



Research Article

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## China's Contemporary Strategies for the Promotion of Security, Development, and Governance in the Horn of Africa

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### Abstract

*This study focuses on "China's Contemporary Strategies for Promoting Security, Development, and Governance in the Horn of Africa". This study explored the key outcomes and challenges of these new strategies by China for security, development, and governance in the Horn of Africa region. The Horn of Africa as it is often called is one of the most culturally, religiously, and ethnically diverse and growing cosmopolitan regions in Africa. The region comprises countries with the most similar as well as unique philosophies. The strategic proximity of the region to the Middle East, Europe, and Asia underscores its strategic importance. However, these cultural, religious, and ethnic philosophies have for some ages thrown the region into a severe crisis. The Horn of Africa to date continues to be the most conflict-prone area in Africa. The finding indicates the strategic and geopolitical importance of the region has poorly been translated into human, capital, and socio-economic development for the good of the people. The region continues to remain one of the most volatile, unstable, and under-developed in Africa. The diversity of domestic and international actors has had great complications on the region's peace, security, and development. However, a recent pronouncement by China for a new strategy toward the attainment of security, development, and governance in the region is worth exploring. The proposal includes the appointment of China's special envoy to the Horn of Africa while advocating that an internal solution is the best option for the crisis in the region.*

**Keywords:** Development, Security, China, Governance, Horn of Africa

### 1. Introduction

China-Africa ties may be traced back to the Tang Dynasty, according to patterns and historical materials reviewed. Trade exchange was the foundation for ancient diplomatic connections and collaboration. Formal and modern interactions, on the other hand, date from the 1950s, particularly Chairman Mao Zedong's time in power. Furthermore, cooperation forged during the Chinese period aided Africa's anti-colonial struggle, and this period marked the beginning of African states breaking away from "Western colonial" political culture. Former supporting liberation movements recognized the diplomatic connections between China and Africa as a result. China has established itself as a reliable partner for Africa in terms of investment and finance, technology and entrepreneurship,

commerce and access to each other's markets, and capacity-building assistance over the last two decades or so. The full scope of Chinese cooperation and opportunities, restrictions, and challenges, as well as their role and impact on peace, governance, and economic development in the Horn of Africa, necessitates extensive analysis, examination, and research.

Many African countries view China's economic and technological development as a model for Africa's economic, development, and industrial transformation. Most observers point to China's non-interference, mutual respect, and friendship diplomacy with Africa, as well as growing commerce and investment, as evidence that "China's role in Africa should be understood as that of an economic development partner." In particular, the cases of more economically successful countries have encouraged much-needed infrastructure and other high-priority productive activities that have aided these countries' economic transformation by attracting large investments at concessional finance and favorable terms and conditions. Because of their economic growth potential, burgeoning consumer markets, low labor costs, and wealth of natural resources, the Horn of Africa, in particular, has become appealing to Chinese investments. China has been cooperating with and promoting inflows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the Horn of Africa (both government and private sector), as well as Chinese finance and trade facilitation ([www.hespi.org](http://www.hespi.org), 2020).

On the other hand, the Horn of Africa can be described as a culturally interconnected region in Africa throughout its long history. The Horn of Africa refers to the North-Eastern part of the continent of Africa which includes such countries as Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia. The name 'Horn of Africa' is used to describe the horn-like shape of that part of the African continent over the peninsula. Protracted armed conflicts, extensive food crises, and large-scale displacement in the Horn of Africa have put the region under international radial for several decades.

Internal disagreements and conflicts have become a source of many inter-state conflicts in the region, this has led to divisions among the states in the HoA region. From the 1950s to date, the Horn of Africa has encountered several devastating inter-state wars, notably the Somali wars of 1964, 1977-78, 2006-9, the Kenya-Somali war of 1963, Uganda-Tanzanian war of 1978-79, and the Ethiopian-Eritrean border war of 1998-2000 (<https://thearabweekly.com>, 2022).

The adverse effects of these inter-state conflicts are underdevelopment, poverty, decreased inter-regional trade, inadequate provision of infrastructure, and huge unemployment among other socioeconomic challenges in the region. The socioeconomic problems in the region coupled with weak institutional capabilities have thrown the region into a serious crisis, hence, the right solution for the region is to address the security challenges while promoting peace and development which have become the immediate needs of the Horn of Africa region.

The geopolitical location coupled with the significance of the Horn of Africa has compiled international powers to as a matter of importance intervention to address the challenges confronting the Horn of Africa region. Over the years the USA, EU, Turkey, and others have been spearheading the role of peacemaking in most conflicts in the region such as the case of Somalia, and the North, and South Sudan civil war while preventing the proliferation of terrorism in the Red Sea and the Somalia coast.

Until recently other emerging actors have begun playing an important role in a bid to promote security, development, and governance in the Horn of Africa region. The role of these emerging actors is in close collaboration with regional organizations, Sub-regional organizations, and international organizations. The emergence of China in the Horn of Africa for the promotion of security, development, and governance is worth exploring. Based on the backdrop of its geopolitical, politico-economic interest or as a matter of emerging power responsibilities, China has been actively involved in the security, development, and governance of the Horn of Africa region. Aside from China's economic interest in the region, it has been playing a crucial role in assisting to solve the conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in the region.

The emergence of China as an international actor in the promotion of security, development, and Governance in the HoA region is worth exploring. China for some years has been active as a

mediator in the South Sudan and Sudan conflicts, its role combating pirates on the Coast of Somalia. Besides, China's One Belt One Road initiative which is presumed to link Africa through the Horn of Africa further strengthens China's efforts in the promotion of security, and development in the Horn of Africa region.

The above and recent pronouncement by the Chinese authority of a new proposition for the promotion of security, development, and governance in the Horn of Africa seems to ignite hope for stability and development in the region. This paper, therefore, seeks to look into this new proposition by the Chinese authorities and how it can achieve the desired security, development, and governance most needed in the region.

## **2. Overview of the Geopolitical Condition of the Horn of Africa**

There however seems to be misinterpretation among experts on the precise description of the Horn of Africa. Various experts have recommended what to be included and excluded in the description of the Horn of Africa due to various considerations based on the wider and narrow view concerning the geopolitical situation of the region. Some of the examples of the description of the demarcation of the Horn of Africa by experts are highlighted below: According to Peter Woodward (2002) a US foreign policy expert, the term "Horn of Africa," is not an indigenous name, but rather a name that was the result of a glimpse from the map of Africa and which does not connect with the inhabitant of that part of Africa. Certainly, among such scholars, there is no understanding of what the Horn of Africa stands for (Woodward, 2002)

However, conventional states making up the Horn such as Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia regard the idea of the Horn as an extension of concerns around the nature of inter-state cooperation. Equally important is history, which defines the convergence and divergence of states and people of a particular region. Nonetheless, for Africa, the Horn of Africa is not always of African origin. The history of the Horn can be traced to Arabia as much as to Africa, which includes the impact of the Islamic region. In a broader context understanding Middle East policy, not forgetting Arab-Israeli conflicts, will be useful to understand US policy towards the Horn of Africa. The Horn by definition includes Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia Sudan, and Eritrea since its attained independence from Ethiopia in 1999 (Woodward, 2002)

Alternatively, other definitions of the HoA are based on shared opportunities and challenges made up of such countries as Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan. Other experts also expand it to include Kenya in the sub-region, while others also exclude Sudan (Lyons, 1992; Bereket, 1980). The paper is of the view that Kenya is more in the East Africa bloc than part of the Horn of Africa region and therefore should not be included. There's also the term "Greater Horn of Africa", this definition comprises the Horn of Africa as well as such countries as Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Sandwich between the definition of Greater Horn of Africa is the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a sub-regional organization in East Africa, of which both Kenya and Uganda are members and not Tanzania (Juma, 2003; BJØRN, 2007). This makes the region comparable to the Greater Horn of Africa without Tanzania.

Other experts who are more concerned with geostrategic motives include recent issues like terrorism, which they use to integrate the Hone of Africa with the Greater Horn of Africa. To this Yemen could be included as part of the Greater Horn of Africa region. This definition is based on religion and not on the practical physical connection. Despite the unification of the Rift Valley theme from Sudan, Djibouti south through Ethiopia right into Kenya for the international fight for freedom and democracy and against terrorism. All these seven states Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen across the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean are confronted with a common security challenge. They equally share a scarcity of resources and an unfulfilled demand for rapid economic development (Robert, 2005). Conventional this paper defines the Horn of Africa to include the seven nations (Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, South Sudan, N. Sudan, Kenya, and Somaliland) which are all members of the IGAD regional framework for peace and security. The

region has become an unstable region and constant political instability with both intrastate wars and interstates crisis of all manner which has plagued the region for a very long time. The most unfortunate part is that most of the states in the region are fragile, with weak institutions incapable of effective governance and maintenance of security and control of their borders. The HoA is a position in an outstanding geopolitical location southwest of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. That location refers to these four countries namely, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti however, taken in a wider and economic context the term the Horn of Africa includes Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda. This is shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1:** Map of the Horn of Africa

**Source:** Compiled by the author based on a Wikimedia common.

The total area of the Horn of Africa proper covers about 2,018,925 square miles, this makes up 17.2 % of the total land surface of Africa. Additionally, the home of Africa is home to about 282 million inhabitants. This comprises 44 million from Sudan, 4 million from Eritrea, 1 million from Djibouti, 12 million from Somalia, and 113 million from Ethiopia. When added to other countries such as Kenya with a population of 54 million, South Sudan with 11 million, and Uganda 45 million, the Horn of Africa accounts for 33% of the entire African population (Mesfin, 2019, p. 3).

The strategic position of the Horn of Africa has subsequently developed into an intense geopolitical competition (rivalry) among international and regional players. The strategic and unique location of the Horn of Africa comes with prospects and challenges for both countries within the region and by extension Africa.

Apart from being located in a major port in the area and international sea route, currently, there is competition between the Chinese and the West on Djibouti, the Turks also claiming grip of Somalia, while the Saudis and the Emirates making a strong presence in the Assab on Emirate's region south of the Red Sea coast including the surrounding islands in Somalia. The singular geopolitical location of the Horn of Africa and its importance have not translated into the economic development of the people of the area. The economy of the HoA contrasts sharply with the catastrophic economic conditions of the region. For example, over the past two decades, the region has been extremely hit by human tragedies due to famines and wars. It's too long for the world to forget the disastrous famines in Ethiopia and Eritrea which led to these two countries becoming dependent on foreign aid. It is equally important not to forget the series of wars among sister nations within the region that has resulted in several deaths of over 100,000 people. From the 1950s to date, the Horn of Africa has encountered several devastating inter-state wars, notably the Somali wars of 1964, 1977-78, 2006-9, the Kenya-Somali war of 1963, Uganda-Tanzanian war of 1978-79, and the

Ethiopian-Eritrean border war of 1998-2000 (<https://theArabweekly.com>).

In recent times Ethiopia has achieved remarkable economic growth, however, regional tension has escalated again between Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia over the latter's decision to construct the Grand Renaissance Dam due to the Nile (<https://theArabweekly.com>).

### 3. English School Perception on Global Political Order and the Horn of Africa

This paper utilized the theoretical framework of the English School. The theoretical understanding of the English School contends that notwithstanding the frequency of anarchy in the international system, national states act as a community by modifying their interactions for the promotion of peace security, and development (Bull, 1995). National states modify their interactions by consensus, they consent to common rules of behavior. These limitations placed on national states imply that national states will be responsible for the protection of international peace and security, at the expense of their national interest (Northedge, 1976). This led to what is called a security dilemma, defending your country or the larger community.

However, the English School, argues that this security dilemma will be overcome when all national states realize that the basic agreement of rules of conduct will be beneficial to the uttermost good of the entire community for peace and security which is vital for the survival of the entire region. The survival of a state depends largely on its relations and role within the community with other states, which form the basics of their engagement. Hence national states do not take their status for granted. (Northedge, 1976). The international system demands the use of rules that serve to control the use of force of authority between political institutions and the purity of agreements (Bull, 1995). The limits to the arbitrary use of force are to ensure that the concept of peace is maintained as the only condition in the international order. The barriers to the arbitrary use of force do not essentially lead to the prevention of war. Nonetheless, barriers will go a long way to deter and control crises, while also preventing conflicts among smaller states, that may sometimes call for the involvement of greater power. Limitations also include such efforts as conflict prevention and peacekeeping initiatives.

Defining jurisdiction is to certify the precision of entities responsible for legitimate political authority for the maintenance of international order. Legitimacy concerns the evaluation of the international community by the institutions responsible for the sovereign rights over a region and its entire population (Wight, 1977). Transnational economic dynamism impacts the evaluation of the legitimacy of the regime. This occurs since states are solely responsible for protecting the basic rights of citizens' lives and property, as well as exercising political influence and not merely preserving the system of the state. In our globalized world today, economic responsibilities transcend national borders, this is because economic and financial crises tend to spread to other parts of the world rapidly, bringing economic hardship to the global economy. This phenomenon calls for economic fairness in relations between developed and developing nations (Bull, 1971).

The advent of transnational concepts of Justice indicates that economic legitimate issues are tackled with a comprehensive strategy that legitimates important features that cannot be separated from the political features of legitimacy.

Defining the sanctity of agreements certifies that all treaties that explain the rights and responsibilities of nations form the foundation for all international institutional actions. All international institutions responsible for implementing policy coordination on security matters are important to the maintenance of peace and security. Common organizations are equally important in undertaking security management activities. These ordinary organizations are mostly informal, such as the ad hoc consultation during the nineteenth-century European Concert (Holbraad, 1970).

Common organizations can be formal, such as the various arms control negotiations between the United States of America and the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. The decision of nations to remain within the rule-bound limits is not a question of the law but rather that of politics, and part of contemporary political agreements which are mostly negotiated within the framework of formal

and informal organizations. (Manning, 1975). Consequently, China’s contribution to regional order in the Horn of Africa, for the provision of peace and development, entails policies that require the use of force, legitimacy, and institutional measures that are well-suited for facilitating security management, development, and governance among regional nations and other international actors.

English School as a theoretical framework scrutinizes the question of whether nations offer the needed platform for policy coordination that is capable of addressing vital security issues, keeping a lid on potential conflicts while facilitating measures for cooperation (Odgaard, 2012).

This provides the English School with a useful concept for understanding that China’s strategy for security, development, and governance in the HoA is not only meant to promote Chinese interest and protect Chinese investment in the HoA but also to promote regional peace, security, and development.

#### 4. Strategic Importance of the Horn of Africa

Until recently, the Horn of Africa has been classified as one of the most volatile regions in the world. The region has experienced many kinds of conflicts either inter-state or intra-states conflicts with huge ramifications for international peace and security.

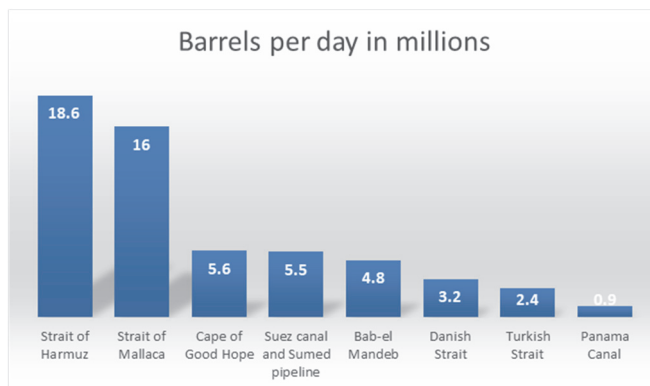
Interestingly, the horn of Africa boasts of a huge geostrategic significance to the world due to the following factors:

The first strategic importance of the HoA is its location which is sandwiched along international shipping routes of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden as well and the Indian Ocean. This is the main shipping route that connects Asia, Africa, and Europe. Based on information from the United States Institutes of Peace report (USIP, 2022, P.11), it is estimated that about \$ 700 billion worth of goods are transshipped through the Red Sea trade route annually (USIP, 2022, P.11).

The second strategic significance of the Horn of Africa is “its proximity to the oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf and the vibrant profitable paths of transportation of the Bab al-Mandab which is a key international maritime chokepoint and port” (Mabera, 2020, p. 1). Data available indicate that “more than 40% of the global oil vessels pass through the Bab-el Mandeb a major international maritime checkpoint” (cited in Dahir, 2019, p. 6).

The Bab-el Mandeb is an important link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal (www. world oil chokepoint, 2015). It is estimated that in 2006, about 3.3 million barrels of oil passed through the strait per day. (www.world oil chokepoint, 2015).

**Table 1:** Provides details on the volume of petroleum that passes through the selected maritime trade routes in the world in 2016.



**Source:** Compiled by the authors based on data from statista.com

The Third strategic significance of the Horn of Africa is its ability to conduct important international initiatives by international and regional powers. According to Dazi-Héni and Gouriellec (2021, p. 3), the Horn of Africa was instrumental in the contemporary international system due to four important extra-regional initiatives such as the US-led Global War on Terrorism, the global fights against maritime piracy, China's New Silk Road Initiative, and the War in Yemen (Dazi-Héni and Gouriellec, 2021). Additionally, the migration policy of the European Union has equally made the HoA a strategic area. Mesfin 20019, opined that the determination of the European Union's urgency policy to limit the flow of migrants has led to huge investment in governance, sustainable development, climate change, and immigration in the HoA (Mesfin 2019).

The fourth strategic significance of the HoA is the existence of abundant natural resources.

Mesfin 2019, the Horn of Africa region is endowed with resources such as crude oil, and other raw materials such as potash, lithium, and diamond with huge Chinese investment. Additionally, uranium and gold as well as Rare Earth Elements (REE), an important component for the manufacturing of batteries for electric cars, cell phones, high-tech weapons, and wind turbines, can all be found in the HoA region (Ahmed, 2020). The Additional natural resources such as the Nile River in the HoA region which is shared by 11 countries with 86% of its water flowing from Ethiopia.

The final significance of the HoA region is its huge economic viability. Dahir 2019, opined that access to the market notably Ethiopia's large and growing markets not forgetting the huge market of the central African market has equally increased the importance of the region. (Dahir 2019). The region boasts \$281.49 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020 according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (Iiss.org, 2021). In Addition to the 282 million population, the large geographical territory coupled with the abundant resources has the potency to attract huge investment. The economic viability of the Horn of Africa is undisputed.

In a nutshell, the Horn of Africa region has a huge strategic significance to the world economy despite its protracted conflict, volatile security, and huge underdevelopment. The significance of the region has led to geopolitical rivalry and competition for control and influence among major international players.

## **5. The Security Situation and the Geopolitical Dynamics in the Horn of Africa**

The Horn of Africa for some time now has been a hotspot for instability and insecurity for decades leading to persistent development challenges. According to Zhao 2018, peace and stability are the only conditions for development and prosperity for any nation (Zhao, 2018). The strategic significance of the HoA makes the security situation worrisome for the international community as well as the African Union. This security situation can be classified into two dimensions ie. Internal and external dimensions. The internal dimension typically has to do with wrangling among sister states within the HoA region, while the external dimension concerns competition and rivalry among international actors in the Horn of Africa such as (the USA, France, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey), and the new player China.

Internally, from the 1950s to date, the Horn of Africa has encountered several devastating inter-state wars, notably the Somali wars of 1964, 1977-78, 2006-9, the Kenya-Somali war of 1963, the Uganda-Tanzanian war of 1978-79, and the Ethiopian-Eritrean border war of 1998-2000. (<https://thearabweekly.com>). The recent development of competition in the HoA can be described as a chessboard of unique geopolitical rivalry among international actors and regional powers in the Horn of Africa. The advent and existence of international actors with strategic and geopolitical interests in the Horn of Africa have truly complicated the security situation in the region. The situation can be described as hot magma beneath the earth's crust only waiting to explode and overflow with time. Unless all international actors can manage their rivalry based on international law coupled with the territorial integrity of all countries in the region with the support of the African Union, it is only a matter of time before this explodes. Vertin 2019 described the dynamism of international rivalry in the HoA as the "new scramble for Africa" (Vertin, 2019), while Mahari

described it as the “great game” (Mahari, 2019). Consequently, the effect of this rivalry and competition has dramatically changed the geopolitical landscape for peace, security, governance, and development of the region. The region has in recent times seen the proliferation of seaports, military installations, and possibly a huge influx of foreign direct investment, mostly from the USA, China, and Russia.

In a nutshell, the current geopolitical dynamism in the Horn of Africa can be classified into four categories such as power projection and scramble for military bases, competition for commercial ports, the Nile rivalry, and the regional landscape of countries within the region.

According to the UN special envoy for Africa, “the region has long been a focus of the United Nations plans for investment. However, the region is confronted with key challenges, such as long-standing civil conflicts and political instability, extreme poverty, and climate vulnerability. Notwithstanding, the region equally offers great opportunities for rapid economic growth in many countries, young and dynamic populations, as well as momentum for regional cooperation. Achieving the region’s vast potential demand for a collective strategy and approach that will deal with the shared challenges confronting the region in a coordinated manner by all international and regional actors (dppa.un.org, 2018).

## **6. China's Strategy for Stability, Development, and Governance in the Horn of Africa**

Security, development, and governance in the Horn of Africa are the primary responsibility of all the countries in the region with support from the IGAD, the African Union, and other international partners. First and foremost, nations in the region must invent a new collective effort for conflict resolution and strategies that can ensure regional stabilization, social progress, and economic empowerment badly needed by the huge youth in the region. China for some time has offered various conflict resolution and development assistance to the region. On a visit to Kenya in January 2022, Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated “The China government is prepared to recommend a new “Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa” to assist regional nations to address issues of insecurity, underdevelopment, and governance (www.xinhuanet.com/africa, 2022), in the Horn of Africa region.

According to the Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi, to show China’s seriousness and preparedness regarding the situation in the Horn of Africa region China would assign a special envoy to the region. The sole aim of this envoy is to foster peace in the turbulent region as well as share political consensus and coordinate all security and development actions. Additionally, China will shift its focus on the continent from infrastructure to trade. This shift in China’s focus from infrastructure to trade is due to the cry among the international community of mounting Chinese debts to African countries (www.Reuters.com, 2022).

Understanding stability as the necessary condition for development, the head of China’s Department for African Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wu Peng, in conformity to China’s position has also tabled two considerations necessary for achieving security and accelerated growth in the Horn of Africa. According to Wu Peng, the first such consideration was to respect the sovereignty of the countries in the region, while supporting them to come out with pragmatic suitable for their conditions to achieve lasting peace. Additionally, countries in the region must also work closely to eliminate all forms of foreign interference while allowing HoA countries in the region to resolve their existing and recent security challenges in their way. (www.xinhuanet.com/africa, 2022). Wu Peng further stated political stability and good governance are the necessary fundamentals for economic development and social progress, without which there can be no sustainable and solid development. The second consideration according to Wu Peng, is that China stands ready and eager to reinforce evidence-based collaboration with all state regions for the promotion of regional economic development coupled with laying a compact foundation for regional peace and stability (www.xinhuanet.com/africa, 2022). Security concerns and instability continue to pose a serious threat to development in the HoA region.



Ethiopian-based international relations and political analyst, Eyob Belachew, opined that the Horn of Africa continues to be one of the “most volatile regions in the world” ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022). Belachew, further added, “The Horn of Africa has been afflicted by inter-state and intra-states conflicts and proxy wars mostly due to geopolitics, geo-strategically, and also geo-economic factors” ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022), for far too long and this must stop for the region to enjoy the wind of 21<sup>st</sup>-century development agenda. The Horn Africa region has experienced traditional and non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, and international maritime piracy, as well as an unprecedented proliferation of small and light weapons. Traditional security threats such as Cross-border conflicts have also had regional ramifications on development, peace, and security. To make matters worse persistent natural disasters such as droughts, flooding, as well as locust invasions coupled with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have all complicated the paths of the region's efforts toward peace, development, and good governance ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022).

Therefore, China's Strategy for Stability, Development, and Governance in the Horn of Africa is vital among others. The cooperation has been advanced to the strategic level and promotes both China and Horn of Africa region countries' development and governance collaboration. It has aimed to benefit the people of the Horn of Africa economically and in peace and security.

## 7. China's Contemporary Strategies for the Horn of Africa

China has been playing an active role in assisting regional initiatives to address the security, development, and governance menace in the Horn of Africa.

During his new year visit to Kenya in 2022, China's foreign Ministers, Wang Yi outlined that “notwithstanding the unique strategic location and development opportunities of the Horn of Africa, the region in recent times has encountered flashes of blistering problems and flare-ups of wars and hostilities, which runs contrarily to the interest and aspiration of the citizens of the region which must be stopped ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022). According to Wang Yi, China is ready to propose a new outlook that will support regional efforts to achieve long-term stability and social progress in the Horn of Africa region. Wang Yi further added the “core of China's new outlook is to support countries in the region to stay out of any form of geopolitical competition (neutrality) between major international actors while keeping their fate in their own hands” ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022). Chinese officials have outlined three major important priorities areas that are crucial for stability, development, and governance in the region. These priority areas are:

- First, countries in the Horn of Africa region must reinforce intra-regional dialogue as a measure to stun all security challenges. This proposal envisages inter-regional dialogue as a tool for total security in the region. The Horn of Africa is composed of countries with homogenous cultures, and economic, historical, and linguistic identities. The nations should therefore employ this as a tool for cooperation.
- Secondly, the region must also speed up regional recovery efforts as a tool to stunned developmental challenges. This region has equally experienced similar economic and developmental challenges, recovery efforts have thus been very slow. Leaders of the region must work together to accelerate complete development in the region.
- Thirdly, the region must further discover effective ways to overcome governance challenges. Issues of governance continue to be a major challenge to all the countries in the region. It is high time for countries in the region to find a suitable mode of government application to the unique needs of each country taking into consideration the overall peace and security of the region.
- Finally, the region shall promote regional and international cooperation, particularly with China to address regional peace-building security and other issues. China continues to offer itself as a viable partner for the development of the Horn of Africa region. China also serves as a model for development for the entire African continent. However, the Horn of Africa

region must ensure that all cooperation with China will offer the most comparative advantage to the nations in the Horn of Africa region.

The overall security concerns of the Horn of Africa are complicated with many competing internal and external actors, and a possible solution must be constructive, systematic, and efficient with the view to ensuring long-term regional development and stability.

Chinese initiative will play an important part in the whole peace-building and development agenda in the Horn of Africa region. China has also requested to offer a platform for security and development in the Horn of Africa region, taking into consideration China's experience as an emerging country through peaceful means. To that effect, the Horn of Africa regions must take a clue from Chinese experience in security, development, and governance. According to African experts Adhere, Beijing's foreign policy non-belligerence can be an asset and should serve as a galvanizing voice in the search for sustainable peace, development, and governance in the Horn of Africa region ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022).

## **8. China's Development Approach in the Horn of Africa**

The pan-Africa think tank group based in Kenya, the Africa Policy Institute has asserted in their recent reports that from the launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, African countries have benefited immensely from various critical infrastructure developments notably, dams, ports, railways, roads, industries, telecommunication, which has boosted energy into African industrialization and development drive. The report further stated, "Kenya in less than a decade can boast of a new 670-kilometer modern Railway which connects the port city of Mombasa to the inland port city of Naivasha ([www.africapi.org/2022](http://www.africapi.org/2022)), as well as the Mombasa-Nairobi SGR route. The effect of China's OBOR initiative has resulted in many industries in various parts of the Horn of Africa region. These industries have boosted African industrialization drive while also providing employment opportunities for many youths.

Another outcome of China's development approach in the region is the construction of a 752.7 km-long Ethiopia-Djibouti railway that links Ethiopia to Djibouti port. In 2021 a total of US\$86.13 was recorded as revenue, a 37.5 % increase from 2020 ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022). China's economic cooperation has a vital role in the citizens' lives in Kenya: For example, people are benefiting from investment, industrial developments, infrastructures, education, institutional developments, and social sectors with the help of the Chinese.

Additionally, China has been assisting countries in the Horn of Africa region in dealing with natural disasters. For much of 2019 and 2020, when Ethiopia suffered her worst desert locust invasion in 25 years, China also donated batches of what the Ethiopian government labeled as "timely and much-needed" anti-locust materials ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022).

In September 2021, about 945 tons of rice were donated by the Chinese government to Kenya when the latter declared a drought which was the result of a natural disaster for distribution to the 2.5 million people who were affected by the disaster and required humanitarian assistance.

In connection with the COVID-19 pandemic which has untold economic effects on many developing economies in the world, China on her part donated various ant—pandemic vaccines and medical supplies to the entire Horn of Africa region. ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022)

In 2015, China's Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA), began implementing many programs in Ethiopia, aimed at assisting the vulnerable in society such as refugee children, which also attests to China's zeal to eradicate poverty in the Horn of Africa region. As of 2020, about 130,000 Ethiopians had benefited from CFPA ([www.xinhuanet.com/africa](http://www.xinhuanet.com/africa), 2022). China has been providing economic development for the Horn of Africa countries, for example, cooperating with South Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia countries for so long decades.

## 9. Challenges Opposing China’s Approach to the Horn of Africa Region

Despite Chinese cooperation at various levels some challenges can negatively impact the relations and influence the processes of cooperation toward peace, stability development, and governance. The driving factors and challenges of China and the Horn of Africa region are more related to political instabilities, terrorist and insurgent movements, lack of technological capacity, and poor cooperation from the region's member countries. One major challenge for China’s initiative for peace, security, and development in the Horn of Africa region is the current scramble for military bases in the region. The power projection drive of a country is prompted by geopolitical competition in the international system. From the view of Markowitz and Fariss 2018, the intensity of geopolitical competition that confronts a state will propel that state to build its power projection capabilities Markowitz and Fariss 2018. Consequently, in recent times the geopolitical dynamics in the Horn of Africa have resulted in a power projection by international actors to establish military bases and deployment of external militaries in the region. Military bases have been established in the region most importantly in the coastal states of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean. Several experts have documented the presence of regional and international security actors and foreign military installations in the region. Neil Melvin 2019, opined that there are a total of 19 foreign military bases in that small Horn of Africa region. These bases have been established by international and regional actors as listed in the table below:

**Table 2:** Countries with military bases in the Horn of Africa

No.	Name of the foreign country	Name of military base	Country of military base	Year established
1	USA	Lemonnier base	Djibouti	2002 takeover from France
		Baledogle	Somalia	1992
		Manda Bay	Kenya	1980
2	United Kingdom	Arbaminch	Ethiopia	2009
		Nanyuki	Kenya	1945
		Baidoa, Mogadishu	Somalia	1960/61
3	France		Djibouti	1932
4	Germany		Djibouti	2002
5	Japan		Djibouti	1950s
6	China		Djibouti	2017
7	Italy		Djibouti	2014
8	Israel	Mt. Soira, Massawa, and Dahlak Archipelago	Eritrea	2012
9	Spain	The national military support base	Djibouti	1893
10	Turkey	Mogadishu	Somalia	2017
11	Saudi Arabia		Djibouti	2015
12	United Arab Emirate		Djibouti	2015
		Berbera	Somaliland	2015
		Mogadishu	Somalia	2015-2018
		Assab	Eritrea	2015

**Sources:** Compiled by the authors based on secondary data (Vertin, 2019).

The table above visibly illustrates overseas military bases in the region. In total, there are 12 foreign players with various military bases in the Horn of Africa region. Any effort for peace, security, and development must be constructive in nature and content with input from all these actors. There are nine (9) military bases in Djibouti alone, with others spread in other countries in the region. This will seriously harm any efforts by China for security, development, and governance without their effort. These countries form part of the stakeholders of security and development in the region, without their input security and development will continue to be a problem in the region. For China to achieve its intention for security in the region, China must act as an honest security and development

initiator as well as a global leader with great power responsibilities for the region.

Additionally, information available indicates Russia is similarly in the process of setting up a military base in the region. "Russian and Eritrean officials have agreed in September 2018 to establish a Russian logistics base at one of Eritrea's ports" (Vertin, 2019, p. 16). The existence of these military bases is a huge challenge to the efforts of China to ensure security, development, and governance in the region, it is not properly managed and can escalate the already tense situation in the region for a possible third world war on African soil.

When FOCAC first began in 2000, peace and security were not part of the agenda. While African nations asked their Chinese counterparts. Today, the picture is radically different, and China is actively involved in several African peacekeeping operations. Wang Yi, China's Foreign Affairs Minister, visited Africa in January 2022, and late November 2021. Matters of Peace and security were high on his agenda, as evidenced by China's statement that it will designate a Special Representative for the Horn of Africa to work toward Regional Peace and development. ([www.accord.org.za](http://www.accord.org.za), 2022). The Dakar China/Africa Action Plan 2022-2024 lays out a series of planned interactions in nine important sectors, including military and police collaboration, counterterrorism, and law enforcement. China has the potential to be a constructive force for peace, stability, and development in Africa, but African citizens should be at the forefront of these discussions ([www.accord.org.za](http://www.accord.org.za), 2022). As stated, China hopes to fully collaborate with regional partners to ensure stability, development, and proper control in the Horn of Africa region.

China's planned Initiative for Peaceful Development, stability, and improved governance in the Horn of Africa might greatly reduce conflict intensity and bring relief to millions of people whose fate is in the balance due to war and underdevelopment. Despite its natural resource wealth, strategic location, and cultural diversity, the Horn of Africa remains one of the continent's most conflict-prone regions.

Political power conflicts and political squabbles have driven the region's governments into continual turmoil, resulting in irreparable societal and governance breakdowns. Other kinds of violence in the region include extremism, piracy, and the proliferation of small and light weapons. As if that weren't sufficient, the Horn also continued to serve as a staging ground for cross-border clashes with regional implications. Security is becoming increasingly dangerous due to the disintegration of statehood in various Horn of Africa countries. The majority of Africans appreciate China's collaboration with Africa, notably on issues of peace, security, and development. As a result, countries in the region should take advantage of citizens' goodwill and use multilateralism to boldly confront current challenges. However, long-term peace and stability are dependent on the collective efforts of all countries in the region. The creation of a sustainable atmosphere for security, development, and governance in the Horn of Africa should not be the exclusive preserve of external actors. Regional actors must shoulder the leadership responsibility, coupled with external support, to generate enabling conditions toward breaking the challenge of conflict ([chinadaily.com](http://chinadaily.com), 2022), in the region to ensure accelerated development in the region.

Internal security challenges such as ethnic strife and terrorism continue to exist throughout the Horn of Africa. Terrorist attacks have occurred in Somalia among other places. The political and economic situation in Somalia continues to deteriorate as a result of the militant group al-Shabaab, which is affiliated with the al-Qaeda movement and is spreading fear and insecurity. The Horn of Africa has, without a doubt, become a place of enormous turbulence and volatility. Similarly, the interim government's politics, as well as the political crisis in Somalia and North Sudan's civil instability, is also a critical challenge. However, some countries, such as Ethiopia and Kenya have been collaborating with the Chinese in areas of peace and stability.

China has cooperated with the Horn of Africa in tackling issues of security, development, and governance. In the face of a slew of traditional and non-traditional security threats, all states in the region must create new conflict resolution strategies to ensure stability. The continent's progress is jeopardized by security uncertainties and instability. Interstate and intrastate conflicts, such as proxy warfare, have plagued the Horn of Africa, owing to geopolitics, geo-strategically, and economically.

To address security issues, the region should improve intra-regional discussion; to address development issues, it should speed regional revitalization; and to address governance issues, it should investigate viable solutions.

China's proposal has the potential to contribute significantly to the peace and development process. China's foreign policy for the region can be a benefit and must also be used as a stimulating voice in the search for workable peace and security, and development for the Horn of Africa region (www.xinhua.com, 2022).

## 10. Conclusion

Horn of Africa and China cooperation is an essential and unique strategic position and great development potential. Hotspot concerns have intensified in recent years, occasionally erupting into wars and conflicts that completely go against the aspirations of the people of the region, and it is about time not to allow these to linger on. China, on the other hand, has continued to show its preparedness to institute what she called the "Initiative of Peaceful Development in the Horn of Africa" and assist regional states in resolving the tripartite issues of security, development, and governance to help the region achieve long-term stability, peace, and prosperity. To overcome security concerns, intra-regional dialogue must be improved among all countries in the region. Nations in the region must put an end to regional competitiveness and champion a pathway of togetherness, live harmoniously, and share responsibilities on matters of mutual concern for socio-economic development and regional growth. The fate of the region for security, development, and governance wholly depends on the collective efforts of all states in the Horn of Africa.

China's proposal for the convening of a regional-wide peace, security, and development conference with the support of the African Union and all other stakeholders will help stop the bleeding in the region. This will offer the opportunity to undertake in-depth discussions, create political consensus, and coordinate joint activities. *China has also appointed a Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa* and is willing to provide the necessary support for this process (www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa, 2022). China's renewed efforts for sustainable peace, development, and governance in the Horn of Africa region can be of significance to the attainment of sustainable peace and stability in the region. However, persistent tension of conflicts, political instabilities, and poor institutional responses seem to affect all efforts for peace and stability in the region. Recent North Sudan conflicts, Somalia terrorist movements, South Sudan clan conflicts, and domestic conflicts in Ethiopia seem to be critical in this wise. All these situations are critical factors for Chinese cooperation in the Horn of Africa region.

Finally, China's ability to involve all international actors in this security, development, and governance initiative will also be a plus for the reputation of China as a player in international development peace, and security, as well as in the Horn of Africa region. Looking at the number of international players who are active with various military bases in the Horn of Africa region, any initiative for stability and development should be a constructive and collaborative approach since they all have a hand in the situation in the Horn of Africa region. The Chinese approach is vital to achieving the desired peace, security, development, and governance in the Horn of Africa region.

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