

Time to Revive Ethio-Korea Trade

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and the Republic of Korea. This diplomatic relationship is, after all, unlike any other as it rests on solid foundation made true by the unrelenting sacrifice of thousands of Ethiopian gallant warriors who took part in the Korean War in response to a call by the United Nations Security Council.

Ethiopia's response to this call was in accordance with the country's unwavering commitment to maintaining world peace and collective security – a mission deemed “holy” by Emperor Haileselassie – despite the failure by member states of the League of Nations to protect the country from the colonial invasion of 1935.

During the Korean War, Ethiopia sent 6,037 troops (the Kagnew Battalion) with more than half of them actually taking part in the warfare. The heroic deeds of Ethiopian soldiers in Korea was well-documented by a Greek war correspondent, Kimon Skordiles, (in his book “Kagnew: The Story of Ethiopian Fighters in Korea”), who travelled to the area to cover the first armed clash of the Cold War. Skordiles was absolutely astounded by the heroism of Ethiopian warriors and ended up writing a book about them while he could have done so about his fellow countrymen, who were also there to support the Koreans.

According to the correspondent, the Kagnew battalion, bound by the motto



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“one for all and all for one” to “fight until we win or die,” won all 235 of its battles against the enemy forces. True to their motto, there were 121 deaths and 536 injuries but not a single one of the 6,037 warriors went missing or became a prisoner of war.

The other distinction, and one that made them seemingly superhuman to their enemies, was that there never seemed to be dead bodies of Kagnew soldiers, for the simple reason that they never left their dead behind. This earned them the respect of their American colleagues, while fostering the belief among their enemies, who had often never seen black men before, let alone black prisoners or casualties, that they were indeed superhuman.

The heroism of Ethiopian soldiers in the Korean War will continue to be an inspiration for many generations to come. In one of the documentaries on the Ethiopian Korean-War veterans transmitted by the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), in which I took part as translator, an Ethiopian veteran, asked by a journalist as to what the mystery is for their

valor in the fighting, was quoted as saying, “For us Ethiopians, fighting is as easy as playing Ye’Gena Chewata (Ethiopia’s version of hockey played during Christmas).”

This response is by no means an exaggeration given that Ethiopia fought and won a series of battles against invaders and remained the only African nation that never surrendered to European colonialists. Some of these veterans also recall a time in Korea when they contributed money for the construction of schools and health centers which were almost completely devastated by the War.

In less than 60 years since the end of the Korean War, South Korea has managed to emerge from the ashes of the War and transform itself from a poor agrarian economy into a leading industrial economy. This country, once regarded as an economic basket case, is often lauded as a model country in that it has successfully caught two birds in one shot – a thriving economy and dynamic democracy.

Efficient government leadership, dedicated economic planners, reverse brain drain, risk-taking entrepreneurs, educated manpower, a tradition of hard work, and timely investment in technology can generally be taken as the most essential ingredients in the country's rise from ashes of the War to achieving the most remarkable growth, dubbed the Miracle on the Han River.

As former President Lee Myung-

bak of Korea said in the 2010 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Korea now looks “well placed to share its development experiences and expertise with emerging and developing countries on strategies for development and on policies for successful recovery from financial crises.”

Korea has been assisting Ethiopia's development endeavors in various aspects. Currently, many Ethiopians are pursuing their studies in various universities of South Korea and more than 40 of them have studied public policy, development policy, and Korea's development history at the Korea Development Institute (KDI) School of Public Policy and Management, a Seoul-based higher education institution that has been playing a pivotal role in sharing the country's development experience with the developing world. Besides, a number of descendants of the Ethiopian veterans are also getting vocational training in various Korean institutions in a plan put forward by Lee.

Ethiopia considers South Korea as an important model for its economic development and the country draws heavily on the lessons of South Korea. It is, however, dismayed to learn that Ethiopia has not been able to attract Korean investors in sufficient numbers, particularly into the textile and leather industries towards which the country's industrial development



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the credit is given to others. This is nothing but a simple undermining of African minds and values by African writers.

On issue of climate change, too, the world knows that Meles was fighting Africa's fight on all the negotiations. He represented Africa in the climate conferences of COP-15, COP-16 and COP-17 held in Copenhagen, Cancun, and Durban, respectively. The popular figure of 100 billion dollars pledged by the developed countries in COP-15 was proposed by Meles.

And it is this figure the world has been discussing since 2009 in all the climate conferences. In that same climate summit, Meles also proposed that 40pc of the 100 billion dollars should go to Africa and be administered by an institution called Green Facility for Africa (GFA) to be created within the African Development Bank (AfDB).

His proposal was also crucial in narrowing the differences observed between the developed and the developing world at the time. Once this money was proposed by him, to be paid for climate change impact mitigation and adaptation in poor countries, the agendas in the next series of climate conferences were about its implementation.

Before the COP-16 held in Cancun, Mexico, Meles, along with the

Norwegian Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, was chosen by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to study the sources of that finance and the way to channel it to the users. Then, in the Cancun meeting, Meles reported his group's finding that it is possible to mobilise 100 billion dollars from the public and private sectors, even at the time of a financial crisis. His report also suggested that a green climate fund (GCF) to be established to administer and channel this finance to the end beneficiaries.

Meles continued to represent Africa in the next climate conference held in Durban, South Africa. In this meeting, the two key talking points were about renewing the Kyoto Protocol, which was about to collapse in Africa, and establishing the GCF. Also in this summit, Meles fought hard to save the Kyoto Protocol as well as pave ways for establishing GCF. In the next climate conference held in Doha, Qatar, in his absence, the Kyoto protocol was signed to continue for the coming five years and the GCF was

established.

From all these, one can understand that the main proposals in the series of climate negotiations are Meles' ideas. As much as it is within one's right not to mention Meles' name in her writings, it would not be right to fail to give credits to his intellectual creations.

What is even more discreditable is to give the credits, deliberately or unknowingly, to others. I believe doing this will not propel Africa forward in any way.

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triggered serious concerns among China's authorities that WMPs could become the next financial "WMDs" (weapons of mass destruction), as banks had strong incentives to make uneconomic lending decisions.

The subsequent state-directed WMP regulation put a brake on credit creation and sent Chinese stock markets plunging. Ultimately, however, the measures should enable China's shadow banking system to continue to grow at a more manageable pace and in a more sustainable way.

There is a risk that the lack of growth in the West may make economic

transformation in the direction of the Chinese model appear more urgent to its governments. But, the Western economic model has brought about unprecedented standards of living. This achievement should not be dismissed simply because of one crisis, no matter how prolonged, and the economic model that produced today's living standards should not be cast aside without careful consideration.

By contrast, China's rapid growth should not obscure its need for economic change. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), at some point between 2020 and

2025, China will pass what economists call the "Lewis Turning Point", at which a country's vast supply of low-cost workers is exhausted and factors, such as labour mobilisation, provide a diminishing contribution to growth. With a smaller demographic and resource advantages in the coming years, the consequences of capital misallocation - unavoidable under a state-directed economic model - will come to the fore.

As China's recent experience with WMPs demonstrates, economic change can expose old problems and create new ones. Ironically, China's transformation from a state-directed to a market-driven economy may require the greatest amount of planning of all.

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strategy is geared for the right reasons.

This may be because investors are victims of the negative publicity surrounding the continent or the relevant government bodies have not done a good job of promoting the great resource potential and investment opportunities in the country. Given South Korea's untapped potential for technological transfer and development assistance, further strengthening the existing overall relations is of paramount importance in Ethiopia's bid to become a middle income country.

With Africa becoming the 'new growth pole' on which global economic growth is becoming increasingly dependent and Ethiopia, being one of the best performing economies in Africa, I do hope that the scheduled four weekly flights recently launched by Ethiopian to Korea would go a long way toward bolstering Korea's trade and investment ties with Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular.

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