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A New Global Re-ordering trains its Strategic Trajectories on the Horn of Africa

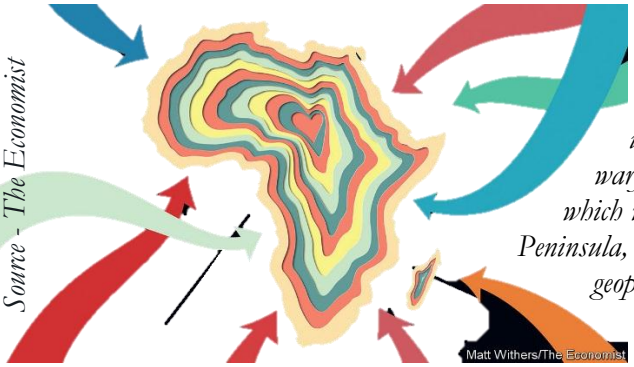
China, US, EU, the Gulf, Non-State actors

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Abstract

The current scramble for the Horn of Africa reminiscent of the of 19th-century colonial Europe. Today, while Chinese foray into the continent is major news for the West, the Horn of Africa has become the target of martial show off by many nations. What is the relevance of the Gulf incursion into the Horn? Why are major powers suddenly interested in the Red Sea arena? Piracy in Somalia has been a threat to international shipping since the second phase of the civil war in Somalia in the early 21st century. Since 2005, many international organisations have expressed concern over the rise in acts of piracy. Piracy impeded the delivery of shipments and increased shipping expenses, costing an estimated $6.6 to $6.9 billion a year in global trade in 2011. The military response to pirate attacks has brought about a rare show of unity by countries that are either openly hostile to each other, or at least wary of cooperation, military or otherwise. On the other hand, Yemen, which was for centuries the centre of civilisation and wealth on the Arabian Peninsula, is in a major conflict. Some speculate that the conflict is a proxy geopolitical war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, the Houthis fighting the government and that have tried a number of non-violent approaches to former governments for years, in an attempt to end discrimination against their community, have now been compelled to resort to violence where the Yemeni government, already under al Qaeda siege, was an easy target". A military intervention was launched by Saudi Arabia in 2015, leading a coalition of nine African and Middle East countries, to influence the outcome of the Yemeni Civil War in favour of the government of President Hadi. China had used the port in Djibouti since February 2015 but negotiated permission for construction of a permanent military base with President Ismail Omar Guelleh in early 2015. The Chinese began construction on the base in early 2016 and completed construction in July 2017. Djibouti is attractive for numerous reasons, including its proximity to key shipping lanes through the Bab al Mandab Strait and the Suez Canal. Additionally, China's new presence in Djibouti alongside major Western powers such as the United States, France, Spain, and Italy indicates its intent of maintaining military capabilities with global reach. Now the Horn has become a strategic arena that may determine who will win the war in Yemen. It will also determine who controls the strategic choke points of Bab al Mandab Strait and the Red Sea at large.



Source - The Economist



Key words: Horn, Africa, Yemen, piracy, GCC, Iran, China, US, EU…

Nowhere is this trial for humanity more acute and the need for engagement more urgent than in the Greater Horn of Africa. The ruinous enormities of conflict, El Niño droughts and floods, climate change impacts are happening every day in front of our eyes. Pictures of mothers with vanishing babies at their desiccated breasts should have been galvanising the world, but it suggests itself, and seems within reach, only to elude and appears readily practicable only to resist realisation.

1. Introduction

1.1. The 'Third Scramble for Africa'

The Economist (Leaders, 7 Mar 2019) underlines the fact that the first great wave of foreign interest in Africa, labelled the "Scramble for Africa," was when 19th-century colonial Europe sliced up the continent and grabbed African communities. During the cold war, the US (braced tyrants the like of Mobutu who claimed to be capitalist) and USSR (backed Marxist dictators) divided Africa into their respective ideological zones - the second "Scramble for Africa." A more benevolent third "Scramble for Africa," is now taking place in foreign direct investment because of Africa's natural resources and its young populace. Governments and businesses from all around the world are rushing to strengthen diplomatic, strategic and commercial ties, generating enormous prospects where Africans, if handled wisely, will be the main winners.

> *The extent of foreign engagement is unprecedented. Start with diplomacy. From 2010 to 2016, more than 320 embassies were opened in Africa, probably the biggest embassy-building boom anywhere, ever. Turkey alone opened 26. Last year India announced it would open 18. Military ties are deepening, too. America and France are lending muscle and technology to the struggle against Jihadism in the Sahel. China is now the biggest arms seller to sub-Saharan Africa and has defence-technology ties with 45 countries. Russia has signed 19 military deals with African states since 2014. Oil-rich Arab states are building bases on the Horn of Africa and hiring African mercenaries. Commercial ties are being upended. As recently as 2006, Africa's three biggest trading partners were America, China and France, in that order. By 2018 it was China first, India second and America third. Over the same period, Africa's trade has more than trebled with Turkey and Indonesia, and more than quadrupled with Russia. Trade with the EU has grown by a more modest 41%. The biggest sources of foreign direct investment are still firms from America, Britain and France, but Chinese ones, including state-backed outfits, are catching up, and investors from India and Singapore are eager to join the fray.*
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> *The stereotype of foreigners in Africa is of neo-colonial exploiters, interested only in the continent's natural resources, not its people, and ready to bribe local bigwigs in shady deals that do nothing for ordinary Africans. The stereotype is sometimes true. Far too many oil and mineral ventures are dirty. Corrupt African leaders, of whom there is still an abundance, can always find foreign enablers to launder the loot. Moreover, contracts with firms from countries that care little for transparency, such as China and Russia, are often murky. Three Russian journalists were murdered last year while investigating a Kremlin-linked mercenary outfit that reportedly protects the president of the war-torn Central African Republic and enables diamond mining there. Understandably, many saw a whiff of old-fashioned imperialism. However, engagement with the outside world has mostly been positive for Africans. Foreigners build ports, sell insurance and bring mobile-phone technology. Chinese factories hum in Ethiopia and Rwanda. Turkish Airlines flies to more than 50 African cities. Greater openness to trade and investment is one reason why GDP per head south of the Sahara is two-fifths higher than it was in 2000. (Sounder macroeconomic policies and fewer wars also helped.) Africans can benefit when foreigners buy everything from textiles to holidays and digital services.*

Dr. Mehari Taddele Maru (2019) in a seminal essay, "The great game in the Horn of Africa" asserts that the Horn of Africa appears to be geared towards a new order set off by global competition over strategic interests by great powers in Africa. In addition to internal political upheavals, the competition is precipitated by a struggle for influence in the region by the US and China. There is also a realignment, taking place by European and Middle Eastern powers who have strategic economic, political and military interests in the region. The US has been a vocal critic of China's incursions in the Horn of Africa, especially in Djibouti, long perceived as an American zone of influence[i].

This lecture is about the current scramble for the Horn of Africa reminiscent of the of 19th-century colonial Europe scramble for Africa that carved out it out to grab its land and communities. The second scramble was during the cold war that divided Africa into US and USSR respective ideological zones. Today, while Chinese foray into the continent is major news for the West, the Horn of Africa has become the target of martial show off by many nations. *What is the relevance of the Gulf incursion into the Horn? Why are major powers suddenly interested in the Red Sea arena*?

2. Statement of challenges

2.1. Secularism & the Sunni-Shia Armageddon

Two key parallel problems plague contemporary Muslim political thought. First, the notion of an Islamic state was highly contentious and was not limited to Islamists. Second, the notion of the secularism was largely rejected or at best was an uncomfortable and vague idea. Hence, Muslim-majority nations will struggle with the role of religion in politics for long (Bokhari, 2018: 1-3)

> *Secular-religious divide in Turkey continues to drive the country's geopolitics. It will continue to do so for the near future. Azerbaijan, a staunchly secular Muslim state that emerged from nearly seven decades of communist rule, a rare crisis took place involving the demolition of a mosque in the country's capital of Baku. Since its emergence as a sovereign state a quarter of a century ago from the rubble of the Soviet Union's collapse, Azerbaijan, a Shiite-majority country, has not experienced much of a challenge from Islamism. That said, the country has its share of Islamist actors – both Shiites and Sunnis (including Salafists). Nevertheless, the issue here was not simply Islamists seeking to leverage circumstances to advance their political goals. Instead, it was about the average Muslim who feels strongly that Islam should have a role in public affairs. For this reason, Muslim-majority nations will ensure that they do not appear as having forsaken religion, despite being secular republics. Usually, this will be achieved by a key article in the constitution stating something to the effect that the legal system shall not contravene the Quran and the practice of the Prophet Muhammad. These states also will have at least one ministry dealing with religious affairs and an official top cleric. As was evident from each of these countries' domestic politics, these measures are not enough to satisfy a key segment of their citizenry. It should be noted that the notion of an Islamic state was a modern one* (Ibid).
>
> *It emerged in response to the rise of the current international architecture based on the secular nation-state. The various regimes that presided over the historical caliphate and the numerous emirates and sultanates that existed in the pre-modern age did not refer to themselves as Islamic states. They did not need to because no secular international order existed from which they could distinguish themselves. What was noteworthy was that the contemporary idea of an Islamic state was ahistorical in that a religious class did not preside over the caliphate. The caliphs since at least the rise of the Umayyads in 661 were what we would today call secular rulers whose power was a function of military might. They incorporated religion into their political structures, but they were quintessential warlords. Managing religion was one aspect of these medieval polities. In contrast, the Islamists of today seek a return to what never was. In cases where different Islamists have come to power, they have had to deal with the everyday issues of governance, in which religion plays a minor role. Despite the horrors committed by the Islamic State regime based in Syria and Iraq, the idea of an Islamic state continues to captivate the minds of many Muslims. A key reason for this was that the popular viewfinder sees the alternative, a secular state, as a contradiction of Islam* (Ibid).

Secularism has become a misnomer among Muslims in that it was understood as irreligiosity instead of religious neutrality. Another issue was that secularism as an ideology emerged from the Judeo-Christian heritage of the West, which further renders it undesirable for most Muslims. This situation has led to the idea that Muslims are resistant to secularism – as argued by Brookings Institution senior fellow Shadi Hamid in his recent book *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam Is Reshaping the World.* However, this was an argument that at the least does not fully explore the possibility that Muslim civilisation could carve its own path to modernity and may find a way beyond politics heavily steeped in religion.

> *Secularism as it was known today was identified as a product of Western culture. That was just one form of secularism. What was truly uniquely Western was the Renaissance-Reformation-Enlightenment trajectory, which other cultures cannot be expected to reproduce. That said, the process of reinterpretation of medieval religious texts in keeping with different spatial and temporal settings was very much part of the Islamic ethos and known as "ijtihad." In other words, the Muslim world was likely to find its way out of religious wars. Conventional wisdom views Sharia law as a function of obligatory and forbidden practices; Islamic jurisprudence, on the other hand, has long viewed the largest category of human actions as the permissible, which was subject to human preferences. This idea has the potential to serve as the basis for a form of secularism that was rooted in the Islamic cultural ethos. In essence, over the long term, a Muslim secularism, which calls for polities that remain neutral in the intra-Muslim sectarian contentions, as well as those with other religious traditions, has*

the potential to emerge, especially as the exhaustion of war sets in. In the here and now, though, the battle over what constitutes an Islamic state and opposition to secularism will remain the centre of gravity (Ibid).

2.2. The Yemen Onslaught

Yemen was for centuries the centre of civilisation and wealth on the Arabian Peninsula. The Romans referred to the area as Arabia Felix, or Happy Arabia. Its once fertile plains were irrigated with the aid of the great Ma'rib Dam built around 700 B.C. by the biblical Sheba and chronicles speak of the land as Frankincense country, whose cities brimmed with all sorts of goods and provided the major link between the Mediterranean and the fabled Indian ports. Nevertheless, there are views that some inaccurately speculate that the conflict in Yemen is mostly the result of a proxy geopolitical war between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the broader Middle East. However, Iran's role and influence in the conflict have been greatly exaggerated. The Houthis have been around for some time, and to their credit, they tried a number of non-violent approaches to former governments for years, in an attempt to end discrimination against their community.

Eventually they were compelled to resort to violence where the Yemeni government, already under al Qaeda siege, was an easy target". A military intervention was launched by Saudi Arabia in 2015, leading a coalition of nine African and Middle East countries, to influence the outcome of the Yemeni Civil War in favour of the government of President Hadi. Today, a military alliance battling Houthi rebels negotiated secret deals and recruited al-Qaeda fighters. There is now a clear and present danger of an imminent and great big famine and cholera engulfing the country.

Jamal Khashoggi's murder could have major repercussions for Saudi Arabia's crown prince, MbS and for the entire kingdom (Wright, 2018). *A solution in Yemen's two and-a-half year-old civil war will likely come through military rather than political means, the country's Saudi-backed president said, blaming the Iran-backed Al Houthis of obstructing chances of peace, but Egypt was humiliated and bankrupted in the sixties in its Yemen intervention. Hence, others say it is necessary to initiate an immediate ceasefire with the help of the international community, and start the peace negotiations in a multilateral context in order to establish an inclusive government in the war-torn country. On the other side, the Houthis argue that a negotiated settlement should begin with the formation of a national reconciliation government that includes the Houthis and those aligned with Hadi that would oversee military disengagement and the rebuilding of a single national military under its command. Peace would begin with a political settlement and then proceed to military disengagement. After the Saudi-led coalition declared the entire Saada Governorate a military target, the UN and Human Rights Watch said that air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition on Saada city in Yemen were in breach of international law. On 1 July 2015, UN declared a level-three emergency – the highest UN emergency level – for a period of six months. Yemen is now a tribute to a 21st century catastrophe of international law, public policy and global governance institutions. To reduce this action to some sadistic aim is too simplistic; there is a sense of frustration in the Gulf and the West seems to be tending to its vexation with oxygen that is fuelling the inferno. It is morally wrong, but morality is an alien concept in Arab polity and indeed, in any of the systems that claim the moral high ground to change it.*

2.3. Anti-piracy Engagements

Piracy in Somalia has been a threat to international shipping since the second phase of the civil war in Somalia in the early 21st century. Since 2005, many international organisations have expressed concern over the rise in acts of piracy. Piracy impeded the delivery of shipments and increased shipping expenses, costing an estimated $6.6 to $6.9 billion a year in global trade in 2011 according to *Oceans beyond Piracy* (OBP)[ii]. Since 2013, piracy attacks have reduced in the region due mostly to patrolling by the navies of countries across the world, especially India, China and EU Navfor (a joint operation of numerous European navies) (Wikipedia, 2019).

The military response to pirate attacks has brought about a rare show of unity by countries that are either openly hostile to each other, or at least wary of cooperation, military or otherwise. It is the first time since World War II that all five permanent members of the UN Security Council have deployed forces on the same side. Currently there are three international naval task forces in the region, with numerous national vessels and task forces entering and leaving the region, engaging in counter-piracy operations for various lengths of time. The three

international task forces, which compose the bulk of counter-piracy operations, are Combined Task Force 150 (whose overarching mission is Operation Enduring Freedom), Combined Task Force 151 (which was set up in 2009 specifically to run counter-piracy operations) and the EU naval task force operating under Operation Atalanta. All counter-piracy operations are coordinated through a monthly planning conference called Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE). Originally having representatives only from NATO, the EU, and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) HQ in Bahrain, it now regularly attracts representatives from over 20 countries. From 2014 onwards, a larger presence of Indian and Chinese navy ships led to a marked reduction of piracy attacks, as they embarked on several joint efforts in rescuing hijacked ships. This includes to famous rescue of the hijacked bulk carrier OS 35 between the coasts of Somalia and Yemen in 2017. As part of the international effort, Europe, India and China have played a significant role in combating piracy off the coast of the Horn of Africa.[iii]

2.4. Al Shabaab & Somalia

"Many today question whether any government has any hope of governing Somalia. The international community has trained some 10,000 Somali soldiers and have armed them to defeat *al-Shabaab*. Thousands have already deserted, taking their new guns with them. Indeed, Somalia's Western-backed army is a significant source of *al-Shabaab's* weapons and ammunition, according to the *UN Monitoring Group* (Ibid). A strategy of *constructive disengagement* in which the international community would extricate itself from Somali politics, but continue to provide development and humanitarian aid and conduct the occasional Special Forces raid would probably be enough to pull the rug out from under *al-Shabaab*.

This group, led mostly by foreign extremists, has recruited thousands of Somali children into its militias. It uses them to impose a foreign ideology brutally on the religiously moderate Somali people. The only way al Shabaab can flourish is to hold itself up as an alternative to the government and the peacekeepers. If the Somali public did not have to face this grim choice, the thousands of clan and business militiamen would eventually put up a fight against Shabaab's repressive religious edicts and taxes. Somalia's sheer un-governability is both its curse and its blessing. Without a battle against peacekeepers to unite it, Shabaab would likely splinter into nationalist factions. Why has the international community allowed this violent farce to continue?: Distracted by the unwarranted concern that withdrawing the soldiers would allow al Qaeda to take control of Somalia, the West argues that it cannot afford to step back. On the contrary, it cannot afford to do anything else. To stabilise Somalia truly by force would require 100,000 troops. Putting another few thousand on the ground — as the African Union has announced it will do — would only increase the violence. It could also necessitate sending soldiers from Ethiopia or other bordering states, bolstering al-Shabaab's best argument for popular support. Because plans to send more soldiers to Somalia cannot succeed without the West's support. It is essential that it resist the temptation to allow history to repeat itself. Instead, the West should negotiate with the moderate elements within al-Shabaab. It is not a monolithic movement, after all. Extremists from Kenya, Afghanistan, Somaliland and elsewhere have spoken publicly for the group. However, al-Shabaab also includes many of the same Somali religious leaders who controlled the Union of Islamic Courts in 2006. Some of these leaders are extremists, and the idea of talking with them is unappetising. Nevertheless, we can and should negotiate with them directly. Such an effort would be supported by most Somalis, who are desperate to be rid of the foreign extremists. It is the best alternative to escalating the violence and strengthen al-Shabaab (Bruton, 2010).

Instability in Ethiopia will undermine US efforts to neutralise al Shabaab, al Qaeda's Somalia-based affiliate, and reverberate across the region. Persistent ethnic violence would draw Ethiopia's focus inward, away from regional peacekeeping commitments. An internal challenge from anti-Abiy elements in the security establishment would have a similar effect. US operations alongside Somali and African Union peacekeeping forces have disrupted al Shabaab in central Somalia and improved security in Mogadishu, but they have not yet broken al Shabaab's hold on large areas of southern Somalia. These yet-to-be-secured gains will evaporate if Ethiopia, Kenya, or Uganda—the third of which faces an escalating political crisis—falters and redeploys troops home. Ethiopia withdrew forces from Somalia due to domestic unrest in 2016, allowing al Shabaab to reoccupy parts of central Somalia. Unrest in Ethiopia also limits its capacity for critical diplomatic engagements, such as the South Sudanese peace talks that it facilitates or negotiations with Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The GERD issue will spawn its own regional conflict if the Nile River states

cannot reach an agreement. The problem of the Salafi-jihadi movement, which includes al Qaeda and ISIS, must be considered alongside issues of human rights and democracy, as they are linked. Instability in Ethiopia creates an opportunity for the Salafi-jihadi movement to expand. Ethiopia's conflicts typically divide along ethnic lines rather than confessional or sectarian ones, and the country has prevented significant Salafi-jihadi recruitment and attacks thus far. Al Qaeda has a strategy of co-opting ethnic fighting and other local conflicts. It is strengthening with this strategy in West Africa and elsewhere (Estelle, 2018).

3. The Power Stampede for the Horn of Africa

The power stampede for the Horn of Africa is deepening. A sharp uptick in the expansion of foreign militaries in the Horn of Africa accompanied the growth of economic competition in the region in 2017. China, Turkey, and the UAE have opened military bases throughout the area in the past two years. The region is strategically important to these states for various reasons: securing shipping routes in the *Bab al Mandab Strait*, proximity to the ongoing conflict in Yemen, and the desire to array forces in the region alongside rivals including the US (Kantack, 2018).

- China

China has concentrated its military presence in Djibouti near American and other Western forces. China opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti's Gulf of Tadjoura on August 1, 2017 (Calamur, 2017; VOA, 2017 & Reuters, 2017)

China had used the port in Djibouti since February 2015 but negotiated permission for construction of a permanent military base with President Ismail Omar Guelleh in early 2015 (Al Jazeera, 2015). *The Chinese began construction on the base in early 2016 and completed construction in July 2017. Djibouti is attractive for numerous reasons, including its proximity to key shipping lanes through the Bab al Mandab Strait and the Suez Canal. Additionally, China's new presence in Djibouti alongside major Western powers such as the United States, France, Spain, and Italy indicates its intent of maintaining military capabilities with global reach. The current agreement ensures China's right to maintain up to 10,000 soldiers in Djibouti through 2025* (Al Jazeera, 2017). *Approximately 1,000 personnel currently staff the base* (Lin & Singer, 2017). *China has previously invested heavily in Djiboutian infrastructure, funding upgrades to ports and airports and financing 70% of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway (Al Jazeera, 2016). China claims that the base will be used to support blue-helmeted peacekeepers and humanitarian operations in Africa, as well as anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden. China will also likely use the base to protect its economic interests in the region and ensure safe shipping between East Africa and China* (Blanchard, 2017). *China has approximately 2,200 personnel deployed in Africa and 500 others in the Middle East* (UN, 2017). *China claims to have escorted more than 6,000 ships through the Gulf of Aden* (Jacobs, 2017)

- The Gulf

The competition between the UAE and Turkey in the Horn of Africa has yielded mixed results in Somalia. The Somali Federal Government (SFG) has received significant counterterrorism training support from both nations, as well as humanitarian aid from Turkey. *The competition has strained relations between the SFG and Somalia's semi-autonomous regions, however. Somali President Mohammed Abdullahi Farmajo rejected the legitimacy of a 30-year Emirati contract on the port of Berbera in Somaliland, for example* (Prunier, 2017 & Radio Dalsan, 2017). *The 2017 crisis between Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE exacerbated tensions between Somaliland and President Farmajo after the semi-autonomous government of Somaliland supported the boycott of Qatar, while the SFG remained neutral in the conflict* (The National 2017 & Schwikowski, 2017). *Emirati operations in Yemen relied originally on basing in Djibouti. The UAE invested heavily in Eritrea beginning in mid-2015* (The National, 2017). *The Emirati military now operates from the Assab base in Eritrea and smaller outposts on the Yemeni islands of Socotra and Perim. The UAE is also expanding its presence into Somaliland at the port of Berbera* (Mustafa, 2017).

In 2008, Djibouti agreed to lease the Doraleh Container Port to Dubai-based Company DP World. The UAE and Saudi Arabia leased a base in the Haramous district of Djibouti City in April 2015 to support operations during the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. *On April 28, 2015, the UAE and Djibouti broke diplomatic relations due to a conflict between Emirati officials and the chief of Djibouti's Air Force over the lease and after an Emirati plane landed at Djibouti's Ambouli International Airport without*

authorisation (The Economist, 2017). Longstanding strained relations exacerbated tensions between the two countries after Djibouti prematurely rescinded a 20-year agreement with Dubai's DP World to run the Doraleh Container Terminal in 2014 (Fitch, 2014). Djibouti ordered the eviction of UAE and Saudi troops from the country the following day.

On April 29, 2015, as Djibouti evicted Emirati troops, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz met with Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki to finalise a 30-year agreement to base Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) operations in Yemen out of Eritrea (Mello and Knights, 2016). The UAE conducted a heavy military build-up at the Assab base in Eritrea in May-July 2015. The UAE also undertook significant infrastructure developments at Assab, including the addition of new deep-water port facilities next to the airfield, the construction of a pier, the expansion of the airfield's tarmac space and air traffic control and the rerouting of major highways and security perimeters around the base.

- **The UAE launched operations from Assab to retake Aden**

Emirati forces have also used the Assab base to train and equip thousands of Yemeni counterterrorism forces (Mello and Knights, 2016). The UAE opened a military training center in Mogadishu in May 2015 (The National, 2015). UAE Special Forces fund and operate the base with the goal of training a brigade of Somali National Army soldiers to combat al Shabaab (Khaleej Times, 2015). The facility and training program remain operational (EBL News, 2017).

The UAE signed a 30-year lease on the Port of Berbera in Somaliland in February 2017. The base remains under construction, but Emirati ships have docked at the port. Emirati forces are using it to support operations in Yemen (Osman, 2017). The Yemeni al Houthi movement threatened to strike the Berbera port with ballistic missiles in December 2017 (All Africa, 2017). The UAE has funded police and intelligence operations in Puntland and Somaliland (Kantack, 2018). The UAE also took over the management and development of the Boosaaso port in the semi-autonomous Puntland state in October 2017 (Garowe Online, 2017). Somali President Farmajo called for the cancellation of the Berbera contract in February 2017 (Goobjoog, 2017; Goth, 2018 & Kantack, 2017).

- **Socotra**

The UAE confirmed the presence of its military forces on the Yemeni island of Socotra in May 2017 (The New Arab, 2017). President Hadi reportedly leased the islands of Socotra and nearby Perim and Abd al Kuri (part of the Socotra archipelago) to the UAE for 99 years before abdicating his position in 2014 (Press TV, 2016). The UAE does not appear to be using Socotra to support operations in Yemen. It has only trained soldiers on the island thus far (Associated Press, 2017). The UAE also is reportedly building an airstrip and related support facilities on Perim Island to support its operations in southern Yemen (Gambrell, 2017 & Seche, 2017). The UAE has not yet established a presence Abd al Kuri.

- **Turkey & Sudan**

Turkey opened its largest overseas military base in Mogadishu on September 30, 2017 (Africa News, 2017). The Turkish military began construction on the base in 2015. Turkey has announced its intention to use the base to train 10,000 Somali soldiers. The base reportedly has the capacity to train 1,500 personnel at a time (Al Jazeera, 2017). Turkey claims that it intends to maintain only 200 troops at the base, but a Turkish official clarified that the opening of the base aligns with Turkey's prioritisation of weapons sales to new markets (Hussein & Coskun, 2017 & Middle East Monitor, 2017). Turkey has previously cultivated a strong relationship with Somalia through a combination of direct investment and humanitarian aid. Turkey's only other operational foreign military base is in Qatar, which houses approximately 5,000 Turkish troops (Bora, 2017).

Sudan signed an agreement on December 26, 2017 to transfer responsibility for Suakin Island in the Red Sea to Turkey. (Al Jazeera, 2018). Turkey has stated its intent to build a naval dock on the island to support both military and commercial vessels, stating that the agreement "could result in any kind of military cooperation." (Kucukgocmen and Abdelaziz, 2017). The agreement

prompted Egypt to deploy hundreds of troops, additional weapons, and military transport vehicles to the *Sawa* military base in Eritrea (Al Jazeera, 2018 & Arab 21, 2018). Sudan responded by deploying thousands of troops to the border region of Kassala. Ethiopia similarly sent additional troops to the Eritrean border (Adam, 2018). *The Suakin Island agreement followed decades of disagreement between Sudan and Egypt over the Halaib Triangle border region* (Middle East Monitor, 2018)

- The rush to control the Red Sea

The Red Sea maritime domain is a preeminent theatre of this great power struggle and the rivalry of regional players include the European Union, Turkey, GCC countries, Israel and Iran. The US policy shift is compounded by other factors: the European migration crisis and its effort to stem migration from the countries of origin; the Yemeni proxy war between UAE-led bloc and Iran; and the competition within the GCC — all of which are in play. There are examples of the consequences of the change of US National Security priority. Djibouti, located in the vicinity of Somalia and Eritrea, has allowed China to build a military base on its territory. As AFRICOM Commanders did before, and Ambassador Bolton pointed out, China's military presence could threaten the Red Sea route (Maru, 2019).

> *Furthermore, if China's plan to win a tender for control of a key port in Djibouti succeeds, supply routes to the US base and mobility of US Navy ships would be under China's control. As a consequence, US officials have called for the establishment of a US military camp in Eritrea as an alternate or in addition to the one in Djibouti. In an effort 'to bring Eritrea in from the cold', the Department of State successfully mobilised various actors, including the anti-Qatar GCC countries led by the UAE and the evangelicals with the full support of some senators. UAE is leading the competition between Middle Eastern countries to control the Red Sea maritime domain and ports. So far, the UAE has been able to secure contracts with Assab (Eritrea), Berbera (Somaliland), and Aden (Yemen). They have established a military base in Eritrea with the potential to be used by Egyptian forces. Ethiopia strongly opposed the move by the UAE until its change of government in April 2018. Eritrea is now America's new ally in the Red Sea. It has signed a peace agreement with Ethiopia, and a cooperation agreement with Somalia.*
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> *The competition between Middle Eastern countries and the resulting rift within the GCC has to be seen in light of President Barack Obama's doctrine of 'leading from behind' that left the Middle East to fend for their own peace and security challenges. The strategy created a leadership vacuum, and to fill this vacuum, a power struggle emerged between the GCC countries. It led to the Yemeni war and a rift within the GCC. The theories about the rift within the GCC are all too familiar. For the UAE-bloc, Qatar is reportedly a state sponsor of terrorism and thus needs to be reprimanded and if necessary, its leadership toppled. Suffocating the Horn of Africa. During the GCC rift, Djibouti, Eritrea and Somaliland announced their unequivocal support for the Saudi-camp against Qatar right off the bat. Cordial relations between Eritrea and Qatar turned sour. The withdrawal of Qatar's observers from the Djibouti-Eritrea border then became inevitable. Facing internal upheaval and change, partly due to US support to the UAE-bloc, some countries that took a neutral stance have now joined the UAE camp. Inconsistent with its previous position of neutrality, Ethiopia seems to have changed its neutral stance in support of the UAE-bloc.*

4. The Horn Bundles Up

4.1. The Ordeal of IGAD

The potential for Ethiopia to destabilise persists. It faces a rapid political transition and ethnic conflict across multiple regions, both of which challenge its stability. The new PM Abiy has pushed through a raft of reforms and raised hopes of a new era of respect for human rights in Ethiopia. Ethnic violence persists, however, much of it occurring on the border between Abiy's home region of Oromia and the Somali Region inhabited by ethnic Somalis (Estelle, 2018).

> *Sustained conflict risks mobilising Ethiopia's Somali population, potentially creating a new opportunity for al Shabaab to recruit or even expand its attacks into Ethiopia. The Abiy government, which has continued mass arrests and internet blackouts even while making progress on other human rights issues, will exacerbate rather than solve this complex problem if it fails to manage it effectively. Abiy's government also faces potentially destabilising challenges from members of the former security establishment, which may be stoking the ethnic*

conflict in the Somali Region. Long-time political elites similarly retain the power to derail core economic and political reforms that are required for a true democratic transition in Ethiopia.[6] Abiy is also likely to lose support from his own base if he fails to contain rising ethnic tensions or mitigate the high expectations placed on him as Ethiopia's first Oromo head of state.

The rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea is another positive development that nonetheless raises threats to US interests. However, geopolitical competition is intensifying in the Horn of Africa, layering proxy conflicts onto existing fault lines and increasing the potential for instability even while generating some positive effects. The UAE's engagement is part of a larger strategic competition among Middle Eastern states. Power plays among the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey have caused political turmoil in Somalia. These have weakened the Somali Federal Government (SFG) on which the US strategy to counter al Shabaab relies. The militarisation of the Horn and the southern Red Sea region has already affected commercial trade and threatens freedom of navigation as more states establish competing military positions. Russia and China are also expanding their influence in the Horn of Africa, and the Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement will likely accelerate this trend[v]. The US must begin to shape its approach to Ethiopia by using all available tools to help it demilitarise his response to ethnic violence, resolve internal disputes, and conduct necessary structural reforms peacefully and acceptably to all sides. The US must ensure that it remains the sole guarantor of its interests in the region by not relying on the UAE or any other outside power to manage these interests. Ethiopia is a critical country in an increasingly important region. The US must recognise the dangers of rapidly changing domestic and regional dynamics in the Horn of Africa to prepare for worst-case scenarios, even as we regard new developments with optimism.

4.2. Ethiopia, Eritrea &Somalia

Leaders of Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea who have never come face to face to build peace in the Horn have now been invited by the charismatic Premier, Abiy. Now that the Horn of Africa nations have pledged to make peace, this paper builds the case for building a peace constituency for in the Greater Horn of Africa nations that share the same history. Regional integration involves hard infrastructure - large physical networks necessary for the functioning of modern industrial nations and soft infrastructure refers to all the institutions, which are required to maintain the economic, health, and cultural and social standards of a sub-region. Recently, people of the Horn of Africa, have been engaged in debates about new bold ideas of reform presented by the new populist, energetic leader of Ethiopia Abiy who has embarked on a wide-ranging transformative reform in Ethiopia and a regional integration initiative in the Horn of Africa region.

Nonetheless, questions arise. Which model of confederation, timing, actors, governing rules and institutions will be established? Will the populations of the three states have a say in this? Is the proposed confederacy owned and led by the three countries or are there other actors who move the levers of power behind the scenes? The paper recommends the development of a code of practice. The guiding principle of the code is that concrete processes need to be established to enable politics to be transparent, accountable, predictable and exercise a level of excellence transcending individual motives and boundaries. It also recommends Alternative conflict management approaches derive from several basic premises about the nature of conflict, change and power. While most Horn of Africa conflicts are state driven, the Somalia case presents itself for ACM where the author argues for creating avenues for speaking to *al Shabaab* as potential partners in peace.

5. Discussion

Africans can do more to increase their share of the benefits. First, voters and activists can insist on transparency. It is heartening that South Africa is investigating the allegedly crooked deals struck under the previous president, Jacob Zuma, but alarming that even worse behaviour in the Democratic Republic of Congo has gone unprobed, and that the terms of Chinese loans to some dangerously indebted African governments are secret. To be sure that a public deal is good for ordinary folk as well as big men, voters have to know what is in it. Journalists, such as the *Kenyans who exposed scandals over a Chinese railway project,* have a big role to play (The Economist, 2019)

Africa's leaders need to think more strategically. Africa may be nearly as populous as China, but it comprises 54 countries, not one. African governments could strike better deals if they showed more unity. No one expects a heterogeneous continent that includes both anarchic battle zones and prosperous democracies to be as integrated as Europe. However, Africa can surely do better negotiating as a union than letting China negotiate with each country individually, behind closed doors. The power imbalance between, say, China and Uganda is huge. It could be reduced somewhat with a free-trade area or if African regional blocs clubbed together. After all, the benefits of infrastructure projects spill across borders. African leaders do not have to choose sides, as they did during the cold war. They can do business with Western democracies and also with China and Russia—and anyone else with something to offer. Because they have more choice now than ever before, Africans should be able to drive harder bargains. Moreover, outsiders should not see this as a zero-sum contest (as the Trump administration, when it pays attention to Africa, apparently does). If China builds a bridge in Ghana, an American car can drive over it. If a British firm invests in a mobile-data network in Kenya, a Kenyan entrepreneur can use it to set up a cross-border startup. Africans should take what some of their new friends tell them with a pinch of salt. China argues that democracy is a Western idea; development requires a firm hand. This message no doubt appeals to African strongmen, but it is bunk". As politics grows more competitive, voters' clout will grow. Moreover, they will be able to insist on a form of globalisation that works for Africans and foreigners alike.

The Ethiopian PM Abiy has thrown a blowlamp into the heart of Horn of Africa society and polity, nerve-wracking the terms of engagement of martial titans and thrown the centre of gravity of the Red Sea arena of war into unprecedented peace trajectory. The way he deconstructed the power monsters of the Horn region is purely ontological. This strategy of conjectural rise of political liberalisation in a rough neighbourhood of the Horn is going to be a seminal lesson in international relations and in political science for a long time to come. To reduce this action to some power mongering aim on behalf of the PM, as constructed by the supermen of the Horn, is too simplistic. There was a sense of aggravation among the citizens of the Horn that have not seen peace in decades and he seems to be tending to this vexation with gales that are fuelling the inferno of political transformation. (Costantinos, 2018).

As a system-wide input to progress and excellence, states must clearly demonstrate their professionalism; with clear testament of commitment to excellence, prudence in their modes of communication, transparency in their operational relationships, accountability to all stakeholders and predictability of their actions. In connection with this, 'politicians' in the Horn must respect established rules codified in the national legal system. They must demonstrate their commitment to empowerment, taking trouble to mention some of the areas in which their intended work would enhance business and national development; and endeavour to promote participation and, as much as efficiently, possible must establish a democratic process for in-house decision-making on the programmes they lead. They must actively support and mobilise all collaborative efforts possible for the establishment of acceptable standards of systems in fledgling business sector and popular organisations.

As a first step in promoting self-assertion and upholding their own development vision and objectives, every politician in the Horn must decide on a number of values related to honesty, public welfare, professionalism, which must be upheld in any partnership. Acceptance and respect of such principles by partners must be regarded as the starting point of negotiations for appointments. In their requirements of technical assistance or other input of a specialised nature, nations should prioritise the use of locally available expert resources. At all times, they should also, seek local mediation channels for inter-organisational or personality conflicts arising in the course of their work. They must totally refrain from disseminating rumours or misinformation capable of bringing disrepute and disrespect to the Horn's politics. They must work to attain increased institutional efficiency and clarity in designing, managing and determining the course of their operations in order to safeguard nations. In particular, 'politicians' in the Horn must demonstrate a practical commitment to prudence, modesty and honesty in all transactions, both institutionally and individually.

There are costs to be paid but as is usual with such change, it enters politics and society in relatively abstract and plain form, yet pundits expect it to land itself to the immediate and vital local polity's socio-political experience. It suggests itself, and seems within reach, only to elude and appears readily practicable only to resist realisation.

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[i] *In a recent policy briefing at the Heritage Foundation, US National Security Advisor John Bolton said, "Soon, Djibouti may hand over control of the Doraleh Container Terminal, a strategically located shipping port on the Red Sea, to Chinese state-owned enterprises. Should this occur, the balance of power in the Horn of Africa —astride major arteries of maritime trade between Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia — would shift in favour of China. And, our US military personnel at Camp Lemonnier, could face even further challenges in their efforts to protect the American people." thwarting Chinese and Russian influence is the anchor of US Africa policy*

[ii] According to the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), a veritable industry of profiteers also arose around the piracy. Insurance companies significantly increased their profits from piracy, hiking premiums.

[iii] The European Union under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) launched EU NAVFOR Somalia – Operation Atalanta (Resolutions 1814 (2008), 1816 (2008), 1838 (2008) and 1846 (2008) of UNSC).

[iv] *Eritrea, emerging from isolation, will seek to establish strategic partnerships with states that will not balk at its authoritarianism[iv]. Somaliland, which is rumoured to be preparing to host a Russian base, will likely seek greater support as Eritrea's opening threatens to divert revenues from Ethiopian goods passing through its ports. Djibouti faces the same challenge. Diplomatic efforts have assuaged Djibouti's initial fears. The threat of isolation remains, however, and will likely drive Djibouti toward closer ties with China, which established its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017. The rift between the Gulf States has also created power vacuums that China will attempt to fill. In supporting Ethiopia, we must recognize that the redress of legitimate grievances and protection of human rights yield long-term security dividends. Investment in good governance and security prevents groups like al Shabaab from co-opting local grievances to their benefit. The US must weigh the value of outsourcing foreign policy objectives to partners against the potential adverse effects of those partners' involvement.*

[v] *A study by Takaaki Masaki of the World Bank and Nicolas van de Walle of Cornell University found that African countries grow faster if they are more democratic. The good news is that, as education improves and Africans move rapidly to the cities, they are growing more critical of their rulers, and less frightened to say so. In 1997, 70% of African ruling parties won more than 60% of the vote, partly by getting rural chiefs to cow villagers into backing them. By 2015 only 50% did.*