Ethiopia’s Quest for a Sea Outlet: Developing a Strategy to use Ports of Eritrea and Somaliland, by Brook Hailu Beshah, PhD, Ohio University. Email: beshah@ohio.edu

Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations of the world. This ancient country is characterized by its unique geo-strategic location sandwiched between Africa and the Middle East, and for its traditions, culture, history and home to all three major religions of the world, namely Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The anchor of the Horn is Ethiopia. Given its population and promising current economic growth and developments, Ethiopia needs its own port or ports. An outlet to the sea is still a burning issue of discussion for Ethiopians at home and abroad even to the point of view of connecting it to the very existence of the Ethiopian polity. Hence, the central theme of this talk will investigate Ethiopia’s quest for an outlet to the sea and use of ports accompanied by a suggestion of short and long-term strategies by considering the geo-politics of the Horn Region. The presentation will have the following parts.

**Part I.** Background on the Outlets of the Ethiopian state:
- Commerce and trade in the area; ports of Ethiopia in pre-colonial Horn Region;
- The transition of the coastal province of BahereNegash to becoming an Italian colony: Eritrea;
- Colonialism and state formation in present day Somaliland.

**Part II.** Survey of Ethio-Eritrean and Ethio-Somaliland Relations: 1991-2018
- Survey of Ethio-Eritrean Relations 1991 to 2018;
- Survey of Ethio-Somaliland Relations 1991 to 2018;

**Part III.** Ethiopia: Quest for a sea outlet and the challenge of using ports; options and scenarios will be the main part of the presentation.
- Scenario 1: Long-Term Strategy to Developing own port: Tio and Zeila and the rationale behind this strategy.

**Part IV.** Conclusion
The presentation will wrap up with a current socio-political assessment of Ethiopia, especially the new government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and relations with the Eritrean and the Somaliland governments.