Paper Title: Undying Ambition

Ethiopia's Enduring Quest for Access to the Sea - Historical Foundations, Geopolitical Strategies, and Regional Implications

Author Name
00252634420801
Gulaid Yusuf Idaan
Senior Lecturer and Researcher
Master's Degrees in:
International Law and Diplomacy
International Relations
Project Management and Planning

Tell:

Email: idaan54@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This paper delves into Ethiopia's enduring desire for maritime access, exploring the historical, economic, geopolitical, and cultural dimensions of this aspiration. Ethiopia's yearning for the sea has roots in its ancient history, reaching back to the dominance of the Kingdom of Axum and the subsequent loss of coastal territories to Ottoman Turks. The paper highlights key historical milestones, including the Battle of Adwa, the Scramble for Africa, and boundary disputes with colonial powers, which have shaped Ethiopia's maritime ambitions.

The Anglo-Abyssinian Treaty of 1897 and the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1942 are examined to understand how diplomatic relations evolved between Ethiopia and the British Empire. The intricate dance between the two nations is analyzed in the context of Ethiopia's quest for a sea outlet.

The Paper also delves into the complex negotiations and historical context surrounding the Haud-Zeila exchange, shedding light on the challenges faced by both Ethiopia and the British as they sought to redefine territorial boundaries.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Red Sea Vision is explored, emphasizing his government's commitment to securing direct maritime access. Abiy's strategic initiatives and diplomatic efforts with neighboring nations are presented as integral to Ethiopia's goal of achieving sea access.

The shifting maritime strategy, transitioning from the Berbera port to the Zeila port, is discussed, highlighting Ethiopia's evolving approach to achieving maritime access and its engagement with international actors.

Lastly, the Paper unravels the historical complexities of Ethiopia's claim to Zeila and the Somaliland Peninsula, shedding light on the disputed nature of this assertion. Archaeological, historical, linguistic, cultural, and geographical factors are analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of this territorial dispute.

In conclusion, Ethiopia's maritime aspirations remain a topic of significant regional and international importance, shaping geopolitics in the Horn of Africa and highlighting the nation's

enduring determination to regain direct sea access.

Introduction

For centuries, Ethiopia has harbored a profound desire and ambition - the dream of regaining direct sea access. This enduring aspiration, rooted in history, economics, geopolitics, and national identity, continues to shape the nation's course.

Historically, Ethiopia's yearning for the sea harkens back to the 16th century when the Ottoman Turks seized control of the Red Sea coast, notably Massawa. Before this pivotal moment, Ethiopia enjoyed access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, facilitating trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange with coastal civilizations. The loss of these ports severed centuries-old connections, giving birth to a dream that refuses to fade.

Economically, maritime access is the lifeblood of international trade. Without it, Ethiopia's ability to engage in direct sea trade is hindered, affecting economic growth. A coastline represents not just economic viability but a symbol of national pride and resilience.

Geopolitically, being landlocked present's challenges, shaping Ethiopia's relationships with neighboring and global powers. A coastline provides strategic advantages, enhancing national security and influencing regional dynamics.

This desire is more than practicality; it's interwoven with national identity and pride. Throughout history, Ethiopian leaders have expressed the collective will to restore maritime connections, making it a symbol of the nation's indomitable spirit.

Diplomatically, Ethiopia has engaged in initiatives and negotiations with neighboring nations to secure access to ports, contributing to regional and international collaborations.

In the modern era, as Ethiopia's economy and population grow, the need for efficient transportation and trade routes intensifies. Maritime access plays a pivotal role in supporting modern economic development.

Challenges persist, requiring the navigation of complex political landscapes and the balancing of national interests in negotiations with coastal nations.

The desire for sea access is etched into Ethiopia's history and the collective consciousness of its people. Rooted in the 16th-century events, it continues to shape the nation's diplomacy, economy, and identity. Ethiopia's long-standing ambition is a testament to resilience, determination, and the unyielding pursuit of progress.

Historical Context of Ethiopia's Maritime Aspirations

Ethiopia's profound yearning for maritime access has deep historical roots that stretch back through the annals of time. Situated in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia's enduring quest for a direct connection to the sea has been a driving force in shaping its foreign policy and economic strategies. This comprehensive exploration takes us on a journey through history, offering a rich tapestry of key milestones, challenges, and the unwavering nature of Ethiopia's pursuit of unrestricted sea access.

The story of Ethiopia's maritime ambitions harks back to the ancient Kingdom of Axum, a dominant power that controlled the Red Sea coast, notably the port city of Adulis. This early maritime connection underscores Ethiopia's keen awareness of the economic benefits tied to sea access, as the Kingdom of Axum engaged in trade across the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

However, the 16th century marked a significant turning point in Ethiopia's maritime history. The Ottoman Turks took control of the Red Sea coast, including the vital port of Massawa, setting the stage for Ethiopia's eventual landlocked status. This situation, a geographic puzzle, would persist for centuries.

To further complicate matters, Egypt assumed control of Massawa in 1875, making it even more challenging for Ethiopia to secure direct access to the sea. It was against this backdrop that the Battle of Adwa unfolded in 1896, pitting the Ethiopian Empire, under the leadership of Emperor Menelik II, against the Kingdom of Italy. Italy's ambitions to expand its colonial influence in Ethiopia led to this pivotal conflict. The resounding victory at Adwa is now celebrated as a symbol of African resistance against European colonialism, a testament to the defense of sovereignty. Notably, Ras Alula, a prominent Ethiopian military leader, played a pivotal role in securing this triumph. However, while Adwa ensured Ethiopia's independence, it did not immediately address the persistent challenge of being landlocked.

Emperor Menelik II's signing of the Treaty of Wuchale with Italy in 1889 marked a diplomatic effort to define territorial boundaries, but this treaty led to conflicts and tensions, highlighting the intricate nature of negotiations surrounding Ethiopia's maritime access.

The late 19th century witnessed the Scramble for Africa, with European powers formalizing control over the continent. Ethiopia's aspirations clashed with the ambitions of European colonial powers, leading to Ethiopia being encircled by territories under European colonial control. This complex geopolitical scenario posed a significant obstacle to Ethiopia's pursuit of economic and strategic objectives.

The aftermath of World War II brought changes to the regional landscape, influencing Ethiopia's quest for coastal access. Border disputes were addressed, and Eritrea was federated into Ethiopia, but direct maritime access remained an elusive goal.

Throughout this journey, one can't overlook the fact that the Ethiopian people have deeply intertwined their aspirations with those of their rulers. The enduring desire for direct coastal access has remained a timeless aspiration, reflecting the intrinsic importance of this objective to the Ethiopian identity.

A significant moment that underscores Ethiopia's unwavering commitment to maritime access occurred during the 1963 Addis Ababa Heads of State Summit, marking the establishment of the Organization of African Unity. It was at this summit that a pivotal conversation took place between Somalia's President **Aden Abdullah Osman** and an Ethiopian Minister. President Aden Abdullah Osman of Somalia asserted that Ethiopia had assumed control of a substantial portion of Somali territory without consent, emphasizing Somalia's pursuit of the principle of self-determination rather than territorial expansion. In response, Prime Minister **Aklilou Habte Wolde** vehemently rejected President Osman's accusations, denouncing them as baseless and lacking factual foundation. Prime Minister Wolde adamantly defended Ethiopia's historical boundaries, extending from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, framing this as a fact

Moreover, Prime Minister Wolde highlighted the absence of historical records supporting the existence of a Somali state or nation,

emphasizing the presence of an international treaty regulating the borders between the two nations. He questioned the basis of Somalia's claims, probing whether they were rooted in linguistic reasoning or religious grounds.

From the Ethiopian standpoint, the Somali port of Zeila was historically seen as controlled by the ancient Ethiopian Kingdom of Axum. This historical perspective traced Ethiopia's influence over Zeila through various rulers, including Emperor Amde Tsion, Negus Dawit, and Negus Yeshaque. The defeat of Adal and Mogadishu in 1445 by Emperor Zere Yacob further solidified Ethiopia's control over southern trade routes.

These historical narratives emphasize the enduring belief within Ethiopia in its historical ties to the port of Zeila and the unwavering commitment to the dream of direct access to the sea. This deep-rooted sense of identity and aspiration continues to shape Ethiopia's maritime ambitions, underscoring the resilience and persistence of the nation in its pursuit of unfettered sea access.

The British played a significant role in the region, establishing British Somaliland to gain control over the strategically vital Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. They also encouraged the Italians to take control of southern Somaliland, which served as a counterbalance to French influence and allowed them to keep an eye on Ethiopia. However, the Battle of Adwa in 1896 marked Ethiopia's resounding victory over the Italian army, compelling a reassessment of arrangements by the British, French, and Italians.

Following this historic battle, boundary agreements were reached with Ethiopia in 1897, introducing territorial delineation to Somali nomads. A similar negotiation occurred in 1897 between Ethiopia and Italy to determine the boundary between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. Although an agreement was reached on the boundary's location, no written

agreement was produced, and the dispute over the boundary's location persisted.

The Anglo-Abyssinian Treaty of 1897 and the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1942

The Anglo-Abyssinian Treaty of 1897 and the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1942 highlight the intricate dance between Ethiopia and the British Empire, showcasing how diplomatic relations evolved, addressing varying geopolitical concerns and priorities. These agreements reflect the adaptability and endurance of the diplomatic relationship between Ethiopia and the British Empire, navigating through different historical contexts and challenges.

In essence, these agreements underscore the complex history of Ethiopia's diplomatic relations with global powers, as the nation strives to secure its maritime aspirations.

The exploration of Ethiopia's maritime aspirations, deeply rooted in history and continuously evolving, underscores the nation's determination to overcome geographical challenges and achieve its potential as a maritime nation. Through diplomatic engagements, historical milestones, and economic imperatives, Ethiopia's quest for direct sea access remains a timeless and enduring pursuit, symbolizing the nation's unwavering commitment to realizing its full maritime potential in the complex and ever-changing landscape of global geopolitics.

The arrival of European colonialists in Africa was a defining moment that ignited a series of geopolitical shifts, significantly involving Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia. Amidst the partition of the continent, Menelik expressed a fervent interest in participating in the carving of Africa and positioning Ethiopia as an imperial power in the region. Unwilling to witness the division of the African continent without Ethiopia

securing its share, Menelik was granted an opportunity by European colonial powers in 1881 to engage in this colonial endeavor.

The Ethiopian Empire had an enduring fascination with the Somali-inhabited lands to the west. Collaborating with Ras Makonnen, his Governor of the Harar region, Emperor Menelik made significant strides in 1898 by annexing these western territories. A critical agreement sealed in 1894 between Britain and Emperor Menelik also played a defining role in Ethiopia's strategic interests. This accord saw the Emperor commit not to support the Mahdist forces in Sudan, who conflicted with the British.

Emperor Menelik's ambitions stretched far beyond these initial actions. He harbored a long-term vision to extend the full authority of the Ethiopian Empire over the Somali-inhabited lands, which included the strategically vital Somaliland Coast. This vision persisted and evolved under the reign of Emperor Tafari Makonnen, better known as Haile Selassie after he ascended to the throne in 1928. Haile Selassie zealously worked towards solidifying Ethiopian presence and asserting authority over the Somali-inhabited regions in the West.

The historical narratives of Ethiopia's emperors display an unwavering and continuous interest in the Somali coast. These historical pursuits align with the broader context of African colonialism and imperial aspirations, emphasizing the geopolitical significance of the Somali region.

These sequences in history delineate Ethiopia's intricate relationship with the broader African continent, particularly in the context of European colonialism, reflecting the nation's strategic pursuits and the ambitions of its rulers.

Negotiations and Historical Context of the Haud-Zeila Exchange

The intricate diplomatic maneuvers surrounding the Haud-Zeila exchange unfolded within a dynamic geopolitical landscape, marked by the complex interactions between Ethiopia and the British. The discussions, spanning several decades, revealed the evolving priorities and challenges faced by both parties.

In the 1920s, Italy's offer of Assab port to Abyssinia faltered over concession disputes. Ras Kassa's 1927 inquiry about ceding Zeila to Ethiopia opened future possibilities. Boundary demarcation in 1931-1934 and the 1936 Italian invasion added layers of complexity. Emperor Haile Selassie's focus on Eritrea for a sea outlet and the British's interest in frontier rectification shaped the negotiations.

The Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1942 marked a significant development, with the British agreeing to hand over administration to Emperor Haile Selassie. However, the Haud-Zeila exchange became a central issue. Ethiopia offered the majority of the Ogaden to Britain for a corridor to Zeila. British hesitations, rooted in concerns about the corridor's width and local clan impact, added complexity.

The "Bevin Plan" in 1946 aimed at creating "Greater Somalia" faced opposition. Ethiopia's 1947 counterproposal, offering a narrow Zeila corridor and the Gadabursi clan's grazing ground, demonstrated its commitment. British suspicion of oil interests created dissatisfaction but avoided outright rejection.

Ethiopia's shifting priorities were evident as it prioritized a draft Treaty of Friendship and Commerce in 1947 over the Haud-Zeila exchange. French opposition and Ethiopia's changing commitments added complexity.

The entanglement of the exchange with international issues, such as Libya, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland, added complexity. Negotiations were suspended in July 1949 and resumed in January 1950. With the failure of the Haud-Zeila exchange, the British considered alternatives, including a lease of the Haud or an outright purchase.

The resolution of the Eritrean question in 1952 marked the end of Ethiopia's centuries-long quest for a sea outlet. Negotiations on the Haud-Zeila exchange were revived in 1953, with Ethiopia proposing a Treaty of Friendship. The British proposed maintaining the status quo or exchanging the Haud for a corridor to Zeila.

After arduous negotiations, the Haud Agreement was reached in London in November 1954, recognizing Ethiopia's full sovereignty over the Reserved and Ogaden territories. Despite the resolution, the British continued supporting 'Greater Somalia.' However, with Somalia's independence in 1960 and its efforts to annex the Ogaden, the fate of the Haud-Zeila exchange was sealed forever.

The British regarded the proposed corridor as wider than necessary for Ethiopia's sea access at Zeila and inhabited by the Issa, Gadabursi, and Ishaq (Habr Awel) clans. While willing to withdraw protection from a small Issa section, transferring Gadabursi and Habr Awel was difficult to justify. The British preferred a narrow corridor limited to the road to Zeila and the Issa clan's territory.

For the British, acquiring only the Haud and the Reserved Area sufficed, considering the proposed Ogaden as arid land with no prior British connections. They would entertain the wider Ogaden proposal only if Italian Somaliland came under British administration, an unlikely eventuality.

Negotiations and Proposals in the Haud-Zeila Exchange

The complex negotiations surrounding the Haud-Zeila exchange between Ethiopia and the British unfolded against a backdrop of intricate diplomatic maneuvers and geopolitical considerations. In the early stages of negotiations, Ethiopia, with a keen interest in gaining a sea outlet, proposed an exchange of

territory with British Somaliland. The Ethiopian offer, presented by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in June 1946, comprised two key elements:

1. Corridor to the Sea: Ethiopia sought a corridor to the sea approximately 100 miles wide at the western end of British Somaliland, encompassing the port of Zeila. This corridor was intended to provide Ethiopia with direct access to the sea.

2. Ogaden Territory: Ethiopia was willing to cede the Ogaden, extending as far south as the Webbe Shebelli, to British Somaliland in exchange for the corridor to Zeila.

3. Inclusion of Tribes: Notably, the corridor proposed by Ethiopia included areas inhabited by three tribes: Essa, Gadabursi, and Ishaq (Habr Awel). The Essa was a small portion, and the Gadabursi and Ishaq were significant clans living in the corridor. The inclusion of these tribes added a layer of complexity to the negotiations.

These proposals reflected Ethiopia's strategic goal of securing maritime access while demonstrating a willingness to negotiate the territorial exchange.

The British response to Ethiopia's proposals involved a careful analysis of the implications and considerations for British Somaliland. The key points of the British stance were outlined in a joint memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies on August 6, 1946:

1. Corridor Width: The British expressed concerns about the width of the proposed corridor, considering it wider than necessary for Ethiopia's sea access at Zeila. The corridor was inhabited by the

Issa, Gadabursi, and Ishaq (Habr Awel) clans.

2. Preferred Corridor: The British, hesitant to transfer important clans like Gadabursi and Habr Awel to Ethiopian control, favored a narrow corridor limited to the road to Zeila and the territory of the Issa clan. They were open to withdrawing protection from a small section of the Issa in the Protectorate.

3. Ogaden Territory: In terms of the Ogaden, the British recognized the potential benefits for the British Somali tribes, particularly in gaining access to essential grazing areas. However, they proposed a more limited exchange of territory than what Ethiopia had initially suggested.

4. Extraneous Factors: The British considered extraneous factors, including the uncertain future of Italian Somaliland and French reactions. The territory offered by Ethiopia included land communications between British and Italian Somaliland, potentially impacting future scenarios.

5. French Considerations: The British acknowledged French opposition to the exchange, as it would alter the neighbor of French Somaliland from Great Britain to Ethiopia. Despite this, the British emphasized the advantages of the exchange for British Somaliland.

In their joint memorandum, the British recommended:

1. Following up on the Ethiopian offer without delay.

2. Opening negotiations based on a more limited exchange of territory, specifying details in Section P of the annexed note.

3. Allowing negotiators flexibility to make adjustments in proposed frontiers based on Ethiopian reactions.

The timing was considered crucial, and negotiations were to be initiated promptly, keeping in mind the geopolitical factors at play. The document concluded with recommendations to inform the French, albeit not necessarily at the outset, about British intentions.

Overall Implications:

The Haud-Zeila exchange negotiations were multifaceted, involving intricate details of territorial adjustments, considerations for various clans, and the broader geopolitical landscape of the time. Ethiopia's pursuit of a sea outlet and the British quest for favorable territorial arrangements, including the tribes of Essa, Gadabursi, and Ishaq (Habr Awel), set the stage for a protracted diplomatic process with far-reaching consequences. The negotiations and proposals, as outlined, were key elements in a complex historical puzzle that had a lasting impact on the region.

Navigating Horizons and Abiy Ahmed's Ambitious Red Sea Strategy for Ethiopia's Maritime Future

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared the country's right to demand maritime access to a Red Sea port, seeking to end Ethiopia's landlocked status since Eritrea's independence in 1993. Abiy suggested diplomatic means initially but did not rule out force, aiming to reestablish Ethiopia's dominance in the Horn of Africa. His speech came in time the Ethiopia a shift in alliances, moving away from Western partners to closer ties with China and Iran, evident during his Belt and Road Initiative forum visit to China.

Mr. Abiy Ahmed has articulated his government's determination to fulfill Ethiopia's age-old desire for direct access to the sea. Abiy's administration has actively pursued diplomatic and strategic initiatives to strengthen relations with neighboring nations, notably Eritrea and Somalia. These efforts are integral to Ethiopia's overarching goal of securing direct maritime access.

Achieving maritime access is a multifaceted and demanding endeavor, requiring negotiations, diplomacy, and often regional cooperation. The complex geopolitical landscape in the Horn of Africa necessitates careful diplomacy and collaboration with neighboring states to make significant progress toward maritime access. Prime Minister Abiy's endorsement of this ambition reflects Ethiopia's historical pursuit while adapting to evolving geopolitical dynamics.

Recent months have witnessed extensive discussions and media coverage regarding Ethiopia's aspiration to gain direct access to a port. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's concerns about the unsustainable costs of relying on Djibouti for port access and shipping routes have driven this interest. He has expressed Ethiopia's determination to secure direct port access through peaceful means or, if necessary, force. While Ethiopia's government hasn't officially declared the consideration of all options, the issue remains a subject of national importance.

On October 14, 2023, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed delivered a televised address to the nation, passionately emphasizing Ethiopia's legitimate right to access a seaport and the Red Sea. This declaration has sparked vigorous discussions on the geopolitical stage, firmly positioning the Red Sea as a central concern in Ethiopia's strategic landscape.

A draft document titled "Ethiopia's National Interest: Principles and Content," crafted by the Ministry of Peace, outlines Ethiopia's strategic and economic interests in the Red Sea region. The document underscores the historical significance of these interests, which have been paramount for Ethiopia throughout its history. Ethiopia's transition to a landlocked country has further accentuated the urgency of securing access to the Red Sea.

The document outlines a comprehensive set of priorities, including preserving Ethiopia's territorial integrity, enhancing its regional influence, and fostering peace and security. It also emphasizes the significance of advancing Ethiopia's interests in the Red Sea and Gulf Peninsula region, an area drawing increasing attention from global superpowers.

The Red Sea and the Horn of Africa have taken on pivotal roles in global geopolitics, urging Ethiopia to engage with regional nations to ensure access to ports and overcome potential geostrategic challenges. Diplomatic engagement with neighboring countries is highlighted as essential to prevent hindrances to the region's development.

One critical aspect emphasized in the document is the historical connection Ethiopia shares with the Red Sea, underpinned by its geographical proximity. Given Ethiopia's growing population and economy, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed considers it imperative for the nation to assert its security, geopolitical, and economic interests in the Red Sea region.

A significant proposal by the Prime Minister and the document is the idea that the African Union should assume ultimate authority over Africa's water resources, seas, and ocean shores. This shift in governance could substantially impact the region's strategic dynamics and play a pivotal role in shaping its future.

The endeavor to secure access to the Red Sea is intrinsically linked to Ethiopia's future, especially its economic development. The Prime Minister draws comparisons with other nations that have successfully invested in securing

ports, emphasizing that Ethiopia's historical, geographical, and economic reasoning supports its claim to a port. Ethiopia's rapidly growing population, projected to reach 150 million by 2030 and double by 2050, further underscores the critical importance of securing a sea outlet.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed points out that the Red Sea and the Nile play pivotal roles in determining Ethiopia's destiny. As strategic and economic interests in the Red Sea region intensify, global superpowers vie for influence in the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia's pursuit of a sea outlet should be conducted through peaceful and just means, including negotiations, federations, or territorial exchanges, in collaboration with neighboring nations such as Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. A sea outlet from Somaliland offers the potential to make a significant contribution to Ethiopia's GDP and open up opportunities in various sectors, from fisheries to tourism.

The narrative surrounding Ethiopia's maritime ambitions requires adjustment, fostering preparedness and national unity. Enhancing cross-border relations, people-to-people diplomacy, and public diplomacy can play crucial roles in advancing Ethiopia's interests.

As Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed emphasizes, achieving access to the Red Sea may not be immediately attainable, but it is a discussion for the sake of future generations. Ethiopia's pursuit of Red Sea access is not merely a matter of national importance; it has the potential to reshape the geopolitical dynamics of the entire Horn of Africa region.

PM Abiy Ahmed Sets Sail on Ethiopia's Sea Quest Once more.

Ethiopia's Quest for a Sea Outlet: Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Addresses Concerns

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed addressed questions from lawmakers during the 3rd year 4th regular session of the House of People's Representatives, emphasizing that Ethiopia's pursuit of a sea outlet and port is not a new agenda and is not intended to threaten neighboring countries' sovereignty in the Horn of Africa.

The Prime Minister conveyed Ethiopia's genuine interest in securing a sea outlet and owning a port on the Red Sea coast, a matter that has sparked widespread discussion and speculation. He explained that Ethiopia, 30 years ago, owned two ports when its population was around 46-47 million, with a GDP of 10-13 billion dollars. Over time, ownership was reduced to the use of two ports, Djibouti and Assab, through trade agreements. However, conflicts with Eritrea led to exclusive reliance on the port of Djibouti.

Abiy expressed concern about geopolitical tensions in the Horn, particularly in Djibouti, where major powers have camps. He highlighted the vulnerability of Ethiopia in potential conflicts, especially considering recent missile attacks near Djibouti and the impact on Ethiopia's 120 million population.

The Prime Minister underscored the need for cooperation among Horn of Africa countries, pointing out Ethiopia's contributions to combatting issues like Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Despite Ethiopia's impressive economic growth, Abiy warned that the economic context is not adequately matching the population growth, potentially leading to future challenges.

Abiy addressed criticism, stating that Ethiopia's quest for a sea outlet is not a new agenda and is not meant to violate any country's sovereignty. He defended Ethiopia's right to discuss the matter under the rules of business, emphasizing that many countries consider the Red Sea

important for various reasons, including preventing piracy.

Responding to concerns about violating Eritrean sovereignty, Abiy drew parallels with the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), asserting that Ethiopia built it for mutual benefits, not to violate Sudan's sovereignty. He urged peaceful discussions to avoid conflicts and scenarios affecting neighboring countries.

In a message to the international community, Abiy invited global governments to engage in a lawful and peaceful dialogue on Ethiopia's quest for a sea outlet. He emphasized that Ethiopia harbors no intention of aggression toward its neighbors and called for collaboration on shared resources and challenges.

The Prime Minister invoked a historical lesson, cautioning against dismissing discussions, citing Emperor Hailesselasie's actions leading to the Eritrean war. He stressed the importance of calm and peaceful discussions to prevent conflicts that could adversely affect the region.

Abiy concluded by assuring that Ethiopia poses no threat of war to its neighbors but is capable of defending itself if attacked. He urged collaborative growth and shared resources among neighboring countries for mutual benefit.

Ethiopia's Dynamic Maritime Shift from Berbera to Zeila Port

Even before Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed publicly disclosed his long-standing ambition to secure a seaport, experts had shed light on Ethiopia's maritime aspirations. In a commentary dated January 5, 2022, Michael Rubin hinted at Ethiopia's enduring desire for a seaport. Furthermore, two articles from "Views on News," published on January 30, 2022, and January 29, 2022, provided deeper insights into Ethiopia's

evolving maritime strategy and its multifaceted agenda in the United Arab Emirates.

These analyses consistently highlighted a noticeable shift in Ethiopia's geopolitical landscape. They underscored that Ethiopia's traditional reliance on Djibouti's ports for import and export activities underwent a significant transformation in May 2016. This transformation unfolded when DP World, a UAE-based company, entered a $442 million agreement to manage the Berbera port, effectively reshaping it into a regional trade and logistics hub. Ethiopia's involvement deepened in March 2018 when it became a major shareholder through an agreement with DP World and the Somaliland Port Authority. Subsequently, the Berbera port became operational, with ongoing projects aimed at expanding its capacity, including the construction of the Berbera-Ethiopia motorway, funded by both Ethiopia and the UAE.

Initially, the ownership structure of the Berbera port was divided among the UAE (51%), Ethiopia (19%), and Somaliland (31%). However, recent statements from a Somaliland minister suggest a shift in ownership, with the UAE and Somaliland now holding 65% and 35% shares, respectively. Ethiopia's response to this change is pending, and it is worth noting that owning port stakes was a component of Ethiopia's Ten Years National Logistics Strategy. Somaliland's aspiration to become a maritime hub in the Horn of Africa remains a driving force in these developments.

The articles also highlighted Ethiopia's increasing interest in developing a new port in Somaliland, particularly Zeila or Saylac. This interest can be attributed to several factors, including the desire to reduce reliance on Djibouti, the discovery of natural gas reserves in the Somali region of Ethiopia, and the strengthening of ties with Somaliland.

These analyses underscore a broader diplomatic realignment taking place in the

region. While Abiy's government is establishing relationships with autocratic backers such as China, Turkey, Eritrea, and Iran, Somaliland is pursuing a different path. It has aligned itself with nations like the United Kingdom, Denmark, Kenya, and notably, Taiwan, rather than succumbing to Chinese influence. This diplomatic realignment is significantly shaping the region's dynamics.

Unraveling the Ethiopian Claim to Zeila and the Somaliland Peninsula: A Historical Perspective

Unraveling the Ethiopian Claim to Zeila and the Somaliland Peninsula: A Rigorous Historical Examination

The Ethiopian assertion of its historical claim to Zeila and the broader Somaliland Peninsula traces its roots to the era of the ancient Ethiopian Kingdom of Axum, which wielded influence in the region. However, a meticulous historical exploration unravels intricate complexities and contradictions surrounding this claim, revealing a narrative that challenges Ethiopia's historical boundaries.

Despite Ethiopia's contention that its historical territories stretched from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, including Zeila, a closer examination of historical records portrays a more nuanced picture. Axum's influence, it becomes evident, did not necessarily extend to Zeila itself. Historical accounts document consistent resistance by the Somali people against Ethiopian attempts to conquer Zeila, underscoring their steadfast defense of independence.

Presently, Zeila firmly resides within Somaliland, prompting a multi-faceted dispute over Ethiopia's claim. This contention encompasses archaeological, historical, linguistic, cultural, and physical evidence.

Archaeological excavations in the region have failed to reveal substantial evidence of Ethiopian occupation or settlement in Zeila. Conversely, a rich tapestry of archaeological findings highlights the enduring presence of Somalilanders over thousands of years.

Historical records from the first millennium BC consistently identify Somalilanders as the primary inhabitants of the peninsula, with Ethiopian references emerging relatively later in history. The Periplus of the Eritrean Sea, a 1st-century Greek maritime guide, notably describes the Somaliland Peninsula as inhabited by the Berbers, without mention of Ethiopians.

Linguistic and cultural disparities further complicate the territorial claim. Somalilanders primarily speak a Cushitic language and are pastoral, while Ethiopians predominantly speak Semitic languages and engage in agriculture.

The formidable geographical barrier of the Great Rift Valley physically separates the Ethiopian Highlands from the Somaliland Peninsula, challenging the feasibility of Ethiopian control over the region.

This ongoing dispute holds significant implications for regional stability, as the Somaliland government vehemently resists Ethiopian claims. International recognition, notably from the United Nations and the African Union, strongly supports Somaliland's sovereignty. The dispute continues to shape regional dynamics and international relations in the Horn of Africa, likely remaining a contentious issue for years to come.

The International Legal Aspects: Exploring Ethiopia's Maritime Claims

Ethiopia's maritime aspirations, deeply rooted in history and diplomacy, also intersect with international legal dimensions. In this section, we delve into the legal frameworks and international agreements relevant to Ethiopia's maritime claims, focusing on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and how they interact with Ethiopia's declarations.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS): The UNCLOS, often considered the constitution for the world's oceans, serves as a crucial legal framework governing maritime issues, including territorial sea limits, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and the rights and responsibilities of coastal and landlocked states. Ethiopia is not a party to UNCLOS This non-membership has implications for Ethiopia's maritime claims and access.

Coastal States' Territorial Sea: Under UNCLOS, coastal states have sovereignty over their territorial sea, which extends up to 12 nautical miles from their baselines. Ethiopia's desire for maritime access involves negotiations with coastal states for access to their territorial waters.

UNCLOS also defines exclusive economic zones (EEZs), as extending up to 200 nautical miles from a coastal state's baselines. Coastal states have rights over the exploration and exploitation of natural resources within their EEZs. Ethiopia's pursuit of maritime access may involve negotiations with coastal states regarding the use of their EEZs.

UNCLOS acknowledges the rights of landlocked states to access and use the high seas and the EEZs of coastal states. This right is crucial for landlocked countries like Ethiopia, which seek maritime access through negotiations and agreements with neighboring coastal states.

Article 125 of UNCLOS - Right of Access to and from the Sea and Freedom of Transit:

Article 125 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) addresses the rights and responsibilities of transit states concerning the access of landlocked states to and from the sea. The relevant section, Part 3, emphasizes the sovereignty of transit states and their authority to safeguard their legitimate interests while facilitating the rights and facilities provided for landlocked states.

1. Recognition of Transit States' Sovereignty:

The article explicitly acknowledges the full sovereignty of transit states over their territories. This recognition underscores the principle that transit states have the authority to govern and control activities within their borders. It establishes a foundation for the subsequent provision that allows transit states to take measures they deem necessary to protect their legitimate interests.

2. Protection of Legitimate Interests:

The core of Article 125 lies in the statement that transit states retain the right to take all measures necessary to ensure that the rights and facilities granted to landlocked states do not infringe upon their legitimate interests. This provision aims to safeguard the autonomy, security, and well-being of transit states in the context of facilitating transit for landlocked neighbors.

3. Balancing Landlocked and Transit States' Rights:

The inclusion of this clause reflects a delicate balance between the needs and rights of landlocked and transit states. While landlocked states are granted essential rights to access and from the sea, transit states are simultaneously empowered to protect their interests. This recognition of a dual set of rights reflects a cooperative approach within the international community, acknowledging the geographical realities and ensuring that the legitimate

concerns of both landlocked and transit states are addressed.

4. Promotion of Cooperation:

Article 125 encourages a cooperative approach between landlocked and transit states. The negotiation and establishment of agreements between these states, as stipulated in the broader context of UNCLOS, provide a platform for diplomatic solutions that respect the rights of all parties involved. This cooperative spirit aligns with the overarching principles of UNCLOS, fostering peaceful and collaborative relations between nations.

In essence, Article 125 serves as a cornerstone for harmonizing the rights of landlocked and transit states, ensuring that the facilitation of maritime access for landlocked states is achieved without compromising the sovereignty and legitimate interests of transit states. It underscores the importance of diplomacy and cooperation in resolving potential conflicts that may arise from the complex interplay of geographical realities and national interests.

Potential Contradictions and Challenges: Ethiopia's non-membership in UNCLOS raises questions about the legal foundation of its maritime claims. Accessing the sea without UNCLOS membership may pose challenges in navigating the complexities of maritime law, including issues related to territorial waters, EEZs, and the rights and responsibilities of coastal and landlocked states.

International Dispute Resolution: UNCLOS provides a framework for the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes through international arbitration and tribunals. Should disputes arise between Ethiopia and coastal states regarding maritime access, the UNCLOS dispute resolution mechanisms may not be readily available to Ethiopia due to its non-membership.

Incorporating Counterarguments: It's essential to consider potential counterarguments or

opposing viewpoints related to Ethiopia's maritime claims in light of UNCLOS and international maritime law. Some arguments might question the legality or validity of Ethiopia's claims, raising issues such as historical treaties, conflicting sovereignty claims, or disputes with other coastal states.

Most Ethiopian scholars build their arguments for Ethiopia's right to have access sea to on The Convention on Transit Trade of Land-locked States, enacted in 1965, which outlines principles and regulations to facilitate the transit of goods and means of transport through the territories of transit states, providing access to the sea for landlocked states, but thoughtlessly they only look one side to the treat but let us look deeply

According to the Convention on Transit Trade of Land-locked States, landlocked states are not allowed to infringe upon the territorial sovereignty or liberties of transit countries. The treaty explicitly emphasizes the principle of freedom of transit, which grants landlocked states the right to have unimpeded access to the sea through the territories of transit states. However, this right is subject to certain conditions and obligations outlined in the treaty.

Landlocked states must respect the sovereignty of transit states, and the treaty emphasizes that transit states maintain full sovereignty over their territory. While landlocked states have the right to unrestricted transit, they are not permitted to infringe on the legitimate interests of transit states in any way.

The convention recognizes the right of transit states to take indispensable measures to ensure that the exercise of the right of unrestricted transit does not compromise their legitimate interests. These measures are expected to be in line with international law and should not unduly hinder transit traffic.

In summary, the treaty establishes a framework for cooperation between landlocked states and

transit states, emphasizing the importance of respecting the sovereignty and legitimate interests of transit states while ensuring the freedom of transit for landlocked states.

The key articles in the Convention on Transit Trade of Land-locked States that address the rights and obligations related to the interaction between landlocked states and transit states, emphasizing the respect for territorial sovereignty, include:

1. Article 2 - Freedom of Transit:

•Establishes the principle of freedom of transit for traffic in transit and means of transport.

•Emphasizes that no discrimination should be exercised based on the place of origin, departure, entry, exit, or other circumstances.

2. Article 5 - Customs Duties and Special Transit Dues:

•Declares that transit traffic should not be subjected to customs duties or taxes related to importation or exportation.

•Allows for charges to cover expenses of supervision and administration but emphasizes non-discrimination.

3. Article 9 - Provision of Greater Facilities:

•States that the convention does not withdraw transit facilities greater than those provided in the convention if agreed upon between contracting states.

•Does not preclude the grant of greater facilities in the future.

4. Article 11 - Exceptions to Convention on Grounds of Public Health, Security, and Protection of Intellectual Property:

•Allows transit states to take reasonable precautions and measures to ensure the genuine nature of transit traffic.

•Acknowledges the right of states to impose measures related to public health, security, and protection of intellectual property.

5. Article 12 - Exceptions in Case of Emergency:

•Permits deviation from the provisions of the convention in cases of emergencies threatening political existence or safety.

These articles collectively establish a framework that upholds the rights of landlocked states to transit through the territories of other states while recognizing the legitimate concerns and interests of transit states. The emphasis is on maintaining a balance between freedom of transit and the sovereignty and security of transit states.

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