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Contemporary Geopolitical Dynamics in the Horn of Africa: Challenge and Prospects for Ethiopia

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Being the major geostrategic regions in the world, the Horn of Africa has become a centre of intense geopolitical competition by international and regional powers. This paper attempts to analyze the contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa and its repercussions for states with particular emphasis on Ethiopia. It argues that there are four defining features of contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Horn region: scramble for military base as a result of power projection by extra-regional states, competition for commercial ports, the Nile rivalry, and regional configuration of states amid political transitions. This geopolitical dynamics has brought opportunities for Ethiopia with regard to port access, building up naval power, infrastructure, hard currency, and regional integration. On the other hand, it has also presented challenges to Ethiopia in terms of alienating neighbors, threatening sovereignty, escalating tensions, jeopardizing religious coexistence, and maintenance of security and sustainability. Therefore, sustaining the gains and addressing the challenges of geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa is vital for ensuring strategic interests of Ethiopia both domestically and in the region.

Keywords: geopolitics, strategic interests, Horn of Africa, Ethiopia

Introduction

The Horn of Africa is a geographical region falling within that horn-shaped part of Africa that protrudes into the Indian Ocean from the continent's landmass in Northeastern Africa. There has been arbitrarily definition of which countries constitute the Horn of Africa. The "principal" countries of the Horn region are usually understood to include the states of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. However, the geographical scope of the region is extended to include Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda, and it is sometimes named "Greater Horn of Africa" by adding Tanzania to the list of constituent countries of the region. The Horn of Africa covers about 2,018,925 square miles (5,228,990 square KM) which is 17.2% of the total area of Africa. There are a total of 282 million people in the Horn of Africa region (Sudan—44 million; Eritrea—four million; Djibouti—one million; Somalia—12 million; Ethiopia—113 million; Kenya—52 million; SouthSudan—11 million; and Uganda—45 million) which accounts 33% of the total population of Africa (Mesfin, 2019, p. 3).

By virtue of its geostrategic location, the Horn of Africa has become the centre of intense geopolitical competition between international and regional powers. This geopolitical dynamics has unique features and provide both opportunities and challenges for states in the region. Accordingly, this paper attempts to analyze the contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa and what opportunities and challenges it brought

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for Ethiopia's strategic interests. It is organized in to five parts. The first part introduces the paper followed by analysis of the strategic significance of the Horn of Africa. The third part points out the main features of contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the region. The fourth part presents the challenges and opportunities of geopolitical dynamics in the region on Ethiopia which are followed by concluding remarks.

Strategic Significance of the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa has been the most volatile and crisis-ridden region in the world that encounters various forms of intra-state and inter-state conflicts as well as internationalized threats to peace and security over the years. Correspondingly, the Horn region is one of the major geostrategic regions in the world due to several factors. The first reason is its location along the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean which is the most vital maritime trade routes connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe. According to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP, 2020, p. 11), approximately $700 billion worth of goods is transshipped through the Red Sea trade route each year. The second factor that makes the Horn of Africa strategically important is "its proximity to the oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf and the vital commercial lanes that transit the Bab al-Mandab which is crucial global maritime chokepoint and port" (Mabera, 2020, p. 1). It is argued that "more than 40 per cent of the world's oil vessels are sailed through the Bab el Mandeb—major global maritime checkpoint" (cited in Dahir, 2019, p. 6).

Thirdly, the Horn of Africa has been conducive in order to execute strategic initiatives by global and regional powers. According to Dazi-Héni and Gouriellec (2021, p. 3), the Horn of Africa is a strategic crossroad of the contemporary international system because of four extra-regional initiatives: the beginning of US-led "Global War on Terrorism" the global "fight against maritime piracy", "China's New Silk Roads Initiative", and the "War in Yemen". Moreover, the migration policy by European Union has made the Horn of Africa a strategic area. Mesfin (2019, pp. 5-6) has argued that European countries policy for limiting the migration flow to Europe have led to investments in the Horn of Africa on governance, sustainable development, climate change, and immigration and, for this end, work closely with institutions in the region.

Fourthly, the prevalence of abundant natural resources in the Horn has made the region strategically important. Mesfin (2019, pp. 3-4) has indicated that the Horn region is rich in natural resources such as crude oil and other raw materials including potash, lithium, and diamonds which has been exploited mainly by Chinese mining companies. Moreover, uranium and gold as well as Rare Earth Elements (REE), which are key ingredients in batteries for electric cars, cell phones, high-tech weapons, and wind turbines, are available in the region (Ahmed, 2020). The other natural resource in the region is trans-boundary Rivers including the Nile River, which is shared among 11 countries and 86% of its water stems from Ethiopia.

The fifth factor to the strategic significance of the Horn of Africa is its market potentials. Dahir (2019, p. 6) has argued that "access to [the Horn's] market, most notably to Ethiopia's large and growing market, and the Horn's strategic location as the main entry to other African markets including the huge central African market has increased the region's strategic relevance". The Horn of Africa region has a total of $281.49 billion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020 (Compiled from International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021). Together with its 282 million populations, large geographical area and abundant resources that would attract massive investments, the Horn region indeed has a large market potential.

In general, the Horn of Africa is the major geo-strategic regions in the world despite its reputation as being

volatile and conflict-prone area. As a result, there exists geopolitical rivalry for influence and control in the Horn region. In recent periods, there has been resurgence of such rivalry in the Horn of Africa by competing powers with varying interests and mechanisms.

Untangling Contemporary Geopolitical Dynamics in the Horn of Africa

In recent periods, the Horn of Africa has become a chessboard for unprecedented geopolitical rivalry by international and regional powers. There exists an advent of so many extra-regional powers with competing strategic interests in the region. This new dynamics, which is coined as "a new scramble for Africa" (Vertin, 2019, p. 1) and "great game" (Mahari, 2019), has ultimately changed the geopolitical landscape of the region in dramatic manner. It is manifested mainly through military and economic aspects including global powers (US, China and Russia) rivalry, the proliferation of seaports, military facilities, and a large influx of foreign direct investment in the Horn of Africa region. On the other hand, there is configuration of states within the Horn of Africa which has been taken place amid political transitions in Ethiopia and Sudan. In general, the contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Horn region is characterized by four defining features: power projection and scramble for military base by extra-regional states, competition for commercial ports, the Nile rivalry, and regional configuration of states within the region. These features are illustrated in the following figure.

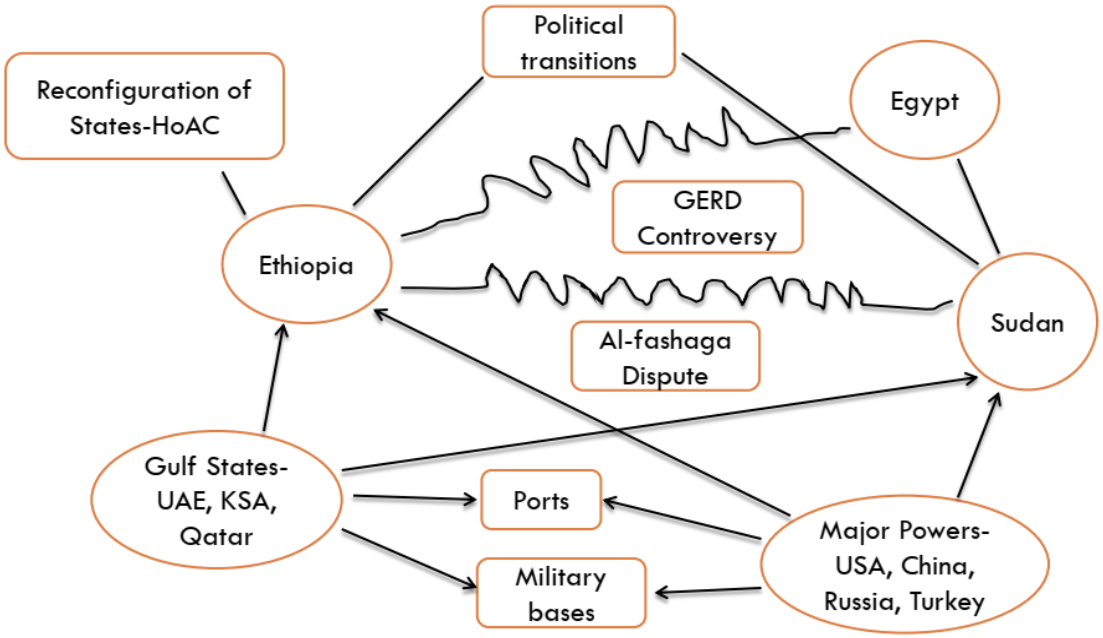

Figure 1. Mapping contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa (Source: compiled by the author)
N.B: the straight line indicate close relationship between the actors and with the issues, zigzag scribble indicate conflictual relations, those in rectangle indicate issues of geopolitical interplays, and those in circle indicate major actors in regional geopolitics.

Power Projection and the Scramble for Military Bases by Extra-Regional States

State's power projection ambition is triggered by the prevailing geopolitical competition in the global order. Markowitz and Fariss (2018, p. 89) argued that the higher the level of geopolitical competition states face, the more likely they are to build power projection capabilities. Accordingly, the geopolitical dynamics in the Horn region has led to power projection by foreign powers through the establishment of military bases and

deployment of foreign military forces in the region in recent period.

A number of military bases are established in Horn of Africa particularly in littoral states of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean. Various scholars have demonstrated the presence of regional and international security actors and foreign military installations in the Horn of Africa. According to Neil Melvin (2019, pp. 28-29), there are a total of 19 foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa established by international and regional powers including United States (operating in Lemonnier base in Djibouti, Baledogle in Somalia, Manda Bay in Kenya and Arbaminch [from 2011-2015] in Ethiopia), China (in Djibouti), United Kingdom (operating in Nanyuki in Kenya, Baidoa, and Mogadishu in Somalia), France (in Djibouti), Germany (in Djibouti), Japan (in Djibouti), Italy (in Djibouti), Israel (Mt. Soira, Massawa, and Dahlak Archipelago in Eritrea), Spain (in Djibouti), Turkey (Moqadishou in Somalia), Saudi Arabia (in Djibouti in 2015), and United Arab Emirates (Djibouti in 2015, Berbera in Somaliland, Mogadishu in Somalia [2015-2018], and Assab in Eritrea). In addition to these, Russia is also on the verge of establishing military bases in the Horn of Africa. It is stated that "Russian and Eritrean officials agreed in September 2018 to establish a Russian logistics base at one of Eritrea's ports" (Vertin, 2019, p. 16). The following figure clearly shows foreign military bases in the Horn region.

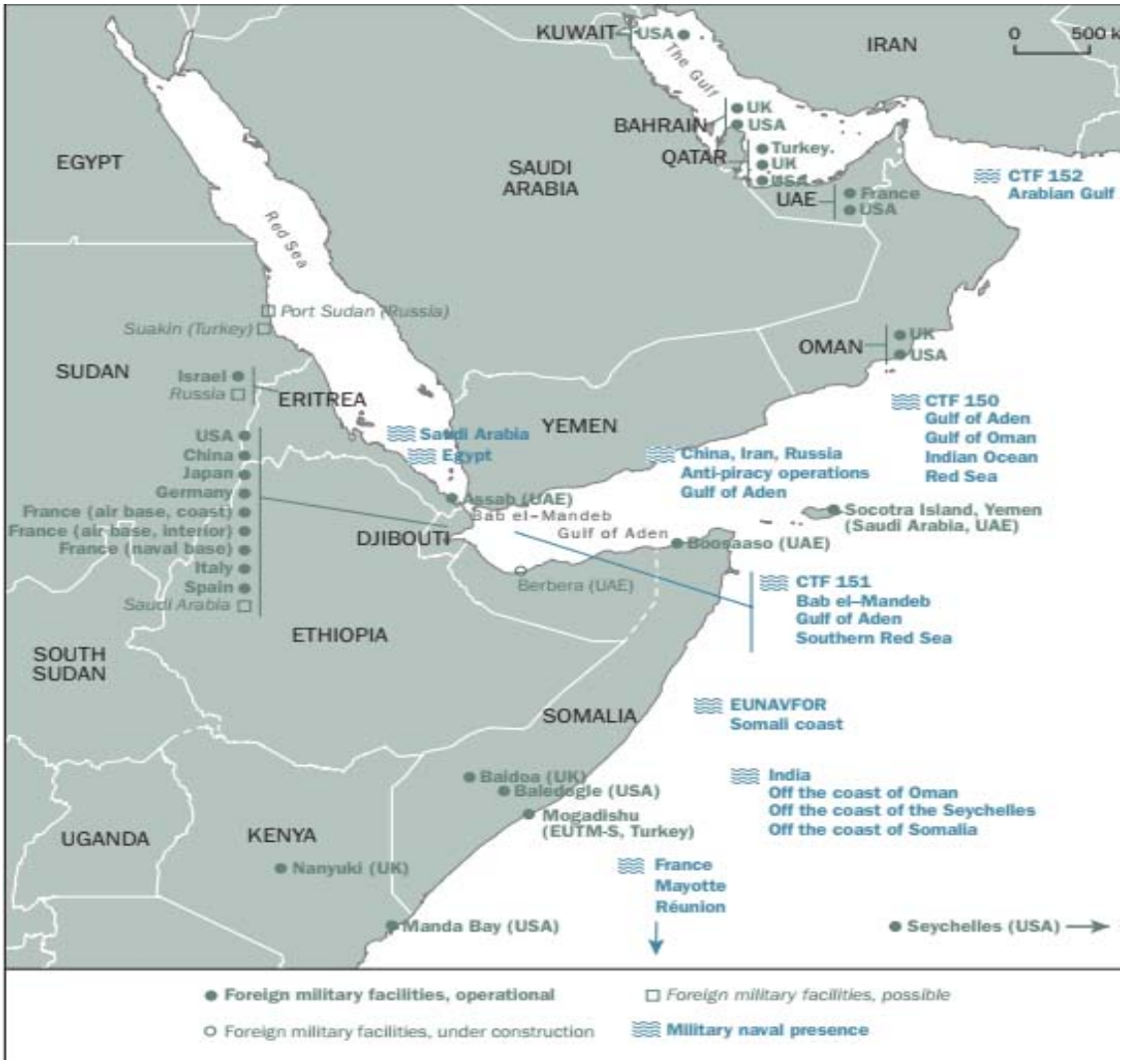

Figure 2. Foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa (Source: Melvin, 2019, p. 2).

In due course of projecting their power in the Horn region, international and regional powers seek to maintain their own strategic aspirations. It is generally argued that foreign militaries "focus primarily on protecting their interests, securing friendly regimes, projecting their influence amid rising competition among global powers, and countering threats to international peace and security, particularly those posed by the activities of terrorist groups and pirates" (Institute for Security Studies, 2019, p. 4). The United States is mainly concerned with counter-terrorism operations across the region, anti-piracy mission and countering Russian and Chinese influence in Africa, where as Chinese interest lies on supporting anti-piracy mission, support for peace operations, protection of sea lines of communication, and emergency/humanitarian response (Melvin, 2019, pp. 28-29). On the other hand, the Gulf States, which are "rising" powers in the Horn of Africa (Huliaras & Kalantzakos, 2017, p. 64), interest has to do with the Yemen conflict particularly support for military operation against the Houthi rebels and the Qatar-Gulf crisis (Dahir, 2019, p. 14) as well as the interest to isolate Iran (Verhoeven, Meester, & Berg, 2018, p. 39).

In general, the presence of foreign military bases and forces has been the major geopolitical issue in the Horn of Africa in recent period. It is in this context that the African Union Peace and Security Council have expressed its concern about "the existence of foreign military bases and establishment of new ones in some African countries, coupled with the inability of the Member States concerned to effectively monitor the movement of weapons to and from these foreign military bases" (African Union, 2016, p. 2).

Competition for Commercial Ports

The Horn of Africa has a 4,000 km coastline that runs from Sudan in the north to Kenya in the south and lies astride vital Indian Ocean trade routes (Huliaras & Kalantzakos, 2017, p. 66). This is a huge potential for development of ports. The Gulf States including Qatar and Turkey have been engaged in competition for commercial ports in coastal states of the region. However, United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been successful in oversea port development game. UAE's Dubai Ports (DP) World signed a 30-year deal to upgrade the Berbera port in Somaliland, made a bid to manage a concession at the port of Mombasa and the Lamu port project in Kenya, and won concessions to manage a string of ports in Kismayo, Bossaso, and Barawe in Somalia (Huliaras & Kalantzakos, 2017, p. 67). In addition to Gulf States, owing to its Belt and Road Initiative, China "built port facilities in Djibouti and recently obtained a degree of operational control over the Doraleh container terminal there" (USIP, 2020, p. 45). The following table shows extra-regional state's holdings of ports in the Horn of Africa.

The pattern of developing and investing in oversea ports is the extension of the general direct investment flows by China, Gulf States, and others towards the Horn of Africa Region. According to Verhoeven et al. (2018, p. 40), from 2000 to 2017, the Gulf States have been directly invested approximately $13 billion in 434 projects across the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, the United States Institute of Peace (2020, pp. 22-23) has indicated that the total aid to and direct investment by Gulf States in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Djibouti has amounted to around $18 billion (Sudan received $8,238 million, Ethiopia received $5,683million, Djibouti received $4,026.8 million) since 2003. In addition to Gulf States, China has enormously invested in the Horn of Africa and revives competition between global powers in the Horn region. According to Dazi-Héni and Gouriellec (2021, p. 5), China invested close to 14 billion dollars in infrastructural projects between 2012 and 2018 in Djibouti, nearly 4 billion dollars in infrastructural projects in Ethiopia and financed 70% of the 3.4-billion-investment to renovate and reopen the Ethio-Djibouti railroad.

Table 1

Foreign Power's Holdings of Ports in the Horn of Africa

No.	External Powers	Port Name	Start Date	Terms	Investment	Shareholders
1	United Arab Emirates	Berbera Port-Somaliland	2016	30-year	$442 million	UAE's DP World 51%, Somaliland 30%, and Ethiopia 19%
		Bosasso Port-Somalia (Puntland)	April 2017	30-year	$336 million	Puntland regional government and P&O ports
		Doraleh Container Terminal (Cancelled)	2000-Feb.2018			Djibouti's Port Authority (67 %) and DP World (33%)
2	Qatar	Suakin Port-Sudan (Planned)	Spring 2018	$4 billion	Phase I-$500 million	Sudan 51% Qatar 49 %
		Hobyo Port-Somalia (Planned)	December 2018	-	-	
3	Turkey	Suakin Port-Sudan (Planned)	December 2017	99-year	$650 million	
		Mogadishu Port-Somalia	2014	20-year		Somali government 55% Albayrak group 45%
4	China	Doraleh Multi-Purpose Port-Djibouti	May 2018		$590 million	China Merchants Holding and Djibouti Ports Authority
		Djibouti Port Authority	2013			Djibouti 76.5%, China Merchants Holdings Company 23.5%
		Doraleh Container Terminal	After Feb.2018			China Merchants Holding and Djibouti Ports Authority

Source: Compiled from Vertin, 2019.

The Nile Rivalry

The Nile River, found at the epicenter of the Horn and shared by 11 riparian states, has a potential for regional cooperation and violent conflict. However, since the start of the construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in April 2011, the Nile River has become a centre of geopolitical rivalry involving Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. There have been continuous disputes mainly between Egypt and Ethiopia. The dispute principally revolves around claims of historical rights by downstream countries of Egypt, and the quest for equitable and fair utilization of the Nile waters by Ethiopia. According to Mabera (2020, p. 6),

> The heart of the dispute is the utilization of water resources with Egypt flagging the GERD as a potential impediment to its water flow whereas for Ethiopia the GERD is a critical part of its national development plans, boosting hydroelectric supply with add-on benefits for regional integration.

The recent debates with regard to GERD concern on the timetable for filling the GERD's reservoir and how the GERD will be managed particularly during droughts (Sørbø, 2020, p. 10). In addition, whether the conflicts over GERD should be brokered by the UN Security Council (UNSC) or African Union (AU) has also been the main source of conflicts though the UNSC refers the matter to AU later on. Sudan and Egypt want the issue to be settled by UN Security Council while Ethiopia prefers for the African Union mediation efforts.

In due course of the Nile Rivalry, Sudan is caught between the competing interests of Egypt and Ethiopia. In March 2012, Al Bashir announced that Sudan supported the construction of the grand Ethiopian renaissance dam (GERD), rejected the colonial era (1959) agreement on Nile, and acknowledged that Sudan's security and

economy depended more on its relations with Ethiopia than with Egypt (Young, 2020, p. 11). However, this foreign policy of Sudan has remained until the overthrow of Al Bashir. After the overthrow of Al Bashir in 2019, the transitional government in Sudan shifts its position on GERD towards Egypt.

The controversies over GERD, however, are not simply limited to the utilization of the Nile water rather it is hegemony and counter-hegemony rivalry in the region. In this regard, Mabera (2020, p. 6) has stated that "the contestations and tensions over the Nile have to be seen as a critical site for inter-state bargaining over the future of the regional order, intermixed with the political and security calculations of various states sharing the resource". There have been several rounds of negotiations in order to address the controversies over GERD, but it failed to reach at political agreements. Despite this, Ethiopia announced on 19 July 2021 that the second-round filling of the dam's reservoir is complete.

Regional Configurations Amid Political Transitions

Two major political transitions have been taken place in the volatile Horn of Africa region recently. These transitions occurred in Ethiopia in April 2018 and Sudan a year later. However, these transitions are accompanied with internal political instability and upsurge of violent conflicts in both countries. After the overthrow of al-Bashir in April 2019, the domestic political dynamics in Sudan is characterized by painful transition, worsening economic crisis, as well as continuous disputes and divisions not only between the civilian and military components of government but also between multiple political actors, parties, and armed groups trying to establish their place in the new political-military order (Sørbø, 2020, p. 4). It has been stated that "there are almost daily protests against the rising cost and shortage of bread and fuel in Sudan" (Shewit, 2021).

On the other hand, despite certain positive reforms, the political transitions in Ethiopia after March 2018 have encountered soaring ethnic tensions, various forms of organized violences as well as large influx of displaced peoples throughout the country. According to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, in his speech at the second special session of House of People's Representative in November 2020, there were 114 violent conflict incidents in different parts of the country after March 2018. Whereas, the Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED) stated that there are a total of 415 violent conflict events (including battles, violence against civilians, explosions/remote violence) in 2018 (ACCORD, 2020a), 103 violent events in 2019 (ACCORD, 2020b), and 300 violent events in 2020 (ACCORD, 2021). The protracted violences in Metekel zones of Benshangul Gumuz region and Wollega zones of Oromia region as well as the ongoing armed conflict in Tigray region which has been expanded to neighboring Amhara and Afar regions are among the conflict incidents in Ethiopia.

The political transitions in Ethiopia and Sudan have resulted in a new dynamics of inter-state relations in the Horn of Africa. On the one hand, there is rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea after Prime Minister Abiy enters a peace deal with Eritrea which accorded him a Nobel Peace Prize. On the other hand, there is a deteriorating relation between Ethiopia and Sudan as the two countries engaged in border dispute over Al-fashaga area in northern parts of Ethio-Sudan border since November 2020. The Sudanese army announced on 2 December that it was now in control of significant portions of the disputed land (Al-fashaga) from Ethiopia (ACLED, 2021). Moreover, Brook Abdu (*Reporter*, January 16, 2021) stated that "the Sudanese forces have entered and occupied from 20 to 40 kilometers of land in Ethiopian territory and are still pushing inwards". These two contrasting developments indeed have their geopolitical effects with new alignments in the Horn of

Africa.

Regional configurations of states have been taking place in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia formed a new regional bloc—the Horn of Africa Cooperation (HoAC). On 27 January 2020, the heads of state and government of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia held their third trilateral meeting and agreed on a Joint Plan of Action which focuses on consolidating peace, stability, and security as well as promoting economic and social development in the region (Henneberg & Stapel, 2020, p. 340). Correspondingly, another alignment is also occurring in the Horn region. Sudan and Egypt recently signed a military cooperation agreement that includes a common defence pact (Shewit, 2021) and, as a result there have been joint military drills by the two countries in April and May 2021. Therefore, the formation of new regional alignments in the context of political transitions has been the main feature in the contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa.

Challenges and Opportunities of Regional Geopolitical Dynamics for Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the pivot of the Horn of Africa region. Geopolitical developments in the region affect the strategic aspirations of the country in different ways. In this regard, the contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Horn region has both opportunities as well as risks for Ethiopia. On the good side, the new dynamics provides Ethiopia the opportunity of alternative port access, supporting naval force development, investments in infrastructures, access to foreign hard currency, and prospects of enhanced regional integration. Besides, the geopolitical dynamics in the Horn has challenges to Ethiopia which includes alienating neighbors, threatening sovereignty, escalating tensions, jeopardizing religious coexistence, and maintenance of security and sustainability.

Being a landlocked country, the need to have outlets to sea has been the major strategic interests of Ethiopia since 1991. After the end of Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000, Ethiopia's import and export trade has been exclusively dependent on Djibouti. 95% of Ethiopia's external trade is conducted through the port of Djibouti and Ethiopia pays around $1.5 and $2 billion annually for port services (Ethiopia Observer, 2018). The new regional bloc of HoAC and UAE engagement in the Horn provides alternative port access in Eritrea and Somalia. As indicated before, Ethiopia owns 19% of the Berbera port in Somaliland together with UAE's DP World. Therefore, there is a good opportunity in terms of alternative port access to Ethiopia.

Markowitz and Fariss (2018, p. 89) argued that "states are likely to ramp up the development of their naval capabilities to counter an increasingly threatening geopolitical environment". In line with this, Prime Minister Abiy announced the plan to develop naval power for Ethiopia. For this end, the Ethiopian military sent 1,000 naval officers to Russia in December 2019 for training with the goal of strengthening its naval capabilities off the coast of Djibouti (cited in Ramani, 2020, p. 11). This shows that the geopolitical dynamics in the Horn region with Superpower rivalry is a good opportunity which has to be utilized in order to develop Ethiopian navy.

The other benefit of contemporary geopolitical dynamics for Ethiopia has been economic opportunities in terms of infrastructure investments, access to hard currency, aid and debt relieves from competing international and regional powers. Dahir (2019, p. 13) stated that Ethiopia secures $3 billion in investments and aid from the United Arab Emirates, including a $1 billion deposit in the country's central bank which enables to ease a lack of foreign hard cash in the Ethiopian economy. Russia cancels $163.6 million of Ethiopian debt ahead of the Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi (Ramani, 2020, p. 10). According to Inter-Agency Regional Analysis Network

(2017, p. 9), the United States has raised its security and development aid to Ethiopia from $1.1bn in 2001 to $3.6bn in 2014. Moreover, USIP (2020, p. 55) has indicated that "the United States and its partners have already begun to provide $2.9 billion dollar IMF package and planned US investments of up to $5 billion in Ethiopia". Besides, Chinese investments in infrastructure such as new airport, African Union Headquarter, ring roads and Ethio-Djibouti railway are a good welcome for Ethiopia. Finally, the construction of Ethio-Djibouti railway with the support of China and the new regional alignments of HoAC proved to be a key ingredient for regional integration in the Horn of Africa.

The geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa also presents challenges to Ethiopia. First, the new regional bloc of HoAC risks losing and alienating of neighbors which are strategically important to Ethiopia. Henneberg and Stapel (2021, p. 345) argued that the HoAC alienates regional neighbors especially Djibouti and Kenya who need to face the loss of strategic influence in the region. The second challenge is that the port development game complicates the question of sovereignty between de-facto state of Somaliland and the state of Somalia. Somalia's federal government in Mogadishu angry protests Berbera Port deals by UAE and Somaliland as it is presumed as violations of sovereignty of Somalia (Vertin, 2019, p. 4).

The third challenge of the geopolitical dynamics is that it further increases polarization and volatility in the Horn region which affects the peace and security of Ethiopia. Particularly, the Nile Rivalry and military alignment of Egypt and Sudan led to escalation of the tensions with Ethiopia and, considering internal conflict dynamics and border disputes, this has potentials for proxy wars as well as border war between Ethiopia and Sudan. Fourth, the engagement of Gulf States may jeopardize the prevailing religious coexistence in Ethiopia. This is due to the fact that "Some Middle Eastern countries besides having economic interests also have religious motivations" (Mesfin, 2019, p. 4).

The final challenge has to do with maintenance of security and sustainability. The engagement of foreign powers with massive investments in Ethiopia requires stable and safe environment. Moreover, the investments have to be taken in to consideration of economic needs and potentials of future generations. In this regard, ensuring peace and stability in the context of wide range of conflicts on the one hand and maintaining sustainable development which takes note of the future on the other hand have been the challenge for Ethiopia which resulted from geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa.

Conclusion

Horn of Africa has been the major geo-strategic regions in the world despite its reputation as being volatile and conflict-prone area. It has become a center for unprecedented geopolitical rivalry by international and regional powers that aim to exert their influence and control in the region. The contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Horn region has seen the existence of power projection and scramble for military base by extra-regional states, competition for commercial ports, the Nile Rivalry, and regional configuration of states amid political transitions. This geopolitical dynamics has brought both opportunities and challenges for Ethiopia. In terms of opportunity, the new dynamics provides Ethiopia alternative port access, investments in infrastructures, access to foreign hard currency, prospects of enhanced regional integration, and support in building up naval force. On the other hand, the geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa has presented challenges to Ethiopia in terms of alienating neighbors, threatening sovereignty, escalating tensions, jeopardizing religious coexistence, and maintenance of security and sustainability. Therefore, sustaining the gains and addressing the challenges of geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa is vital and should prevail for

maintaining strategic interests of Ethiopia.

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