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A RAIA profile on:

Abiy Ahmed

Third part of a six part series on climate leaders ahead of the 2022 COP27 in Egypt.

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Abiy Ahmed

Introduction

"Growing up, my parents instilled in me and my siblings an abiding faith in humanity."

Medemer resonates with the proverb, "I am my brother's keeper. I am my sister's keeper." In my little town, we had no running water, electricity, or paved roads. But we had a lot of love to light up our lives".

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has lived at the forefront of conflict throughout his whole life: from being raised by two opposing religious trends to joining rebel forces against the governing communist regime of his country, and signing peace agreements to end a 30-year-long international dispute; Abiy Ahmed's biography is marked by adversity, war and the eternal quest towards Ethiopian unity above all. His leadership as the Prime Minister of Ethiopia (2018-present), naturally, is not an exception to this rule.

This paper aims to deeply explore his profile and answer one particular question:
is Abiy Ahmed a climate leader?

Despite how short and clear the question might sound at first, there is no easy answer to it: such is not a "yes-no", "black-white" question. What makes an environmental leader? What are the requisites to be fulfilled? Must policies follow a sole environmental vision or can they be proposed individually, escaping the "classic format" of a guiding line? To become a climate leader, must policies be carefully thought of in advance or do short-term, improvised environmentally-friendly policies still count? The answer to these questions lies under an overarching thesis: that, to understand Abiy Ahmed's environmental action, we must escape our western-centric understanding of climate leadership. This paper will conclude that **Abiy Ahmed is not a climate leader in the "strict" "environment-first" manner. However, this report will show how - even if his green project's intentions are initially motivated by strengthening other areas of government (the socioeconomic development of the country) they are still green projects: their results are impacting the environment positively.**

It is possible then, to state that, even if Abiy Ahmed is not an environmentalist with a long-term view according to Western environmental understanding, the policies of a man focusing on solving the urgent needs of his population may still contribute to improving the climate crisis. At the end of the day, isn't this what environmentalism is about too? In this sense, environmentalism is being explored in this case study through "The Rest" angle: the perspective of entire populations coping with environmental disasters with a low GDP per capita and defective institutions.

Methodologically, this report analyses the leader with the RAI methodology by viewing systemic aspects (external actors and factors affecting his environmental policies) and exploring how international actors - such as international organizations, NGOs and economic and political alliances with regional governments - influence Abiy Ahmed's decision-making. However, this report does not stop at a sole evaluation of the structural factors, but also reflects on the psychological aspects that have had an impact on this profile: how does a figure like Abiy Ahmed's become the Prime Minister of an African nation? What particular conflicts have affected him in a personal manner? Which personal experiences and traits could provide an explanation for the order in which his agenda is prioritized?

After this introduction, this report will first present the current environmental challenges threatening the stability of Ethiopia outlining Abiy Ahmed's stake, then explore the leader's defining moment, which will provide a clear picture of the leader's environmental leadership. In third place, this report outlines Abiy Ahmed's policy solutions to solve the environmental challenges previously described. Finally, an impact assessment of these policies is provided in order to evaluate the extent in which the leader's initiatives correctly tackle his country's environmental challenges. To conclude, the document will overview Abiy Ahmed's ability to drive change, the impact of proposed & implemented policies, and an outlook on his next environmental steps.

Abiy Ahmed's background, upbringing and history

Born on August 15, 1976, Abiy is one of the youngest heads of government in the world, the youngest Prime Minister in the history of Ethiopia and the first one to come from Oromia. Being categorized as such "*the first, the youngest*" - has also helped to profile him as a modernist leader **who aims at widely transforming Ethiopia into a new country, more aligned (initially, at least) with western liberal values.** Thus, his young age is encompassed in a series of other characteristics of his profile, forming a picture of **a constraint-challenging leader, someone who has risen to power in order to solve all of Ethiopia's long-standing problems.** His opposition pointed out that this persona he created (representing many of the "firsts") could lead to Abiy Ahmed seeing himself as a "messiah"^{1,2}.

His young age has not only stood out as a mere bibliographic detail, but his young profile and groundbreaker characterization has also translated into the

¹ In this regard, Tsedale Lemma - founder and editor in chief of the Addis Standard- has stated that Abiy sees himself as a "a post-ethnic, contemporary capitalist

² Mackintosh, Eliza. "From Nobel Laureate to Global Pariah: How the World Got Abiy Ahmed and Ethiopia so Wrong." CNN. Cable News Network, November 5, 2021.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/07/africa/abiy-ahmed-ethiopia-tigray-conflict-cmd-intl/index.html>.

policies he has taken. When he first came to power, he drove the country into a process of liberal reform. For instance, in 2018, he appointed an unprecedented cabinet that included 50% of women, including the first female minister in defense³. In his first year in power, he also managed to take a new approach in regards to religious practices, highlighting the right to religious freedom⁴. Lastly, reverting a 30-year-long war by signing peace accords with Eritrea earned him a Nobel Peace Prize in 2019.

This modernist profile, defying the country's traditional ethno-nationalist machinations also arises when taking a look at how Abiy Ahmed came to power. He was elected after a series of aggravated anti-government protests in Oromia, he was nominated from his own political party, the Prosperity party. His election put an end to the social unrest, marking a shift from turmoil to order⁵.

In this regard, the international media also received his election as a turning point in Ethiopia's traditional political fate. In fact, in 2019, he was featured in Time Magazine's list of the world's most influential people. He was also named African of The Year and one of Foreign Policy's 100 Global Thinkers in the same year.⁶ Furthermore, media such as Al Jazeera have deemed him as "bringing a youthful vigor and bold confidence to the masculine, patriarchal and archaic traditions of the Ethiopian State"⁷.

Abiy Ahmed's childhood and family history must be highlighted in order to understand the values guiding his agenda and further characterize his persona. A child of a mixed marriage in both religious and ethnic terms (his father was a muslim Oromo and his mother an orthodox christian Amhara), he learned the value of tolerance and unity across religious and ethnic divides from a very early age. Being raised as such has turned him into the result of a success story in what many ethiopians see as irreconcilable; ethnic conflict in Ethiopia has been and

³ Marijke Breuning and Gabriela Okundaye, "Half of the Cabinet: Explaining Ethiopia's Move to Gender Parity in the Government," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 56, no. 5 (2021): pp. 1064-1078, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096211007652>.

⁴ The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has historically been a source of attacks in Ethiopia. Before Abiy came into power, the Patriarch of the Church was forced to go into exile to the United States. Abiy challenged the historically attacked by the TPLF on the Orthodox Church by welcoming the church leader back into Addis Ababa in 2018.

⁵ A result of an unconventional transformation of the traditional EPRDF Coalition, Abiy ahmed built the prosperity Party in 2019, marking a shift away from traditional politics in the country, as the new coalition was built without the historic support of the TPLF.

Michael Duffy, "Abiy Ahmed Profile." RAI, September 22, 2021. <https://raiagroup.org/abiy-ahmed-profile>.

⁶ Mackintosh, Eliza. "From Nobel Laureate to Global Pariah: How the World Got Abiy Ahmed and Ethiopia so Wrong." CNN. Cable News Network, November 5, 2021. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/07/africa/abiy-ahmed-ethiopia-tigray-conflict-cmd-intl/index.html>.

⁷ Awol Allo, "The Power of Ethiopia's Gender-Balanced Cabinet," *Women's Rights | Al Jazeera* (Al Jazeera, October 19, 2018), <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/10/19/the-power-of-ethiopias-gender-balanced-cabinet>.

still is one of the main sources of social and political unrest. In fact, the current civil war being fought in the Tigray area can be attributed partially to ethnic divides⁸.

When looking at his biography, one event can be understood as a scar⁹ in Abiy's life, an event later influencing his political guidance, that is the incarceration of Abiy Ahmed's father and stepbrother during Abiy's teenage years for opposing the ruling communist Derg regime¹⁰. When Abiy turned 15, his step-brother was killed in a politically motivated assassination. Living this tragedy caused Abiy to join the Oromo Democratic Party (OPDO) in the fight against the Derg during his teenage years after his brother's death. Building his career in the Derg's political opposition, as well as having to personally endure the killings of close relatives by the same regime pushed Abiy Ahmed to favor neoliberal economic policies and to form alliances with western powers in his first years as Prime Minister, marking a clear dissent from communist values.

The OPDO would later nominate him the head of the OPDO Secretariat, laying the path for his rise to power. Throughout his twenties, Abiy also joined the military and served in the Ethiopian National Defense Forces as lieutenant colonel in the war against Eritrea. Holding a degree in Computer Engineering and a doctorate in conflict resolution, in 2017, Abiy led and founded the Ethiopian Information Network Security Agency, the country's organization responsible for cybersecurity.

It is, due to his own upbringing, as well as his encounters with conflict and experience in peacekeeping, that Abiy Ahmed quickly became an activist for building a united Ethiopia. Being faced by conflict caused by ethnic division has

⁸Somini Sengupta, "Can Ethiopia's New Leader, a Political Insider, Change It from the inside out?," The New York Times (The New York Times, September 17, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/17/world/africa/ethiopia-abiy-ahmed.html>.

Dawit Endeshaw, "The Rise of Abiy 'Abiyot' Ahmed: The Reporter: Latest Ethiopian News Today," The Reporter Ethiopia, March 31, 2018, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/4733/>.

⁹ Something Miftah Hudin Aba Jebel - a childhood friend of the Prime Minister- has deemed as one of the turning points in the leader's life: "I think losing his brother at that age was a turning point in Abiy's life," Miftah Hudin Aba Jebel told *The Reporter*. "I mean we were young and I remember one night Abiy asking me to join the struggle (...) To be honest, it was difficult for me to understand what he was saying."

Dawit Endeshaw, "The Rise of Abiy 'Abiyot' Ahmed: The Reporter: Latest Ethiopian News Today," The Reporter Ethiopia, March 31, 2018, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/rise-abiy-abiyot-ahmed>

¹⁰ Ahmed Ali was incarcerated, along with his first son Kedir Ahmed, during Abiy's teenage years: The ruling Derg regime had been facing opposition by the OLF (Oromo Liberation Front), the TPLF and the ANDM; Abiy's town was considered an OLF stronghold, and his father and brother, being respected members of the community, were targets of the Derg regime. When Abiy was 15, his brother was killed in a politically motivated assassination.

Dawit Endeshaw, "The Rise of Abiy 'Abiyot' Ahmed: The Reporter: Latest Ethiopian News Today," The Reporter Ethiopia, March 31, 2018, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/4733/>.

disturbed the leader to such an extent, that he has built his own, new philosophy for future Ethiopian and African politics: the Medemer philosophy. Medemer, which means “unity” in Amharic, one of Ethiopia’s official languages, represents, in bold terms, the idea of pan-Ethiopian patriotism directed under Abiy Ahmed’s tool of pathos. As such, with Medemer, he poses the idea of building a successful democracy, with industrial development, religious freedom and domestic unity. To him, Medemer is a way to ideologically guide the country into its liberation from its autocratic, archaic, authoritarian past¹¹.

Abiy’s portrayal as a groundbreaker, as someone with the ability to set up difficult objectives—such as giving a 360-degree turn to the political workings of his country—has also led him to have a desire to publicize his achievements. Abiy Ahmed, having also participated in the military, is clearly a result-oriented politician. Furthermore, the military led him to respect a hierarchical structure based on merits in the institutions he leads, and to have experience in calculating the risks needed in order to reach his goals.

Thus, this “achievement motivation” is breathed in all the relevant decision spheres of his government: economically, socially and politically. More importantly for this report, this desire to make disruptive, innovative policies is seen in most of the environmental initiatives he has taken. In the next sections, we shall see how the environmental policies taken under his leadership have also followed this motivation for achievements, always displaying the grandiosity and the pioneering nature of the projects being undertaken.

Abiy Ahmed’s Stake

When understanding Abiy Ahmed’s stake for climate actions, three main motivations arise: firstly, the poor macroeconomic crisis threatening Ethiopia’s development and social stability; secondly, the country’s vulnerabilities to climate change, causing internal displacement and food insecurity; thirdly, the leader’s (and the regime’s) need to gain favorable public approval for its systemic survival

This section thus explores these three motivations in detail, while in parallel outlining the *personal* stake Abiy Ahmed holds in his own climate agenda: **Why is climate relevant for Abiy Ahmed?** It will be proven that the climatic vulnerabilities threatening his country can threaten the fulfillment of the pan Ethiopian unity he foresees, being a distinguishing element of his leadership, could harm his systemic survival. Here, the consequences emerging from

¹¹ Middle East North Africa Center, “A Changing Ethiopia: Understanding Medemer,” United States Institute of Peace, February 18, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/events/changing-ethiopia-understanding-medemer>.

mismanagement of environmentalism would restrain him from fulfilling the electoral promises he pledged to in 2019; the promises that have portrayed him as a reformist leader, emerging to "redirect Ethiopia to its true destiny".

The poor macroeconomic crisis threatens Ethiopia's development

Ethiopia is a landlocked country in Northeast Africa with a population of 112¹² Million. The country's economy is largely agrarian with only 20% of the population living in cities and agriculture comprising 75% of exports and 44% of GDP, according to a 2020 CSIS study. When looking at the industrialization projects of the country, however, the nation's structural industrial transformation is being handled at a slow pace: agricultural productivity is trailing population growth, the manufacturing industry is not developed and investment is stagnant. In addition, the country is the 17th least developed country in the world, with a per capita income of \$783¹³. Lastly, the rise into an economic powerhouse has also been challenged by structural constraints of the country: lack of an established stock market, banking sector and foreign exchange regime.

There are, however, industrialization efforts being carried by the government, a case in point being the 2019 proposal of the Growth and Transformation Plan II¹⁴, aiming to turn Ethiopia into a low middle income country by 2025, through "sustaining the rapid, broad based and inclusive economic growth, which accelerates economic transformation and the journey towards the country's Renaissance"¹⁵. As part of this plan, Abiy's green development solutions have recurrently been organized in alliance with international organizations, in some occasions being funded in an 80% by partners such as the World Bank, UNDP, and the Global Green Growth Institute¹⁶. The possibility of assuming the least cost mitigation and adaptation costs proves yet another motivation for Abiy to take on sustainable development projects. Furthermore, economic growth and

¹² "Ethiopia: Overview," World Bank, April 21, 2022,

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia/overview>.

¹³ Faleg, Giovanni. "RESETTING ETHIOPIA: Will the State Heal or Fail?" European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21117>.

¹⁴ "GTP II focuses on ensuring rapid, sustainable, and broad-based growth by enhancing the productivity of the [agriculture](#) and [manufacturing](#) sectors, improving the quality of production, and stimulating competition within the economy".

"Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II)," Green Growth Knowledge Platform (Green Policy Platform , May 2016),

<https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/national-documents/ethiopia-growth-and-transformati-on-plan-ii-gtp-ii>.

¹⁵ "Growth and Transformation Plan II in Ethiopia," United Nations (United Nations), accessed June 14, 2022, <https://ethiopia.un.org/en/15231-growth-and-transformation-plan-ii>.

¹⁶ For instance, the NDC implementation is organized in collaboration with several development patterns - such as the World Bank, UNDP ,Perspective Climate Group, among others. Of the total cost of this program, 20% will be domestically financed while the remaining 80% relying on conditional internal support.

Abiyot Dagne Belay, Cynthia Elliott, and Muluneh G. Hedeto, "Ethiopia's Updated NDC Underscores Its Focus on Climate Action," World Resources Institute, July 26, 2021, <https://www.wri.org/insights/ethiopia-updated-ndc-climate-action>.

liberalization are of particular importance to Abiy Ahmed's leadership, due to his personal experience in fighting a communist regime - and losing a brother to this fight- during his teenage years. Abiy Ahmed has made it a point for his leadership to showcase his economically liberal rhetoric, liberalizing historically state-owned companies¹⁷ and passing new Investment Proclamations.

Being influenced by global economic slowdowns and leading a civil war as of November 2020, Abiy Ahmed is, nonetheless, currently dealing with an economic crisis: according to the IMF, economic growth in the country is expected to slow to 3.8%, the lowest level in almost two decades¹⁸, and inflation is expected to rise to 35%¹⁹. Following the country's sectoral divisions described earlier, the urban population is being affected the most by these challenges, with its real income losing from 6.6 to 8.5%²⁰.

In addition, the country suffers chronic energy shortages²¹, undermining the industrial development of the country and the livelihoods and socio-economic well-being of the population. With 56% of the total population having no access to any form of electricity, petroleum fuels making up to 14% of imports and more than 90% of households using solid biomass fuels for cooking, In short: Ethiopia lacks a modern, flexible, reliable and affordable energy system²². The current energy system not only holds dangerous effects for the environment²³, but also on the living standards of people, with energy poverty threatening human

¹⁷ Abiy Ahmed has recurrently shown alliance with and willingness to engage with the private sector of his country, such as by opening Ethiopia's telecommunications monopoly - Ethio Telecom- which had been traditionally state-owned in June of 2021. Furthermore, Ethiopia has passed a new investment law in early 2020, The Investment Proclamation No 1180/2020, explicitly designed to encourage foreign investment in the power sector and in the exploration and development of minerals and petroleum.

"Ethiopia: Investment Proclamation No. 1180/2020.," FAOLEX Database (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations., April 2, 2020), <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC195385/>

¹⁸ Vivienne Nunis, "Ethiopia's Economy Battered by Tigray War," BBC News (BBC, August 30, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58319977>.

¹⁹ Andres Schipani, "After the War Ends, Can Ethiopia's Economic 'Miracle' Get Back on Track?," Financial Times, June 20, 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/a74b5486-d2fa-4cdd-98d0-20a7eaf4ede2>.

²⁰ Emerta Aragie, Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse, and Seneshaw Tamru. "The Short-Term Impact of Covid-19 on Ethiopia's Economy through External Sector Channels: An Economywide Multiplier Model Analysis," 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2499/p15738coll2.134182>.

²¹ Data from The World Bank shows that, in 2015, there were 8.2 power outages in firms in a typical month in the country, with the world's average standing at 6.

²² Amsalu Woldie Yalew, "The Ethiopian Energy Sector and Its Implications for the Sdgs and Modeling," *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Transition 2* (August 2022): p. 100018, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rset.2022.100018>.

²³ Due to energy inefficiency, around 23% of the total energy transmitted is lost during distribution. Furthermore, Ethiopia has one of the least diversified energy systems in Africa, with its consumption of fuelwood exceeding the sustainable woody biomass yield in 335 out of the 500 districts covered by the Woody Biomass Inventory and Strategic Planning Project in 2000 Amsalu Woldie Yalew, "The Ethiopian Energy Sector and Its Implications for the Sdgs and Modeling," *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Transition 2* (August 2022): p. 100018, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rset.2022.100018>.

resource development²⁴, health of individuals, and automation of agriculture. According to E. Mandefro Getie, a researcher from Bahir Dar University, "The quality and distribution of education in rural Ethiopia are also affected by energy poverty. The energy poverty in Ethiopia is challenged by the pandemic COVID-19 in terms of education systems and sharing information about the pandemic disease to create awareness using online information sharing technology"²⁵.

As of 2020, the hydropower generation capacity of Ethiopia is around 45 GW, only 6% of the total potential available for use. Thus, Abiy Ahmed finds himself in front of a sparkling opportunity: choosing to invest in energy development, by presenting projects targeting the remaining 94% of the total potential for hydropower. On the one hand, introducing sustainable solutions for energy poverty would impact access to education, an improved health system and the current dependence on imports of fossil fuels.

A successful green energy project could also provide a source for regional power for Abiy Ahmed, with 600 Million of Sub-Saharan Africa's population living without any access to electricity²⁶. In this regard, the reaps brought about by a new infrastructure for green energy infrastructure would allow funding for other sectors of government, such as security²⁷. Furthermore, it is possible that, if energy poverty diminishes throughout the country, Abiy Ahmed could publicize such a national effort as an event proving that the Medemer fate is slowly being achieved, strengthening his "soft" power nationally, and handing him a favorable bargaining chip when having to deal with internal wars.

Vulnerabilities to climate change and short-term climatic threats

According to the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority, Ethiopia only contributes 0.04% of the global greenhouse gas emissions²⁸. However, the region

²⁴Elias Mandefro Getie, "Poverty of Energy and Its Impact on Living Standards in Ethiopia," *Journal of Electrical and Computer Engineering* 2020 (July 2020): pp. 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/7502583>.

²⁵ Elias Mandefro Getie, "Poverty of Energy and Its Impact on Living Standards in Ethiopia," *Journal of Electrical and Computer Engineering* 2020 (July 23, 2020): pp. 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/7502583>.

²⁶ Frans Timmermans, "Time to Make Energy Poverty in Africa a Thing of the Past," European Commission, June 17, 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/timmermans/announcements/tim-e-make-energy-poverty-africa-thing-past_en#:~:text=Across%20the%20globe%2C%20nearly%20800,000,000,000%20people%20are%20living%20in%20poverty%20and%20inequality%20is%20a%20glaring%20injustice.](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/timmermans/announcements/tim-e-make-energy-poverty-africa-thing-past_en#:~:text=Across%20the%20globe%2C%20nearly%20800,000,000%20people%20are%20living%20in%20poverty%20and%20inequality%20is%20a%20glaring%20injustice.)

²⁷ Trading Economics forecasted military expenditure in the country to reach USD 502 Million by the end of 2021.

"Ethiopia Military EXPENDITURE 2022 Data - 2023 Forecast - 1965-2021 Historical," Ethiopia Military Expenditure - 2022 Data - 2023 Forecast - 1965-2021 Historical, accessed August 21, 2022, <https://tradingeconomics.com/ethiopia/military-expenditure>

²⁸ "Roundup: Ethiopia Eyes Strong Environmental Protection Efforts to Mitigate Adverse Effects of Climate Change," Xinhua, June 5, 2022, <https://english.news.cn/africa/20220605/d6336353508545db91e70e4ee1eeffd/c.html>.

has a highly volatile climate and has been highly affected by climate change-driven catastrophes.

The country has a long history of recurring droughts, which have increased in magnitude and impact since the 1970s. The last one, happening in June of 2022- was the country's worst drought in 40 years, severely affecting 7 Million people throughout the country. Another case in point is the 2011 Horn of Africa Drought, which affected 4.5 Million people in the country²⁹. The effects of droughts are often combined with other hazards, mainly migratory pest infestation: In 2020, Ethiopia experienced the worst locust invasion in decades. In addition, flooding have also regularly affected Ethiopia's population, affecting all regions, but Somali, Afar, Oromia and Amhara the most³⁰. According to the Climate Risk Country Profile report by The World Bank, projections indicate that there is a likely 20% increase in extreme high rainfall events for the end of the century³¹. According to research carried out by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, heavy rains could cause soil erosion, crop damage and - overall- an increased risk of flash flooding (which itself carries further socio economic threats, such as injuries, drownings, destruction of infrastructure and poor air quality due to molds)³².

These climatic challenges have had devastating effects on Ethiopia's population, leading to displacements all around the country and, overall, affecting socio economic dynamics³³. The strong impact of such catastrophes is due to the country's agricultural sector's dependence on rainfall and the institutionally low adaptive capacity. Furthermore, as droughts generate the widespread death of

²⁹C. MacKenzie Dove, Yunziyi Lang , and Viviane Clement , "Ethiopia – Climate Risk Country Profile (2020)," The World Bank Group , June 15, 2022, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099432006152216345/p171116024fa790c50b4ae091dd929c683b>.

³⁰ For instance, in the year 2006, an unprecedented flood disaster occurred between August and November with a devastating impact, particularly in Dire Dawa, Amahara and Somali regions. According to DPPA (2006), in Dire Dawa alone the livelihood and homes of 10,000 people were completely damaged and more than 250 lives were lost and productive assets worth of birr 70 million was damaged. Moreover, during the same year, in South Omo, the flooding due to river bank overflow has claimed the lives of 360 people and damaged the productive access and livelihood of more than 20,000 people in Dasanach and Ngangatom districts. ("Number of people affected by drought in Ethiopia during the 1990 – 2005", *DDPA*, 2005. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia).

³¹ C. MacKenzie Dove, Yunziyi Lang , and Viviane Clement , "Ethiopia – Climate Risk Country Profile (2020)," The World Bank Group , June 15, 2022, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099432006152216345/p171116024fa790c50b4ae091dd929c683b>.

³²"Climate Change Indicators: Heavy Precipitation," United States Environmental Protection Agency, April 2021, <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-heavy-precipitation#:~:text=The%20potential%20impacts%20of%20heavy,flooding%2Drelated%20effects%20on%20health>.

³³ Tsegai Berhane Ghebretেকে, "Sustainable Development through Environmental Federalism in the Case of Ethiopia," *Globalization, Environmental Law, and Sustainable Development in the Global South*, 2021, pp. 101-121, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003160236-7>.

livestock³⁴, pasture failures and water shortages, they are one of the main causes for the current food shortages and food insecurity³⁵. According to a UN report, between 1990 and 2005, each year 6.3 million people required food assistance amounting to over 654,000 tons annually, a number now standing closer to 10 million people. The area most affected being Tigray, where an annual average of more than 1.2 million people is affected.

According to Famine Early Warning Systems Network predictions, humanitarian assistance needs in Ethiopia in 2022 will be at record levels, nearly 40% higher compared to 2021 and 2016, the worst droughts yet. Widespread malnutrition is causing a humanitarian crisis, which worries Abiy Ahmed in two aspects: on the one hand, it proves his profile of a reformist leader wrong, due to the lack of effective leadership. Thus, it hinders positive public opinion on the leader. Furthermore, the food insecurity crisis is driving international humanitarian organizations to the country, something Abiy Ahmed has recently seen as a threat to his government and a breach of Ethiopian sovereignty³⁶. In addition, the social impact brought about by the conflict in Tigray further aggravates the existing humanitarian crisis, with 400,000 people facing famine in Tigray alone³⁷. International humanitarian organizations have made claims on the crisis, which have further opposed Abiy Ahmed's government to international governance institutions, in particular to their involvement in the civil conflict³⁸.

³⁴ "The main causes of livestock deaths in Ethiopia are shortages of water and food during drought. Increased temperatures can affect the behavior and metabolism (internal body processes) of livestock, such as a reduced intake of food and a decline in productivity. Changes in rainfall and warmer temperatures may also increase the geographical distribution and survival of flies and mosquitoes that transmit infectious diseases to livestock. These impacts on livestock are already being felt in Ethiopia; in the past two decades in Borana zone, southern Ethiopia, there have been losses of livestock associated with drought: The number of animals per household declined 'to three oxen from ten; to seven cows from 35; and to six goats, down from 33'. Tesso Gutu, "Climate Change, Natural Disaster and Rural Poverty in Ethiopia," United Nations, accessed August 21, 2022,

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/03/Climate-Change-Natural-Disaster-and-Rural-Poverty-in-Ethiopia-by-Gutu.pdf>

³⁵ "Horn of Africa: Persistent Drought Increasing Food Insecurity (June 27, 2022) - Ethiopia." ReliefWeb. Humanitarian Information Unit - U.S. Department of State, June 27, 2022.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/horn-africa-persistent-drought-increasing-food-insecurity-june-27-2022>.

³⁶ "Ethiopia to Expel Seven Senior UN Staff for 'Meddling,'" Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), September 30, 2021,

<https://www.dw.com/en/ethiopia-to-expel-seven-senior-un-staff-for-meddling/a-59368187>.

³⁷ Al Jazeera, "US Cuts off Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea from Trade program," Conflict News | Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, January 2, 2022),

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/2/us-removes-ethiopia-mali-and-guinea-from-agoa-trade-program>.

³⁸ In september 2021, the Ethiopian government published its decision to expel seven senior UN officials under the "persona non grata" status. This action was heavily criticized by Washington, marking Abiy Ahmed's hostility to international actors "meddling" in the country's internal affairs, more specifically: the Tigray war. ("Un Shocked by Ethiopia's Decision to Expel Top Officials," BBC News (BBC, September 30, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58753569>).

Secondly, climatic catastrophes are leading to an internal displacement crisis, eventually causing herder conflicts, exacerbating current tensions between inter-ethnic groups. Civil tensions are driven on borders of land, grazing areas and freshwater sources. The scarcity of pasture and tenure have been major drivers for conflict among the country's ethnic groups, a struggle being fostered by further political disagreement and historical fights, such as the Oromo-Somalia land dispute³⁹. According to a UN report, 3 million persons have been forced to migrate within the years 2017-2019⁴⁰. The herder conflict not only threatens the fulfillment of the panethnic unity foreseen by Abiy's Medemer, but it also holds devastating effects for the successful completion of development projects.

In addition, climatic disasters affect the country's economic and industrial development. According to the World Bank, estimates suggest that climate change may reduce Ethiopia's GDP up to 10% by 2045, largely through drought-induced impacts on agricultural productivity⁴¹. In particular, Abiy Ahmed's government worries about the climate change threats being posed at coffee, livestock, pulses and flowers, with herd making up about 10% of national export income⁴². The disadvantage at which the agricultural production stands in regards to the issue poses yet another pressure in the income distribution and inequality schemes of the country.

However, the economic impact of climate change goes beyond solely the agricultural sector, also affecting industrial growth and overall development. For

³⁹"The land dispute between the Oromo and Somali pastoral regions caused the internal displacement of around three million people in 2017-2018. The land disputes between Guji and Gedeo internally displaced about one million agro-pastoralists in 2018-2019. Land-related disputes also exist in non-pastoral regions, such as the Amhara and Tigray regions. Currently, the political unrest in Ethiopia can also be related to land resources, as land is a highly politicized resource linked to structural inequality".

Aduugna Eneyew Bekele et al., "Large-Scale Land Investments and Land-Use Conflicts in the Agro-Pastoral Areas of Ethiopia," *Land Use Policy* 119 (2022): p. 106166, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2022.106166>.

⁴⁰ Tesso Gutu, "Climate Change, Natural Disaster and Rural Poverty in Ethiopia," United Nations, accessed August 21, 2022, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/03/Climate-Change-Natural-Disaster-and-Rural-Poverty-in-Ethiopia-by-Gutu.pdf>.

⁴¹"In Ethiopia, estimates indicate that nearly 85% of the population is dependent on the agricultural sector, and the sector contributes significantly to GDP. The agricultural sector is very much vulnerable to climate change impacts such as natural resources degradation, floods, destocking of household assets, etc. With lower technological and capital stocks, the agricultural sector in such a poorer developing country is unlikely to withstand the additional pressures imposed by climate change without a concerted response strategy".

Tesso Gutu, "Climate Change, Natural Disaster and Rural Poverty in Ethiopia," United Nations, accessed August 21, 2022, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/03/Climate-Change-Natural-Disaster-and-Rural-Poverty-in-Ethiopia-by-Gutu.pdf>.

⁴² Tesso Gutu, "Climate Change, Natural Disaster and Rural Poverty in Ethiopia," United Nations, accessed August 21, 2022, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/03/Climate-Change-Natural-Disaster-and-Rural-Poverty-in-Ethiopia-by-Gutu.pdf>.

instance, 80% of Ethiopia's roads are unpaved, and possible construction projects tend to become failed plans due to the possibility of road degradation by heavy rains and floods. This is a matter particularly worrisome for Abiy Ahmed, due to two factors: on the one hand, a portion of these failed projects are initially funded by national reserves, generally lacking enough resources and struggling to harness more funds. Furthermore, the rapid failure of such projects may give incentives to Abiy Ahmed to relocate such funding into other spheres of government, thus putting him at crossroads with the development plans he proposed in 2019. On the other hand, most of these plans are funded by international donors, such as the Chinese Government⁴³. Development projects failing due to environmental catastrophes which could have been avoided or more efficiently managed could jeopardize such ties.

Need to gain favorable public national and international approval.

Before being hit by the 2021 global supply chain crisis, as well as the severe droughts⁴⁴, the country's economy had been deemed as a success story "Over the past 15 years, Ethiopia's economy has been among the fastest growing in the world (at an average of 9.5 percent per year). Among other factors, growth was led by capital accumulation, in particular through public infrastructure investments. (...) The consistently high economic growth over the last decade resulted in positive trends in poverty reduction in both urban and rural areas. The share of the population living below the national poverty line decreased from 30% in 2011 to 24% in 2016 and human development indicators improved as well over time. However, gains are modest when compared to other countries that saw fast growth, and inequality has increased in recent years"⁴⁵.

Another reason for such pause is the incidence of conflict: Inter-ethnic tensions have challenged the government's industrial projects, a case in point being the Addis-Djibouti railway - a public transport project important for climate action due to its ability to work on energy efficiency as well as decrease CO₂ emissions within the transport sector and fuel urban economic growth⁴⁶- which opened to commercial service in January 2018, but suffered blockades during flare-ups in regional ethnic tensions due to collisions between trains and livestock⁴⁷.

⁴³ Jos Meester , "Designed in Ethiopia; Made in China 'a Widening Partnership'," Clingendael Magazine , July 30, 2021.

<https://www.clingendael.org/publication/designed-ethiopia-made-china-widening-partnership>.

⁴⁴ The 2022 drought has been deemed as the worst in 40 years, affecting 7 million throughout Ethiopia. Furthermore, the 2020 locust invasion has also contributed to food insecurity.

⁴⁵ "Ethiopia: Overview," World Bank, April 21, 2022,

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia/overview>.

⁴⁶ Jackson Sekasi and Mauro Luiz Martens, "Assessing the Contributions of Urban Light Rail Transit to the Sustainable Development of Addis Ababa," Sustainability 13, no. 10 (2021): p. 5667, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13105667>".

⁴⁷ International Crisis Group. "Ethiopia and the GERD." Bridging the Gap in the Nile Waters Dispute. International Crisis Group, 2019. <http://www.icg.org/stable/resrep31344.5>.

The international arena has voiced its opinion regarding the Ethiopian government's handling of the Tigray War, with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres stating that "The war that began in November has affected all Ethiopians and "has already drained over a billion dollars from the country's coffers"⁴⁸. The UN further published in November of 2021 an investigation accusing government forces of abuses that could amount to war crimes⁴⁹. However, the war has not only had damaging effects on the public opinion held on Abiy Ahmed internationally, but it has also led foreign investments and loans from International Organizations and allies to be suspended, with factories closing their operations in the country⁵⁰. The lack of a favorable international opinion, thus, is of particular concern to the leader, as it would lead to the withdrawal of great sources of funding for development.

However, the concern for favorable public opinion goes beyond mere economic purposes; Abiy needs it for the structural survival of his leadership. Abiy's Medemer prophecy finds itself at a crossroads, being harshly hit by the reality of politics. As environmental initiatives are usually widely accepted by the vast majority of the population, Abiy could see environmental action as a remaining tool to push towards his goal of a unified country. In this regard, the passing of successful environmental policies could help depict national pride and thus build on Medemer. In addition, as environmental projects could call for civilian participation and engagement, they would also provide a sense of transparency to the regime. Importantly, one must understand that the failure of Medemer,

⁴⁸ Marc Champion, Simon Marks, and Fasika Tadesse, "How Ethiopia PM Abiy Ahmed Went from Nobel Peace Prize to Tigray Crisis," Bloomberg.com (Bloomberg, November 3, 2021), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-03/ethiopian-premier-s-wild-ride-from-nobel-peace-prize-to-siege>.

⁴⁹ Stephanie Nebehay and Dawit Endeshaw, "Joint UN, Ethiopia Rights Team: All Sides Committed Abuses in Tigray," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, November 3, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/business/cop/un-ethiopia-rights-commission-release-report-abuses-tigray-2021-11-03/>.

⁵⁰ For instance, the US Administration suspended Ethiopia's membership in the tariff-free African Growth and Opportunity Act in November of 2021 due to "Ethiopia's gross violations of internationally recognized human rights", ending Ethiopia's tariff-free access to the US market and leaving the country out of a scheme that would otherwise have brought the country " \$100m in "hard cash" annually" and generate "employment " directly generates employment for about 100,000 people, mostly women in southern Ethiopia working in textile factories that export to the US". A case in point being the Global fashion giant PVH Corp. closing its manufacturing facility, the largest factory in Ethiopia's model industrial park in the city of Hawassa.

Al Jazeera, "US Cuts off Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea from Trade program," Conflict News | Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, January 2, 2022), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/2/us-removes-ethiopia-mali-and-guinea-from-agoa-trade-program>.

David Thomas , "Biden Suspends Ethiopia, Guinea and Mali from AGOA," African Business, November 2, 2021, <https://african.business/2021/11/trade-investment/biden-suspends-ethiopia-guinea-and-mali-from-agoa/>.

"Fashion Giant PVH to Close Factory; Ethiopia Blames U.S. Sanctions," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, November 19, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/article/ethiopia-conflict-trade-idUSKBN2I420Y>.

being a core element of his government and - more importantly- his persona, would prove his leadership obsolete.

Finally, the passing of environmental policies is yet another tool helping the leader to influence his position internationally. In this regard, such a tool would be working in two ways: On the one hand, environmental policies - such as the building of green electricity infrastructure- require various stakeholders and organizations willing to provide loans or invest in such developments. Thus, engaging in green initiatives also serves the leader to build new international economic alliances with the private sector and international organizations providing funding. On the other hand, Abiy's green projects have been well received by the Western community⁵¹⁵²⁵³⁵⁴, with Abiy relying on their promotion to offset the harm the Tigray war has done to his international image.

Abiy Ahmed's Defining Moment

"There is no longer a border between Eritrea and Ethiopia because a bridge of love has destroyed it".

- Abiy Ahmed on July 8th, 2018, a day before he traveled to meet Eritrea's President Afwerki in Asmara.

When taking a look at a leader's biography, there are one or two events that can be distinguished from others due to their significance for the individual's

⁵¹ In this regard, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals platform holds one section of the website solely on Ethiopia's Green Legacy initiative, with information on the resources mobilized, progress and the project's timeline.

Office of the Prime Minister, Ethiopia (Government). "Green Legacy Initiative ." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Sustainable Development . United Nations. Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/green-legacy-initiative>.

⁵² In 2019, the UN's Environment program platform also published an article under the title "Ethiopia plants over 350 million trees in a day, setting new world record".

"Ethiopia Plants over 350 Million Trees in a Day, Setting New World Record," UNEP, accessed September 1, 2022,

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/ethiopia-plants-over-350-million-trees-day-setting-new-world-record>.

⁵³The World Agroforestry Organization published a similar report on the success of the campaign in June, 2020.

Eyob Getahun, "Ethiopia to Grow 5 Billion Trees in the Second Green Legacy Campaign," World Agroforestry | Transforming Lives and Landscapes with Trees, June 9, 2020, <https://www.worldagroforestry.org/blog/2020/06/09/ethiopia-grow-5-billion-trees-second-green-legacy-campaign>.

⁵⁴ Leaders such as Justin Trudeau have highlighted Abiy's Green Legacy efforts in a joint meeting in February, 2020.

"Prime Minister Justin Trudeau Meets with Prime Minister of Ethiopia Abiy Ahmed," Prime Minister of Canada, February 8, 2020, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/readouts/2020/02/08/prime-minister-justin-trudeau-meets-prime-minister-ethiopia-abi-ahmed>.

emergence as a leader. This, being a “defining moment”, marks a before-and-after in the individual’s career, and its significance is shown through the consequences it brings about for the leader’s world. Furthermore, this is a “defining moment” because the event showcases the individual’s guiding, or *defining*, values. In the case of Abiy Ahmed, his defining moment (in his role as a climate leader) is **the 2019 awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize** for his “Decisive initiative to resolve the border conflict with neighboring Eritrea (...) and for his efforts to achieve peace and international cooperation”⁵⁵.

One might argue that this event is not related to Abiy’s emergence as a *climate* leader. However, this event is as “generous” as a defining moment could be for the correct understanding of the leader’s profile; it showcases the leader’s relationship with climate action as best as possible, with his acceptance speech clearly outlining the logic behind his agenda prioritization. The speech is particularly interesting because it is a primary source — a retelling through his own words — of the “romantic” perspective through which he views his country’s environment and landscape. This speech highlights his pragmatic thinking, wherein he avoids referring to sustainability and environmental action as crucial spheres in policy making.

Furthermore, the event portrays Abiy’s characterization of a “messiah” and reveals psychological traits such as his realist logic, his experiences throughout his childhood, his focus on ethnic and religious unity and, in some occasions, hints of populist rhetoric. Thus, the event is not only a milestone in Abiy’s career and an element he has used to pursue other actors into following his lead; but it also enables the spectator to grasp his doctrine in a more rounded manner through his narrations of his childhood and his vision for Ethiopia’s future.

The background

Until July, 2018, Ethiopia and Eritrea had been locked into a state of “neither peace nor war”⁵⁶, in the aftermath of a 30 years long conflict that had separated families, complicated geopolitics and taken 80,000 lives⁵⁷. The dispute comes from historical border distortions emerging from colonial treaties in the nineteenth century, as well as from ethnic nationalistic sentiments mainly being fought for by Tigrayans and Eritreans.

⁵⁵ “The Nobel Peace Prize for 2019,” NobelPrize.org, October 11, 2019, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2019/press-release/>.

⁵⁶ Teresa Nogueira Pinto, “Neither Peace nor War in Ethiopia,” GIS Reports, February 8, 2022, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/ethiopia-war/>.

⁵⁷ Salem Solomon, “‘They’re Going to Come for Us’: A Teenage Girl Caught in a War’s Riptides,” The New York Times (The New York Times, November 28, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/28/magazine/ethiopia-eritrea-war.html>.

In 1991, Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia but fighting soon followed, and by 1998 the two states were locked in a portion of their shared border⁵⁸. The war⁵⁹ is reported to have caused about 70,000 casualties on both sides, and over 370,000 Eritreans and approximately 350,000 Ethiopians were affected by the war. The war, alongside other recurring events such as droughts and climatic catastrophes, exacerbated the existing food crisis which affected 8 million people. In addition, According to the Human Rights Watch, thousands of detainees suffered cases of torture, rape or other degrading treatment⁶⁰.

What led Abiy Ahmed to put an end to the “no peace-no war” state that had threatened the region for 18 years? On a psychological ground, the signature of such a historically disruptive accord is one of the main factors that pushed him to prove his groundbreaking nature as a leader. The change of the 30-years-long established machinations between both countries' relations was yet another proof for how modern and reformist the character of the leader was.

Aside from the psychological analysis, there are other, structural, reasons that pushed both Ahmed to sign the accords with President Afwerki of Eritrea. On the one hand, Ethiopia, being landlocked, had resorted to the Djibouti port for access to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea to access global markets more easily. The peace accord gave Ethiopia access to Eritrea's Red Sea ports in Assab and Massawa.

Although the signature of the treaty allowed both nations to embark on a new path of peace and dialogue, it brought consequences to Abiy Ahmed's leadership that have led to Ethiopia's current internal political state: a civil war. The military and strategic cooperation agreements between Eritrea and Ethiopia sparked tensions with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), as it was not involved nor consulted in the most recent agreement. The TPLF, the party that had ruled Ethiopia since 1991 until Abiy's rise, had been excluded from Abiy's new coalition, and a peace treaty between both nations was non-viable until then as the TPLF had blocked any peace attempts over the UN 2002 arbitration.⁶¹ In this

⁵⁸ Nicole Winfield, “Un Hints at Sanctions If Eritrea and Ethiopia Do Not End Fighting,” The Independent, May 13, 2000,

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/un-hints-at-sanctions-if-eritrea-and-ethiopia-do-not-end-fighting-718960.html>.

⁵⁹ “UNMEE: United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea - Background,” United Nations Peacekeeping (United Nations, 2008),

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/unmee/background.html>.

⁶⁰ “Ethiopia Accuses Eritrea of Instigating War,” Reuters, October 8, 2007,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20071212075740/http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L08321833.htm>.

“SPLM Requests Ethiopian Role to End Sudan's Peace Crisis,” Sudan Tribune, October 20, 2007,

<https://sudantribune.com/article24476/>.

⁶¹ ISSAfrica.org. “The Eritrea-Ethiopia Peace Deal Is Yet to Show Dividends.” ISS Africa, September 11, 2020.

<https://issafrika.org/iss-today/the-eritrea-ethiopia-peace-deal-is-yet-to-show-dividends>.

regard, the change in the political paradigm and party structure as Abiy came to power was the tool that allowed both Abiy and Afwerki to cooperate, with the "public" objective of fostering peace relationships among nations, and the more "private" goal of combatting the TPLF.⁶²

The Speech

Abiy Ahmed's acceptance speech for the Nobel peace prize provides a good summary on the significant psychological and systemic pressure points that have followed him since his youth.

For instance, Abiy makes several references to the importance of regional unity, and Africa's integration with the rest of the world. By stating "while our two nations were stuck on old grievances, the world was shifting rapidly and leaving us behind", Abiy Ahmed highlighted the manner in which he's a constraint challenger, breaking away from "old grievances" and following the liberal world's "trends" in terms of government and leadership.. He later referenced a widely used proverb "*yoo ollaan nagayaan bule, nagaan bulanni*"⁶³ to appeal to unity and the need for peacemaking. By driving on a notion known by his enemies and allies alike, he is laying a common ground through which cooperation can be achieved. Furthermore, Abiy recounts his own life and depicts his own experiences in warfare as a sufficient reason for the need for peacemaking between the two nations, "War is the epitome of hell for all involved. I know because I have been there and back".

Here, he is not only referring to his own experience, but also using those events to guide the fate of a nation. Besides pointing out regional unity, Abiy appeals to Medemer and inter-ethnic unity throughout his speech. He not only presents the idea of Medemer as the guiding value for peacemaking between Eritrea and Ethiopia⁶⁴, but also presents his own ideology to the international audience, in his own words. Here, he also draws from his own personal experiences as a child in his hometown in order to more clearly explain what Medemer stands for.

Drawing on his past experiences, he paints a picture of Ethiopia's fate that embodies the struggles of all the people in Ethiopia and, at the same time, depicts himself as the correct person to lead Ethiopia into a better future.

⁶² Brimbal, Antoine. "Isayas Afwerki and Abiy Ahmed Frenemies over Tigray Conflict." RAI, September 1, 2022. <https://raiagroup.org/afwerki-and-ahmed-frenemies-over-tigray-conflict>.

⁶³ In his acceptance speech, Abiy stated: "We have an old saying: 'ሰላም እንድታድር ጎረቤትህ ሰላም ይደር' (...). It is a saying shared in many African languages, which means, "For you to have a peaceful night, your neighbor shall have a peaceful night as well" (Abiy Ahmed Ahmed Ali, "Abiy Ahmed Ali – Nobel Lecture.," NobelPrize.org, December 10, 2019, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2019/abiy/lecture/>).

⁶⁴ Ultimately, peace requires an enduring vision. And my vision of peace is rooted in the philosophy of Medemer.

Abiy also mentions his government's focus on development and economic growth, and how their "focus has now shifted to developing joint infrastructure projects that will be a critical lever in our economic ambitions".

Lastly is the relationship being drawn between nature and pacemaking: "For me, nurturing peace is like planting and growing trees. Just like trees need water and good soil to grow, peace requires unwavering commitment, infinite patience, and goodwill to cultivate and harvest its dividends. Peace requires good faith to blossom into prosperity, security, and opportunity. In the same manner that trees absorb carbon dioxide to give us life and oxygen, peace has the capacity to absorb the suspicion and doubt that may cloud our relationships".

Here, he is not only using a rhetoric known by all audiences, but he is especially speaking to Ethiopia's large agricultural population to create a poetic narration of how unity should be fostered. However, if there is one important aspect of Abiy's leadership being depicted here, is that he does not necessarily put climate action (or a focus on environment) as a main priority. Instead, there is another sphere of government he deems as more important: security. This quote particularly shows how his rule is not necessarily motivated by environmentalism, but that climate action only enters into play if it helps "explain the need for peace-making"; eg: if it contributes to another, more prioritized (under his realist agenda) sphere of government.

The impact of Abiy Ahmed's defining moment

Systematically, The Nobel Prize award is a double-edged sword, a weapon that can be fired both by Abiy or by the western liberal international community. It is a pressure point that must be analyzed, as it can be used both to gain western allies and as a point of significant accountability from those same newly-gained allies.

On the one hand, winning a Nobel Peace Prize provided Abiy Ahmed with international recognition and highlighted his moment of highest national popularity. The prize, in this regard, was a source of legitimacy for a leader who had just been elected, had just passed his first 100 days in government and was beginning to gain international recognition for his liberal reforms⁶⁵. Further, the event portrays the Medemer ideology in full display, as well as a clear outlining of how he understands domestic and regional politics. In this sense, this moment helped him divulge his Medemer ideology to an international audience, and, more importantly, to neighboring African states. The award comes directly before the peak in Abiy's journey of democratic reform and rebuilding of Ethiopia's

⁶⁵ David Pilling, "Ethiopia's Ethnic Infighting Threatens Abiy Liberal Reforms," Financial Times (Financial Times, June 25, 2019), <https://www.ft.com/content/1dff9336-96a1-11e9-8cfb-30c211dcd229>.

political institutions. On the other hand, the Nobel Peace Prize has been used by international media outlets⁶⁶ to highlight the irony and hypocrisy in Abiy Ahmed's turn towards totalitarian practices and involvement in a civil war only two years after being awarded such honor.

Abiy Ahmed's Solutions

As mentioned in Abiy Ahmed's stake, the environment is intertwined with several spheres of his government: the regime's survival, the need for economic development and the challenges posed by unexpected, yet recurrent, climatic catastrophes. Furthermore, politically, he is undergoing an internal crisis, leading a civil war against one of the strongest ethnic groups in Ethiopia. These events influence his agenda prioritization, and, thus Abiy must not only mind traditional governmental issues such as economics and politics, but he must also put a great emphasis on dealing with the dissenting group; as well as responding to the negative criticism received by international organizations for his "*violent and illiberal*"⁶⁷ handling of the crisis.

For Abiy Ahmed, the **implementation of environmental policies will be pushed to a secondary position unless two situations emerge: that climatic catastrophes are directly and urgently impacting Ethiopia's population or that environmental initiatives are providing economic gains, fulfilling one of Abiy's main goals, economic development.** However, Abiy Ahmed's environmental leadership does not simply end there, Abiy Ahmed's agenda also includes, though in a smaller proportion, policies aiming at solving the climatic challenges of his country. In short, most of his environmental policies are firstly directed at challenges in other spheres, such as the emerging macroeconomic crisis, but will be addressed as part of his climate leadership, as they are overflowing into environmental mitigation strategies positively.

Section "The Stake", presented the environmental challenges faced by Abiy Ahmed. This section, in turn, introduces the solutions he proposes for such problems.

⁶⁶ In an open letter published in the Financial Times, Michael Street stated (on Abiy's handling of the Tigray War): "He should honor his Nobel Peace Prize by holding out an olive branch to moderate Tigrayans and working with them to stabilize Ethiopia's threatened environment. His landslide victory in last July's elections gives him the support of the majority of Ethiopians to make this happen" (Michael Street, "Financial Times Letter: Abiy Might Have Won the War but Must Win Peace," Financial Times (Financial Times, March 30, 2022), <https://www.ft.com/content/888cf503-c2f6-42b8-b0c1-de283fdfe159>).

⁶⁷ The EU suspended aid to the government in 2021, with the EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borell stating that "it was a way of demonstrating our rejection of what is going on out there", which the EU and U.S. have described as "ethnic cleansing" Evan Dyer, "Analysis | as Allies Accuse Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed of Atrocities in Tigray, Canada Stands Back | CBC News," CBCnews (CBC/Radio Canada, July 11, 2021), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ethiopia-tigray-abiy-ahmed-1.6097250>

Ethiopia's framework for environmental efforts

Ethiopia's official efforts on climate leadership are scattered across multiple platforms. The most significant pointers for Ethiopia's efforts are the country's two Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submissions (2016 and 2021) to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁶⁸. The updated NDCs build on the country's development goals as laid out in **Ethiopia's 10 Years Perspective Development Plan**. The plan, which runs from 2021 to 2030, aims to sustain the remarkable growth achieved under the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) of the previous decade⁶⁹, while facilitating the shift towards a more private-sector driven economy. As such, the plan outlines a strategy for the country's green development, focusing its efforts on large-scale investments in irrigation agriculture, broad-based rural development and private sector involvement.

In particular, the strategy outlines the need for investments in the agricultural, forestry and industrial sectors (the first two being the most vulnerable to climate change)⁷⁰, and fostering export-oriented growth. With the vision to make Ethiopia an "African Beacon of Prosperity", the plan's macroeconomic goals are to reach 10.2% average growth target across the ten years, reduce the poverty rate from 19% to 7%, and reduce urban unemployment to less than 9%⁷¹. Beyond sole development objectives, the plan also has six main pillars, namely economic growth, increased commercial competitiveness, institutional transformation, expanding the private sector, ensuring equity for women and children, and building a green economy⁷².

⁶⁸ The submissions summarized the country's short to long-term efforts to address vulnerabilities to climate change, focusing on three key areas: droughts, floods and cross-cutting interventions. (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, "Ethiopia National Adaptation Plan - UNFCCC," United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, accessed August 27, 2022, <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Documents/Parties/NAP-ETH%20FINAL%20VERSION%20%20Mar%202019.pdf>.)

⁶⁹ The First Growth and Transformation plan (GTPI) was a national initiative by the Ethiopian government (2010-2015) with the goal of achieving a GDP growth of 11-15% per year during its enforcement. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20140111222818/http://www.ata.gov.et/priorities/national-growth-transformation-plan/>).

⁷⁰ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, "Ethiopia National Adaptation Plan - UNFCCC," United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, accessed August 27, 2022, <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Documents/Parties/NAP-ETH%20FINAL%20VERSION%20%20Mar%202019.pdf>.

⁷¹ Ethiopian Monitor, "MPs Approve Ethiopia's 10-Year Development Plan," Ethiopian Monitor, March 24, 2021, <https://ethiopianmonitor.com/2021/03/23/mps-approve-ethiopias-10-year-development-plan/#:~:text=The%20development%20plan%2C%20which%20replaced,of%20Ethiopia%20and%20its%20citizens>.

⁷² Melkamu Tadesse Wazza, "Ten Years Development Plan of Ethiopia (2021-2030): A Critical Review," February 1, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.13412.86407>.

The last pillar, building a climate resilient green economy, is particularly important to understand Ethiopia's environmental leadership legacy. In 2011, the Ethiopian government launched the Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy (CRGE), providing an overarching framework for Ethiopia's response to global warming. With the vision of becoming a lower-middle-income country by 2025 through a green economy transition, the CRGE⁷³ looked at building adaptive capacity and resilience in order to reduce the country's vulnerability to climate catastrophes⁷⁴. As such, the three focus sectors established by the CRGE were "improving crop and livestock production practices for higher food security and farmer income while reducing emissions; protecting and re-establishing forests for their economic and ecosystem services (...); expanding electricity generation from renewable sources of energy for domestic and regional markets and leapfrogging to modern and energy-efficient technologies in transport, industry and buildings"⁷⁵.

In particular, the key areas for the CRGE were those of agriculture, forestry, energy, water, transport, industry and housing. All in all, the CRGE had the goal of reducing the country's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 64% by 2030, compared to the business-as-usual scenario. It shall be noted that the CRGE was born with the support of western nations. It was launched during the COP17 (and thus has the support of the United Nations), and it has established partnerships with bilateral and multilateral institutions, such as the Adaptation Fund, the Climate Green Fund, the World Bank group, and the Global Green Growth

⁷³ "Launched in 2011, the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy sets that by 2025 Ethiopia will be a middle-income country, resilient to climate change impacts and with no net increase in greenhouse gas emissions from 2010 levels. This resilience strategy for agriculture and forestry has been developed as part of the CRGE strategy. It shows that economic growth must be protected against the impacts of current and future climate change. The agriculture and forestry sectors are key to both national income and household livelihoods. Combined, the sectors make up over two-fifths of the national economy (43% of our Gross Domestic Product) and employ the vast majority (around 80%) of the country's population. Due to reliance on rain-fed techniques, agriculture is highly vulnerable to weather and thus to future impacts of climate change. Also, future climate change is expected to pose significant impacts on the productivity of our forests." (Climate Resilience Strategy Agriculture and Forestry, "Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy," Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2011, <https://gggi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2015-08-Sectoral-Climate-Resilience-Strategies-for-Ethiopia-1-Agriculture-and-Forestry-Climate-Resilience-Strategy.pdf>.)

⁷⁴ Climate Resilience Strategy Agriculture and Forestry, "Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy," Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2011, <https://gggi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2015-08-Sectoral-Climate-Resilience-Strategies-for-Ethiopia-1-Agriculture-and-Forestry-Climate-Resilience-Strategy.pdf>. Ethiopia, "Ethiopia's Climate- Resilient Green Economy Strategy," Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (United Nations, 2012), <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=392&menu=35>.

⁷⁵ Climate Resilience Strategy Agriculture and Forestry, "Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy," Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2011, <https://gggi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2015-08-Sectoral-Climate-Resilience-Strategies-for-Ethiopia-1-Agriculture-and-Forestry-Climate-Resilience-Strategy.pdf>.

Institute. Nationally, the Ministry of Finance and the CRGE facility are in charge of its oversight and implementation.

Under this framework, Abiy Ahmed places his green (or green *development*) efforts. The following pages will thus present the main policies/solutions falling under the GTP-II, undertaken by Abiy Ahmed. As such, the solutions will be organized following the three pillars of the CRGE Strategy: First, a reforestation initiative will be presented; secondly, a policy hoping to promote more efficient agricultural practices; and lastly, two strategies aimed at solving Ethiopia's chronic energy shortages.

Green Legacy Project

With the goal of raising “the public's awareness about Ethiopia's frightening environmental degradation and, educate society on the importance of adapting green behavior”⁷⁶ as well as “combatting the challenges of food insecurity by preventing land degradation”⁷⁷ Abiy Ahmed proposed a national reforestation project called the Green Legacy Project⁷⁸. The project hopes to plant 20 billion trees over a four year period (2019-2022) in order to reach national environmental goals and provide a solution to the forestational harm produced through decades of mismanagement of forests and agricultural production⁷⁹.

This initiative is particularly relevant for the categorization of Abiy Ahmed as a climate leader, as it is a strategy that will only pay off in the long-term. Abiy himself has also backed this logic: “While literally sowing the seeds today, we have no doubt these seeds will bear fruit across generations and contribute to reducing carbon emissions, decreasing water and air pollution, increasing rains in dry areas and preventing flooding and landslides”⁸⁰.

Unlike other of his green policies described below, this long-term scope is especially important when addressing Green Legacy: why take on such an effort,

⁷⁶“Green Legacy: Gallery,” Green Legacy Ethiopia , 2022, <https://greenlegacy.et/>.

⁷⁷“PM ABIY Officially Launches This Year's Green Legacy,” Ethiopian News Agency , June 21, 2022, <https://www.ena.et/en/?p=36621>.

⁷⁸“Green Legacy- Dataset ,” Green legacy Ethiopia , 2022, <https://www.greenlegacy.et/green-legacy/dataset>.

Johnny Wood , “Ethiopia Has Planted 350 Million Trees in Less than a Day to Tackle Deforestation,” World Economic Forum, July 31, 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/07/ethiopia-has-planted-350-million-trees-in-a-day-to-tackle-deforestation-and-its-not-stopping-there/>.

⁷⁹ According to the Farm Africa Organization, “Ethiopia's forested land was reduced from almost a third of the country at the turn of the 20th century, to less than 4% today”. Johnny Wood , “Ethiopia Has Planted 350 Million Trees in Less than a Day to Tackle Deforestation,” World Economic Forum, July 31, 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/07/ethiopia-has-planted-350-million-trees-in-a-day-to-tackle-deforestation-and-its-not-stopping-there/>.

⁸⁰ “PM ABIY Officially Launches This Year's Green Legacy,” Ethiopian News Agency , June 21, 2022, <https://www.ena.et/en/?p=36621>.

if it will not bear fruits in the immediate future, eg: for the next election? To answer this, one must look at multiple factors: raising national and international public opinion, depicting efficiency and unifying the country.

On the one hand, the initiative is not solely aiming at turning back the climate clock, rather, it is also a vehicle to foster public awareness on the threat of deforestation for the country's survival. Moreover, such a goal is rather intertwined with Abiy's more general ambition of increasing national pride and unity (the key of his Meedemer philosophy). By presenting the project under the principle of "combating a common enemy" (environmental catastrophes driven by global warming), Abiy Ahmed is aiming to engage the whole of Ethiopia's population, fostering national unity beyond the long-standing ethnic divides.

In this regard, through an open letter in the Ethiopian Monitor Journal, Abiy Ahmed has stated, "We set out to build an exclusive process that will enable a large section of society to be custodians of such a grand national initiative first by participating in the execution and then by being custodians for the future"⁸¹.

When referring to the unifying power of Green Legacy, the leader said, "when I call upon all Ethiopians to 'Adorn Ethiopia' the call is to cover our nation Green; to see beyond lines of division – regional, ethnic, religious, sex – and in unity dress Ethiopia with the prosperity and dignity the people of this great nation deserve."⁸²

Furthermore, involving the public in Green Legacy also gives Abiy's environmental policies a sense of heightened transparency. In addition, Green Legacy also hopes to unify the country at an institutional level, involving all kinds of national and international organizations like the country's ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, The Forest and Climate Change Commission, local governments, officials and operators of public institutions, the private sector, and the UN's Environment Program⁸³.

Besides the national prospects of the initiative, the project also carries an international motivation. If proven successful, it could be used as a vehicle to publicize Abiy's leadership in international climate foras, thus providing more popularity to Abiy Ahmed's regime (particularly, to western, liberal countries who

⁸¹Abiy Ahmed , "Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative – Planting Our Print for Future Generations ,", Ethiopian Monitor, June 19, 2022, <https://ethiopianmonitor.com/2022/06/19/ethiopias-green-legacy-initiative-planting-our-print-for-future-generations/>.

⁸²"Ethiopia Readies for 2021 Green Legacy Tree-Planting Season," Embassy of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, London, UK. , May 20, 2021, <https://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/ethiopia-readies-for-2021-green-legacy-tree-planting-season/>

⁸³"Green Legacy Initiative," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Sustainable Development (United Nations), accessed August 2, 2022, <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/green-legacy-initiative>.

have recurrently⁸⁴ demonstrated their commitment towards reforestation strategies). Drawing favorable international attention is key to Abiy's current regime, in order to provide incentives to important international allies that have withdrawn their support⁸⁵ in light of the Tigray war. Thus, the support raised from the international arena is not only relevant for its political significance but also for its economic funding from Western donors.

All in all, Green Legacy has become more and more important with the fall of Abiy's leadership due to the harsh reality of *realpolitik*. The war in Tigray marks a clear turning point in Abiy Ahmed's rule, showing a gap between the initial long-term idealist vision of his speeches, versus his short-term, unrehearsed efforts to deal with this challenge. More than ever, Abiy relies on these efforts to gain back the popularity among the national and international public opinion.

SCALA program

Ethiopia joined the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development program (UNDP) in the Scaling Up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture (SCALA)⁸⁶ program as of early 2022. The program, which will last until 2025, supports 12 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin

⁸⁴ For instance, in the COP26 Climate Conference hosted by the UK in Glasgow, more than 100 world leaders pledged to end and reverse deforestation by 2030, through the "Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forest and land Use" commitment (Georgina Rannard and Francesca Gillet, "COP26: World Leaders Promise to End Deforestation by 2030," BBC News (BBC, November 2, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-59088498>)).

Other examples of international efforts for the commitment on reforestation are the New York Declaration on Forests (2014) ("Forest Declaration Platform," Forest Declaration (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit, March 21, 2014), <https://forestdeclaration.org/>), as well as the United Nations Forum on Forests' International Forest Policy (2007) (Constance L. McDermott, Aran O'Carroll, and Peter Wood, "International Forest Policy - the Instruments, Agreements and Processes That Shape It," Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat (United Nations, June 2007), https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Intl_Forest_Policy_instruments_agreements.pdf)).

⁸⁵ "The civil war has also cost Ethiopia, one of the biggest economies in east Africa, billions in donor support and duty-free access to the US. Since the beginning of the year, the conflict had eased, spurring hopes for peace". Andres Schipani, "Ethiopia's Ceasefire Ends as Fighting Erupts in North," *Subscribe to read | Financial Times* (Financial Times, August 25, 2022), <https://www.ft.com/content/b0c6d5f7-b3f3-43ec-bcd0-a10d2780a26f>.

⁸⁶ "Ethiopia Enhances Irrigation, Watershed and Pastureland Management to Translate Climate Plans into Actionable Climate Solutions," UNDP Climate Change Adaptation, May 13, 2022, <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/scala-ethiopia-enhances-irrigation-watershed-pastureland-management-to-translate-climate-plans-into-actionable-climate-solutions>.

"Introducing the SCALA program" Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (IKI), 2021, [https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/iki-media/video/introducing_the_scala_program/#:~:text=SCALA%20is%20a%20five%2Dyear.Plans%20\(NAPs\)%20and%20nationally%20determined](https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/iki-media/video/introducing_the_scala_program/#:~:text=SCALA%20is%20a%20five%2Dyear.Plans%20(NAPs)%20and%20nationally%20determined).

"Scaling Up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture Through NDCs and NAPs (SCALA). Inception Report: Ethiopia," UNDP, May 2022, https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/resources/ethiopia_inception_report_adjusted.pdf.

America⁸⁷ in building adaptive capacity and reducing GHG emissions so as to meet the countries' National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and NDCs^{88,89}. In particular, the program focuses on climate action in the **agriculture and land use sectors**, and is funded by the German International Climate Initiative (IKI)⁹⁰. It also counts with the joint efforts of regional offices and national governments⁹¹.

More specifically, SCALA Ethiopia has established three objectives, 1) enhance integrated watershed management, 2) enhance irrigation performance, and 3) improve pasture land management. As for the first objective, it is argued that creating a more efficient management of natural resources will overall improve water sources both for irrigation but also for livestock feed. As for the second, improving the irrigation value chain will also help counterbalance natural resource degradation. In addition, through water conservation methods, the marketable production of agriculture will increase. It should be noted that these first two objectives speak directly to climate change-induced risks typical to Ethiopia: droughts and floods. Lastly, the third goal hopes to rehabilitate small ruminant value chains, which will protect pasturelands, remove carbon emissions and be a source for economic development⁹².

The motivations for Abiy Ahmed in accepting the intervention of international institutions in his handling of the environment are several. Firstly, the solutions brought about by SCALA are directed to addressing key existing climate

⁸⁷ Argentina, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mongolia, Nepal, Senegal, Thailand, and Uganda.

⁸⁸The SCALA efforts in Ethiopia are "purposely designed to ensure sustainability in our climate response through supporting the implementation of the Climate-Resilient Green Economy (GRGE) transformative climate actions in the land use and agriculture sectors to reduce emissions and enhance adaptive capacity while enhancing collaboration between the public and private sectors as main drivers for implementation of those climate actions" (United Nations Development program, "Translating Climate Plans into Actionable Climate Solutions.," UNDP, May 31, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/ethiopia/news/translating-climate-plans-actionable-climate-solutions>).

⁸⁹"Scaling Up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture Through NDCs and NAPs (SCALA). Inception Report: Ethiopia," UNDP, May 2022, <https://www.undp.org/>.

⁹⁰ In this regard, the program also works with the private sector to "scale up financing and pursue innovative approaches in agri-food systems and value chains". IKI has donated 20 Million euros to the program, making it its most significant donor.

"Introducing the SCALA program," Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (IKI), 2021, [https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/iki-media/video/introducing_the_scala_program/#:~:text=SCALA%20is%20a%20five%2Dyear,Plans%20\(NAPs\)%20and%20nationally%20determined](https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/iki-media/video/introducing_the_scala_program/#:~:text=SCALA%20is%20a%20five%2Dyear,Plans%20(NAPs)%20and%20nationally%20determined)

⁹¹ According to The Scala Inception Report, the first inception workshop has included national level participants (ministry of finance, of planning and development, of water and energy, etc), as well as regional actors, coming from Regional Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) (Amhara Regional State EPA, SNNP Regional State EPA, Somali Regional State EPA, etc) "Scaling Up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture Through NDCs and NAPs (SCALA). Inception Report: Ethiopia," UNDP, May 2022, https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/resources/ethiopia_inception_report_adjusted.pdf

⁹² Small ruminant production, carrying a triple economic purpose -meat, milk and skin- are great sources of income for small rural communities.

hazards⁹³, as the project intends to improve the country's adaptive capacity and resistance to natural resource degradation, floods and droughts. As it will be seen below, most of Abiy's environmental efforts are linked to the development of high ROI projects, such as the strengthening of the green energy sector. Apart from the Green Legacy project, which does not consume a high proportion of resources and serves as a tool for controlling the public opinion. In this regard, handling current, unexpected climate hazards is a costly activity and not a "cost-effective" one, as providing solutions to environmental catastrophes is more aimed at solving the pre-existing hazard rather than at seizing a new investment opportunity. Thus, signing SCALA allows Abiy to channel less funds to such "low ROI" needs and thus direct them to other high-cost projects for economic development, while still providing a feasible solution to his population's urges.

Participation in the Scaling-Up Renewable Energy Program

In 2012, the country joined the World Bank's initiative to encourage private investments in emerging countries' solar power. The program, part of a larger international initiative, is funded by the Climate Investment Plan⁹⁴. In this regard, the Scaling-Up Renewable Energy Program (SREP) is backed by a US\$839 million fund, and channeled through five multilateral development banks⁹⁵. Its objective is to "finance scaled-up deployment of renewable energy solutions to increase energy access and economic opportunities"⁹⁶.

In Ethiopia in particular, the program underwent updates with the regime change, but its main objective remains the same: supporting the energy sector objectives of the country's Transformation Plans⁹⁷. When it was first introduced in 2012, the

⁹³ "With the SCALA program supporting Ethiopia over the next five years, UNDP and FAO will strive to foster a more inclusive, multi-stakeholder process that meets the needs of smallholder farmers, rural communities, women, and youth, who are the most vulnerable to climate change". Scaling Up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture Through NDCs and NAPs (SCALA). Inception Report: Ethiopia," UNDP, May 2022, https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/resources/ethiopia_inception_report_adjusted.pdf

⁹⁴ The SREP is backed by a \$839 million fund, and channeled through five multilateral development banks. Its objective is to "finance scaled-up deployment of renewable energy solutions to increase energy access and economic opportunities" ("Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program," CIF Investment Funds | Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program, 2015, https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/results-2015/srep/#about)

⁹⁵ "Cumulatively, 60% of the financing for the programs comes from national governments, whereas the remaining 40% is sourced from MDBs" ("Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program," CIF Investment Funds | Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program, 2015, https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/results-2015/srep/#about).

⁹⁶ "Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program," CIF Investment Funds | Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program, 2015, https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/results-2015/srep/#about.

⁹⁷ "Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia - OECD," Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012, https://www.oecd.org/env/cc/TADELE_FDRE%20Ethiopia%20Scaling%20-%20Up%20Renewable%20Energy%20Program%202012.pdf.

program had the plan of “increasing power generation capacity from the present level of 2 GW (2012) to 10 GW by 2015 and to 25 GW by 2030”⁹⁸. In this regard, the goals for the SREP were to “meet the demand for energy in the country by providing sufficient and reliable power supply that meets international standards at all times”. According to the SREP, such a goal would be achieved by enhancing hydroelectric power plants, as well as other renewable energy projects, and improving the existing distribution lines to provide more access to rural villages across the nation.

In addition, the program highlighted the importance of producing energy for regional exports, as well as modernizing the distribution system so as to reduce power losses. These objectives were presented under the umbrella of improving access to energy while also remaining under international standards of carbon emissions⁹⁹. The program thus selected three projects to be funded: the Development of Aluto Langano Geothermal field, Assela Wind Farm Project, Clean Energy SMEs Capacity Building, and Investment Facility Development of Tendaho Geothermal field.

In 2018, the country signed the Public Private Partnerships Proclamation (PPP), a legislative framework to promote and facilitate the implementation of privately financed infrastructure projects. Under this umbrella (and following the established SREP framework), Abiy Ahmed's government engaged in several programs for renewable resources development projects, securing access to US\$ 50 Million (96% in grants, 4 % in loans) for the development of the SREP projects as of January, 2022¹⁰⁰.

All in all, the PPP marks a clear public-private partnership framework being encouraged by Abiy Ahmed's policies. These partnerships are likely to bring regional investors together, as well as realign the international alliances of Ethiopia, not only focusing on international organization funding, but also grants and loans from international corporations. Enhancing development through public-private partnerships, thus, is not only in accordance with the country's CRGE Strategy, but also corresponds to Abiy Ahmed's overall neoliberal agenda.

⁹⁸World Bank Group, “Scaling up Renewable Energy Program (SREP),” World Bank (World Bank Group, September 16, 2014),

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/armenia/brief/srep#:~:text=About%20SREP&text=The%20SREP%20was%20established%20to,of%20low%20carbon%20development%20pathways.>

⁹⁹“Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program in Low Income Countries (SREP),” African Development Bank Group , accessed August 28, 2022,

<https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/climate-investment-funds-cif/strategic-climate-fund/scaling-up-renewable-energy-program-in-low-income-countries-srep>

¹⁰⁰IEA/IRENA Renewables Policies Database, “Scaling-up Renewable Energy Program for Ethiopia (SREP) – Policies,” IEA.org, January 24, 2022,

<https://www.iea.org/policies/5903-scaling-up-renewable-energy-program-for-ethiopia-srep>.

The Assela Wind Farm Project

In September 2020, The Ethiopian parliament validated a loan agreement for the construction of the Assela Wind Farm, a \$170.5 million USD project hoping to provide 100 MW to the Ethiopian electricity grid¹⁰¹. The project is signed between the country's Ministry of Finance, Denmark's Danske Bank (providing a loan facility of approximately USD \$137 million), the Danida Business Fund (granting the country USD \$111 million) and the African Development Bank (providing a USD \$10 million loan and performing a feasibility study). The partnership entrusted the project's construction to Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy and counts with the participation of the state-owned Ethiopian Electric Power, which will build a substation for the transmission and distribution of the sourced energy.

All in all, the agreement signed between Ethiopian Electric Power and Siemens Gamesa stipulates that the Danish subsidiary of Siemens Gamesa will have control of 60% of the development project, with the parent company holding the remaining 40%¹⁰².

Participation in the International Finance Corporation's Renewable Energy Program¹⁰³

In 2016, the state-owned electricity producer signed an agreement with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) for the development of a 500MW solar power source under the institution's Scaling Solar Program. The first round of the partnership thus finished in December 2019, with the construction of two solar independent power producers (IPPs) of 250 MW. However, the agreement was continued under Abiy's government, with a new, second round of tenders. Costing around \$798 Million, the second round of the solar program was expanded to six projects and 750 MW. The Scaling Solar 2019 round involved the Saudi Arabian developer ACWA Power, focusing on two development projects in the Somali and Afar Region. According to an IFC disclosure "[t]he projects are expected to not only provide competitively priced clean power, but also reduce Ethiopia's dependence on hydro resources by diversifying the energy supply mix. IFC will assist Ethiopian Electric Power and the PPP Directorate General in developing/structuring, following a competitive tender, an independent power

¹⁰¹ According to Siemens Gamesa, this would help power over 400,000 Ethiopian households and will save more than 260,000 tons of CO2 emissions per year. ("Press Release: Siemens Gamesa Seals Its First Wind Farm Project in Ethiopia, Expanding Its Leadership in Africa," Siemens Gamesa, January 4, 2021,

<https://www.siemensgamesa.com/-/media/siemensgamesa/downloads/en/newsroom/2021/01/siemens-gamesa-press-release-agreement-siemens-energy-green-hydrogen-en.pdf>.)

¹⁰² "Assela I Wind Power Project," NS Energy, 2019,

<https://www.nsenergybusiness.com/projects/assela-i-wind-power-project/https://constructionreviewonline.com/news/ethiopia/assela-wind-farm-project-in-ethiopia-enters-construction-phase/>.

¹⁰³ "Ethiopia's Renewable Energy Goals," Herbert Smith Freehills: Africa notes, September 30, 2020, <https://hsfnotes.com/africa/2020/09/30/ethiopia-renewable-energy-goals/>.

producer to design, finance, build, and operate solar PV-based generation capacity of up to an additional 750 MW."¹⁰⁴

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

Meeting the CRGE goals hinges partly on new hydropower projects, the most significant of which is the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The initiative is set to make up 90% of Ethiopia's electricity supply, becoming the seventh largest hydroelectric dam on the planet when finished. The project is said to have the potential to make Ethiopia a continental energy producer¹⁰⁵, as the dam would allow Ethiopia to hold more than double its carrying capacity, turning the country into the largest producer in Africa¹⁰⁶. This alone has the potential to be a huge step in the country's aspirations towards economic prosperity. In this regard, its completion and operation would speed up the efforts of poverty alleviation through energy exports and easier access to electricity for its population.

Thus, the dam has become a symbol of the modernization process (modernization in terms of the promotion of **development** projects) carried out by Abiy Ahmed's administration, elevating it as an icon of national pride and unity. While the GERD aims to represent the modernization of infrastructure, its efficient construction and operation would also symbolize the success of Abiy Ahmed's overall modernization goals (representing the **ideological** revolution of Medemer). Modernization, for Abiy, thus contains a dual meaning; the completion of the GERD is proof of the success of Abiy's modernization ideals in these two senses, the need for development and Abiy Ahmed's individual, psychological motivations: achievement and power.

Building the dam would provide the country with economic power and influence, which is key for a region where development is a main priority. Furthermore, the building of the GERD corresponds to Abiy's search for affiliation: were the dam to reap the socioeconomic gains it promises, it could generate great public acceptance. Being such a groundbreaking infrastructure for the region, its effective operation and construction would define his leadership historically, possibly turning him into a beloved leader.

In conclusion, Abiy Ahmed's environmental policies do not follow a single, unified green framework; rather, they are being implemented under two strategies for

¹⁰⁴ IFC Project Information and Data portal , "Ethiopia Scaling Solar - Round 2," International Finance Corporation - The World Bank , accessed August 28, 2022, <https://disclosures.ifc.org/project-detail/AS/604194/ethiopia-scaling-solar-round-2>.

¹⁰⁵ Al Jazeera. "Ethiopia Turns on the Turbines at Controversial Nile Mega-Dam." Energy News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, February 20, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/20/ethiopia-electricity-production-gerd-blue-nile-mega-dam>.

¹⁰⁶ Duffy, Michael. "Abiy Ahmed Profile." RAI, September 22, 2021. <https://raiagroup.org/abiy-ahmed-profile>.

socioeconomic development. Therefore, the main motivations for the carrying of his environmental actions (which are -in bold terms- related to either afforestation efforts, sustainable agriculture and land practices, or renewable electricity generation and development) are mostly related to his electoral promises for development and the population's demands for solutions when being struck by harsh environmental catastrophes. One last motive to be highlighted in this regard is related to his psychological logic: the eventual success of his environmental initiatives would satisfy his result-oriented mindset and quest for achievement, as well as be a bargaining chip useful for carrying negotiations with international Western organizations.

Abiy Ahmed's Impact

This report first presented the leader's stake in climate action and then provided an overview of the leader's solutions for such challenges. This section, then, draws a last point in the evaluation of Abiy Ahmed's environmental leadership: an impact assessment of his sponsored initiatives. To do so, the order of the previous section will be followed, analyzing firstly the effectiveness of the Green Legacy Campaign, then that of the SCALA program, the consequences of the Scaling-up Renewable Energy agreements and lastly, the implementation of the GERD.

Green Legacy project - Impact

As of June 19, 2022, the project has allegedly already succeeded in planting close to 18 billion seedlings¹⁰⁷. The target for 2022 is to plant 6 billion seedlings during Ethiopia's rainy season, with 52% of the seedlings accounting for agroforestry trees and 42% of them accounting for prepared seedlings¹⁰⁸. When overviewing the project's developments in the past three years, two particular events can be highlighted as milestones. On July 29, 2019, Ethiopia managed to plant 354 million seedlings within a 12-hour span, exceeding the initial challenge of planting 200 million, and claiming a world record¹⁰⁹. Secondly, on June 21, 2021, when Ethiopia underwent a presidential election (which handed Abiy Ahmed his second term), the nation was also encouraged to take part in the project after having casted their votes.

¹⁰⁷ Ethiopian Monitor, "Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative – Planting Our Print for Future Generations," Ethiopian Monitor, June 19, 2022, <https://ethiopianmonitor.com/2022/06/19/ethiopias-green-legacy-initiative-planting-our-print-for-future-generations/>.

¹⁰⁸ Johnny Wood, "Ethiopia Has Planted 350 Million Trees in Less than a Day to Tackle Deforestation," World Economic Forum, July 31, 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/07/ethiopia-has-planted-350-million-trees-in-a-day-to-tackle-deforestation-and-its-not-stopping-there/>.

¹⁰⁹ "Ethiopia 'Breaks' Tree-Planting Record to Tackle Climate Change," BBC News (BBC, July 29, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49151523>.

The record-breaking success of the campaign has been mentioned by Abiy in his presidential speeches and press releases¹¹⁰. In this sense, the success of the project has been used as a broader metaphor for the overall efficiency of his regime, "The Green Legacy Project is a demonstration of our national capacity to launch and complete activities and tasks per set targets".

It is possible, then, that the campaign was also a vehicle for him to deploy his "constraint challenger" and "successful young leader" characterization, following a leadership style motivated by the portrayal of achievement against all odds. The fact that the project was able to achieve its successful completion in spite of the Tigray war would further strengthen this characterization. In all, Green Legacy enabled him to deploy his idealism of Ethiopia's faith at its fullest when discussing the project, "The Green Legacy Project is not one that will bear fruits immediately. Rather, we will see the results in the next generation".

Therefore, the project also enables a tool for improving national and international public approval. As for the national approval, it is shown by the participation of religious leaders¹¹¹ as well as by citizens' participation. According to the Green Legacy Project's files, Green Legacy already included approximately 18 million civilians, 13 million coming from rural populations and 6 from urban areas.^{112,113} In this regard, standing politically for cooperation, as well as efficiently deploying a federal effort to fight against a common threat (something Abiy has not been able to conduct in other spheres of government yet) is a partial success for his Medemer ideology to become a reality. The achievement of Medemer would

¹¹⁰The initiative has proven successful and is openly published in the "Ethiopia's Office of the Prime Minister" and in the "Ethiopian Embassy in London" websites, highlighting the record-breaking figure of 350 million trees being planted in a single day in 2019 ("Ethiopia Readies for 2021 Green Legacy Tree-Planting Season,"

Embassy of Ethiopia, London, May 20, 2021,

<https://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/ethiopia-readies-for-2021-green-legacy-tree-planting-season>)

¹¹¹ For instance, the Ethiopian Catholic Higher Learning Institute staff and students along with the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat, Archdiocesan Catholic Secretariat, Vatican Embassy, and CMRS have planted trees in the Institute's compound. In addition, religious leaders from all congregations joined tree-planting efforts at a 5th of June, 2020 event in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital.

"Green Legacy 2021: Adorn Ethiopia," Ethiopian Catholic Higher Learning Institute, August 2, 2021,

<https://ecu.edu.et/green-legacy-2021-adorn-ethiopia/>

"Ethiopia to Grow 5 Billion Trees in the Second Green Legacy Campaign," World Agroforestry | Transforming Lives and Landscapes with Trees, accessed August 20, 2022,

<https://www.worldagroforestry.org/blog/2020/06/09/ethiopia-grow-5-billion-trees-second-green-legacy-campaign>

¹¹² "Green Legacy Ethiopia," Green legacy Ethiopia, accessed August 13, 2022,

<https://greenlegacy.et/green-legacy/home>.

¹¹³ For instance, the Ethiopian Catholic Higher Learning Institute staff and students along with the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat, Archdiocesan Catholic Secretariat, Vatican Embassy, and CMRS have planted trees in the Institute's compound. In addition, religious leaders from all congregations joined tree-planting efforts at a 5th of June, 2020 event in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital.

"Green Legacy 2021: Adorn Ethiopia," Ethiopian Catholic Higher Learning Institute, July 30, 2021,

<https://ecu.edu.et/green-legacy-2021-adorn-ethiopia/>

continue to characterize him as a constraint challenger, appealing to those who feel frustrated by Ethiopia's long-running autocracy and institutionalized political machinations led by the EPRDF.

As for its international success, the project's events included representatives from ally embassies and international organizations¹¹⁴. Furthermore, the campaign is being published in the international climate conferences Abiy Ahmed's government has participated in in the past years. There are two recent international climate conferences where Abiy Ahmed's regime mentioned the project, the COP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow (2021) and the Stockholm+50 Conference¹¹⁵ of June 2022.

In the first case, Ethiopia's government promised (along with 100 world leaders) to end and reverse deforestation by 2030, the pledge included more than 14B in public and private funds. In the case of the Stockholm +50 Conference, Abiy Ahmed publicized the initiative to the international audience, and also called global leaders to join him, "(...) we must foster trustworthy ties between state and non-state actors in order to increase solidarity and collaboration. I believe my country is doing its fair share towards ensuring a healthy planet on all fronts."

These efforts in sharing the policy regionally and globally¹¹⁶ depict another characteristic of his leadership style: the search for affiliation and unity as one of his guiding principles. Because he wants to be seen as a collaborative leader regionally, he has deployed efforts to export his successful environmental campaign to all of East Africa. This political stance for regional cooperation is an example of how Medemer could be translated to his handling of international relations.

The thesis of this report was that Abiy Ahmed's first motivation for the initiation of environmental actions was not necessarily "climate anxiety" per se, but rather the

¹¹⁴ For instance, The UN had UN agents attend the tree planting events: representatives of the UN Environment program's Liaison Office to African Union Commission, UN economic Commission for Africa and representatives to Ethiopia have all attended the Green Legacy opening event in 2019. Ethiopia Plants over 350 Million Trees in a Day, Setting New World Record," UNEP, accessed June 10, 2022, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/ethiopia-plants-over-350-million-trees-day-setting-new-world-record>

¹¹⁵ The Stockholm+50 Conference was established with the goal of celebrating 50 years of global environmental action.

¹¹⁶ For instance, the third round of the Project, launched on the 18th of May, 2021, included the exports of 1 billion seedlings to neighboring countries to "start a regional effort towards green Africa" In addition, Abiy Ahmed has repeatedly referred to regional unity when presenting Green Legacy, encouraging other African nations to take on a similar cause: "To our African brothers and sisters, join us in making Green Legacy a continent-wide phenomenon, covering our beloved Africa in green"

Ethiopian Monitor, "Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative – Planting Our Print for Future Generations," Ethiopian Monitor, June 19, 2022, <https://ethiopianmonitor.com/2022/06/19/ethiopias-green-legacy-initiative-planting-our-print-for-future-generations>

goal of economic development and controlling of Ethiopia's government. And this policy is no exception, this is a long-term campaign that will not reap its benefits in controlling desertification and saving the country's agriculture in the short-term. However, the policy is still instrumental to his regime, it is an inexpensive project achieving an otherwise costly objective — publicizing his government in the international and regional arenas.

SCALA program - Impact

The SCALA program is one of the most recent environmental partnerships taken up by the Ethiopian government. Having only performed an inception workshop in January of 2022¹¹⁷ There is little to evaluate yet from the project. However, the inception workshop highlighted the limited implementation capacity at all levels, and the need to work through a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral coordinated effort. The need to strengthen monitoring capabilities (thus requiring infrastructure and human resources) was also highlighted. Another challenge was the lack of complete data, with unincorporated adaptation indicators.

Lastly, the workshop presented the work plan for the project. Finishing in 2024, the final outputs should consist of 1) forming an evidence base for implementation of transformative climate actions in land use and agriculture, 2) strengthening the NDC and NAP priorities for land-use and agriculture and integrating them into sectoral planning and budgeting; and 3) enabling the environment for the private sector to engage in the implementation of NDCs and NAPs.

Participation in the Scaling-Up Renewable Energy Program (SREP) - Impact

Globally, the project has already improved energy access for 7,395 million people, generating 276 MWh of electricity annually.¹¹⁸ In Ethiopia, the most advanced projects are geothermal sector development projects. The Climate Investment Fund, with the Ethiopian government, has accorded the design of a new public sector institution to lead the development of the geothermal sector and the drafting of the primary legislation that will provide the high level framework for the development of the sector.

As for the Assela Wind Farm Project¹¹⁹, as of January 2022, the project is in the permitting stage. It is expected to get commissioned in 2023, with the Siemens

¹¹⁷ "Scaling up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture through NDCs and NAPs (SCALA)," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations , May 2022, https://adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/resources/uruguay_nap-ag_inception_workshop_report.en.pdf.

¹¹⁸ "SREP Countries," CIF Investment Funds | Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program, accessed August 20, 2022, https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/results-2015/srep/.

¹¹⁹ "Assela | Onshore Wind Power Project, Itaya, Ethiopia," NS Energy, accessed August 20, 2022, <https://www.nsenergybusiness.com/projects/assela-i-wind-power-project/>

Gamesa Consortium being responsible for the construction, operations, management, maintenance and repairs of the infrastructure. Scheduled to commence its construction between July 2023 and June 2025, the Assela I wind farm is expected to supply approximately 300GWh of electricity to Ethiopia's national grid a year.

Participation in the International Finance Corporation's Renewable Energy Program - Impact

No reports on the results of the implementation of the scaling solar program in particular were found.¹²⁰ However, recent studies on the handling and use of solar energy in the country overall have been performed. In a June 2022 study on "The impact of alternative energy technology investment on environment and food security in northern Ethiopia", it was found that only about 15% of Ethiopia's hydropower potential was in use, the prospects for solar energy being less than 1%. Adding solar, instead of hydropower, could help Ethiopia's drought mitigation efforts. "A shortage of finance was among the barriers to adopting available modern energy technologies such as solar energy for lighting, radio, and mobile batteries" remains a main barrier to the implementation of renewable energy sources. In this regard, Abiy Ahmed will rely on further international funding that depends on the popularity of his regime internationally.

G.E.R.D. - Impact

The policy, designed to bring great economic gains and create a sense of national pride through the establishment of energy security and independence, has endured several implementation and construction challenges, both locally and internationally. On February 2022, the dam produced electricity for the first time, and, as of August 2022, the third phase of filling the reservoir was completed¹²¹. The dam, announced in 2011, was initially supposed to have been finished in 2018, but its construction suffered a 5 years delay, and was completed in 2022.

Nationally, Ethiopia had initially handed construction to the Metals and Engineering Corporation (METEC), the country's military-industrial conglomerate. However, in 2019, after accusing METEC's head of corruption charges, contracts to fulfill METEC's work were handed to a group of foreign companies, including

¹²⁰ Daniel Assefa Tofu, Kebede Wolka, and Teshale Woldeamanuel, "The Impact of Alternative Energy Technology Investment on Environment and Food Security in Northern Ethiopia," *Scientific Reports* 12, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-14521-2>.

¹²¹ Person and Giulia Paravicini, "Ethiopia Completes Third Phase of Filling Giant Nile Dam," Reuters Thomson Reuters, August 12, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-completes-third-phase-filling-giant-nile-dam-2022-08-12/>

Italy's Salini Impregilo SpA, GE Hydro France, China Gezhouba Group Corp, Voith Hydro Shanghai and China's Sinohydro Corp¹²².

Additionally, this investment was interrupted on several occasions¹²³ by opposition groups who are leading an ethno-nationalist ideology opposed to Abiy Ahmed's Medemer. These interruptions were not only worrisome to the GERD's stakeholders (mainly, the Italian, French and Chinese companies mentioned above), but also to Abiy Ahmed personally. The interruptions were imposing limitations on what could become the icon of efficiency and success for his government, and also damaging the guiding principle of Abiy's leadership.

Internationally, concerns over the construction and filling of the dam have been raised by Egypt and Sudan; diplomatic talks currently are still being held. Egypt and Sudan have voiced that the filling of the dam could limit the water flow to their countries and thus damage their land, which would have catastrophic consequences for their agriculture, industry and socioeconomic development overall. Studies have suggested that a nationwide water shortage in as little as two years could be caused if the dam were to be filled at a too rapid pace¹²⁴.

Overall, the dispute is part of a greater argument on regional power: controlling the Nile's basin, in order to control the region's water resources and export electricity to the continent. Egypt, thus, has posed a permanent legally-binding agreement accepted by the affected states, which addresses the negative environmental effects. The country has also suggested that such a negotiation will be pivotal for Ethiopia to meet the targets of the GTP¹²⁵.

It should be noted that the standoff is not merely affecting regional relations, but is also echoing more broadly into the international arena. Cases in point are the September 2020's suspension of economic assistance from the United States to Ethiopia due to the lack of sufficient progress in negotiations¹²⁶, the UN Security Council holding a session in July 2021 to discuss the dispute, and Joe Biden's

¹²²"Ethiopia Dam Official Blames Construction Delays on Conglomerate METEC," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, October 1, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-dam-idUSKBN1WG3CB>.

¹²³ International Crisis Group. "Ethiopia and the GERD." *Bridging the Gap in the Nile Waters Dispute*. International Crisis Group, 2019. <http://www.icg.org/stable/resrep31344.5>.

¹²⁴Griff Witte, "Egypt Sees Ethiopian Dam as Risk to Water Supply," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, June 18, 2013),

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/18/egypt-ethiopia-dam-blue-nile>.

¹²⁵ Hussameldin Abdelgadir Salih Mohamed, "Egypt Warns of Ethiopia's Unilateral Steps Regarding Nile Dam," Anadolu Ajansı, July 25, 2022,

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/egypt-warns-of-ethiopia-s-unilateral-steps-regarding-nile-dam/2645388>.

¹²⁶ In this regard, Donald Trump stated: "it's a very dangerous situation because Egypt is not going to be able to live that way... And I said it and I said it loud and clear - they'll blow up that dam. And they have to do something."

"Trump Comment on 'Blowing up' Nile Dam Angers Ethiopia," BBC News (BBC, October 24, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54674313>.

meeting in July 2022 with Egypt's current president, supporting the country's water security.

The concerns over the sustainability of the dam thus raises the following question: from the Ethiopian point of view, is the GERD part of an environmental policy or is it aiming at an economic policy focused on nationalism, energy security and development? To provide an answer, one must only look at the manner in which Abiy Ahmed has referred to the function of the dam, "Regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Ethiopia's interest is to respond to the electricity and economic needs of our country and reduce Sudan's and Egypt's concerns while bringing peace and prosperity in the Horn. We should use the energy together and resolve any issues related to water. We just want it to be a peaceful journey towards development."

As per this quote, it is possible that a positive environmental solution sponsored by Abiy Ahmed is simply a *byproduct* of a greater, more important socio-economic policy. The fact that the dam is being built — despite the possibility that it could present counterproductive effects for the region's soils — supports this mechanism. The case in point is not only the alleged future soil erosion problems for Egypt, but the deforestation that the building of the plant has caused. The GERD is located in the region of Benishangul-Gumuz, where 98% of the tree cover is dry forest.¹²⁷ In January 2022, Ethiopian authorities announced the removal of 17,000 hectares of forests.

Overall assessment of the institutional structure of Ethiopia.

Lastly, there is one overarching implementation challenge for the country: defective institutions, the lack of a centralized authority, and the recurrent conflicts emerging across and between ethnonationalist groups.

Overall, Ethiopia's rise as an economic powerhouse has been challenged by the structural constraints of the country — both politically and institutionally. It lacks an established stock market, banking sector, regulation capacity and foreign exchange regime. The weak institutional structure of the country mostly relates to the country's historical autocratic processes, where arrangements were opaque and leadership lacked transparency.

This machination is further complicated by the fact that each domestic region has its own Special Force, known as Liyu Police in Amharic. These forces, which respond more to regional rather than national demands, are causing federal relations to become blurry, hindering federal efforts for coordination and contributing to participation of armed forces when ethnic-nationalist conflicts

¹²⁷ David Charles and Dominique Lyonsi , "How Do You Protect What's 'Everywhere but Nowhere?'" CIFOR Forests News, July 30, 2019, <https://forestsnews.cifor.org/61625/how-do-you-protect-whats-everywhere-but-nowhere?fnl=en>

arise. Therefore, ethnic-nationalist sentiments are not only backed by languages and symbols particular to each region, but are also being promoted by the institutional regime, which involves armed conflict as a form of response to such sentiments. Thus, the defective institutional structure is contributing to the decentralization of government, hindering the achievement of an effective passing of unified policies across the region.

In addition, this decentralization disincentivizes the private sector from developing environmental projects, where the role of these partners is essential, particularly in countries, like Ethiopia, that lack the resources to produce such developments without foreign aid. In this regard, inter-ethnic tensions and the institutional regime fostering such conflicts have caused several environmental policies to suffer construction delays, such as the completion of the Addis-Djibouti railway¹²⁸ and the Light Rail Transit and Bus Rapid Transit lines¹²⁹.

¹²⁸The first electrified railway in Africa, the Addis- Djibouti Railway hoped to offer both passengers and freight services, transforming a seven-day trip into a 10-hour one. Reshaping the geographic position of both countries in the marine traffic and logistics network, the infrastructure also aims at reducing air and noise pollution, keeping annual gas emissions from transport just to under 9 tonnes by 2030 (estimations suggest that - without the new railway, thus, solely holding the current diesel-powered railway- the carbon dioxide emissions from transport would grow to 40 tonnes a year by 2030). (E. G. Woldegebriel, "Ethiopia Hopes to Reap Benefits from Eco-Friendly Rail," Thomson Reuters Foundation News , April 23, 2013, <https://news.trust.org/item/20130423142157-cofa6/> and Li Xuanmin, "Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway a Road to Prosperity, Bri Boost 'Speedy' Transformation in Africa in Past Decade," Global Times, July 14, 2022, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202207/1270556.shtml>.)

¹²⁹The importance of the development of light rail public transport lines is discussed in "Assessing the Contributions of Urban Light Rail Transit to the Sustainable Development of Addis Ababa" by Sekasi and Martens According to whom "Railways as the backbone of sustainable transport make Strong connections to a number of the SDGs and supporting targets, notably; energy efficiency (Goal 7), resilient infrastructure (Goal 9) and access to sustainable transport (Goal 11), resilience to climate-related hazards (Goal 13), and promote environmentally sound technologies and multi-stakeholder partnerships (Goal 17) [...]". They have further stated: According to the international transport forum, Transport greenhouse gas emission 2010, within the transport sector, energy consumption and therefore CO₂ emissions are dominated by roads, followed by aviation and shipping. Rail accounts for 2% of CO₂ emissions within the transport sector. This, therefore, implies that railways are the good performers towards environmental sustainability in the transport sector. (...)In discussing the findings of their study, [40] suggest that the construction of Urban Rail Transit has played an important role in realizing great-leap-forward development of economy and improving the urban economic structure and has become the source impetus for fueling urban economic growth. They further describe in detail three effects as (1) it leads the transformation of economic development, (2) construction provides broad development space for the environmental protection industry, and (3) construction improves the city's soft power". Jackson Sekasi and Mauro Luiz Martens, "Assessing the Contributions of Urban Light Rail Transit to the Sustainable Development of Addis Ababa," *Sustainability* 13, no. 10 (2021): p. 5667, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13105667>.

Despite the fact that many of Abiy Ahmed's environmental policies have not yet moved past their initial construction stages, there is a broad conclusion to draw on this section: On the whole, Abiy Ahmed's environmental policies have proved effective in the "numeric" terms of achievement (the perfect case in point being the large numbers of trees planted under Green Legacy). The key element for such initial success are the leader's efforts in developing partnerships with the private sector and international funds. In this sense, Abiy's handling of such relationships are depicting his confidence in his neoliberal intentions, which are being materialized through the actual legislation passed. However, such advancements are confronted by other structural issues of Ethiopia: the defective institutional regime and decentralized government are serious threats to the successful completion of Abiy Ahmed's environmental projects. With inter-ethnic tensions and internal civil conflicts disincentivizing investment and hindering prospective construction deadlines.

There are further aspects of Abiy's policies to be looked at in the future if a comprehensive impact assessment is to be carried: In regards to Green Legacy, what percentage of the planted trees will grow into actual trees and effectively contribute to the country's reforestation? How trustable are the results published by the Government if there are no reliable national institutions measuring the impact of the policies taken? Will Ethiopia come to an agreement with all stakeholders involved in the functioning and construction of the G.E.RD, in order to make this policy a "rounded" green initiative (without controversies on the environmental harm it could possibly bring about)?

Conclusion

Abiy Ahmed has profiled himself as a "constraint challenging" "reformist" messiah, a figure willing to take on all necessary measures required to fulfill the promised future set by Medemer, his guiding ideology. These four sections have defined this psychological rationale (his quest for achievement and his result-oriented leadership, as well as his ultimate desire for an ethiopian unity) and the structural elements influencing his rule (dealing with harsh opposition internationally due to his handling of the Tigray war and being struck by unexpected climate catastrophes harming the vast rural population of his country). Thus, the report has ultimately depicted the manner in which Abiy's agenda follows a certain, inflexible order, with **economic development and political and regime security** at the forefront of his priorities.

When replying to the initial question guiding this report, the review of Abiy Ahmed's climate leadership finds one particular query: where does climate fit in

his strictly realist agenda? How can a governmental sphere with such a long-term prospect fit an agenda so concerned with the *"here and now"*?

In short: Abiy Ahmed *is* and *is not* a climate leader.

Abiy Ahmed is **not** a climate leader, when looking at his regime under a strict, environment-first view; where environmental policies must be arranged under one, single umbrella, where other policies taken by the same government do not contradict green measures.

There are several arguments proving this view right. Firstly, the lack of a unified environmental policy. Abiy Ahmed's environmental leadership is scattered around two main strategies: the CRGE and the GTPII, both directly aimed at economic development. In this regard, not only does Abiy's leadership lack a unified environmental policy, but it lacks an enforced institutional regime¹³⁰, thus also a trusted source of information and accountability measuring the progress of the environmental policies taken. Secondly, and as a consequence of this structure for environmental policy-making, there are certain green measures taken that are contradicting the mere objective of "sustainability" as they are providing benefits for stakeholders in Ethiopia but harming the environment in its entirety. The perfect case in point in this regard would be the debate around the construction of the GERD, with Egypt claiming the possibility of an eventual drought in the country caused by such a project.

However, Abiy **is** a climate leader when looking at his government through a less strict, more flexible angle, where other forms of leadership are also considered and where the scope escapes the western "to-do" list view. This second view, then, would *still* consider the leader's environmental efforts, *even when* such efforts are not initially thought of under a "green" - sustainable- intention. Here, solutions such as the "Green Legacy Project" would be looked at beyond the intentions that could have pushed the leader to engage in them; results matter. Then, the Green Legacy project could speak for Abiy's characterization of an environmental leader, as the initiative has been extremely successful in terms of the involvement of stakeholders and the actual results attained. Furthermore, initiatives such as the Assela Wind Project, or the Scaling-Up Renewable Energy Program, have proved effective in their negotiation and construction, the leader pairing up with important international actors to perform in such a manner. Despite the possible economic and political motivations for such alliances, the

¹³⁰The country suffers an overarching implementation challenge: the existence of defective institutions, as well as the lack of a centralized authority for the federation, with conflicts emerging across and between ethno-nationalist groups. With Abiy's turn towards more autocratic means and his engagement in the Tigray war, the democratic process, as well as the institutional regime overall have been weakened in the past years, a process strongly criticized by the international community. In this respect, Abiy has proved disregard for institutions, in particular, for environmental ones: he has "downgraded" the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry to a Commission.

results prove the initiatives are functional not only for the economic and social development of the population, but also for the decarbonization efforts.

Even if Abiy's leadership is to be questioned on multiple fronts - with the Tigray war drawing a humanitarian crisis- the leader has still been able to provide solutions to other threats in the country, engaging in policies that - beyond the analysis on the intentions driving them- are aiming at controlling structural pain points of the country. In this regard, Abiy's policy-making has focused on important sectors of the population, such as the agricultural and rural- harmed by droughts and floods- and the energy sector - chronically suffering shortages-. In particular, caring for the energy generation and electricity propagation mechanisms of his country would have catalytic repercussions in all spheres of living, such as education and industry.

The leader's ability to drive change finds trouble at multiple angles, an opposition is driven both by values and culture (remaining inter-ethnic tensions) and the disadvantaged international position (in terms of military and economic might) at which Ethiopia stands. Even still, Abiy Ahmed has managed to engage in green policy-making, which -overall- proved effective, with results starting to show signs of success. This report on Abiy Ahmed's environmental policy can only evaluate the status quo: most of his policies cannot be fully evaluated yet for environmental success. However, this report provides an overview of Abiy Ahmed's environmental leadership; environmental policies serve as a means to his ends. Understanding this result serves as a basis for how actors should approach Abiy Ahmed when wanting to shape his climate policies.

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