

# Effects of Ethiopia's landlocked status on ties with its neighbours

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## Abstract

This study looks at Ethiopia's landlocked status and the economic, security, and political implications for the country's relations with its neighbors. Furthermore, it addresses potential threats arising from the implications as well as potential solutions. Ethiopia lost its sea outlet after 1991. As a result, it is incurring significant costs to cover port fees and other related costs. Ethiopia's economy is suffering as a result of the high cost. A literature review is used as a source of data to investigate the implications of Ethiopia's landlocked status in relation to its ties with neighboring countries. Books, journals, internet materials, and media outlets were consulted in this regard. Furthermore, a key informant interview was conducted to collect up-to-date data and information that supports the findings of the literature review. The security and political aspects are discussed in light of East Africa's security, neighboring countries' interests, and the presence of foreign powers in the region. This study underlines that Ethiopia's landlocked status has implications for its security and political affairs. Ethiopia's landlocked status is primarily due to the country's political leadership. Ethiopia can deal with the consequences of its landlocked status by establishing a stable political system and developing a compatible economic policy. In this regard, Ethiopia should learn from other countries how to overcome the negative effects of landlockedness, as there are developed landlocked countries.

**Keywords:** Economic, Political and Security Implications; Landlockedness; Post-1991 period; Ethiopia

## Argument

The issue of sea outlet has been one of Ethiopia's main concerns throughout its long history as a critical aspect of the country's foreign policy. It was a major source of bloody wars against foreign powers such as the Ottoman Turks, Egypt, and Italy, as a result of which many Ethiopians died (Yacob, 2010). According to Yacob (2010), the post-1991 period marks the end of Ethiopia's access to the sea. One of the prime reasons is a lack of political leadership. In support of this claim, one of the ex-Generals stated that Ethiopia's post-1991 landlocked status can be traced back to the time when the insurgent Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) fought against the military regime. According to him, the group maintained a firm stance that Eritrea was a colony of Ethiopia rather than a part of Ethiopia's sovereign territory, and that it would be liberated from Ethiopia's colonization. To that end, the TPLF fully supported the Eritrean People's Liberation Forces (EPLF) in their fight for independence.

Despite the fact that Ethiopia suffers greatly from a lack of access to the Red Sea, its leaders have chosen to ignore the situation. A typical example is the response of Ethiopia's former Prime

Minister (Meles Zenawi) when asked about the impact of the country's landlocked status. He said, "Port is a commodity, and we can purchase it where it is affordable," (Getachew, 2013; Yacob, 2010). However, as the then-Prime Minister stated, using foreign ports to gain access to the sea was not an easy task; rather, the situation has significant economic, security, and political implications for the country.

Even though Ethiopia can currently conduct its import and export trade primarily through Djibouti, with Port Sudan and Port of Mombasa as alternatives, they are too expensive, and the country has been spending a significant amount of money on port fees. For instance, in 2015 the cost incurred by Ethiopia for Port fees amounts to one-fourth of the country's annual budget of the year (Getachew, 2015) and currently, Ethiopia is spending not less than 3 billion USD annually on Port use. The high cost of port fees has an impact not only on the economy, but also on the lives of Ethiopians. If the country had been able to use its port/s, the port fees could have been used to fund the construction of hospitals, roads, and other infrastructure (Getachew, 2013; Yacob, 2010).

Landlockedness also has an impact on the country's political clout because, when Ethiopia had its own ports, there was no need to use other ports, and the country was more self-sufficient in its actions (Canon, 2017). Due to its landlocked status, Ethiopia is forced to rely on neighboring countries' ports for import and export trade. As a result, any action or decision taken by Ethiopia must not offend the coastal countries, which may use their leverage against it. No matter how important a measure or decision is to Ethiopia, the country must refrain from offending them (Rossiter, 2016). This situation jeopardizes the country's interests. Despite other obstacles to using neighboring countries' ports, port fees have been steadily increasing, and Ethiopia seemed to have no choice but to accept them due to the country's lack of bargaining power as a result of its landlocked status (Rossiter, 2016). This situation weakened Ethiopia's political leverage and kept the country under the influence of its coastal neighbors.

Ethiopia's landlocked status has an impact on its security. The crisis in neighboring countries is one of the security threats (Yacob, 2010). Ethiopia is vulnerable to security threats emanating from the sea because it has no control over the coastal areas of its neighboring countries. As a result, its security is dependent on its neighbors (Canon, 2017; Yacob, 2010). In other words, landlocked countries' security is determined by the strengths and weaknesses of their neighbors. This means that landlocked countries with poor and unstable neighbors are insecure, whereas landlocked countries with stable and strong neighbors are more secure (Ayob, 1978).

Ethiopia is currently attempting to mitigate the effects of its landlocked status. To that end, it has already initiated talks with Djibouti, Sudan, Somaliland, Kenya, and even Eritrea, which has had a no-war and no-peace relationship with Ethiopia for the past two decades (Carmody, 2018). At the moment, diplomatic relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia are improving, and Ethiopia has already begun using Eritrea's Port of Massawa (Maasho, 2018). Furthermore, talks are underway between the two countries about how Ethiopia can use the Port of Assab by paying reasonable fees (Olewe, 2018).

Therefore, this study focuses on Ethiopia's post-1991 landlocked status, as well as the economic, security, and political implications for the country's relations with its neighbors, as well as possible interventions that the country may consider to address the challenges that emerge as a consequence.

## Theoretical insights

Due to a variety of factors, there are clear development differences between and among countries in today's world. One of these is being either landlocked or coastal. As a result of this disparity, some countries, such as the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, are more developed, with high per capita GDP, whereas others in Africa and Asia are developing or least developed (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008). The distinction between these can be analyzed theoretically. Three theories (geography theory, institutional theory, and growth theory) are discussed in this section to explain the reasons for the differences in development levels. The three theories will also be examined in relation to Ethiopia's landlocked status and its implications.

### Geography theory

Geography theory explains geographical differences in growth and development between and among countries. In other words, a country's location can have a significant impact on its economic growth and development. The implications of geographical differences can be seen in terms of coastal and non-coastal (landlocked) countries (Chung, 2014). Coastal countries have easier access to the sea than landlocked countries. Because they are closer to the sea, the costs of using sea transport are lower than in landlocked countries. This means that high transportation costs have a negative impact and cause huge development disparities between and among countries, as landlocked countries incur higher costs than coastal countries (Arvis et al., 2007).

Though landlockedness affects countries' economies in various ways, the impact is magnified in the case of landlocked developing countries (Ariekot, 2016). For example, one of the challenges that landlocked developing countries face when engaging in maritime trade is their remoteness from sea routes or limited access to the sea. Besides that, coastal countries' delays and compliance with problematic import procedures raise trade costs for landlocked countries (Ariekot, 2016). As a result of their landlocked status, overall trade flow into them is significantly reduced, resulting in slow economic growth and development. Furthermore, distance from the sea raises the cost of export trade by increasing the time required to transport locally produced goods to ports (Arvis et al., 2007). In addition to their distance from the sea, landlocked countries' poor domestic and transit infrastructure, as well as their poor transportation coordination system, increase the time required to transport goods from place to place and to the sea, raising the insurance costs of import and export goods (Chung, 2014).

Furthermore, the scarcity of trade corridors is a barrier to landlocked countries' economic growth and development (Arvis et al., 2007). This means that if a country has multiple options for sea access, it will be able to choose the closest and cheapest corridor. However, if the options are limited, the landlocked country will be forced to use them regardless of how far they are, how long they take, or how expensive they are. Besides, the uncertainty of the time required to reach ports of transit states occurs as a result of border delays and a poor port system in coastal states, making it difficult to assess transportation costs (Ariekot, 2016).

### Institution theory

This theory refers to the structures or institutions of a country that influence its development (Chung, 2014). Because institutions are the results of a political process, their function is determined by the nature of the political organs and the distribution of political power in a given country (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008). Institution theory also refers to a country's political power, which controls and decides on issues critical to the country's development (Ariekot, 2016). In other words, differences in the quality of institutions are one of the major differences

in development between and among countries (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008). This implies that countries with weak or corrupt institutions will suffer economic hardship. Only the property rights of the political elites are protected in countries where institutions are corrupted, while the majority of people's individual lives cannot be changed for the better. Only the elites' investments generate economic growth under such a system, but they do not add value to the country's long-term development. Strong institutions, on the other hand, have a well-organized economic structure and better opportunities for economic growth and development than weak institutions. Furthermore, in well-organized countries, resources are distributed fairly among the people, as are development outcomes (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008).

There are three types of institutional theory: economic, political, and cultural (Chung, 2014). Economic institutions are critical in determining a country's economic incentives, as well as related economic activities and outcomes (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008). For example, protecting citizens' property rights is one of the most effective ways to ensure the efficient use and distribution of resources. The efficient use of resources enables a country to achieve high economic outcomes, which leads to rapid economic growth and development. Economic institutions, because of their impact, most importantly help to regulate the distribution of political power and resource allocation in a country, provided that economic institutions operate independently and without undue political interference (Jager, 2004).

Political institutions refer to the type of government, democracy versus dictatorship, and other aspects of administration. As the term implies, political institutions are directly related to political power (Toye, 2008). Political power has a direct impact on an economy's growth and development trajectories because the group with more political power can choose the set of economic institutions for themselves regardless of whether they achieve greater economic growth and development or not. In other words, people who hold political power develop a country's economic policy. This scenario is more realistic in countries where democratic institutions are in their infancy and political power is unrestricted (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008; Chung, 2014). Religions and beliefs are regarded as factors influencing an economy's growth and development from a cultural institutional standpoint. Some religions and beliefs, for example, may encourage people to work and save more, allowing a country to achieve higher economic growth and development (Toye, 2008).

Moreover, institution theory asserts that institutions can assist a country in overcoming the shortcomings of geography theory in the sense that geographically disadvantaged (landlocked) countries can compensate by developing strong institutions and infrastructure that enhance maritime trade and significantly reduce the cost of sea transport. Furthermore, these countries can bridge the gap by establishing a strong and stable political system capable of effectively managing economic activity and ensuring equitable distribution of resources among people (Toye, 2008).

### Growth theory

This is a theory that deals with factors that are important in a country's development. There are two types of growth theories: exogenous and endogenous (Chung, 2014). According to the exogenous model, economic growth and development are determined by external factors (Engle et al., 1983). This means that the factors are unaffected by other system variables such as labor, technological changes, the availability of raw materials used in the production process, and the supply and demand for the goods produced (Jager, 2004).

As a result, economic growth within an economy is influenced by what happens outside the economy, as opposed to the internal or endogenous growth model. An economy can grow indefinitely by utilizing already available items in the system such as existing technology, the rate of technological advancement, the saving rate, and investment in education, among other things (Engle et al., 1983). In general, given the fixed nature of labor and technology, economic growth can halt at some point as ongoing production reaches a state of equilibrium due to an increase in internal demand. Once equilibrium is reached, exogenous factors come into play to either increase or decrease economic growth (Jager, 2004).

In comparison, the institutional theory is more applicable for a given country's economic growth and development than the growth theory because the outcome of the geography and growth theories will be negatively impacted unless there is an appropriate institutional setup in a given country (Ariekot, 2016). By the same logic, geographical factors are less important than institutional factors in determining growth (Ariekot, 2016; Jager, 2004). This is because, in the current global situation, there are countries with better geographical positions but are poor due to weak institutional standing, such as Somalia and Eritrea.

On the other hand, some countries, such as Switzerland, Luxembourg, Andorra, and Liechtenstein, are geographically disadvantaged (landlocked) but developed due to their strong and well-organized institutional structures (Getachew, 2015; Yacob, 2010). This is because a country's geographical conditions largely determine its early stage of economic development. After industrialization and technological improvement are attained, the significance of geographical factors has decreased. Landlocked countries, for example, can use air transport to mitigate the negative effects of a lack of or limited access to the sea. Changing conditions may amplify the positive economic effects of institutional factors in some ways (Chung, 2014). As a result, in the context of current global economic realities, one could argue that institutional theory is more important than geography theory.

When we compare geography and growth theories, access to the sea is the primary source of growth for a country. However, according to growth theory, the sources of growth include factors such as innovation, capital accumulation, and technological advancement. Growth theory takes into account both exogenous and endogenous variables (Engle et al., 1983). According to the current globalization trend, the importance of technology for growth is increasing. Technology advancements may mitigate the negative effects of geographical disadvantages on growth. For example, the use of air transport has significantly reduced the geographical advantage of access to the sea because sea transport is not the only effective way of promoting international trade (Jager, 2004).

As a result, growth theory is more applicable or provides more growth options than geography theory. Nonetheless, in the case of the growth theory, the magnitude of the variables is uncertain because they are easily influenced by external forces such as government intervention and changes in the business cycle (Chung, 2014; Jager, 2004). Long-term growth forecasts must thus be adjusted when external factors change.

According to the findings from the literature review and theoretical frameworks, Ethiopia is a landlocked country with a weak economy, and the majority of its institutions that could support its economy are in their infancy.

Geographic theory is applicable to analyze the implications of Ethiopia's landlockedness in the post-1991 period because Ethiopia's geographic location placed the country in a disadvantaged position in accessing benefits from international and regional markets. In other words, geography

theory aids in seeing the various paths Ethiopia must take to mitigate the negative effects of its landlocked status (Engle et al., 1983). Furthermore, because institutions play critical roles in mitigating the negative effects of landlockedness on the country, it is appropriate to apply the concepts included in institution theory because it gives us a hint as to the type and nature of institutions that Ethiopia requires to mitigate the effects of landlockedness. On the other hand, institution theory helps in understanding how to build strong institutions to promote development (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008). Furthermore, because the elements incorporated in growth theory, such as endogenous and exogenous growth models, are required to bridge the gap created by the country's landlocked status, the concepts and analyses enshrined in growth theory must be applied (Engle et al., 1983). Factors both inside and outside the economy that have a positive or negative impact on Ethiopia's economy are thus critical to overcoming the impact of landlockedness (Chung, 2014).

### Research Approach

As the topic requires in-depth comprehension and a detailed description of landlockedness, a qualitative research approach and design was used in this study. This approach and design's main advantage is that it can increase our understanding of landlockedness from both a global and national perspective (Klotz & Prakash, 2008). To determine what has been done, said, and written about Ethiopia's landlocked status in the past and its effects, a thorough review of the literature was conducted. In this regard, books that have been written about the subject as well as a variety of sources, including journals, articles, internet resources, and media outlets, have been used.

Key informant interviews with experts and representatives from relevant organizations, including the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's (FDRE) Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense and the Eastern Africa Standby Force, were also conducted in order to support the data derived from the literature review and conduct a comparative analysis of the past data with the present and updated one. Interviews were also conducted with a lecturer in political economy at Addis Ababa University.

The study used thematic coding to organize the information gathered from key informants, document reviews, and audio-visual sources. Thus, by combining the findings and discussions, the data were analyzed using thematic content analysis.

### Landlockedness: Results

The authorities are to blame for Ethiopia's landlocked status after 1991. As a result of their failure to uphold Ethiopia, the nation lost its seaport (Yacob, 2010). A crucial right that is important for the nation's economic, security, and political interests was taken away from it by the leaders of the post-1991 era (Yacob, 2010; Getachew 2015). According to one of the officials interviewed, EPRDF leaders were not aware of the drawbacks associated with being landlocked at the time they allowed Eritrea to secede from Ethiopia by controlling the Ports of Massawa and Assab. The same source added that this country's disadvantage resulted from a lack of awareness of the advantages of having access to the Sea. This, however, is not a convincing defense for the claim that the EPRDF leaders were ignorant of the advantages of having a sea outlet and the drawbacks of being confined to land. This is because the top EPRDF figures at the time, like the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, had university-level education backgrounds and were able to comprehend the benefits of securing access to sea outlets.

Meles Zenawi and other prominent EPRDF leaders of the TPLF were frequently traveling to the US and Europe for political negotiations and other related missions when the TPLF was an insurgent group. Due to this exposure, it is reasonable to assume or argue that they were aware of national development and the factors contributing to it, one of which was unrestricted access to the global market through sea outlets. Additionally, Meles Zenawi, the EPRDF's leader and supreme decision-maker, was renowned for his political and economic analysis and acumen (De-Waal, 2012; Jones & Carabine, 2013). As a result, the leaders were able to comprehend the problems related to access to the sea outlets. They had the opportunity and full authority to negotiate on the matter, especially in the case of Assab during the Algiers negotiation process and the secession of Eritrea (Yacob, 2010).

Meles Zenawi's response to a question about Ethiopia's landlocked status following Eritrea's secession is one of the statements that indicate the EPRDF leaders' desire to turn Ethiopia into a landlocked nation.

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“At this time, we no longer use the ports in Massawa and Assab. If we don't use the two ports, we lose nothing. In terms of development and growth, Ethiopia experienced its quickest results ever. Due to the fact that we can use the ports of our neighbors, being landlocked does not make us poor. So, there's no need to lament Ethiopia's geographic isolation. We cannot and should not suffer from being a landlocked nation. Ethiopia was indigent before we had ports. Ports are currently unavailable, but development is being made. Therefore, development can happen without a port.”

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Aside from that, the EPRDF made its own political choice rather than putting the question of Eritrea's separation from Ethiopia up for public debate. The outcome of the secession process might have been very different if the Ethiopian people had been properly consulted on the matter. This implies that Ethiopia's sea outlets were lost as a result of serious mismanagement and malice on the part of its leaders in the years following 1991.

Ethiopia and Eritrea's diplomatic ties have already resumed, and it is hoped that they will grow in the future. At the moment, these ties appear promising. Eritrea is strategically more advantageous to Ethiopia than other nearby coastal states due to proximity and other factors, such as shared cultural and religious values. Of all the ports in East Africa, Assab is the one that is closest to Ethiopia. In light of this, using the Port of Assab is the best option for Ethiopia (Yacob, 2010; Getachew 2015). As a result, Ethiopia should work to realize the use of Eritrean Ports and develop their multilateral diplomatic ties. Additionally, the two nations should be able to allow their citizens to travel freely within each nation without the need for a visa or other restrictions to promote increased interaction and the development of closer ties.

Ethiopia has experienced severe economic, security, and political deficits as a result of its landlocked status since 1991. Literature on the subject and data on the extent and severity of the challenges signify that the country cannot easily overcome the issue of its landlocked status unless the related constraints are properly addressed. In order to offset the negative effects of being landlocked, Ethiopia should establish a stable political system and build institutions that enable the country to judiciously use and manage its resources effectively and efficiently.

### Economic Implications

Currently, Ethiopia pays more than 3 billion USD in port fees annually, the majority of which is paid to Djibouti. Since 2000, Ethiopia has paid 1.5 billion dollars annually on average for port services, totaling 27 billion dollars (Getachew, 2013). Given that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance

Dam will cost approximately \$5 billion USD to construct, the aforementioned amount could be used to construct about six Renaissance dams (Wossenu & Shimelis, 2019).

Additionally, the price of demurrage (storage) for goods at ports is so high that Ethiopia's imports have become too expensive or unaffordable. The Ethiopian Railway Corporation's success in negotiating lower demurrage costs with Djibouti suggests that Ethiopia could gain an advantage if it is able to expand the number of trade routes or ports to increase its chances of securing reasonable port fees. To this end, Ethiopia should work with the coastal states to chart means of developing the necessary infrastructure that facilitates enhanced import and export trade. It is thus of paramount importance if the country establishes regional integration with neighboring coastal states by jointly constructing railways and road networks that can facilitate trade activities.

The experiences of landlocked European countries such as Switzerland, Luxembourg, Andorra, and Lichtenstein indicate that Ethiopia should update its internal road infrastructure and railways to minimize the time it takes to import and export goods (Getachew, 2015). Moreover, Ethiopia should build its capacity to export goods on which value is added and easy to transport by air so that it can minimize its dependence on sea trade (Getachew, 2013).

The poor road infrastructure facility linking Ethiopia to Djibouti is increasing the time taken to import goods to the country thereby increasing the price of goods according to one of the informants. In addition, cumbersome transit and border procedures are also main sources of delay increasing the cost of import and export goods thereby increasing the price of goods for consumers (Chung, 2014). Moreover, Ethiopian lorry drivers are not allowed to enter Djibouti for transporting goods rather they stay on Ethio-Djibouti Border when drivers from Djibouti transport goods. This also increases the cost of goods imported to Ethiopia because drivers from Djibouti make them incur extra costs. To avoid these constraints militating against import and export trade, Ethiopian authorities should conduct a series of discussions with their Djiboutian counterparts and other neighboring coastal countries.

Despite earning foreign currency from a variety of exportable goods and other sources, port fees and other costs associated with Ethiopia's landlocked status consume a significant portion of its earnings. For the past three decades, the nation has faced difficulties related to this situation. If the Ethiopian government does not come up with ways to resolve or lessen the issue, it might continue for the foreseeable future (Getachew, 2013; Yacob, 2010). Ethiopia's economic development is constantly constrained by its location as a landlocked country. This may be expressed as moving one step forward and then slipping one step backward, which in effect means that the country has and will have stagnant development.

One of the opportunities for Ethiopia to overcome the shortage of foreign currency is making use of the presence of international organizations in the country. Ethiopia receives foreign currency resulting from its being the seat of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). To sustain the economic benefit obtained from these, the country should maintain its peace and security so that it could efficiently use its economic benefit resulting thereof. If Ethiopia can manage to effectively utilize this advantage, even its neighboring countries can benefit by providing transit and port services. Hence, Ethiopia necessarily needs robust institutions that can boost its capacity to manage foreign currency obtained from international organizations and other sources to offset the negative impacts of its landlockedness.



## Security Implications

Eastern Africa in general and the Horn of Africa, in particular, are among the most volatile conflict regions in the globe (Meala, 2011). Conflict remains a typical feature of the Horn of Africa, particularly in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century (Meala, 2011). The reasons for this are attributed to the following core factors (Ayoob, 1978):

1. The interaction of different cultures in the area. In other words, people with different cultures reside in the region and these cultures contradict each other resulting in conflicts. However, this argument is challenged because there are regions in different parts of the world where people with different cultures lived together peacefully for many years.
2. Countries in the Horn of Africa are not formed voluntarily or through the organic process of state creation. Rather they are formed by colonial powers that controlled the region. In other words, the boundaries of countries in the region are demarcated by the colonial powers disregarding the interests and the culture of the people residing in the area which subsequently resulted in recurrent conflict in the region. Given the current situation in Eastern Africa, this problem is presumed to continue in the future unless countries in the region make efforts to address outstanding problems.
3. Though countries in the region are officially liberated from colonization, external powers still interfere in the internal affairs of countries of the region and create a hostile environment that leads them to conflicts. This situation prevailing in the Horn of Africa is a typical example of the complications that occurred in the process of nation-building in Africa in the post-colonial period.

As Ethiopia is located in a geographic locality close to the Red Sea, which is a strategic hub for military and economic activities, the country is vulnerable to various forms of foreign threats emanating from the area. Since the country lost its sea outlets and currently does not have control over any of its neighboring coastal areas and the whole Red Sea littoral, landlockedness always remains to be a serious security concern. Any threat emanating from the Red Sea coast can easily penetrate Ethiopia's territory and inflict harm (Yacob, 2010).

Moreover, Ethiopia cannot depend on foreign powers such as the US, China, Japan, Saudi, and UAE against possible dangers from the Red Sea area since these countries are focused on protecting and promoting their national interest. Besides, prevailing rivalry particularly between the US and its allies like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, on one hand and, China, on the other hand, pose a potential threat to stability in the Horn of Africa (Mehari, 2019). For the Red Sea serves as a passage for a significant amount of oil and other goods to the world market, it is a strategic location over which the US, other Western powers, Arabs, and others have an interest. The Bab El-Mandeb Strait is the most crucial link between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, which countries in the area need to control to manipulate every activity in the area (<https://www.google.com/search?q=Babel+Mendeb&rlz>).

The multidimensional competition between US and China in Africa has grown significantly, at present with the potential to usher in a new Cold War in Africa and the Red Sea area designated as a war between the two Elephants (Mehari, 2019). Hence, East African countries like Ethiopia should work together and find a way to overcome the negative influence by the US and China.

Another option, according to one informant, for Ethiopia to be in a safer position is to play a vital role to strengthen the capacity of organizations like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Standby Force (EASF). This is because member states

agreed that any threat against one or more member states is considered a direct threat against all member states. In the case of the EASF, though the force is not currently operational as expected, member states like Ethiopia that are landlocked and vulnerable to external threats should work hard to build the capacity of the force to enable it to effectively engage in operations. Unless Ethiopia strengthens the above-mentioned organizations and looks for other means, insecurity will continue to threaten the very existence of the country. Hence, leaders of the country should intensively work and exert utmost effort to restore its right to access the sea. Moreover, they should work hard to realize the country's drive towards establishing a strong naval force that increases its capacity to defend itself against any external threats.

### Political Implications

Throughout most of the 20th century, especially following its anti-colonial struggle and afterward, Ethiopia has been enjoying significant political leverage in Africa in general and Eastern Africa in particular (Rossiter, 2016). This influence was the product of a combination of factors such as its historical significance (Ethiopia is the first African country that ensured its independence against colonial ambitions), population (second largest in Africa), area (one of the largest countries in the Horn), and natural resources endowment (water, strategic location, etc.). However, following the 1993 secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia, Ethiopia lost its strategic importance since it lost access to the sea. Besides, its landlockedness made Ethiopia less independent in its actions (Getachew, 2013).

Landlockedness makes a country unable to deal with problems efficiently. Ethiopia depends on the cooperation of its neighboring coastal states to undertake its import and export trade. However, Ethiopia's status in this regard prompts coastal countries to impose high tariffs that do not take into account the country's capacity to meet this in the face of its weak bargaining power to negotiate affordable rates. Moreover, Ethiopia needs to use the ports of its neighbors if it is necessary to import armaments, which implies that Ethiopia should carefully handle its relations with neighboring coastal states like Djibouti on which it heavily depends. Even if Djibouti is also benefiting from its bilateral relations with Ethiopia, it also exerts considerable influence on the latter (Getachew, 2015). If, for instance, a dispute arises between Ethiopia and Djibouti, and the latter could prevent the former not to use its ports even for a few days, Ethiopia would sustain significant economic, social, and other related damages if such a situation unfolds (Yacob, 2010). So, Ethiopian leaders are obliged to seriously think about this before they decide against the interest of Djibouti even if the latter acts against its interests.

Ethiopia is under the influence of its neighboring coastal states due to its landlockedness. Despite this, the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not yet establish a department that reviews and analyzes the political implications of the country's landlockedness in view of its relations with neighboring countries. At present, there are several foreign powers that roam around the Red Sea area. As a result, the situation calls for taking the threat seriously and taking all necessary measures to handle it. In other words, it is now time for Ethiopia to carefully conduct continuous surveillance of the area to immediately respond to any move that threatens its interests. The fact that a department that reviews and analyzes the political implications of the country's landlockedness is absent implies that the problem is not properly appreciated and dealt with by the Ethiopian government.

Nowadays, Djibouti has become a hub of military bases for different global powers. Due to this, the country is making a significant amount of money from those foreign powers. So far, Djibouti has obtained more than 90% of its foreign income from Ethiopia for using its ports. In addition, Ethiopia provides basic consumer goods and water to Djibouti. However, as Djibouti is currently

earning a significant amount of income from foreign powers, this probably decreases the country's dependence on Ethiopia to generate most of its income. This changing circumstance is most likely to increase Djibouti's influence over Ethiopia. Hence, Ethiopia should figure something out to handle the situation before it is too late.

## Conclusions

The issue of sea outlets was neglected in the post-1991 period as a result of which the problem related to landlockedness remains unaddressed. Hence, the current and future generations of Ethiopia should strive to fix this problem through diplomacy, legal remedy, and any other available peaceful solution. In the post-1991 period, discussions about Ethiopia's landlockedness have been rare and discouraged. Ethiopians should not look at the issue as an attempt to open a Pandora's Box but rather raise and discuss it publicly so that all Ethiopians can understand the negative impacts of landlockedness and the benefits of access to sea outlets and strive to be part of the solution.

Despite the challenges faced and tough struggles made by their predecessors to secure Ethiopia's sea outlet, leaders of the post-1991 years did not keep the legacy but declined to preserve it. Hence, current leaders of the country should not repeat the same colossal mistake but rather should work hard to enable the country to restore its sea outlet or at least secure unrestricted or affordable access to the sea. Landlockedness left Ethiopia with no or limited access to the sea. Currently, the country depends on one or two neighboring coastal countries to get access to the sea and undertake its import and export trade. To reduce its reliance on one or two neighboring countries, Ethiopia needs to have diversified port use.

Ethiopia is incurring significant costs for port fees and related expenses. The port fee is so significant that it is adversely impacting the country's economy. To overcome this, Ethiopia should develop an economic policy that enhances job creation, entrepreneurship, and other activities that can boost its economic performance. As Ethiopia has been experiencing threats due to its landlockedness, the issue of security is critical. To avert this threat, Ethiopia needs to establish smooth diplomatic relations with the neighboring coastal countries and foreign powers in East Africa. Besides, Ethiopia should establish a naval force to protect its security against foreign threats. Moreover, the country should closely work with its neighbors to strengthen the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Standby Force (EASF) to keep its security and the security of member states.

Landlockedness by itself does not result in poverty since there are landlocked countries with developed economies. European countries such as Switzerland, Luxemburg, Andorra, and Liechtenstein are landlocked developed countries. Hence, Ethiopia should draw experiences from these countries to overcome the negative impacts of its landlockedness and bring about development.

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