2018-2022 can be explained into two specific different periods. While the period from 2018-2020 was marked by ambitious reforms, the period from 2020-2022 was marked by internal challenges. Whereas in the first period Ethiopia garnered immense international support, its internal challenges in the period from 2020-2022 have derailed its status as an emerging power in general and its natural position as a regional leader in particular.

The first three years of the reform period were golden years of political stability, thriving democratic and human rights, better economic performance, and enhanced regional and international acceptance. Ethiopia embarked on a promising journey of reform as the changes introduced ushered-in democracy, human rights and regional stability; reformed democratic institutions; widened political space accompanied with the release of political prisoners and journalists; and open avenues for dialogue and unity among divergent political groups. The government acknowledged crimes against humanity; established the Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission; and called for comprehensive transitional justice. Exiled political parties that were in armed struggle returned home to pursue peaceful struggle. Electoral, anti-terrorism and civil society laws were revised. A historic Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement ended a 20-year state of war.

However, the northern conflict that erupted in November 2020 regrettably started to slash the positive gains in Ethiopia's global and regional standing. It ravaged the political, economic and social fabric in conflict-affected areas and the overall national performance; and hampered the support of the international community. Basic infrastructures were heavily damaged and vandalized. At around the close of 2021, there was a desperate need to mobilize resources in collaboration with international partners to expedite the rehabilitation efforts and support the internally displaced people in conflict zones.

Moreover, due to the dire situation in Ethiopia, the Sudanese military government instigated attacks on Ethiopia. There was mobilization of the Sudanese Army along the Ethio-Sudan border

and provocative rhetoric against Ethiopia. There was also an attempt to infiltrate TPLF's Samri criminal group that committed the *Maikadra* massacre and other armed groups, in collaboration with third countries, into Ethiopia through various spots using South Sudan as a springboard.

The other key element of the internal situation during this period was a steady economic growth defying the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. IMF's World Economic Outlook report issued on April 2024 shows that Ethiopia's economy grew by 7.7%, 9.0%, 6.1%, 6.3%, and 6.4% in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively.

## **I. Ethiopia's Multilateral Diplomacy**

In this section, the researcher discusses Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy from 2018-2022, with particular reference to the UNSC, Bretton Woods institutions and UNHRC. A reference was made to the three pillars of the UN – peace and security, economic development and human rights – to choose these institutions, in line with their specializations, as the focus of the analysis.

Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the first three years of the reform period (2018-2020) was incredible. Ethiopia was considered a key regional actor. It has garnered immense international recognition and support. It received the acclamation and support of the UNSC, Bretton Woods institutions, and the UNHRC. The UNSC praised Ethiopia's rapprochement with Eritrea. As per the data retrieved from the WB website, the bank approved a total of USD 5.73 billion (2018 – USD 2.65 billion, 2019 – USD 1.16 billion and 2020 – USD 1.92 billion) financial support for Ethiopian projects from the International Development Association (IDA). Similarly, on December 2019, the IMF approved a three-year financing package of USD 2.9 billion to help the country implement its Homegrown Economic Reform Plan.

The UNHRC and other human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, praised the promising changes in human rights and democratization. Data reveals that this was the period when Ethiopia, for the first time in its history, came out of a defensive position with regard to human rights. Ethiopia worked in a better cooperation with the UNHRC. KII<sup>3</sup> further goes to assert that 'Ethiopia was the darling of the West'. The establishment of impartial and independent Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), and their acceptance by the international community even during the time of the northern conflict, was commendable. In 2021, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights

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<sup>3</sup> KII is a key informant with a position of Director at MFA interviewed on 09 May 2024 at MFA

Institutions upgraded the rating of the EHRC for operation in accordance with the UN Paris Principles from grade B (partial compliance) to grade A (full compliance) improving its trustworthiness. Moreover, Ethiopia's UNHRC membership was again renewed for 2016-2018. Not only this, Prime Minister Abiy won the Nobel Peace Prize.

To explain it more with concrete examples, in the UNSC's 8314<sup>th</sup> meeting on 18 July 2018, members welcomed the rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Some members also pointed out that the evolving peace was a 'model for the whole world'. The UNSC also commended Ethiopia's continued assistance to the situation in Abyei in its resolution 2497 (2019) at its 8663<sup>rd</sup> meeting, on 14 November 2019. The UNSC expressed its appreciation for the continued commitment of troops, police and equipment to AMISOM by the Ethiopian Government, and recognized the significant sacrifices made by AMISOM forces, including Ethiopians, in its resolution 2431 (2018) at its 8321<sup>st</sup> meeting, on 30 July 2018.

Ethiopia also played an active role in regional and international affairs. As a non-permanent UNSC member from 2017-2018, it played a critical role in finding solutions to the peace and security challenges in Africa and Middle East. According to KI<sup>4</sup>, as part of the A3 (the three elected African states on the UNSC), Ethiopia promoted African issues; contributed to the renewal of effective peacekeeping missions; and coordinated African positions. It also played an active role to the peace and security situation in Syria and other countries in the framework of E10 (the ten elected members of the UNSC). The informant also hints that hadn't Ethiopia been in the UNSC, the sanctions on Somalia would not have been lifted. Following Prime Minister Abiy's initiatives to pacify the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia proposed the lifting of sanctions on Somalia and Eritrea during its UNSC membership.

As a chair of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, Ethiopia convened meetings on the AU Reform Agenda, the AU Silencing the Guns Initiative and the AU-UN cooperation. The annual report of MFA's IODG shows that Ethiopia had about 12,800 peacekeeping forces in 2019, of which 600 were women, deployed in different countries. In recognition of this, Ethiopia hosted an international meeting on 'The Role of Women in UN Peacekeeping Operations' on January 2019. It was also elected member of ECOSOC, Commission for Social Development, Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, World Meteorological Congress, UNEP Council, FAO Finance Committee, UN Peace Building

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<sup>4</sup> A key informant, Director General at MFA, interviewed on 29 May 2024, at MFA

Commission, UNESCO, and served as Vice President of the 74<sup>th</sup> UNGA and Chair of IOM in 2018/2019. In 2019/20, it co-chaired Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative.

Besides, the 2019 annual report of MFA's IODG indicated that 'there were no complaints and charges against the conditions of human rights by international organizations in Ethiopia in 2018/2019'. During the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the UNHRC in 2019, High Commissioner Michel Bachelet reported the improvement in human rights conditions in Ethiopia as 'exemplary', which members of the Council and NGOs have also pronounced. In recognition of the positive changes, the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of World Press Freedom Day, under the motto "The role of the media in Elections and Democracy" was also globally celebrated in Addis Ababa from 01-03 May 2019.

The 42<sup>nd</sup> session of the UNHRC in September 2019 unanimously endorsed Ethiopia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). As also found in the session's report, in UN (2019, p.114, pp.133-134), the Council commended the efforts of the Ethiopian Government in facilitating the Sudanese mediation process between the Transitional Military Council and the Forces for Freedom and Change. Moreover, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression visited Ethiopia after 13 years, and recognized the improved condition of human rights and freedom of speech, and called for support to Ethiopia's reforms. All these were reflections of the global community's recognition to the positive changes in human rights.

However, in the period from 2020-2022, Ethiopia had a 'challenged multilateral diplomacy' as it was exposed to a myriad of undue external pressures from the international community. The crisis in northern Ethiopia slashed the diplomatic gains of the first specific period. Not only that, the conflict became the major preoccupation of Ethiopia's diplomacy for the following years. The Diplomatic Journal of MFA stated the challenge as follows:

*Creating understanding on the law enforcement operation in the Tigray region... has been one of the major preoccupations of the Ministry ... for the last two and half years... [T]here were extensive and successive briefings to the diplomatic community on the genesis of the conflict, struggles to avoid sanctions, resolutions on multilateral fora, and the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia to resolve the conflict peacefully, which resulted in... the signing of the Pretoria Peace Agreement... Upon the signing of the... Agreement, the Ministry was preoccupied with a series of campaigns to normalize relations and create understanding on the current situation of the country with its partners from the West (MFA, 2023, p.2).*

To start with, Ethiopia was accused of massive human rights and humanitarian allegations. There were colossal digital media campaigns negatively affecting Ethiopia's image on the international stage. In its 47<sup>th</sup> session, as found in UN (2021, pp.186-188), the UNHRC adopted resolution

47/13 on Ethiopia on 13 July 2021 by a vote of 20 in favour, 14 against and 13 abstentions. While Brazil was in favour, China, India and Russia were against the resolution. During its 48<sup>th</sup> regular session, the UNHRC also hosted a meeting on Ethiopia on 13 September 2021 under the theme ‘Situation of human rights in Tigray region’, which called for a joint investigation of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the EHRC. Based on the investigation findings unveiled on 03 November 2021, the Ethiopian Government established an Inter-Ministerial Task Force to redress the challenges and to take measures.

Likewise, in its 33<sup>rd</sup> special session, the UNHRC adopted resolution S-33/1 on Ethiopia on 17 December 2021 by a vote of 21 in favour, 15 against and 11 abstentions. While Brazil was in favour, China, India and Russia were against the resolution. Rejecting the joint investigation findings of the EHRC and OHCHR, the UNHRC established the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) for one year. ICHREE was mandated to complement and build upon the Joint Investigation Report of the OHCHR and EHRC. Ethiopia insisted that the UNHRC should first recognize the efforts of the Government to address the alleged human right violations, and adopt the investigation report, which the Council sidelined.

As a result, Ethiopia objected to ICHREE on the grounds that it would undermine the Joint Investigations, the results of which were accepted by Ethiopia, albeit with reservation; and that the primary responsibility for promotion and protection of human rights rests with states themselves. As any international mechanism is expected to respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of states; ICHREE’s establishment was broadly inconsistent with the fundamental tenet of international law that established the principle of complementarity, Ethiopia also argued that focus should have been placed on strengthening existing initiatives, not duplicating them, and that the UNHRC should stop its double standard position on human right violations in Tigray vis-à-vis Amhara and Afar regions. Besides, Ethiopia argued that, according to KX5, the UNHRC should support national mechanisms than imposing and instituting other country specific mechanisms.

On 24 March 2022, Ethiopia declared an indefinite humanitarian truce, in a bid to ensure the free flow of humanitarian aid into Tigray region. Government forces were also withdrawn from Tigray and withheld from entering into the region. ICHREE members also visited Addis Ababa from 25-29 July 2022 where they met with former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister

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<sup>5</sup> An informant, a director, at MFA interviewed on 15 May 2024 at MFA

(DPM and FM) Demeke Mekonnen, the Minister of Justice, and members of the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce. Then, ICHREE presented its initial findings on the conflict on 22 September 2022. The Ethiopian Government, however, categorically rejected the report underlining that it “is a manifestly political statement issued under the guise of an ‘investigation report’” (Ethiopian News Agency, 2022). Moreover, during its 51<sup>st</sup> session in 2022, the UNHRC adopted resolution 51/27 on Ethiopia on 07 October 2022 by a vote of 21 in favour, 19 against and 7 abstentions. While Brazil was in favour, China, India and UAE were against the resolution.

Finally, the Pretoria Peace Agreement of November 2022 has heralded the culmination of the two-year long conflict. The agreement is a practical embodiment of ‘African Solutions to African Problems’. This further affirms Ethiopia’s call in the words of former DPM and FM Demeke at the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA:

*We are gathered here because our forefathers, learning from the tragic episodes of human history, decided to establish the UN as the guardian of peace. However, we are yet to achieve true universality in the main organs of the UN. Africa has no permanent seat in the UNSC. Our quest for African solutions to African problems has yet to be given the respect and support it deserves. We believe these considerations underpin the credibility of the Council on the continent... It is only when we uphold regional solutions that we could start reducing the proliferation and over extended stay of African issues in the UNSC (MFA, 2023, p.494).*

The continued implementation of the Pretoria peace deal was taken as a clear manifestation of the Government’s commitment to peacefully resolving political differences. National consultations were conducted followed by the initiation of the Transitional Justice Policy (TJP). To ensure accountability, reconciliation, truth-telling, and healing, Ethiopia has worked to the finalization of the TJP. Through the National Dialogue Commission, Ethiopia has also embarked on inclusive dialogue to forge a peaceful future for all citizens. As a result, the international community was convinced to call off ICHREE considering the positive processes.

Overall, the outcome of Ethiopia’s engagements with the UNSC, UNHRC and the IMF among the Bretton Woods institutions from 2021-2022 was upsetting. In 2021 and 2022, the UNSC conducted seven meetings on Ethiopia’s internal situation, of which six were negative, and only one – a closed session on the Pretoria peace deal - was positive. Besides, the UNSC and its members have mentioned Ethiopia in about eighteen meetings within these two years, of which only in two meetings, Ethiopia was mentioned positively, and the rest were negative. The UNHRC, as well, conducted eight special sessions from 2018-2022, of which one was on Ethiopia, held on 17 December 2021. The others were Iran (1), Sudan (2), East Jerusalem (2),

Myanmar (1), Afghanistan (1) and Ukraine (1). This was an alarming signal to its multilateral diplomacy for Ethiopia has been categorized with those countries having the worst record.

Moreover, the WB approved a total of USD 3.19 billion (2021 – USD 1.65 billion and 2022 – USD 1.54 billion) financial support for Ethiopian projects from IDA. This figure shows a minimal reduction compared to the year 2020. The IMF did not provide any financing package during this period. The US Presidential Executive Order 14046 (The White House, 2021) bestowed power to the State and Treasury departments to take any measure without any further legal procedure including barring support to Ethiopia's engagement particularly in the IMF. The Treasury department, as a result, desisted from supporting Ethiopia in such institutions to the extent of blocking the visits of IMF's staff to Ethiopia. Not only this, the US constrained Ethio-IMF discussions. It was only after State Secretary Antony Blinken's lifting of atrocity determination on June 2023 that serious engagements between Ethiopia and IMF resumed.

Moreover, there were unilateral measures taken against Ethiopia. There was a 'political stalemate' between Ethiopia and the US. The US Senate passed Resolution 97 on Ethiopia on 24 March 2021 pertaining to the conflict. The US paused economic and security assistance to Ethiopia, and cut Ethiopia's access to the trade benefits of the US African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), effective 01 January 2022. It also came up with HR6600 and S.3199 draft Bills. As a result, former DPM and FM Demeke had to say such measures were 'unhelpful in seeking a lasting solution' to domestic and regional security challenges. He said, "withholding development aid and programmatic support to Ethiopia will hurt ordinary citizens and taint the longstanding relations between the two countries" (MFA, 2023, p.666).

Likewise, the conflict impacted the Ethio-EU relations. The EU commission blocked USD 107 million budgetary support to Ethiopia, and vowed to continue supplying humanitarian aid through third parties. What has restricted a possible EU sanction was the fact that the EU does not have a collective position on sanction like that of the US. The EU also drafted and tabled a resolution at the UNHRC, which all its members endorsed, that established ICHREE. Ethiopia preferred to continue exposing the personally biased statements and counterproductive measures of Joseph Borrel, EU's Vice President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. It rather vowed to work closely with the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa and the Commissioner for International Partnership.

Moreover, there were unnecessary pressures and orchestrated campaigns against Ethiopia by some countries. A number of European Governments urged their citizens to leave Ethiopia. Some

other foreign Embassies based in Addis Ababa attempted to bring in military personnel in the pretext of replacement of departed diplomats. Moreover, former DPM and FM Demeke said, “we have credible evidence indicating that some actors have attempted to smuggle weapons to arm the terrorist cell under the guise of humanitarian assistance. This is unacceptable” (MFA, 2023, p.664). In a pre-recorded message to the international community on the humanitarian response in Tigray, on 04 June 2021, he added:

*What is saddening is the attempt to dictate terms to the country in ways that are not helpful... We are indeed disappointed by the campaign that is being waged against Ethiopia... [I]t is extremely regrettable to see that some within the international community have embarked on a mission to undermine the unity, territorial integrity, and cohesion of the Ethiopian state under the guise of humanitarian concern. We urge these individuals and partners to desist from these unhelpful activities (MFA, 2023, pp.663-664).*

In this regard, stating how the West pressurize the global South, Russian FM Lavrov pointed out that “[t]o preserve their hegemony, the West has been... using a wide array of coercive measures against those who disagree... This can range from outright military invasions to illegal unilateral sanctions and international media shaming (BRICS Russia 2024).

In addition, there were attempts to move the AU Annual Summit from Addis Ababa to other African cities. Yet, Ethiopia worked closely with AU and member countries to successfully host the 2022 AU Summit in Addis Ababa as per its regular schedule. Even more, some countries and international organizations campaigned to move the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Conference slated for June 2022 in Addis Ababa. To Ethiopia’s dismay, the Conference ended up being held in Kigali, Rwanda.

On the other hand, there was clear lack of fairness by the international community. With regard to the humanitarian crisis, for instance, there were double standards on the side of the international community. The international community who has been raising concerns about lack of humanitarian assistance to Tigray region was quiet on the holding of around 1,075 trucks by TPLF. Moreover, the global community could not condemn the flagrant violation of Article 2 of the UN Charter by the Sudanese Government and put pressure on Sudan to withdraw from Al-Fashaga areas to resume peaceful settlement of the dispute.

With regard to the GERD, the UNSC tabled a development project as a security issue, the first in its history. The 42<sup>th</sup> session of GCC’s Supreme Council, held in December 2021, as well declared that the water security of Egypt and Sudan is an integral part of Arab national security, and assured GCC’s support for Sudan and Egypt. At the backdrop of the tabling of the GERD file at

the UNSC more than once, “Ethiopia had to submit letters and statements to various international organizations, including the UNSC and the Arab League of States, in order to take on undue interference... Ethiopia, with a sincere conviction in the maxim, African Solutions to African Problems, was successful in convincing the world that the issue is an African one that must be resolved by the riparian states and the AU” (MFA, 2023, p.2).

Overall, looking into the talking points and briefing notes of MFA, the researcher learns that Ethiopia’s diplomatic machinery and high-level government engagements throughout 2021 and 2022 were preoccupied with the domestic situation with the goal of garnering diplomatic support. There were frequent briefings clarifying measures taken by the Government to bring peace and stability. The engagements helped to explain efforts to combat the ongoing destabilizing activities and some countries’ efforts to put undue pressure on Ethiopia. Some countries shared the security concerns of Ethiopia and reaffirmed their full support and solidarity.

### **Commitment to Multilateralism**

There was a consistent policy of supporting a revitalized multilateralism through the years from 2018-2022. In his address to the general debate of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the UNGA, on 27 September 2018, former FM Workneh Gebeyehu said, “we are meeting at a time when multilateralism is facing serious challenges, and yet, there has never been a time when we needed multilateralism more” (UN, 2018). In addition, in her address to the general debate of the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA, on 26 September 2019, President Sahle-Work stated that “commitment to multilateralism has never been more urgent” (UN, 2019). Similarly, addressing the general debate of the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA on 25 September 2020, Prime Minister Abiy stated the following:

*...the UN is indeed under enormous pressure to deliver better. This is why it needs to evolve and adapt with the new global realities to make itself fit for purpose... At a time when the world needs global leadership and collective action to tackle complex challenges, the ongoing standoff in the UNSC is undermining the UN and the organ’s credibility. Such an impasse supports the need for the UNSC to be reformed and adapt to current global realities (UN, 2020).*

When addressing the general debate of the 76<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA, on 25 September 2021, former DPM and FM Demeke highlighted Ethiopia’s view of multilateralism as follows:

*Ethiopia, has always been steadfast in its support for multilateral institutions. Our position emanates not from rhetoric but from our tragic ordeal during the days rule-based order was left in the shambles... Multilateralism will meet its objective only if states are able and free to manage their domestic and external affairs... our*

*viewpoints that are underpinned by our diversity in cultures, history, and socio-economic reality will not always be fully-aligned. This diversity shall be viewed as an asset and no one amongst us should wish to prevail over the other, especially when it comes to values and policies dealing with our internal and external affairs (MFA, 2023, pp.443-444).*

Likewise, an instance of Ethiopia's resolve for the UN charter can be its take on the 11<sup>th</sup> emergency session of the UNGA, held on 04 March 2022, to deal with a draft resolution on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. When the Assembly adopted a resolution that demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, with a vote of 141 states in favour, 5 against, 35 abstentions, 12 states including Ethiopia did not cast their votes. Ethiopia believes that adopting a resolution which stands in favour of one side and condemns the other will not solve a crisis. It also argued that the interference of external powers in Ukraine's internal affairs from the onset have exacerbated the problem and internationalized it. Therefore, Ethiopia underlines the need to solve the matter by continuing the ongoing peaceful dialogue among Russia and Ukraine, and avoiding internationalizing the matter.

Besides, in his remarks at the general debate of the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA, on 24 September 2022, Demeke stressed that:

*We need more, not less, multilateralism. We shall continue to uphold our cardinal principles of independence, impartiality, integrity, noninterference, sovereign equality, and non-selectivity to maintain a working multilateral system rooted in the UN Charter. We need to reform our global institutions to reflect current realities. We need to make them more representative and responsive to the demands of the time. Only through genuine solidarity and concerted action could we ensure collective security and prosperity (MFA, 2023, pp.496-497).*

In general, from 2018-2022, Ethiopia has consistently expressed, as always, its urgent pursuit of a strong and reinvigorated multilateralism in the face of serious global challenges whose consequences are of epic proportions; reformed, representative and responsive global institutions; collective action and international cooperation which at the time was not at a level near the gravity of the challenges; and trusted global leadership.

Still more, Ethiopia was also elected, in 2020/2021, as a member of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, ECOSOC, International Political and Civil Rights Committee, UNESCO World Heritage Committee, UN Development Commission, Children Rights Convention Committee, Climate Change Affected Countries Forum Board, UN Internal Displacement Sustainable Solution High Panel, UNESCO Executive Board Deputy Chairship and GAVI COVAX Advance Market Commitment Co-Chairship. Again, in 2021/2022, it was elected as a member of FAO

Executive Board, UNDP, UNPF, UNOPS and WHO Executive Boards, WFP Board, and UNESCO Intergovernmental Council for the International Hydrological Program Committee.

On the other hand, Ethiopia's internal situation has negatively affected its regional and international role. A reduced role in peacekeeping missions and regional organizations, and the questioning of its AU headquarter status, among others, were some of the instances. Ethiopia's participation in peacekeeping missions was held up for some time due to the domestic conflict. As found in Bernal-Meza (2019, p.128), Saraiva (2017) avers that "as is often the case in crisis situations, foreign policy has been in second place". In this sense, the country's multilateral diplomacy could not mobilize enough resources and support to propel the country's economic growth, to promote democracy and human rights, and to enhance the country's positive image.

In a different view, Ethiopia's defensive diplomacy succeeded in resisting the multitude of external pressures. According to KVIII<sup>6</sup>, its diplomacy enabled the continuity of the country's survival, effectively preventing interventionist measures. Ethiopia was not also made a 'standing agenda item' in the UNSC despite the mean efforts of some countries. It succeeded in bringing back its files - GERD and the northern conflict - from the UNSC to the AU platform. As a result, there was no any UNSC resolution adopted against Ethiopian. The principles of subsidiarity and local remedies have never been beneficial to Ethiopia than during this period. The motto of 'African Solutions to African Problems' was also meaningful in the Ethiopian context. KXI<sup>7</sup> also asserts that "Ethiopia's natural fallback is Africa; Ethiopia exploited it to do away with its challenges." Of course, the strong engagement of the diaspora and the support of partners such as African countries, Russia, China, India and others also paid off.

## **II. Challenges**

Data reveals that geo-political competitions, undue external pressures, double standards by the international community, lack of fairness and inclusivity in the existing global institutions, and the continued deterioration of the internal situation were some of the major challenges to Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy, especially towards the end of 2018-2022. KI explains the impact of the internal situation on its multilateral diplomacy as, "if you have peace/development at home, you can be a peace advocate/credible voice". KX also notes that the boundary between the foreign and domestic situation is blurred.

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<sup>6</sup> A key informant from Institute for Foreign Affairs (IFA) interviewed on 22 May 2024 at IFA

<sup>7</sup> A key informant, at MFA's Middle East, Asia and Pacific Affairs D/G, interviewed virtually on 28 May 2024

Moreover, Ethiopia's diplomatic machinery was in a complete defensive mode during the last years of this period, the northern conflict being its major preoccupation. Thus, the country's multilateral diplomacy was not able to bring the necessary support to propel its development.

## **4.2 Ethiopia's Multilateral Diplomacy (2023-Present): Challenges and Opportunities**

The draft revised foreign policy has made changes in its orientation towards the international system as it clearly stipulates the importance of multipolarity, the organizing of developing countries and the reform of organizations of the established international system as key elements. Consequently, the new historical milestone in Ethiopia's BRICS membership has rubber-stamped Ethiopia's longstanding advocacy for a stronger and plural multilateralism.

### **4.2.1 Ethiopia's BRICS Membership**

Ethiopia submitted an official request to join BRICS in 2023 when Prime Minister Abiy sent a letter to South Africa's President Ramaphosa, the then chairperson of BRICS. DPM and FM Demeke also wrote letters to the Foreign Ministers of BRICS countries requesting their support. Besides, Demeke met all BRICS Foreign Ministers to solicit support for Ethiopia's admittance into BRICS. Consequently, Ethiopia officially joined the forum on 01 January 2024, exactly after 100 years when it joined the fledgling League of Nations.

BRICS signifies a long-standing tradition of solidarity among countries of the global South which was firmly established in 1955. This was when Asian and African countries met at the historic Bandung Conference to determine their stance and common goals in the Cold War era and assert themselves in the international system. The historic result of the conference was the formation of NAM. Amid pressure from the Cold War bipolarisation, those countries pursued their own path and strategy under the Bandung Principles of the Afro-Asia solidarity. It is thus important to recall that Ethiopia was at the Bandung Conference. History repeats itself.

MFA welcomed Ethiopia's BRICS membership and called it 'historic' in a statement issued on the same day. Yet, KXII<sup>8</sup> opined that Ethiopia's BRICS membership is not a 'paradigm shift' as there is no any practical measure or a new foreign policy decision that followed suit. Interviewees argue that Ethiopia's BRICS membership is part of the draft revised foreign policy which calls for diversified partnership. Ethiopia therefore plans for a harmonious integration in BRICS by engaging in all activities in 2024, and afterwards.

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<sup>8</sup> A key informant, a diplomat, at MFA interviewed on 15 April 2024 at MFA

#### 4.2.1.1 Factors that Drove Ethiopia's Interest in to Joining the BRICS

Addressing the question how Ethiopia plans to wisely play in the BRICS platform would help to understand the motivating factors for its membership. Data reveals that Ethiopia's rational decision to join the BRICS comes from internal and external factors. Internally, economic calculations, mainly, and foreign policy directions have driven Ethiopia to seek for membership. In order to sustain its high economic growth, Ethiopia seeks for significant concessional and grant financing. Finance Minister Ahmed Shide affirmed that the economic factor was 'determinant' for Ethiopia's BRICS membership. Because BRICS' development finance, investment, trade, infrastructural development, and technological advancement potentials are huge, Ethiopia eyes to co-develop and cross-fertilize its economy with BRICS economies. KVIII also argues as a 'net importer', Ethiopia would like to enhance its export potential with trade relations with BRICS states.

Ethiopia strives for greater integration into the global economy ending its passive role. KX believes Ethiopia's BRICS membership is a continuation of its earlier developmental state philosophy, in which economic sovereignty was prioritized and international relations geo-economized. Ethiopia seeks to diversify its economy; access new technologies; address food, energy, climate and economic crisis; and integrate with the knowledge economy of BRICS. There was also an immediate need for economic resources for the post-war reconstruction efforts. "Reconstruction plan demands to look for different and new sources" (ibid).

As economic cooperation is one of the pillars of its foreign policy objectives, Ethiopia assumes a crucial role its BRICS membership has to unlock the massive untapped opportunities in member countries. It also appreciates the leadership and commitment of BRICS to building partnerships with Africa in trade, investment, technology transfer, and infrastructure development.

Ethiopia's BRICS membership is also derived from Ethiopia's broader foreign policy strategy of 'diversifying partnerships and expanding options.' As Emperor Haileselassie once said 'we go wherever our national interest goes', Ethiopia's 'pragmatic and independent foreign policy' entails – maximizing Ethiopia's benefits by engaging in diversified partnership. Ethiopia often avoids 'over-reliance' on certain powers. The membership request note, as seen by the researcher, reads:

*...the intention to join BRICS is related to diversifying our partnership to respond to the legitimate development aspirations of our people. The long-held policy of constructive neutrality of Ethiopia would remain one of the cardinal principles of*

*Ethiopian diplomacy. It is important to reassure western governments that we are not entertaining any idea of supporting anti-Western coalition. Our strong position has been to reform, not destroy, the current international order to make it more inclusive, and more representative to reflect the current realities.*

While continuing its robust relations with traditional partners, Ethiopia thus seeks to enhance its relations with new partners such as BRICS as it is a platform for additional cooperation and partnership at global stage. Ethiopia does not believe in bloc politics, alliances and coalitions. Hence, its BRICS membership is not meant to shun out the strong relations with its Western partners; it is not an alternative, but complementary, to these relations.

Similarly, Guntram Wolff, in his interview with the Deutsche Welle (DW) News on 03 January 2024, avowed that BRICS “is just another sort of piece in a puzzle of having more relations with more partners... for Ethiopia [and other members], this is really a way of diversifying their external relations and thereby increasing the leverage they have relative to each big power”. From economics point of view, Degye, *et al.* (2024, pp.28-29) uphold that “given its current state of domestic and global economic and political challenges and international relations, Ethiopia should work with both the BRICS and the [IFIs]”.

As well, as a credible voice and advocate of effective multilateralism and Pan-Africanism, Ethiopia shares the core values and aspirations of BRICS. BRICS’ fundamental principles, including respect for the chosen path of development, mutual consideration of interests and pursuit of collective solutions to contemporary global challenges, among others, inspired Ethiopia to join the forum. Ethiopia values multilateralism and BRICS’ aspirations to create a more inclusive and balanced international system. KX also claims that Ethiopia’s BRICS membership stems from its “pursuit to play a role in the world order in transition”.

While stressing that the reform of the global governance architecture including the UNSC is urgent and vital, Former DPM and FM Demeke admitted that BRICS has “championed this call. That is why Ethiopia is grateful to have been invited to join [BRICS]” (UN, 2023). The openness of BRICS to accept new members in the same period was also an immediate factor that drove Ethiopia’s interest to join BRICS.

BRICS is also an additional platform for Ethiopia to amplify its credible voice and reflect its foreign policy considerations at the global decision-making bodies. This will further enhance its commitment towards a reformed global governance architecture and multilateralism, to champion the interests of Africa and the global South, and to contribute to global efforts to address multifaceted and interlinked common challenges, particularly developing countries

continue to confront. Ethiopia has a solid and credible historical role in shaping and making meaningful contributions to multilateralism as it is not the first time it became a member to multilateral platforms. It is a founding member of the League of Nations, UN, NAM, ICAO, ITU, IPU, G77, the AU, an early member of the WB and IMF, and several other common platforms for Africa and the global South. Its BRICS membership is thus in line with its historic position on strengthening multilateralism.

Externally, the undue coercive external pressures particularly from the West and the reassuring support it garnered from the major BRICS countries, particularly recently, have influenced it to look for BRICS membership. This also holds true in the case of Russia as its commitment to BRICS has increased especially since 2014. “The Crimea crisis and the increasing tension between Russia and the West culminated in Russia’s suspension from the G8 and contributed crucially to this new turn in foreign orientation” (Vadell & Ramos, 2019, p.76). In the same vein, a study by EEA reveals the top five reasons, in the perception of experts, that drove Ethiopia to join BRICS. These include economic and political sanctions, geopolitics, deteriorating relation with Western powers, and external intervention. The authors then concluded that “Ethiopia is perceived to have joined [BRICS] mainly driven by political and economic challenges the regime is currently facing” (Degye, *et al.*, 2024, p.17). In line with this, KVIII<sup>9</sup> argues that BRICS membership serves as a ‘temporary respite’ from the whole set of challenges.

There are also other factors including the role of leadership, rational decision making, and perception. The leadership factor can be considered, in inference at least, to have played a critical role in Ethiopia’s BRICS membership. Xuotong, as found in Yang (2019), categorizes political leadership into four types - inactive, conservative, proactive and aggressive. Of these, proactive leadership “refers to policymakers that devote themselves to the work of enhancing the status of their country” (ibid, p.42). Thus, in line with Xuotong’s concept of political leadership, the current Ethiopian leadership may be considered as ‘proactive leadership’ for realizing Ethiopia’s BRICS membership. KI also affirms the notable role played by Prime Minister Abiy and DPM and FM Demeke. Information from friendly countries such as South Africa and Russia also reveal that Prime Minister Abiy displayed an active diplomacy during the Johannesburg BRICS Leaders’ Summit to made Ethiopia’s membership possible. “Nigeria, which displayed a lesser active presence, might have had a better chance of becoming an African member of BRICS if it wasn't for the extraordinary efforts of the Prime Minister”, KI added. Still more, the individuality

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<sup>9</sup> ibid

approach to multilateralism which, according to Caporaso (1992, p.604), conceives that, states “enter into contractual relations with other states in a rational, self-interested way”, also holds true to Ethiopia as it seeks to benefit from the forum in ways explained earlier. States have an instrumental behaviour - instrumental multilateralism – thereby they associate themselves with institutions to pursue their national interests. Moreover, in line with Walt’s (1990) ‘balance of threat theory’ which theorizes that ‘the perceived threat by a state has greater influence than the actual threat it is facing’, Ethiopia might have misperceived the role of BRICS in counterbalancing ‘undue external pressures’ in the context of its recent internal situation.

Ethiopia deserves to be a member of not only BRICS but also other international platforms so as to project a commensurate influence with its rich diplomatic history, and larger population and economy. Baumann (2017, p.25) avers that “countries should have more of a say in global affairs not only for their performances but, above all, for the sizes of their economies, their internal markets, and their differentiated production structures”. Ethiopia’s BRICS membership is thus a testament to its growing economic and political importance on the global stage. Moreover, the BRICS alliance allows holding each other in check (Glosny, 2010). In that, Egypt’s BRICS accession in the absence of Ethiopia, as consensus is the leading principle of BRICS, would have blocked Ethiopia’s BRICS membership is a right decision at the right time.

In sum, as the theories entail, Ethiopia’s BRICS membership pertains to a rational decision making to maximize its utility (national interest) and minimize the costs/risks amidst the then mounting internal and external challenges. As the institutional approach states, BRICS members exploit the platform to foster trust based on their shared identity to coordinate not their policies and positions, but also of the developing world in general. As narrow interests cannot bring cooperative outcomes, BRICS is able to survive, if not thriving better, over the years without any central institution. BRICS is a platform to deliberate on the coordination of foreign policies. According to the PTT, BRICS as an institution of international cooperation enhances national power thereby multiply global and regional influence, helps to reduce external pressures from dominant powers, helps to hold each other in check, and establish complementary/alternative economic cooperation institutions. Different economic and sociopolitical systems can coexist peacefully. BRICS membership enables Ethiopia to pursue an active role in the South-South cooperation platforms including the NAM and the G77 plus China. It also brings forth, as the status-seeking theory of the post-positivism school asserts, an increased regional and continental role.

#### **4.2.1.2 Factors that Enabled Ethiopia's BRICS Membership**

Ethiopia has a proud and long history of multilateralism. Its firm devotion to a reinvigorated multilateralism has continued through the thick and thin. Ethiopia's BRICS Sherpa Mr. Mamo, during the BRICS Sherpas meeting in Durban in 2023, underscored that Ethiopia's rich experience in and uninterrupted commitment to multilateral cooperation, which started during the days of League of Nations emanates from its long-held belief in collective security and prosperity, and the priority it gives to the spirit of consensus in its multilateral engagements. Ethiopia continues to support multilateralism with the resolve to cooperate with the global community to deal with transnational issues that need collective response.

Ambassador Mesganu, State Minister of MFA, in his address to the 2023 Doha Forum, also posited that Ethiopia, known for its tradition of multilateralism, internationalism and active non-alignment on global affairs, is an advocate for an inclusive, balanced and reasonable model of a pluri-centric world on which the shared future of humanity and planet earth rest. A pluri-centric order makes the international order serve and reflect the aspirations, interests and priorities of the developing world in partnership with the developed one. He also stressed that the three pillars of Ethiopia's long history of diplomacy – maintaining collective security, harnessing collective development and managing global affairs through inclusive multilateralism - would surely add balance, certainty and positivity to the evolving global order.

Ethiopia is a staunch devotee to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, particularly of collective security, and is hugely proud of its age-old and weighty contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. In her statement at the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting in Accra, Ghana, on 06 December 2023, Martha Luwiji, State Minister of Defense, expounded Ethiopia's notable track record for global peace and security in that it "has always been among the top troop contributing countries to peacekeeping missions. Since its first participation in UN peacekeeping mission in 1951, over 180,000 Ethiopian peacekeepers were involved to date" (UN, 2023).

In addition, Addis Ababa is one of the world's largest diplomatic hubs for multilateral diplomacy. It is the seat of the AU, UNECA, Global Black Heritage, History and Education Center, OSC, and others. Ethiopia is also one of the largest refugee hosting nations in Africa. Dr. Samir Saran, President of the ORF, while moderating the WEF panel discussion, summarized Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy as typically one of the leading in institution building within the global South. He added that Ethiopia plays "a critical role from the AU, hosting the AU, to

peacekeeping, to many key initiatives around financing for development and others that came out of [it]. Ethiopia played a bridging role between the North and the South, East and the West, and it is a centerpiece” (WEF, 2024). Ethiopia has also a proven track record of promoting principled positions that would significantly contribute to the furtherance of BRICS’ collective interest.

In other words, Ethiopia is believed to be the right choice for the forum’s additional representation in Africa. Ethiopia’s economy is the third largest in Sub Saharan Africa, and has been growing double-digit over the past decades, one of the highest rates in the world. With 120+ million people, second in Africa, Ethiopia also offers huge market access for BRICS. Its predominantly youth population is an asset for cooperation through driving innovations and consumption. In spite of recent internal challenges, its economy has huge potential for being a manufacturing and industry base for Africa, BRICS and the world. Anchored in its 10-year development plan, the country is accelerating its journey towards sustainable peace and prosperity. The entry of Ethiopia expands the agricultural and renewable energy base of the BRICS family. As well, Ethiopia is considered to serve as a strategic bridge or gateway to a wider market and investment for more than one billion Africans. Its unique position at the tripoint of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia makes Ethiopia the hub of connectivity in Africa. Politically, it is a key player in the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia stays committed to preserve the strong multilateral tradition of Africa, developing world and South-South cooperation. It has a solid foundation and history in promoting Pan-Africanism and voicing continental issues in the international arena. It is also an active member of the AU and champion of several initiatives of the Union. Besides, as the only African member of the League of Nations, it has battled with injustices in international platforms. With the dear sacrifices of its sons and daughters, it has also successfully protected its independence - the only in Africa. With this success, it stood proudly as an icon of Africa, the black community, and all those battling injustice and external aggression. These make Ethiopia an ideal representative of the continent. It is thus without doubt that Ethiopia can be a valuable addition to BRICS bringing a wealth of experience to the platform.

More importantly, Ethiopia has had long-standing historical bilateral relations with BRICS members. Ethiopia’s shared historical, political, economic, and people-to people ties with each member place it in a unique position to elevate existing partnerships. Ethiopia is an old civilization, an old state with rich and proud history, and a land of many origins. Its diplomacy stretched beyond a century. It is, thus, a fitting time to come together to build a better future for

all developing countries to create a peaceful, sustainable, and equitable world. Ethiopia also shares, with these countries, an enduring history of solidarity, support, and mutual cooperation, on various international platforms including the UN, G77 and the NAM. Besides, its pandemic-period collaboration with China and the global South as a whole are among the enabling factors for its BRICS membership. Not only this, for KVIII, Ethiopia's All-Weather Strategic Partnership with China serves as an immediate enabling factor for its BRICS membership.

Yet, in a different view, KVIII<sup>10</sup> opines that, accepting an 'anchor state', particularly in Africa, as a member would enable BRICS to attract and easily influence others to seek for membership.

Having all these positive records, Ethiopia is considered as an asset to BRICS. In its statement on the occasion of Ethiopia's full BRICS membership as of January 1, 2024, MFA stated that:

*Its membership recognizes the rich multilateral contribution of Ethiopia to promote international peace, security, and prosperity; and the continued commitment and leadership of Ethiopia to South-South cooperation. Due to the ongoing economic reforms, the current and potential of the Ethiopian economy has been acknowledged... Guided by its long-held principles and rich history of multilateralism, Ethiopia remains committed and ready to play a constructive role in promoting peace and prosperity as a new member of the BRICS (MFA, 2024).*

In general, as stated earlier, Ethiopia is considered as one of the emerging powers one cannot afford to ignore.

#### **4.2.1.3 Opportunities and Challenges**

##### **A. Opportunities of Ethiopia's BRICS Membership**

Ethiopia's BRICS membership is a natural continuation of its policy of securing a conducive environment for its economic and political advancement. Ethiopia is fully convinced that its BRICS membership would greatly contribute to its national efforts to realize stability and prosperity. It seeks to sustainably tap into the abundance of trade and investment potentials, and development finance offered by BRICS. Degye, *et al.* (2024, p.18) affirm that "[j]oining the BRICS is expected to help mobilize additional source of development finance for new and emerging economies like Ethiopia". Ethiopia foresees to take advantage of the different levels of development and different experiences of BRICS countries. Not only this, Ethiopia's BRICS membership presents another opportunity to further solidify its bilateral ties with all members.

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

The opportunities in BRICS are further illustrated across the three pillars as follows:

#### ***A. Opportunities in the Political and Security Pillar***

BRICS is being gradually seized of global political issues as is evident in its summit declarations. For instance, the latest Johannesburg summit declaration discussed the political and security situations in many parts of the world including Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Haiti, the Ukraine-Russia crisis, the Israel-Palestine situation, Nigerian and Libyan turmoil, rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, among others. The first time the BRICS discussed the topic of security – mainly in Syria and Africa, was during its fifth summit in 2013. Taking a look into the total number of meetings over the last four years, meetings on political and security issues rose from 17% in 2021 to 19%, 21% and 20%, in 2022, 2023 and 2024, respectively.

Therefore, at least in the short-term, Ethiopia has a lot to tap into from BRICS' political and security priorities, particularly as stated in the priorities and initiatives of the 2024 Russian chairship. These include seamless and smooth on-boarding and integration of new BRICS members into the existing cooperation mechanisms; promoting common approaches in the international fora; enhancing cooperation on transnational issues such as countering terrorism, corruption, illegal drug trafficking and transnational organized crime; and promoting sustainable development and development cooperation. Besides, Russia's initiatives for 2024 in the field of security include establishing a council for anti-money laundering and combating financing terrorism, counter-terrorism working group strategic vision, BRICS points of contact directory for exchange of information on computer attacks, strengthening a political and legal framework in international information security, and cooperation in the use of AI in combating corruption.

Ethiopia's BRICS membership would give it a role to play in the global system. As per KXIII<sup>11</sup>, the global system has shaken, not shifted, because of the role of the most powerful emerging countries including BRICS members. This demonstrates the increasing role other members, including Ethiopia, would play in shaping global affairs and global policy. As well, BRICS membership assures Ethiopia of the continued exercise of its policy space/autonomy. Not only this, it will also serve as a foreign policy tool to influence the foreign policy behaviours of other countries, more particularly prospective BRICS member or partner countries. It will also enhance its international legitimacy as opposed to the previous three years.

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<sup>11</sup> A key informant, from MFA, interviewed on 15 April 2024 at MFA

In addition, BRICS provides a deliberation platform to pursue common and coordinated foreign policy positions on global issues in international institutions. It enables members to deepen their foreign policy coordination. As the institutional approach states, BRICS members exploit the platform to foster trust based on their shared identity to coordinate not their policies and positions, but also of the developing world in general. As narrow interests cannot bring cooperative outcomes, BRICS is able to survive, if not thriving better, over the years without any central institution. Kapoor (2020) points out that emerging powers “find it difficult to strike out on their own and hence rely on multilateral institutions to achieve their goals. In a similar vein, for the past decade, BRICS countries have sought to improve coordination of issues of mutual interest”. Accordingly, BRICS leaders, Foreign Ministers, national security advisors, ministers, and senior officials convene regularly to coordinate their positions in respective areas. The yearly summit focuses on coordinating BRICS voices within international institutions. Leaders and Deputy Foreign Ministers convene to discuss regional issues in North Africa and Middle East, including the situation in Gaza. There are also working groups including in cyber security, counter-terrorism and anti-drug, security in the use of ICTs, disaster management, and others, in which Ethiopia can display an active role.

BRICS provides opportunities for sharing policy advice and exchanges of best practices in terms of domestic and regional challenges as well as advancing the restructuring of the global political architecture. BRICS outlined its vision for reform of the international system in its 2021 joint statement on *Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System*, emphasizing inclusivity and representation. Thus, resolving to realize these goals and working towards a multipolar world is the artery of the political and security pillar. The 2023 BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting held in Cape Town reiterated the call for reforms of the principal organs of the UN – recommitting to instill new life in the discussions on reform of the UNSC, revitalize the UNGA and strengthen the ECOSOC. The first explicit mention of the UNSC reform was made at the third BRICS summit in Sanya in 2011. Africa, for instance, seeks full representation in the UNSC with a minimum of two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats. Thus, BRICS can help to push hard on the reform of the established global order in favour of the interests of the global South in general, and Africa and Ethiopia in particular. Tekeda (2024) foresees some hope in the reform of the UNSC, through the review of the UN Charter, during the upcoming Summit of the Future.

Similarly, BRICS avails another opportunity for Ethiopia to promote African interests. Ethiopia was able to amplify the voice of Africa and the global South in its participation of the meetings

held so far including the 2023 Leaders' Summit, Finance Ministers' meeting, the UNEA6, the Sherpas' meetings, the Deputy Foreign Ministers' meeting held in Moscow on April 2024, to mention few. By aligning itself with other powers, Ethiopia is well-positioned to enhance its role in shaping regional policies and accelerate the realization of the AU's development goals.

Furthermore, BRICS countries envision a multipolar world order. According to the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) (2015, p.105), BRICS members "are committed to a democratic and just polycentric world order founded on the rule of law, equality, mutual respect, cooperation, coordinated action and collective decision-making. This vision could be achieved by supporting political and diplomatic efforts to peacefully resolve global disputes". It is thus mutually beneficial for BRICS and Ethiopia to align their efforts to promote a polycentric international system and expand the representation of EMDCs therein.

BRICS also aims at achieving global peace and security through peaceful diplomacy. A greater role for BRICS in resolving conflicts peacefully as well as ensuring respect for international law and the UN Charter, could expand the prospects of international peace and security. BRICS aims "to create a stable, safe and fair world order through peaceful diplomacy and multilateralism" (IPEA, 2015, p.105). This fits well with Ethiopia's historical commitment to collective security. A respondent from one of the Ethiopian security apparatuses upholds that BRICS solidifies its members' cooperation in areas of countering terrorism, transnational crimes and other global challenges of peace and security. Ethiopia's vow to implement the 2020 BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy can also positively enhance and support its counter-terrorism efforts.

BRICS membership creates an opportunity for positional improvement and/or upgrading. According to the PTT, national power comes from cooperation with other countries which offers the opportunity to multiply influence and multiply power worldwide. This in turn helps to enforce common interests such as improving bargaining power at the multilateral level and expanding regional influence. Asserting that emerging powers would pursue 'their rise jointly through the formation of coalitions in international politics', Xing (2019, p.11) affirms that BRICS serves as "a global stage/platform or an intermedium for each country to position itself in its region and in the world". Thus, Ethiopia's BRICS membership can bolster its political influence on both regional and global stages. Ethiopia's position in the global stage before its BRICS membership was characterized by its defensive position. However, Ethiopia is nowadays demonstrating an assertive and offensive diplomacy - epitomized by the signing of an MoU with Somaliland and the assertive contents of the statements issued by its MFA in recent times.

BRICS membership also helps reduce the increasing influence of major powers. BRICS can help Ethiopia to tone down the undue external coercive measures through the support of powerful BRICS members. Baumann (2017, p.24) argues that “if a conflict... is reproached by the Western powers and leads to drastic sanctions placed on a belligerent country, a sensitive situation is created if the country being punished happens to be a BRICS member. The cohesion of the group may require a joint demonstration in favor of a fellow association member, even if the other members of the group are not necessarily in accordance with the position of the belligerent member”. Impliedly, Ethiopia’s BRICS membership makes it more geo-strategically important, perhaps encouraging Western powers to soften human rights accusation these days.

In other words, BRICS, during the XV summit and the 2023 Foreign Ministers meeting, expressed its concern on the use of unilateral coercive measures and their negative effects on the developing world, and the impact of unilateral economic coercive measures, such as sanctions, boycotts, embargoes and blockades, on the world economy. BRICS leaders condemned “unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions in violation of international law... emphasize the unique importance of the indivisible nature of security, and that no State should strengthen its security at the expense of the security of others” (BRICS, 2014). Stressing ‘the imperative of refraining from any coercive measures not based on international law and the UN Charter’, BRICS, as a result, promotes a more agile, effective, efficient, representative, democratic and accountable international and multilateral system.

BRICS also supports regional mechanisms to address challenges of peace and security. The Johannesburg summit declaration II stipulates that BRICS supports African peace efforts by strengthening the relevant capacities of African States, and ‘African solutions to African problems’ should continue to serve as the basis for conflict resolution. Besides, the Summit was seized of African political issues including those in the Horn of Africa in the case of the Sudan. Ethiopia also benefitted from African-led problem-solving mechanisms in the case of the Pretoria Peace Agreement. The upholding of the principle of subsidiarity, which the BRICS implicitly supports, is of paramount importance to Ethiopia and Africa.

BRICS can also assert the interests of its members in available global platforms. For instance, in G20, in which six BRICS countries and the AU are members, the interests of BRICS can be easily pronounced. IPEA (2015, p.14) asserts that, “[a]s BRICS countries assume a pivotal role in the global governance architecture, they have to strive to affect structural changes within existing multilateral institutions... They must be propositional and share relevant governance

experiences with each other to further this central objective”. Not only this, in its latest summit, the BRICS called for greater representation of EMDCs in international organizations in which they play an important role” (XV BRICS Summit, August 2023). In this regard, AU’s membership to the G20 during India’s chairship is evident. BRICS countries also work in cooperation in the UN third committee. They have a coordinated position that political, economic and social rights should have the same equation. Likewise, in the UNHRC, China, India, Russia and the UAE have shown their strong support to Ethiopia. Currently, Brazil, China, India, South Africa and UAE are members of the Council. Thus, as some of the members of the BRICS are members of key international organizations and associations, such as the UNSC, they will continue providing political support to Ethiopian causes. BRICS members may help Ethiopia in easing the humanitarian crisis it faces. Through its AU membership, Ethiopia can also play a key role in G20 in cooperation with the BRICS members.

In sum, in order to effectively exploit the available opportunities under this pillar, Ethiopia outlines strategic activities including full integration with the BRICS family through the alignment of BRICS activities with Ethiopia’s national priorities; commitment to the core principles of BRICS; cooperation on political matters; reform of the global political, economic, and security architecture; cooperation on national, regional, and international peace and security agendas; consolidation of the BRICS platform; and maintaining a balance, among others. As the individual approach entails, Ethiopia can also exploit the BRICS platform in dealing with bilateral issues with members thereby minimizing administrative costs. According to the PTT, BRICS as an institution of international cooperation enhances national power thereby multiply global and regional influence, and helps to reduce external pressures from dominant powers, helps to hold each other in check.

### ***B. Opportunities in the Economic and Financial Pillar***

Many of the BRICS countries, including Ethiopia, have appointed their senior officials working in the economic sector as their Sherpas and Sous Sherpas showing the value these countries attach to economic cooperation in the BRICS framework. Besides, the number of meetings on economic and financial agendas dominate (an average of over 50%) the total number of BRICS meetings over the last four years despite its gradual decrement.

BRICS members pledge to make unified and coordinated efforts to navigate the complexities of the current global economic landscape. BRICS also aims to support the development of developing countries in three ways – through the NDB and CRA, by complementing the West,

and by providing additional support for the UN development goals. Most importantly, it calls for ‘development’ to be taken back to the centre of global agenda.

BRICS advocates for a more stable, predictable and diversified international monetary system, and the enhanced use of national currencies in trade and investment, new payment instruments, and platforms to reduce vulnerabilities. It calls for the reform of Bretton Woods institutions, with a greater role for EMDCs, including in leadership positions. Although the capital structure and voting rights have been amended at both the WB and IMF, voting power is still skewed towards advanced economies. BRICS thus seeks to see that any adjustment in quota shares of the IMF “should result in increases in the quota shares of EMDCs, while protecting the voice and representation of the poorest members” (XV BRICS Summit, August 2023). Likewise, BRICS’ call for the reform of the global financial and monetary architecture has been one of the issues Ethiopia has for long been advocating.

In particular, BRICS promotes the status of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) or the internationalization of its members’ own currencies. According to KVII<sup>12</sup>, BRICS works towards the overhauling of the international financial structure that has been too dependent on the US dollar. Pavel Knyazev, the Ambassador-at-Large of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russia's Sous Sherpa to BRICS, stated that “the practice of trading in national currencies develops between leading economic centres that do not agree to live under the dominance of one model, in which the dollar is used for unfair competition”. BRICS’ plan for de-dollarization intends to help member states to trade and conduct other financial transactions with their local currencies. “The BRICS bank has revealed a three-year de-dollarization initiative to switch away from the USD” (Degye, *et al.*, 2024, p.18). The NDB planned to provide about 30% of its financial support from 2022-2026 in members’ local currencies. The concept of ‘petro-dollar’ is also under question as members start using their own currencies. This is because BRICS members control half of crude oil production globally, and China and India are world’s first and third largest oil importers.

Not only this, Pedersen (2019, p.172) puts that, “BRICS countries are presently contemplating the creation of their own credit rating agency because of dissatisfaction with the credit ratings”. While explaining the priorities of Russia’s 2024 chairship, Ushakov (2024, March 5) also stated that “creating an independent BRICS payment system is an important goal for the future, which would be based on state-of-the-art tools such as digital technologies and blockchain”.

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<sup>12</sup> A key informant, a diplomat at the Embassy of Brazil in Addis Ababa, interviewed on 28 March 2024

In the short term, Ethiopia can seize available economic and financial opportunities in the platform to support its development. Moreover, BRICS and its members may help Ethiopia in easing the economic crisis and the debt burden, for the successful implementation of the national development plans and the post-conflict reconstruction. BRICS emphasizes “the importance of contributing to post-conflict countries’ reconstruction and development and call upon the international community to assist countries in meeting their development goals” (XV BRICS Summit, August 2023). In this regard, Russia avows, in its 2024 chairship, its commitment for the implementation of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025 and the Action Plan for BRICS Innovation Cooperation 2021-2024 for ensuring energy and food security; enhancing the role of BRICS in the international monetary system; and expanding interbank cooperation.

Ethiopia is the fifth largest economy in Africa, and its BRICS membership will give it a greater voice in global economic institutions. It will enhance its relatively small global footprint, and help to boost its economic development. Ethiopia can use its membership in the forum to promote its own economic interests, to learn from the other BRICS members and adopt their best practices of rapid economic growth in recent decades, and to raise its profile on the global stage thereby attract more attention to its development challenges.

Data reveals that Ethiopia’s BRICS membership is all about integration into and access to the largest and well-performing world economies. BRICS offers a huge trade and investment potential for Ethiopia. Ethiopia has also much to gain from collaboration with BRICS in terms of increased food security, agricultural modernization, industrialization, infrastructure development, and accessing technology, among others. The technological advancements in various sectors can also enhance productivity and competitiveness. Ethiopia’s BRICS Sherpa Mr. Mamo, during the BRICS Sherpas meeting in Durban, reaffirmed that BRICS “would greatly contribute to national efforts to realize a peaceful and prosperous Ethiopia... [Ethiopia seeks for] abundant trade, development financing and investment opportunities”. Ethiopia endeavours to ensuring a stable and predictable access to infrastructure finance, to mobilizing investment capital, and to diversifying and modernizing its economy.

BRICS’ share of FDI in Africa in 2010 was 4.9% of the world total, and reached 8.8% in 2021. Likewise, the trade exchanges between Africa and BRICS countries between 2010 and 2022 increased from USD 280 billion to USD 473 billion. Moreover, while addressing the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit, Dilma Rousseff, President of the NDB, stated that the priorities of the bank are aligned with the AU Agenda 2063. Looking into the intra-BRICS economic exchanges, according to the

NDB General Strategy for 2022-2026, the growth in the value of intra-BRICS trade has also been considerable, increasing by 5.1 times over the period from 2005 to 2020. By contrast, trade between BRICS and advanced economies only grew 2.1 times during the same period.

Coming to Ethiopia, a national economic performance report shows that Ethiopia's export trade in 2017/18 (2010 EFY) was dominated by G7 countries (23.8%) followed by BRICS countries (22.3%), and neighbouring countries (17.4%). In the year 2022/23 (2015 EFY), Ethiopia's top export destinations were G7 countries (23.1%), BRICS countries (21.8%), and neighbouring countries (12.7%). This figure has shown a significant change in the first quarter of the 2016 EFY (2023) whereby the top export trade destination was the BRICS (22.6%) followed by G7 countries (22%) and neighbouring countries (10.2%). Besides, in his article titled *'The Way Forward to Ethiopia-US Relations: Collaboration or Confrontation?'*, published in the Ethiopian Herald Newspaper on 19 June 2021, former DPM and FM Demeke upholds that "while most countries of [Sub-Saharan Africa] attract FDI to their extractive sectors, Ethiopia's FDI flows have been destined to the manufacturing and infrastructure sectors. These trends have also redirected international trade away from the traditional developed economies towards newly emerging economies, with China alone absorbing the lion's share of the country's imports and exports" (MFA, 2023, pp.667-668).

BRICS has also a strong position on issues of environment and climate change. During UNEA6 in Nairobi, according to BRICS (2024), BRICS issued a joint statement reemphasizing the importance of implementing the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement; stressing the need to enhance financial support both through existing mechanisms like GEF and CIF, and MDBs; and reaffirming the important role for BRICS in advancing international environmental governance within the UN system. This presents an opportunity for Ethiopia as a vocal force on these issues.

BRICS also rejects sanctions and protectionism that impede global trade, and opposes trade barriers including those under the pretext of tackling climate change. In its joint statement during UNEA6, BRICS underlined that "measures taken to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss must not constitute a means of arbitrary discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade and must not create unnecessary obstacles to international trade" (BRICS, 2024). A noteworthy example of the coercive discriminatory measures is the EU's Regulation on Deforestation-free Products (EUDR) that aims to curb deforestation by banning products from regions unable to prove deforestation-free practices. Harter (2024) wrote a news to the Guardian about the effect of this regulation on Ethiopian farmers stating that "Ethiopian coffee producers

fear its impact on their smallholder-based industry... [C]ompliance with EUDR requires complex data, posing challenges for smallholders... Ethiopian farmers worry about losing their main market... [C]hallenges remain in meeting EUDR criteria... [T]he future of Ethiopia's coffee industry hangs in the balance". Therefore, BRICS' strong position on these issues and advocacy against such measures is in Ethiopia's favour.

BRICS is also in a position to identify possible solutions towards alleviating the debt crisis and mobilizing concessional financing for sustainable development of African countries including Ethiopia. In its Johannesburg Declaration II, BRICS noted that "high debt levels in some countries reduce the fiscal space needed to address ongoing development challenges". Ethiopia promotes a sustainable and responsible debt management system that addresses the challenges of developing countries. During the BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting held in Sao Paulo on 27 February 2024, it expressed its commitment to play its constructive role in further amplifying the role of BRICS on such important matters.

The Economic Partnership Strategy charts out BRICS' vision to promoting trade and investment, creating a friendly business environment, and diversifying cooperation. Platforms including the NDB, CRA, BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR), Alliance Study Group, BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation, BRICS Business Council, and BRICS Women's Business Alliance, to enhance the cooperation. The NDB, founded in 2015, aims to provide financial support to EMDCs to bridge infrastructure gaps while promoting sustainable development and equity. While its headquarters is in China, it has regional centres in India, South Africa, Brazil and Russia. In 2021, the NDB added Bangladesh, Egypt, UAE, and Uruguay as new members. In establishing the NDB, members were mindful of a context where EMDCs continue to face significant financing constraints to address infrastructure gaps and sustainable development needs. The creation of the NDB could be an important step towards a more multipolar financial landscape. The NDB could potentially incentivize existing global financial regimes to reform, adapt and become more responsive to the evolving needs of the global South. It supports public or private projects through loans, guarantees, equity participation and other financial instruments. It focuses on clean energy and energy efficiency, transport infrastructure, water and sanitation, environmental protection, social infrastructure, and digital infrastructure.

From 2022 to 2026, the NDB expects to provide USD 30 billion in funding (for about 80 projects) to infrastructure and sustainable development projects. It also dedicates 40% of its total volume of approvals to projects contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. By the

end of 2021, the Bank's projects were primarily aligned with 11 SDGs. The NDB has also a global role. Since the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2015, MDBs have increasingly prioritized the mobilization of private capital to help bridge the immense gap in financial resources needed to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. As well, the NDB is committed to catalyse more investment from private investors and other sources of capital.

It is understandable, deductively, that the focus areas of NDB match Ethiopia's priorities. Besides, the bank respects the choice in the developmental path and policy of countries which Ethiopia cherishes. This entails, as found in the NDB's General Strategy for 2022–2026, full respect for national sovereignty and ownership of member countries in driving their development priorities, as well as no policy strings attached to the Bank's commitments.

To support the realization of Ethiopia's vision towards prosperity and to implement its national development plans, various Ethiopian authorities have studied the opportunities under this pillar. There are about 22 cooperation frameworks in the economic and finance pillar. Seven Ethiopian institutions including the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopian Customs Commission and Ethiopian Investment Commission, have provided their feedbacks on BRICS cooperation frameworks *vis-à-vis* their specializations. According to their feedbacks, the frameworks are largely in line with Ethiopia's priorities. They can help for an increased access to funding and new technologies; to enhance collaboration with leading research institutions; to open up new market opportunities for Ethiopian businesses and consumers; to facilitate the exchange of best practices; to expand Ethiopia's trade and investment relations with BRICS nations; and to attract tourists from the BRICS thereby enhance its market shares globally.

To conclude, in order to maximize its benefits by tapping into the available economic potentials, Ethiopia emphasizes on strategic activities of promoting financial cooperation, and pursuing economic cooperation in the fields of trade and investment, infrastructure development, transport and connectivity, industrialization and innovation, SMEs, agriculture and food production, environment and renewable energy, and digital economy and ICT. Therefore, Ethiopia needs to identify its comparative advantage for intra-BRICS economic ties. For instance, Dilma Rousseff, President of NDB, once said, Africa has “the largest untapped hydroelectric potential on the planet... which can guarantee renewable, continuous, basic, safe and affordable energy”. In this regard, the GERD can be considered as a comparative advantage in the field of energy. In line with this, a report by Forbes, Ward (2024), reveals that Ethiopia, in collaboration with a Russian

bitcoin mining company BitCluster, planned to establish USD 250 million bitcoin mining and AI data centre. Leveraging its renewable energy sources to power the advancement of bitcoin mining and AI development, this move is expected to enhance Ethiopia's journey towards integrating cutting-edge technologies into its economic infrastructure.

Moreover, Ethiopian Airlines, which received the 'Corporate Sustainability Achievement Award' from the BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry Annual Recognition Awards 2024 in Delhi, according to a press release of the airline (23 January 2024), can connect the BRICS nations further enhancing the intra-BRICS economic cooperation and integration.

Yet, the economic gain in BRICS may have a slow momentum as it may not differ quite significantly from the bilateral exchanges. Analyzing the Indian experience, Pedersen (2019, p.176) posits that "the growing number of investment links naturally implies that India's purely economic self-interests in building and nurturing good relations with the other BRICS countries is slowly expanding. This has been a motivating factor behind India's attempt to broaden the scope of the collaboration efforts within BRICS, but these still tend to be largely potential economic interests rather than actual and direct material interests".

### ***C. Opportunities in the Social Pillar***

Partnership under BRICS is more than government-to-government relations. Governments alone cannot deliver on generating momentum towards global growth, sustainable development, and inclusion of the global South in the world system. It requires a whole of community, whole of society approach. BRICS leaders recognised the need to strengthen people-to-people exchanges and to foster closer cooperation in the areas of education, health, sport, culture and art. People-to-people exchanges forge new friendships, deepen relations and mutual understanding in the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, diversity and mutual learning, involving women, youth, civil societies, businesspeople, media, ruling parties, parliaments, law societies, cultural organisations, sports federations, theatre, film, to name but a few.

Some of the BRICS people-to-people exchanges and platforms include the Young Diplomats Forum, BRICS Business Council, Women's Business Alliance, Youth Council Framework, Parliamentarian Forum, Trade Union Forum, BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC), Civil Forum, Urbanization Forum, Alliance for Green Tourism, Forum for Political Parties, Academic Forum, BRICS Network University, Seminar on Governance, Alliance of Libraries, Alliance of Museum,

BRICS Games, BRICS Film and Cultural Festivals, Media Forum as well as virtual BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre.

The importance of the social and people-to-people cooperation was visible in BRICS' response to COVID-19. Besides, more than 100 multilateral research projects have been funded under the BRICS Framework Programme. In the field of knowledge production, believing that international relation is a Western dominated discipline, Kristensen (2019, p.26) argues that “[m]oves toward constructing ‘indigenous theories’ rather than mimicking the West are also growing”. Therefore, BRICS Think Tanks have a room to collaborate in producing a non-Western knowledge (post-Western theorization) reflecting their own reality. They need to theoretically define as well as strategically design the evolving form of multilateralism.

Some global narratives about BRICS constantly aim to highlight differences. They speak of different histories, cultures, religions, development paths and forms of governance as something negative. Thus, changing narratives in the BRICS Media Forum, empowering the media with BRICS International Journalism Training Program and the Joint Photography Exhibition, worth mentioning. The uniqueness of BRICS is precisely the diversity and richness which welds members together as a powerful global force. It brings them together to work in cooperation not only for members' benefit but for the global community.

Therefore, Ethiopia has a lot to exploit the opportunities in the BRICS people-to-people ties. Both Ethiopia and other BRICS members stand to benefit from enhancing cooperation in knowledge exchange, capacity building, human resource development, provision of technical training as well as deepening cooperation and exchange among educational and research institutions. In this regard, Ethiopia plans to focus on fostering people-to-people relations and cultural exchanges, education, health, and women and youth affairs. There are about seven BRICS cooperation frameworks in this pillar. Ethiopian institutions have reviewed and provided feedback on these frameworks. The institutions uphold that the legal frameworks facilitate the promotion and development of language, traditional and indigenous knowledge; availing grants/concessional loans to support joint initiatives and projects; enabling technology transfer and workforce development; increasing networking and resource mobilization; the adoption, adaptation, innovation and invention of health solutions; and facilitating collaboration in the areas of research, information, knowledge and experience exchange.

In sum, Ethiopia's BRICS membership avails to it immense opportunities in the political and security, economic and finance, and the social fields. This affirms Zartman and Touval's (2019,

p.1) assertion that the association of states for common well-being can bring about ‘gains’ - material gains as well as ‘the perception of progress toward goals, such as improved security, status, or freedom of action for oneself and the imposition of constraints on other actors, and so on’. Therefore, tapping into these opportunities with a well-designed strategy would realize its vision towards a stable and prosperous nation.

## **B. Challenges of Ethiopia’s BRICS Membership**

Ethiopia’s BRICS membership might have some potential internal and external challenges. Internally, Ethiopia’s domestic constraints may hinder it from fulfilling its ‘power expectation’ in BRICS. Its domestic political, economic, and social crises may as well affect its foreign policy choices and shape its sense of identity and common objectives with BRICS. Ethiopia’s external and internal problems would manifest in its involvement in BRICS and potentially contribute to its weakness. Moreover, attributed to the gap in communication, Ethiopia may face the challenge of an over-inflated expectation from its domestic public regarding the benefits of joining BRICS.

Moreover, BRICS’ pursuit of a multipolar world will have both positive and negative repercussions for Ethiopia. While multipolarity brings about a wider policy space and alternative avenues, the order may also become chaotic. A chaotic international order would in turn exacerbate the problems in the geo-politically sensitive Horn of Africa. This would result in a ramification where countries of the region including Ethiopia would not be able to skilfully navigate the dangerous troubled water.

Externally, Ethiopia may face an undue pressure from the West, mainly due to misperception. The West could wrongly perceive that Ethiopia’s BRICS membership would reduce their influence in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea or the African continent as Ethiopia was their key ally in their presence in the region. The West doubts that Ethiopia’s BRICS membership would mean a change in its foreign policy and position, that is, an anti-western move and a resort to minilateralism shunning out its longstanding position on multilateralism. However, KX argues that “BRICS is not a manifestation of minilateralism. It is an open platform ready to welcome other new members”. The West also considers the BRICS as a geo-strategic bloc than an economic forum, and in turn view Ethiopia as a non-trustworthy partner. Ethiopia may also face difficulty to access grants and loans from IMF, WB, and from individual countries. A recent preliminary study by EEA also reveals that “Ethiopia will face several adverse measures from Western powers. These include refusal or reduction of new loans and grants, financial

disbursement problems, and pressure from the WBG and the IMF for devaluation of its local currency. Substantial political measures and pressure on FDI are also expected from Western powers” (Degye, *et al.*, 2024, p.20).

Moreover, disparities in the structure of national institutions and policies, and membership to different organizations, would also be another challenge. For instance, due to differences in institutional mandates, Ethiopian institutions have experienced challenges to effectively participate in BRICS meetings. Another example is that, all BRICS members except Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia are members of the WTO. This would make intra-BRICS trading difficult.

Still more, some BRICS members such as Iran are under sanction. This creates an obstacle to cooperate with these countries in some fields of cooperation. For instance, one Ethiopian institution hints that because Iran’s financial institutions, personalities and other organizations are sanctioned by the UNSC, Ethiopia would get it difficult to make transactions with such entities as the Financial Action Task Force recommendation 7 restricts so.

There is also an inevitable partnership imbalance. There is a huge asymmetry in terms of the size of population and economy, and military capacity. Ethiopia is a developing country with a relatively low GDP per capita, the lowest in BRICS. This would make it difficult for Ethiopia to compete with the other BRICS countries, which are all major economies. In the same vein, Ethiopia needs to balance its engagement as a BRICS member with its other international commitments, such as in the AU and the UN.

The principle of consensus-based decision making would make it difficult to reach agreement on important issues, due to the different political and economic systems of the BRICS members. Hence, strengthening coordination to ensure greater policy coherence and harmonization on key issues will be crucial. The principle of consensus is a tiresome, time-taking activity that demands frequent correspondences to convince one’s national position. Particularly, if the number of members rises, the possibility of reaching consensus would be difficult. This would ultimately make the forum weaker and unresponsive. For instance, with regard to the reform of the UNSC, there appears to be no consensus as to the nature that the reforms should take. According to Bohler-Muller (2014, pp.270-273), “[a]lthough BRICS leaders have expressed support for [the reform of the UNSC]..., China and Russia have to date not expressly supported the inclusion of the other three countries and have rather used the rhetoric of increased ‘effectiveness’ of the UNSC. Furthermore, South Africa is in the difficult position of not alienating the AU, which is of the view that more than one African country should be represented on the permanent council”.

This might also put Ethiopia in problem with South Africa and the other aspirant members. For instance, Brazil, India and South Africa opposed Ethiopia’s and Egypt’s position on the UNSC reform stating that ‘supporting the aspirant countries’ is the language of BRICS which new BRICS members should respect. Two recent BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas meetings on BRICS partners model failed to succeed because of difference on this issue.

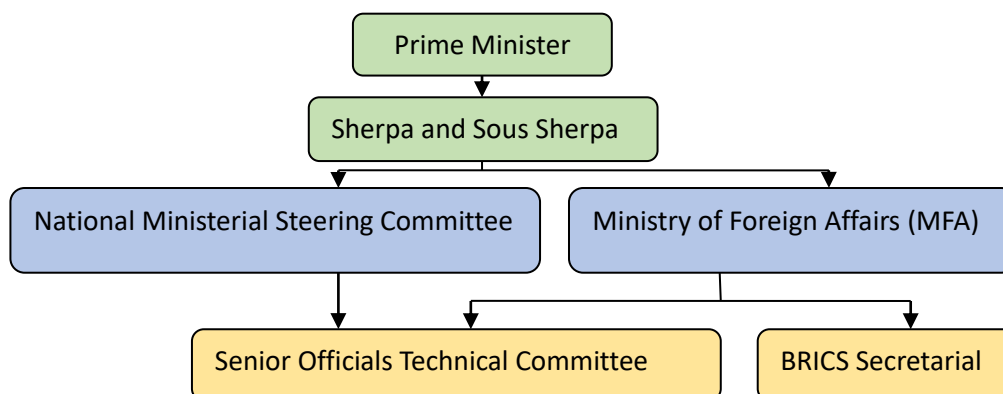
The tendency in the reproduction of the traditional North-South relations would also be a challenge to Ethiopia too. Discussing Brazil’s experience in its BRICS membership, Bernal-Meza (2019, p.123) asserts that “for some time, [Brazil’s] exports of durable goods grew significantly, but at the beginning of the new century, it was the raw material exports that were now growing, while sales of manufactured goods dropped... A strategic relationship meant having an inter-industrial trade. But what was happening was a core-periphery trade and that did not represent the example of a strategic relationship”. Likewise, the ‘primarization’ of Ethiopia’s exports, which it intends to alter through rapid industrialization, would remain a challenge.

Overall, membership to an international institution is not without a cost. Ethiopia’s BRICS membership is not an exception. This goes in line with Zartman and Touval’s (2019, p.1) definition of multilateralism or international cooperation as “a situation where parties agree to work together to produce new gains for each of the participants unavailable to them by unilateral action, at some cost”. This requires a meticulous approach to reduce risks and maximize benefits.

### C. Operational Structure for Ethiopia’s BRICS Membership

To effectively utilize the opportunities and tackle the challenges in BRICS, Ethiopia has established an operational structure of various platforms including committees and a secretariat.

**Diagram II - Work Flow and Operational Structure**



Ethiopia's BRICS engagement strategy is implemented by a set of actors. The Prime Minister is the ultimate decision maker. The Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa oversee BRICS activities and make every preparation for BRICS Summit; chair Ethiopia's BRICS Ministerial Steering Committee meetings; and participate in BRICS Sherpa/Sous-Sherpa meetings. The National Ministerial Steering Committee provides political guidance; ensures coordination of different institutions; and makes recommendations to the Government. The MFA facilitates engagements in BRICS; serves as the secretariat to the Sherpa; chairs Ethiopia's BRICS Senior Officials Technical Committee; and participates in BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting. Other Ethiopian ministries and institutions actively engage in BRICS activities in their particular specializations in ministerial, working group, contact group, council and other meetings and events; and assign Focal Persons to be seized of their specific engagements.

#### **4.2.2 Multilateral Diplomacy in Post-BRICS Admission Period: Challenges, Opportunities**

Politically, albeit the presence of conflicts still raging the country, the 2022 Pretoria peace deal has changed the domestic situation. The government is heavily invested to build trust in the international community taking various measures. For instance, the Council of Ministers adopted the Transitional Justice Policy that has been awaited for long by the international community. The international community was considering to take measures after looking into the commitment of the government with regards to the implementation of the transitional justice mechanisms. Hence, this step would bring about a positive impetus to Ethiopia's re-engagement with the global community.

On the other hand, Ethiopia's economy has kept its growth momentum at higher rates. IMF's World Economic Outlook report issued on April 2024 shows that Ethiopia's economy grew by 7.2% in 2023. It also projects the country's economic growth rate in 2024 and 2025 to be 6.2% and 6.5% respectively.

#### **A. Ethiopia's Multilateral Diplomacy**

This sub-section deals with Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in both BRICS and the established international system - the UNSC, the Bretton Woods institutions and the UNHRC, since 2023.

Following the Pretoria peace deal, the Ethiopian Government has embarked on normalizing its relations with the West to compensate the downward spiral in the country's international standing

that the domestic conflict posed. This confirms Yang's (2019) assertion that, from a neoclassical realist perspective, variables in the domestic dimension such as political instability and domestic conflicts, may change and modify how states act and behave in the international system. It is undeniable that Ethiopia has strong, long standing and solid bilateral relations with the US, European countries and other traditional partners. There could be some hiccups in the relations, but those do not define the nature of Ethiopia's cooperation with these countries. Moreover, Ethiopia upholds its BRICS membership should not be misread as a negation of its relations or to shun out its relations with traditional partners. The relative improvement of domestic situations has also improved, in relative terms, Ethiopia's relations with such partners. For instance, in June 2023, the US lifted a legal designation on Ethiopia that paves the way to resume the dispatch of US' international economic aid considering progress on human rights. The determination stated that the Ethiopian Government was no longer engaging in a 'pattern of gross violations of human rights' and allowed Ethiopia to once more qualify for US and international loans and financial aid. The lift also included unblocking major IMF programs to help Ethiopia's shaky economy by potentially covering gaps in Government funding and reworking its ballooning government debt.

The strained US-Ethiopia relations got smoother but not fully normalized. The Presidential Executive Order 14046 is still active after its renewal last year. Ethiopia's request to revitalize the bilateral Working Group Mechanism that was created after 2005 is not yet welcomed by the US. Likewise, the EU and Ethiopia signed a USD 650 million Multiannual Indicative Program (MIP) on October 2023 focusing on the green deal, human development and peacebuilding.

Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in 2023/2024 was, in general, marked by some success stories. KX also attributes the country's national success to its multilateral diplomatic efforts. The UNSC, in 2023-2024, conducted one meeting on the MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland. However, it did not adopt any resolution or outcome document on the issue. Besides, the UNSC and its members have mentioned Ethiopia in about seven meetings during this period. Of these, Ethiopia was mentioned positively only in two meetings with regards to the Pretoria peace deal and its role in resolving the conflict in Laascaanood, which was also stated in its Press Statement of 07 June 2023, and in countering Al Shabaab under the frontline states' initiative. In the rest of the five meetings, it was mentioned negatively. The other major positive development is that Ethiopia has started, in 2024, to deploy peacekeeping forces, only police officers, in South Sudan. According to the nine months' report of MFA's IODG for the year 2023/2024, of the 49 officers that passed the test, 15 are deployed to South Sudan.

With regards to the Bretton Woods institutions, the WB has continued to be a valuable partner for Ethiopia's development. Development cooperation still holds central place in the relations, and the WB has continued to play a crucial role in supporting Ethiopia's Home-Grown Economic Reform. The WB approved a total of USD 3 billion (2024 - USD 1.72 billion and 2023 - USD 1.29 billion) financial support from IDA for Ethiopian projects for the two years. In its recent statement issued on 05 April 2024, the Ministry of Finance affirmed that it signed six financing agreements valued USD 1.72 billion with the WB in the form of credits and grants, for the implementation of six projects. The agreements were signed by Finance Minister Ahmed Shide, and Ousmane Dione, Country Director for Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan at the WB. However, the IMF has not availed any financing package for Ethiopia during this period.

With regards to the UNHRC, through a continuous diplomatic engagement with other groups within the Council such as the NAM group, the Africa group, Like-minded group and the BRICS group (under formation), Ethiopia had seen the termination of ICHREE in 2023. Also, there was no any draft resolution proposed against the human rights situation in Ethiopia during the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the UNHRC in 2024. Yet, statements were issued by a group of 43 countries during the 55<sup>th</sup> session. With the current UNHRC membership of five BRICS countries, Ethiopia is also assured of their support whenever it deems necessary.

Commencing engagement in BRICS is also a major success in Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy. Ethiopia undertakes a lot of activities to display a strong presence in BRICS, and to effectively tap into the immense benefits of its membership. The government has appointed Mamo Esmelealem Mihretu, Governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia, as Sherpa, and Ambassador Misganu Arga Moach, State Minister of MFA, as Sous Sherpa. A 19-member National Ministerial Steering Committee and a Senior Officials Technical Committee are also established and started discharging their respective responsibilities. The BRICS Secretariat, established in MFA, is facilitating the daily BRICS engagements. Moreover, Ethiopia has so far partaken in more than 45 meetings of the 60 BRICS meetings. These meetings enabled Ethiopian institutions to interact and share experiences, to establish a working relation, and to understand the structure, rules, values and principles of BRICS.

Ethiopia also endorsed its BRICS Engagement Strategy. As outlined in the Strategy, Ethiopia focuses to catch up with the consolidated experiences and systems of the BRICS platform; to familiarize and integrate easily with the working mechanisms, processes and the 'BRICS culture' that have been developed for over 15 years; to solicit the necessary support to the country's

development and prosperity; and to foresee Ethiopia's vision for the consolidation of BRICS and discharge its expected roles. The Strategy is critical in clearly setting out Ethiopia's interests, effectively engaging all stakeholders in BRICS activities, playing a significant role in the platform, and fully exploiting the potentials in the platform.

There are about 30 BRICS legal frameworks to guide cooperation which Ethiopia is ready to sign. Of the 30 legal frameworks, 18 of them are signed., and about 10 of them are not formal legal instruments as they are in the form of declarations, action plans or terms of reference which do not require signatures. Most of the legal frameworks are designed around the key areas of cooperation Ethiopia desperately needs. These key areas well align with Ethiopia's priority sectors as stipulated in the Ten-Year Perspective Development Plan (2021-2030). After its admission to the BRICS, Ethiopia has got support from BRICS members to speed up its integration to the family. Ethiopia has also presented its request for NDB membership to which the leaders of China, Russia and Brazil have expressed support. The President of the NDB has also given a positive response to the request. Decision on Ethiopia's request will be made by the Board of Governors of NDB in June 2024. If the request is not vetoed by more than one country, Ethiopia will officially be a member. BRICS also provides additional economic opportunities for Ethiopia which complement the opportunities from traditional partners and the support of IMF and WB to rebuilding its economy. As stated earlier, Ethiopia's export trade to BRICS countries in 2023 has surpassed the same volume to the G7 countries, which has for long been dominant.

### **Commitment to Multilateralism**

In multilateral platforms, Ethiopia has continued actively reiterating its firm positions against unfair pressures and unilateral measure, and for the urgent need in the reform of the global governance architecture. In his address to the 78<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA on 23 September 2023, former DPM and FM Demeke, underscored that “unilateral sanctions and coercive economic measures violate UN principles and international law. Ethiopia opposes such measures imposed on developing countries and calls for their unconditional removal... diplomatic dialogue among sovereign nations should be the primary tool to resolve differences” (UN, 2023). As well, Ethiopia, like countries of the global South, has continued its call for reforms in the UN system and the IFIs, and the creation of a polycentric global order that benefits all. “Ethiopia underscores that reforming the UNSC is not a choice but an urgent necessity... Allocating permanent seats for Africa... is politically and morally justified... The BRICS have championed

this call. That is why Ethiopia is grateful to have been invited to join [BRICS]” (ibid). KV<sup>13</sup> also framed BRICS as a ‘midwife’ for the upcoming polycentric global order.

Stressing the importance of a reformed global governance architecture, Demeke stated that:

*The international financial architecture should be reformed with special consideration for Africa’s needs and priorities. Swift resolution of Africa’s debt crisis and the provision of additional development finance should be top on our agenda. Ethiopia advocates for an inclusive international order that recognizes the contribution of all countries* (UN, 2023).

With regards to Ethiopia’s commitment to the UN Charter, there were similar and unswerving positions in this period with that of the period from 2018-2022. To illustrate it more, Demeke called on UN member states “to recommit to the Charter of the UN” (ibid). Furthermore, in his opening remarks on the occasion of the First Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly of the then Organization for Educational Cooperation (OEC), and now Organization of Southern Cooperation (OSC), Demeke underlined that the world was in a critical time confronting multiple challenges. He further pointed out that:

*In an interdependent world, the hardest hit are developing countries... Creating an inclusive, fair, and effective global system that responds to the legitimate demands of the global South should be at the top of the international agenda. We need genuine global cooperation fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century... The voices of developing countries should also be heard with the vision of leaving no one behind... There is an emerging consensus on the importance of reforming the current global system. What is, therefore, needed is a genuine political commitment, particularly from the major powers* (MFA, 2023, pp.540-541).

Furthermore, Ethiopia remained an astute actor in the UN system in the post-BRICS admission period as well. It served as a member of ICAO and UNESCO.

To conclude, Ethiopia has shown, as has always been the case, its firm commitment towards a newly reformed multilateralism in this period too. Unique to this period is the practical and historical measure it has taken to enhance multilateralism by joining BRICS which considers the agenda as its top priority. Ethiopia’s multilateral diplomacy after its BRICS admission is evident of Ethiopia’s growing international ‘insertion’ coming out of its downward spiral in its pre-BRICS membership period. Ethiopia’s admission to the BRICS has given it a moral boost for its diplomacy. Leveraging its BRICS membership, Ethiopia’s diplomacy seems to becoming more assertive and offensive than ever, its quest for access to the sea being one of the manifestations.

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<sup>13</sup> A key informant, a diplomat, at Ethiopian Embassy in Moscow interviewed on 20 May 2024 online

In addition, Ethiopia tabled its candidacy for membership in the UNHRC (2025-2027), Commission on the Status of Women, Committee of the Rights of the Child (CRC), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), UNESCO Executive Board, International Maritime Organization (IMO) council, and International Labor Organization (ILO) governing body. While Ethiopia has already secured its membership in CSW and CRC, the others are in progress. Its UNHRC membership candidature is endorsed, according to KX14, by the 54 African countries. About 25 other supports are garnered in a reciprocal basis. A total of 98 votes secures its election for membership. It is also a candidate for the three-year term in the AUPSC (2025-2027). It is also campaigning for its citizens to assume positions in different international organizations. An instance is the candidature of Mr. Imeru Tamrat Yigezu to the UN Human Rights Committee, seeking his re-election for the term 2025-2028 at the election to be held in New York on 29 May 2024. Besides, Professor Benyam Dawit has been re-elected to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child at the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the State Parties held on 23 May 2024 in New York, with the support of the government. Moreover, Ethiopia is working to host the ten-year review of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for the implementation of the SDGs in July 2024. It also became a seat for more international organizations which have already signed a host-country agreement. The OSC and the Global Black History and Heritage Centre established their headquarters in Addis Ababa in May 2023 and December 2023, respectively.

## **B. Challenges**

Relatively minimal than the previous study period, Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy has encountered some challenges in the post-BRICS admission period. First, in June 2023, the USAID and the WFP have suspended food aid distribution in Ethiopia. Secondly, the West views Ethiopia's BRICS membership in geo-strategic terms. Hence, Ethiopia's views of the BRICS as a geo-political and security policy forum would determine its relations with traditional partners. Some of the bold measures and initiatives of BRICS such as de-dollarization would create some discomfort on the West, and as a result, bring about 'unintended consequences' for Ethiopia. This demands a delicate balance or a careful walk on a tightrope.

So far, Ethiopia focuses on the economic dimension of the BRICS as it considers this is where its vital national interest lies. For Putin, BRICS "should become 'a full-scale strategic cooperation mechanism' - a vision for great power management on Russian terms, as it were. However, the

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<sup>14</sup> A director at MFA, interviewed on 15 May 2024 at MFA

other BRICS nations were lukewarm as their priority for BRICS cooperation remained geoeconomics” (Skak, 2019, p.155). However, as the BRICS strengthens its political and security cooperation, and thereof its concern and presence in the MENA region, the West would become too concerned. The West’s view of Chinese and Russian presence in the Horn of Africa region matters to member countries including Ethiopia. Likewise, Ethiopia’s position on the Russia-Ukraine crisis was of a concern to its Western partners.

Internally, the gap in communication regarding Ethiopia’s BRICS membership among the public, Ethiopian institutions, and the global community especially the West, would continue as a challenge at least in the short-term. There is ‘inflated’ expectation from the Ethiopian public. KXIII<sup>15</sup> asserts that, due to the misperceptions, Ethiopia may encounter lack of goodwill from the West in its future engagements. Besides, Ethiopia benefits from multilateral platforms including BRICS in proportion to the level of its investment and engagement. However, the level of engagement by Ethiopian institutions in BRICS is not satisfactory.

These days, Ethiopia engages itself in lengthy talks with IMF without reaching any concrete agreement. Ethiopia is expected to implement IMF’s policy recommendations including devaluation. The other implicit challenge, in this regard, is the contradiction in positions – the need for reforming the Bretton Woods institutions in the context of their inefficiency and non-inclusivity on the one hand, and the desperate need for their support by engaging in lengthy discussions on the other hand.

Given the continued challenge of domestic instability, human right actors such as the UNHRC and the international community at large are pressuring Ethiopia to put into effect redressing mechanisms for human right allegations. These demands are conditioned in Ethiopia’s relations with the international community.

### **C. Prospects**

The prospect of Ethiopia’s multilateral diplomacy depends on two key issues. Firstly, Ethiopia should address its internal challenges to effectively dispose of undue external pressures and engage in a fruitful relation with the international community including the UN system.

Secondly, Ethiopia needs to address issues related to its BRICS membership. The success of Ethiopia’s BRICS membership should also answer three critical questions. Firstly, what

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<sup>15</sup> A key informant, diplomat, at MFA interviewed on 15 April 2024 at MFA

economic benefits would Ethiopia aspire to tap into in the BRICS platform different from the bilateral economic relations with BRICS members? Secondly, considering its real political and security interests, how would it balance such interests with the interests of its traditional partners? Thirdly, does Ethiopia have the capability and readiness to navigate well in the current global system and the political economic dynamics of the BRICS?

Ethiopia's BRICS membership is showing a positive prospect in injecting fresh impetus to post-conflict economic recovery. It is elevating the role and voice of the global South, including Ethiopia, in global affairs. It will gradually bring about diplomatic influence, positional improvement/upgrading, and upward mobility to Ethiopia in global affairs. BRICS' economic opportunity is complementing the support Ethiopia garners from its traditional partners.

#### **4.3 Comparison of Ethiopia's Multilateral Diplomacy in the Two Periods: Summary**

Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the two periods shows continuity in consistently pronouncing its long-held policy of seeking for a reinvigorated multilateralism, firm commitment to the UN Charter, establishing a multipolar world order, promoting the interests of the global South, among others. According to KI, Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy is based on the content of the matter, the merit of the case, and its longstanding principles.

However, the nature of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the last years of the first period was defensive as opposed to the assertive diplomacy it starts pursuing in the second period. In the first period, Ethiopia was tabled seven and mentioned eighteen times in the UNSC whereas it was tabled once and mentioned seven times in the second period. This shows the lessening of UNSC pressures on Ethiopia in the second period. Rather, Ethiopia starts deploying its peacekeeping forces which it was forced to stop in the first period. While the support of the WB continued throughout the two periods, IMF did not provide any support and hold any discussion with Ethiopia until the end of 2023. Issues of debt restructuring, devaluation, the pressure from private creditors, and peace and security considerations are still the major preoccupations in its IMF engagement. Moreover, as opposed to pressures from the UNHRC during the first study period, Ethiopia saw a smoother pressure from the Council in the second period. It further tables its candidacy for the Council's membership (2025-2027), as well as the CSW, ICCPR and CRC.

The other important aspect of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the second period was its pursuit of BRICS membership. Ethiopia's BRICS membership itself is a result of its successful multilateral diplomacy. As the draft revised foreign policy calls for diversifying partnership,

Ethiopia's BRICS membership is a natural continuation of its foreign policy. Data also reveal that Ethiopia's BRICS membership is not a 'paradigm shift' and would not change the nature of its engagement with the established global institutions – the UNSC, Bretton Woods institutions and the UNHRC. Moreover, Ethiopia's BRICS membership does not signify a new policy approach nor a change in its foreign policy orientation. Ethiopia does not prefer unilateralism over its historical support for multilateralism. It rather continues its call for a reformed global governance and multilateralism, making the UN at the centre of global governance. It is not about closing one door while opening another. BRICS is not about replacing/substituting Ethiopia's strong traditional partnership with the West; and that 'BRICS is not anti-West or anyone'. Instead, KX describes it as "charting the middle path" in favour of national interests.

Though the period from 2020-2022 was marked by high internal crisis coupled with immense undue external pressure from the international community, the second study period saw Ethiopia a scaled up regional and international relevance, legitimacy and influence attributed to its BRICS membership. Ethiopia slowly came out of its downward spiral in its pre-BRICS membership period. Ethiopia's admission to the BRICS has given it a moral boost for its diplomacy.

Regarding the factors that contributed to the relative success in Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the post-BRICS admission period, the analysis has revealed two lines of argument. The first is the about role of BRICS membership in improving Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy. BRICS is utilized as a driver for Ethiopia's foreign policy priorities including the pursuit of the African agenda and South-South cooperation and, in this respect, Ethiopia continues to place Agenda 2063 on the agenda of BRICS, and to harmonize policies adopted in international for a such as Agenda 2030, with those pursued in BRICS. Data also reveals that Ethiopia's rational decision to join BRICS aims at providing additional impetus to manoeuvre the multilateral landscape and realize, in cooperation with its counterparts, its vision for a strengthened multilateralism.

BRICS becomes an additional multilateral platform to reflect and protect Ethiopia's national interest as institutionalists assert. While rendering it policy autonomy, BRICS provides Ethiopia a platform to assert and project its foreign policy. It also assures that a growing economy and population demands a commensurate increase in diplomatic influence. It thus enables Ethiopia pursue an active role in the South-South cooperation platforms including the NAM and the G77 plus China, in view of global regionalism and economic integration. It also brings forth, as the status-seeking theory of the post-positivism school asserts, an increased regional and continental role. It also eases the pressure of the West. It complements the economic and political support the

country garners from its traditional partners. It enhances experience sharing among BRICS members which have a consolidated experience in multilateralism. Ethiopia is now able to decide on the future of BRICS including the decision-making power to decide which countries can be or cannot be a member. This testifies to the increase in its diplomatic influence and leverage.

The second line of argument factors in Ethiopia's historical assets as enabling factors for its ability to endure all the internal and external pressures and challenges. In this regard, FM Taye considers Ethiopia's consolidated history of diplomacy and its political independence as key assets that helped the country succeed in its multilateral diplomacy in recent times. Seconding this assertion, former DPM and FM Demeke avows that "[d]espite the numerous short- and medium-term challenges facing Ethiopia, history has shown us that the country can and will bounce back and re-emerge as a viable and dependable partner" (MFA, 2023, p.671). This argument is also supported by KVIII, who states that the country's diplomatic history helped Ethiopia to maintain and preserve its sovereign independence amidst the mounting challenges.

However, the two lines of argument seem to complement each other as Ethiopia's BRICS membership itself is a resultant reflection of the country's consolidated history of multilateral diplomacy, national independence, and regional and global relevance.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the study *vis-à-vis* the stated research objectives and questions, and forwards possible courses of future action to fill the identified gaps.

#### 5.1 Conclusions

Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the pre-BRICS admission period was marked by both positive and negative outcomes. The period from 2018-2020 was remarkable in that Ethiopia was recognized and accepted as a key player in the region and on international platforms. It was for the first time in its history that Ethiopia came out of a defensive position with regards to human rights promotion and protection. It had better cooperation with the UNSC, UNHRC and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The study, however, reveals three different views of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy from 2020-2022. The first views the period as 'one of the challenging periods in Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in its recent history' as it had a 'challenged multilateral diplomacy'. According to the second view, Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy made significant achievements during this period as the country defended itself and skillfully rescued its interests from any serious harm. It effectively prevented interventionist measures. Also, it was not made 'a standing agenda' of the UNSC during these challenging times. There was no resolution, press statement, presidential statement, or press element against Ethiopia. Ethiopia was able to 'effectively use multilateral platforms' to bring back its files - the GERD and the northern conflict - to continental mechanisms. The importance of the Africa Group was realized for the very first time. Ethiopia made robust and successful responses to the challenges it faced. In addition, Ethiopia took a lesson that the existing international order is biased and unjust, and got the idea of joining BRICS to redouble the effort to bring about change to the existing international order. Ethiopia's BRICS membership is, therefore, an achievement in its multilateral diplomacy. The third view takes the middle ground stating both success stories and failures.

Despite the achievements, one cannot go without mentioning the fact that the conflict negatively affected Ethiopia's image. Ethiopian issues were repeatedly tabled on international platforms, and charges of human rights violations left a scar on its global stature. The pressures from the

international community, one way or another, affected the public and the national economy. Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy could not bring an immediate conclusion to the conflict.

Factors that drove Ethiopia to apply for and join BRICS include factors such as its policy of diversification, economic calculation with particular reference to the immediate need for economic resources for reconstruction, the openness of BRICS to accept new members, value and interest congruity with BRICS, pursuit of an additional platform to reflect its foreign policy considerations, undue external pressures, perception (expectation of power shift from West to East), to mention a few. Regarding the timing in particular, Ethiopia's bad experience during the conflict contributed to its pursuit of BRICS membership. Ethiopia felt it was not well understood by the West. It felt it was unduly pressured and mistreated by the West. Again, the countries that were supportive of Ethiopia's cause amidst the mounting pressures happened to be BRICS countries in the UNSC and the UNHRC.

Factors that enabled Ethiopia to join BRICS include its enduring devotion to multilateralism; its history as a supporter and founder of various international institutions; its significant contribution to global peace and security; its status as one of the largest diplomatic hubs in the world; being a right representative of Africa; having long-standing historical bilateral relations with BRICS members including the All-Weather Strategic Partnership with China; and being one of the emerging powers one cannot afford to ignore. Referring to the applications of more than 25 countries to join BRICS and the stiff competition thereof, FM Ambassador Taye says 'Ethiopia has projected its potential'.

The draft revised foreign policy has changed its orientation towards the global order, stipulating the importance of multipolarity, the organizing of developing countries and the reform of organizations of the established international system as key elements. These elements have got a new and clear expression in the country's BRICS membership. Ethiopia's BRICS membership is an assertive move 'going from the region to the world' to build a new international scenario in which regional powers had more influence. This involved acting on multiple fronts. Through its BRICS membership, Ethiopia projected itself from the region to the world, as part of the emerging power of the global South in international political economy and the new world order.

Comparing Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the two periods, Ethiopia displayed a consistent policy of pronouncing its call for restoring relevance to multilateralism, and a firm commitment to the UN Charter and a multipolar world order, promoting the interests of the global South, among others. Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy is based on the content of the matter, the merits

of the case, and its longstanding principles. However, the nature of its multilateral diplomacy in the last years of the first period was defensive as opposed to the assertive or offensive multilateral diplomacy it started to pursue in the second period. The second period saw the lessening of pressures on Ethiopia from the UNSC and the UNHRC compared to the first period. While the support of the WB continued throughout the two periods, the IMF did not provide any support and did not hold any discussions with Ethiopia until the end of 2023. Ethiopia also started deploying its peacekeeping forces, and tabled its candidacy for UNHRC's membership (2025-2027). The other important aspect of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the second period was its BRICS membership, which itself is a result of its multilateral diplomacy.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy, particularly of its recent history, is not studied well if not at all. As Ethiopia's BRICS membership is also yet to get the attention it deserves, this study could not establish causal relations of Ethiopia's BRICS membership with its multilateral diplomacy. Thus, though this study can serve as an eye opener, further research on the issue is needed.

Devising a coherent strategy both at the level of BRICS and Ethiopia is fundamental. Ethiopia's strategy, in particular, should clearly identify its interests across the three pillars and the corresponding strategic activities to realize them. The BRICS language in its declarations and other documents on the subject of UNSC reform should be revisited in order to include Ethiopia's interests. Moreover, Ethiopia should not indulge much in the political and security aspect of BRICS, but in the economic and financial aspect. The BRICS strategy should include the role of members, including Ethiopia, in the consolidation of BRICS.

"Do we know BRICS well?", is a key question worth answering. Designing a communication strategy to manage the 'over-inflated' expectations of the public and Ethiopian stakeholders of the benefits Ethiopia could gain from BRICS, and manage the pressures from the West, is also critical. The study also reveals that Ethiopia should not overplay the West's accusation of BRICS as there are also West-affiliated BRICS members. It should be communicated that BRICS is not only China and Russia. It rather is fast becoming an unarguable representative of the global South. Moreover, it should be stated clearly that BRICS is not a bloc, grouping, alliance or coalition against any other grouping. Besides, Ethiopia's BRICS membership serves the purposes of diversifying its partnership, facilitating its active participation in South-South cooperation and allowing it to benefit economically.

Ethiopia needs to accomplish a number of specific tasks. For instance, there is a need to work on policy alignment/harmonization to make the best of the engagement in BRICS. Moreover, Ethiopia may need a special envoy to BRICS as the experience of the Chinese Government shows. Along with this proposal, strengthening its missions in the BRICS countries, the BRICS secretariat at the Ministry, and enhancing the engagement of Ethiopian institutions is vital. Ethiopia, besides its BRICS membership, should enhance its role in the Alliance of Multilateralism for effective multilateralism.

Building strong institutional capacity to make the best of the BRICS forum is a key ask. Ethiopia should create vibrant economic institutions including the banking system and financial markets to engage effectively with those of its BRICS counterparts. It should invest in new mechanisms, institutions and frameworks to fine tune its integration with the BRICS and adjust its international standing. Crafting a pro-active agenda is also critical. Being more forward-looking, it may come up with its own payment system to avoid its dependence on Western payment systems such as Visa and Mastercard. It should also empower the private sector, political parties and civic organizations in order to make a concerted effort in participation in BRICS.

There is a need to adopt a policy of international initiatives and activism rendering Ethiopia a global player and a much more prominent role in global agendas. There is a need to pursue 'autonomous and active diplomacy' - implied non-automatic alignment with traditional western powers related to the security agenda that bypasses the UN and the search for new partners and markets in the so-called global South. In the same token, Ethiopia should play an active and assertive role in the consolidation of the BRICS forum with the ultimate goal of creating a fairer and more inclusive global order. Being an African proud founding country of the UN, Ethiopia has never presided over the UNGA as the UN is preparing for its 78th session. Also, Ethiopia has not for most of the time chaired any of the committees of the UN. Ethiopia's role in the established international system, more particularly the UN, is not satisfactory. 'We should not be shy', FM Taye asserts.

Above all, improving the domestic political and economic situation is imperative to enhance the country's multilateral diplomacy. Internal unity and solidarity are vital for a robust multilateral diplomacy.

Finally, there is no foreign policy document governing Ethiopia's current diplomacy. Therefore, the adoption process of the draft revised foreign policy should be finalized within the shortest time possible to cope with the changing reality.

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## **Appendix I: Data Capturing Instruments**

### **1. Qualitative Interview Schedule**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Dear Participant,

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is GETNET SISAY DEMELASH, a Master of Arts student in Comparative Politics at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, College of Social Sciences, at Addis Ababa University. I am currently conducting research for my master's thesis entitled: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ETHIOPIA'S MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY IN THE PRE- AND POST-BRICS ADMISSION PERIODS (2018-2024): OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS.

To that end, I am conducting an interview in which I kindly ask you to participate by answering questions in this interview schedule. I am confident your responses will enable me to have a better understanding of the issue I am studying and would like to thank you in advance for your time and effort. I assure you that the information you provide will be used for academic purposes and will be treated in strict confidentiality. In case you have any questions, please call me on +251 910 53 14 28.

Once again, kindly accept my sincere gratitude for your assistance.

#### **II. QUESTIONS**

##### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Kindly respond to all questions

**NB:** All information gathered will be kept confidential.

##### **Section I:**

1. How do you describe the achievements, challenges and opportunities of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy from 2018-2022?

.....  
.....

**Section II:**

1. What factors do you think drove Ethiopia's interest in to joining the BRICS family?

.....  
.....

2. What factors do you think enabled Ethiopia to join the BRICS?

.....  
.....

3. Do you think Ethiopia's admission to the BRICS family enhance its multilateral diplomacy? If YES, how? If no, why?

.....  
.....

4. What do you think are the challenges and prospects of Ethiopia's membership to the BRICS?

.....  
.....

**Section III:**

1. Do you think internal political factors affect Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the pre- and post-BRICS admission periods? If YES, how?

.....  
.....

2. How do you compare Ethiopia’s multilateral diplomacy in the pre-BRICS admission periods (from 2018-2022 in the UN system particularly the UNSC, the Bretton Wood Institutions and the UNHRC) and after its BRICS admission?

.....  
.....

**Section IV:**

1. Do you think there would be a change in the policy and praxis of Ethiopia’s multilateral diplomacy?

Yes

No

State your reasons, with practical instances, for the above response on the space provided.

.....  
.....

2. Provide any strategies that you think Ethiopia should pursue in its BRICS membership to best serve its national interests

.....  
.....

**Section V:**

1. Write any additional information you think might be useful in my study. Should you need to say more than is provided for in the spaces, please attach additional paper.

.....  
.....

END OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Thank You for Your Cooperation!**

## **2. FGD Questions**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Dear Participant,

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is GETNET SISAY DEMELASH, a Master of Arts student in Comparative Politics at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, College of Social Sciences, at Addis Ababa University. I am currently conducting research for my master's thesis entitled: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ETHIOPIA'S MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY IN THE PRE- AND POST-BRICS ADMISSION PERIODS (2018-2024): OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS.

To that end, I am conducting this focus group discussion (FGD) in which I kindly ask you to participate by presenting your views to the questions in this schedule. I am confident your responses will enable me to have a better understanding of the issue I am studying and would like to thank you in advance for your time and effort. I assure you that the views you express will be used for academic purposes and will be treated in strict confidentiality.

Once again, kindly accept my sincere gratitude for your assistance.

### **II. QUESTIONS**

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

The FGD has a duration of 90 minutes.

**NB:** All information gathered will be kept confidential.

#### **Section I:**

1. How do you describe the achievements, challenges and opportunities of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy from 2018-2022?

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2. What do you think are the challenges and prospects of Ethiopia's membership to the BRICS?

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3. How do you compare Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy in the pre-BRICS admission period (from 2018-2022 in the UN system particularly the UNSC, the Bretton Wood Institutions and the UNHRC) and post-BRICS admission periods?

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### 3. Document Review Guidelines

A. Achievements and challenges of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy from 2018-2022 in the UN system particularly the UNSC, the Bretton Wood Institutions, and the UNHRC



B. Driving and enabling factors for Ethiopia's BRICS admission



C. Opportunities, challenges and prospects of Ethiopia's BRICS membership



D. Achievements and challenges of Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy after its admission to the BRICS



E. Internal political factors influencing Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy



F. Any change and continuity in Ethiopia's multilateral diplomacy between the pre-BRICS and post-BRICS admission periods (2018-2022 and 2023 on)



## Appendix II: List of Key Informants (Interview and FGD)

| No. | List of Key Informants | Institution                                  | Position         | Data Collection Technique | Date of Data Collection | Place of Data Collection |
|-----|------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1   | KI                     | MFA  | Director General | Interview                 | 29 May 2024             | MFA                      |
| 2   | KII                    | MFA  | Director         | Interview                 | 09 May 2024             | MFA                      |
| 3   | KIII                   | MFA  | Director         | Interview                 | 09 May 2024             | MFA                      |
| 4   | KIV                    | Ethiopian Embassy, Geneva                    | Diplomat         | Interview                 | 10 May 2024             | Online                   |
| 5   | KV                     | Ethiopian Embassy, Moscow                    | Diplomat         | Interview                 | 20 May 2024             | Online                   |
| 6   | KVI                    | Ethiopian Embassy, New York                  | Diplomat         | Interview                 | 15 May 2024             | Online                   |
| 7   | KVII                   | Embassy of BRICS Member Country, Addis Ababa | Diplomat         | Interview                 | 28 March 2024           | MFA                      |
| 8   | KVIII                  | Institute for Foreign Affairs (IFA)          | Director General | Interview                 | 22 May 2024             | IFA                      |
| 9   | KIX                    | MFA  | Director         | Interview                 | 15 May 2024             | MFA                      |
| 10  | KX                     | MFA  | Diplomat         | FGD                       | 15 April 2024           | MFA                      |
| 11  | KXI                    | MFA  | Diplomat         | Interview                 | 28 May 2024             | Online                   |
| 12  | KXII                   | MFA  | Diplomat         | FGD & Interview           | 15 April 2024           | MFA                      |
| 13  | KXIII                  | MFA  | Diplomat         | FGD & Interview           | 15 April 2024           | MFA                      |
| 14  | KXIV                   | MFA  | Diplomat         | FGD                       | 15 April 2024           | MFA                      |
| 15  | KXV                    | MFA  | Diplomat         | FGD                       | 15 April 2024           | MFA                      |
| 16  | KXVI                   | MFA  | Diplomat         | FGD                       | 15 April 2024           | MFA                      |
| 17  | KXVII                  | MFA  | Diplomat         | FGD                       | 15 April 2024           | MFA                      |
| 18  | KXVIII                 | MFA, BRICS Member Country                    | Diplomat         | Interview                 | 07 June 2024            | BRICS Meeting in Russia  |
| 19  | KXIX                   | „  | Diplomat         | Interview                 | 07 June 2024            | „                        |
| 20  | KXX                    | „  | Diplomat         | Interview                 | 08 June 2024            | „                        |