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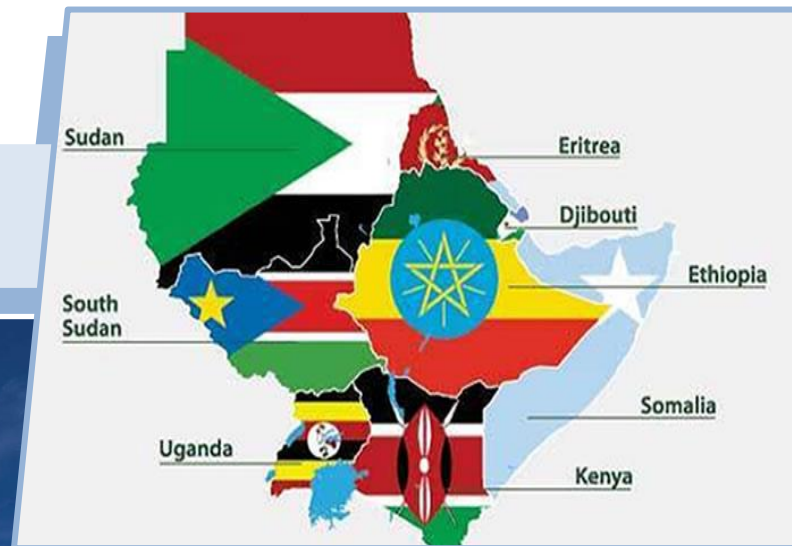
NATO STRATEGIC DIRECTION SOUTH



INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND
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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

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Geopolitical Dynamics in the Horn of Africa and Mechanisms for Collaboration between NATO and IGAD Countries



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management in Ethiopia, counter insurgency and counter financing of terrorism in the Horn of Africa. Dr. Mesfin has over 12 years of executive level experience at the federal government of Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

This paper details the main findings of a study conducted during a two-week Joint Production Workshop between IPSS and the HUB carried out for the first week in NSD-S Hub facilities in Naples and for the second week in Addis Ababa.

The Horn of Africa is generally said to comprise the states of Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea. However, South Sudan and the Sudan are also directly affected by the Horn’s politico-economic factors. The security situation in this sub-region is highly complex due to several socio-economic, political and geo-political factors which range from extreme poverty to maritime insecurity. The sub-region is also rich in natural resources including potash and diamonds, and a significant portion of the world’s crude oil passes through the Aden-Suez canal route, making the Horn of Africa one of the world’s most critical regions in terms of security.

International relationships between the countries in the Horn of Africa have been significantly influenced by the international and regional power relationships over the last two decades. At the end of the 20th century the newly established State of Eritrea and Ethiopia, whose government was led by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), attempted to create stability in the region. However, the war that broke out between these two countries (1998-2008) and the expansion of terrorist groups and piracy in the region brought about new security threats which made the sub-region volatile and susceptible to the influence of international and regional powers.

In total 282 million people live in the Horn of Africa: Sudan – 44m; Eritrea – 4m; Djibouti – 1m; Somalia – 12m; Ethiopia – 113m; Kenya – 52m; South Sudan – 11 m, and Uganda – 45m.

Therefore, the population of the Horn of Africa accounts for approximately a third of the entire African population. The rapidly increasing population in the Horn of Africa (growth rate of approx. 3% per annum, compared to the continental growth rate of 2.3% p.a.) puts great strain on health and education services and employment figures, and is creating huge challenges for a sustainable economic growth.

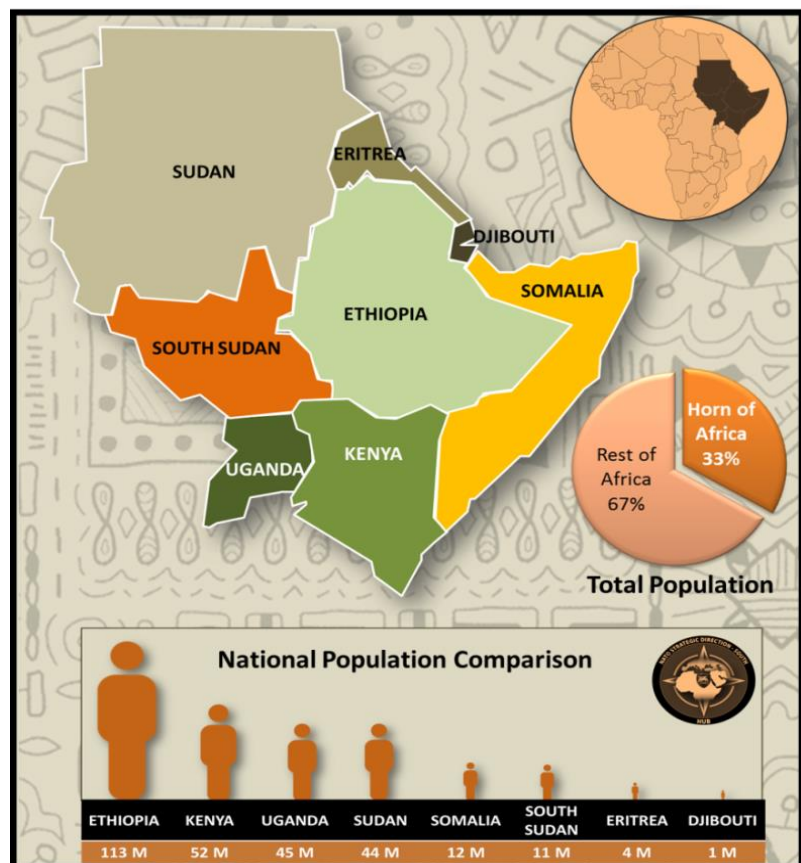


Fig. 1 – Population figures for Africa

1. PEACE AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

In this extremely complicated African region, most of the challenges are communal, including river and water management, grazing land rights (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Kenya), poverty, authoritarian rule and weak civil society organizations. The main threats are violent extremism motivated by extreme religious beliefs, unemployment and marginalization as promoters of violent extremism and foreign terrorist networks, and maritime insecurity (Bab al Mandab; piracy/terrorist networks) all of which have led to increased intervention by regional and international powers.

The Horn is one of the regions in the world most affected by conflict. This has a direct impact on population, thus the sub-region has the highest percentage of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP). Among the 12.6 million IDP in Africa in 2016, 8.6 million were from East Africa. By the end of 2016, more than a quarter of South Sudan's population was internally displaced due to intra-state conflict.

Poverty is a major problem in the Horn of Africa especially as it also fuels recruitment by terrorist groups. Somalia has become a center of home-grown terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab. It has well-established networks with Al Qaida and terrorist groups in Yemen. There is a spread of Yemen-based militants and arms, along with financial flows into Somalia. Up to one million refugees from Somalia are based in Yemen. There are parallel economic structures in the country which have facilitated regional trade in arms and the smuggling of people and fuel.

2. INTERESTS OF EXTERNAL POWERS

As mentioned before, the Horn of Africa is currently one of the competition areas in which many global powers compete to exploit resources, maintain their influence and guarantee trade routes, particularly because it is next to one of the most important shipping corridors in the world (the Bab al Mandab Strait) and to the oil rich Arabian Peninsula and South Sudan.

Some Middle Eastern countries besides having economic interests also have religious motivations.

The Blue Economy, including the development of trade corridors, is important for the Gulf States, so Dubai World is a relevant player in the Horn of Africa. Dubai World is the Holding of Dubai, founded by Emir Muhammad bin Rashid al Maktum in 2006. It covers domestic and foreign investments of the Emirate of Dubai. Soon after its foundation it became prominent in the Horn of Africa. Among its activities were numerous investments, especially in Djibouti and its harbor.

Finally, the Gulf States try to limit Iran's influence, including confronting Iran's intervention in the Civil War in Yemen from the western side.

Iran aims to compete with Saudi Arabia through private activities (FDI) by investing in industrial parks in Ethiopia and other East African countries. Networking with Lebanese Shia communities across Africa is relevant. The diamond trade of African Lebanese communities plays a role in financing Hizb-Allah, and probably Houthi rebels.

In the Sudan, South-Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia and Ethiopia, China exploits natural resources¹ such as crude oil and other raw materials (e.g. diamonds, lithium and potash) through Chinese mining companies (fig. 2). It aims to connect African Hubs by way of the New Silk Road to mainland China (Lusaka-Dar es Salam

¹ China's exploitation of African resources extends well beyond the Horn of Africa, reaching as far south as Zimbabwe.

road and DRC-Djibouti/Kenya and Ethiopia roads). At the same time it is also becoming more involved in peacekeeping missions and other humanitarian activities.

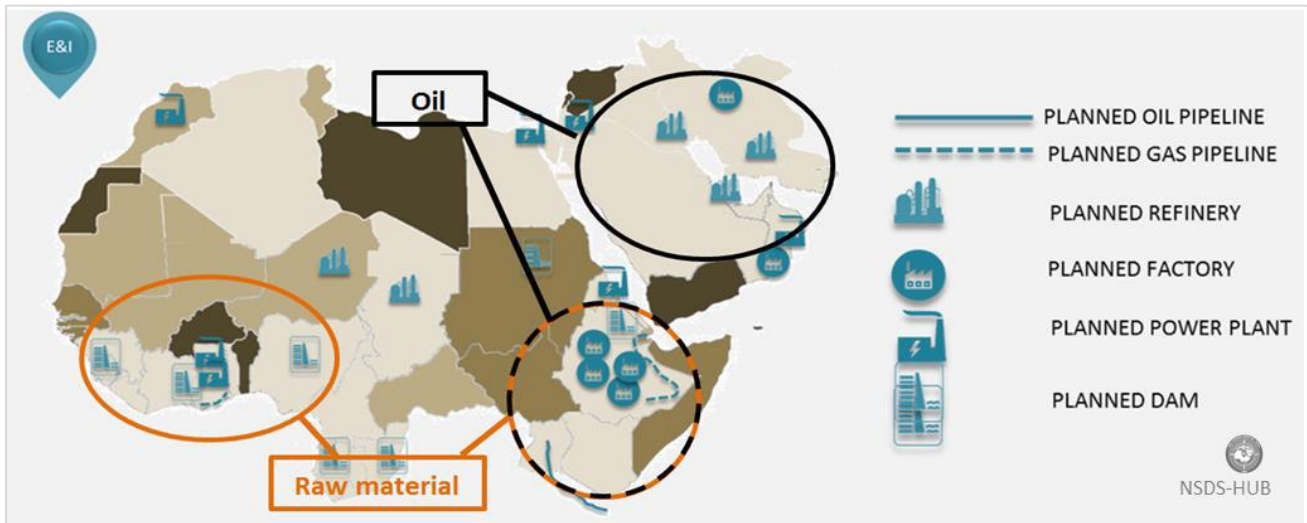


Fig. 2 - Source: NSD-S HUB Paper “Impact of China’s strategy on stability in Africa and the Middle East”

China supports infrastructural development and is an important debt holder in Africa, owning a total of 60 billion USD in debt. Djibouti has a decisive role due to its geographic location. The importance of this country is elevated on account of its vicinity to the main marine route which passes from the Gulf of Aden through Bab el Mandab to Europe.

Djibouti is the first foreign country where China has set up a military base. The purpose of China’s military presence in Africa is to protect economic interests, since its trade amounts to 1 billion USD a day, a large proportion of which passes through the Aden-Suez canal route. The rich natural resources such as oil reserves in South Sudan and the Sudan have become attractive to countries such as China to maintain their growing economies.

The US, on the other hand, with its allies, tries to limit China’s influence. Partnerships between US and African companies have been created with an allocation of 60 billion USD to support the private sector.

In the wake of the attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the US established Africa Command whose primary focus is monitoring anti-terrorist activities in the Horn of Africa and Africa as a whole. From an African perspective these developments were perceived as evidence of US intentions to progress from the projection of soft power towards an active intervention approach to fight terrorism and maintain the security of the Red Sea trade route, all of which eventually leading to Ethiopia becoming a main ally.

The increasingly dominant presence of China in Djibouti has been interpreted by Africa as having forced the US and others to explore alternatives. Since Eritrea is seen as the most likely choice, it was also thus considered in the interests of the US to foster the peace process between Eritrea and its ally, Ethiopia.

European countries favor investments in the Horn of Africa in order to limit the migration flow to Europe, working closely with the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development² (IGAD)

² IGAD is an organization of states in North-East Africa, covering the Horn of Africa states as well as Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. It is based in Djibouti and was founded in 1996.

focusing on governance, sustainable development, climate change and immigration. In this realm, specifically EU countries believe better governance and sustainable development are important for resolving the causes of conflicts, thereby causing a likely reduction in migration from Africa to Europe, particularly because the containment of immigrants has become a major concern since 2015. To implement these strategies the EU Commission is prioritizing collaborations between the regional entities such as IGAD and AU, even though they are not fully-fledged international actors due to the varied interests of their members.

The relevance of Russia today cannot be compared with the Soviet Union's influence in the region in previous decades. Nonetheless, Russian projects involve infrastructure, such as ports in Eritrea and railroad development in Ethiopia. Furthermore, most countries in the Horn of Africa rely on Russian arms systems.

Besides its interest in natural resources (gold, diamonds, and other minerals) India is relevant in agricultural investments in Africa to guarantee its own food security. India also tries to penetrate African markets, mainly for its textile products. Further Indian interests are Maritime Security and the search for African support for its goals within the UN³.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The geographical location of the Horn of Africa makes it a competitive hotspot for various global powers. Many regional powers are also involved, either in collaboration with global powers or separately, to maintain their influence. Being a major trade route towards western countries, collaboration with the states of the Horn of Africa is vital. Also, as the Horn of Africa is a network hub for religion-inspired violent extremist groups from the Middle East and Africa, it is of primary security interest for all international actors, including NATO, to closely monitor the global trade routes and regional security.

The Horn of Africa should focus its attention on regional integration, cultural diplomacy and the implementation of peace deals between the countries in the sub-region. In this regard, ethnic groups could help to achieve further integration, examples being the *Afar* in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea, the *Tigrai* in Eritrea and Ethiopia and the *Somali* in Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya. In 2018, the Horn of Africa was the site of tremendous peace initiatives such as institutionalizing agreements involving sub-regional and regional institutions like IGAD and AU to revitalize peace processes. Therefore, strengthening IGAD, so that it can become more assertive and coordinate issues of regional integration, will be of paramount importance.

Maritime security from the Bab al Mandab Strait to the Suez Canal as well as tackling organized crime (anti-piracy collaboration, human trafficking and anti-terrorism) is paramount and requires international collaboration. For the states of the Horn of Africa as well as the Red Sea states, such collaboration with NATO member states should be fostered in order to exploit local skills and experience to support capacity development of the security institutions of the IGAD member states. IGAD itself might create closer relationships with NATO and NATO members to institutionalize future collaboration.

³ For further information see NSD-S HUB paper "The Rationale behind India's Shift to Africa".