# HORN OF AFRICA BULLETIN

September-October 2017 Volume 29 Issue 5

## The Gulf Engulfing the Horn of Africa?

## Contents



The Horn of Africa Bulletin is a publication of the Life & Peace Institute

**Editorial information**
This publication is produced by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) with support from the Bread for the World, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Church of Sweden International Department. The donors are not involved in the production and are not responsible for the contents of the publication.

**Editorial principles**
The Horn of Africa Bulletin is a regional policy periodical, monitoring and analysing key peace and security issues in the Horn with a view to inform and provide alternative analysis on on-going debates and generate policy dialogue around matters of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The material published in HAB represents a variety of sources and does not necessarily express the views of the LPI.

**Comment policy**
All comments posted are moderated before publication.

**Feedback and subscriptions**
For subscription matters, feedback and suggestions contact LPI's Horn of Africa Regional Programme at HAB@life-peace.org. For more LPI publications and resources, please visit: www.life-peace.org/resources/

**Life & Peace Institute**
Kungsängsgatan 17
753 22 Uppsala, Sweden

**ISSN** 2002-1666

# About Life & Peace Institute

Since its formation, LPI has carried out programmes for conflict transformation in a variety of countries, conducted research, and produced numerous publications on nonviolent conflict transformation and the role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding. The main focus of our work has been on Africa, with the Horn of Africa Programme being established and well-known in the 1990s, not least our work in Somalia. Other initiatives have been carried out in Congo-Brazzaville, Croatia, Sri Lanka and East Timor. We have strengthened the capacity of our civil society partners to address the conflicts in their own context, in some of the most difficult and war-torn countries.

Currently, we run conflict transformation programmes in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions in partnership with local civil society organisations and universities in Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and the DRC. There is also a common programme including publications, policy work and methodology design based in Sweden.

The complex and constantly evolving relations and interactions between the societies and states in the Horn and the countries of the Persian Gulf have significant peace and security implications for the region and globally. Historically, the Red Sea has never functioned as a barrier but has been a bridge allowing the exchange of ideas, goods and even communities. These exchanges and linkages have played a major role in configuring the societies and states on both sides of the Red Sea, and shaping their identities and self-image. The shipping lanes transiting through the Red Sea and the Bab el Mandeb straits are a major transit route for oil shipments and very critical to world trade. The Gulf states are a key destination for labour migration from the Horn, and the remittances from migrants in the Gulf is a source of resilience for millions of households and an important contribution to the balance of payments of several states in the Horn. Three member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-South Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia-are landlocked, which further intensifies the criticality of the Red Sea and the Bab el Mandeb straits for the region.

The Arab states of the Persian Gulf have increasingly garnered attention from media commentators and security analysts as “new actor/s” in the Horn of Africa (Horn). The reference to the Arab states of the Gulf should be understood to refer to the six member states of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council)-Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates/UAE. However, a caveat to underline is that there are important differences between these states and their level of engagement with the wider international system. Four GCC member states – Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait – are the most critical in relation to engagement with the Horn region.

The expanding and deepening economic and financial linkages between the GCC states and the Horn, has tended to receive positive reviews and approbation. However, there are growing concerns and criticism regarding the political and security implications of the engagement of certain GCC states in the Horn. Analysts who emphasize actual and potential negative repercussions of the relations between the GCC and member states of the IGAD point to the possibility that Horn states might be drawn into the tensions between Iran and certain GCC states or the competition between Qatar and the Saudi Arabia-led alliance.[1] There are also more prosaic concerns regarding the potential incompatibility and tensions between the security interests of certain GCC states and states in the Horn. Media reports in Ethiopia tend to view the Saudi-led alliance’s growing military presence in the Horn region with a suspicious eye.

The tensions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia have entangled states in the Horn, with several states aligning themselves with Saudi Arabia against Qatar with the exception of the Somalia Federal Government which has adopted a neutral stance. The recent decision by the governments of Qatar and Ethiopia to sign several agreements on bilateral cooperation-coupled with reports that the government of Qatar has agreed to lend financial support to grand Ethiopian renaissance dam (GERD)-is symptomatic of the dynamic and complex consequences of the interactions between the Gulf and the Horn.[2] This recent development has been interpreted as a Qatari reaction to the Egyptian government’s decision to join the Saudi-led alliance, and in light of the recent breakdown in talks over the dam between the Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia, could lead to the escalation of tensions.

This issue of the Horn of Africa Bulletin (HAB) has sought contributions that would analyse and problematize current and emerging aspects of the relations between states in the two regions. While this issue of the HAB has not been able to source the full roster of articles for the issue,

the authors who have contributed articles have managed to achieve an excellent blend of the descriptive and analytical on the theme of the issue. The article by Mr. Ferras is a critical and provocative overview of the expanding engagement of certain GCC states in the Horn. The article provides a brief overview of the historical and economic linkages between the two regions, and showcases the underlying structural inequalities between the two regional blocs, which coupled with other gaps impose structural limitations on the potential peace and development dividend to be derived from greater GCC engagement with the Horn. The author also explains how the machinery of foreign policy decision making in the GCC and IGAD member states is a key factor in contributing to instability in both regions. Ferras argues that a key missing link in the current situation is the aspect of multilateral coordination and cooperation between the GCC and the IGAD to tackle several pressing peace and security issues in the region.

The article by Mr. Roble is a riveting read and addresses an issue that is often elided in the conventional commentary on the relations between GCC states and IGAD member states. The article describes and also analyses the increasingly tenuous and tension-filled relations between the Somali Federal Government and the administrations of the regional states, which the author links to interests and demands derived from greater GCC involvement in Somalia. The article manages to balance the impact of both external and internal variables in understanding the tensions between the centre and periphery in Somalia, and is useful in showcasing the relevance and prominence of non-state actors in the international relations of the Horn.

The article by Mr. Karim is an interesting analytical overview of the evolving interests and drivers behind the greater engagement of actors such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Republic of Turkey, in the Horn. The author shows how a concatenation of narrowly framed security interests, economic/commercial interests, public diplomacy needs and competitive behaviour and interests, provide the key drivers behind the greater engagement of new actors in the Horn.

The authors of the three articles in-spite of their varying emphases and perspectives also see greater GCC engagement with the countries of the Horn of Africa especially in the realms of peace and security as fraught with potentially destabilizing consequences for the states and societies of the Horn. All of the authors also underline how the expanding and deepening GCC presence in the Horn could potentially destabilize inter-state relations between the member states of the IGAD. Readers of the HAB will enjoy these analytical articles on a very topical issue which will have profound consequences for the Horn of Africa.

Demessie Fantaye, Editor

[1] Henderson, Simon. 2017. ‘A Field Trip to the Front Lines of the Qatar-Saudi Cold War’ in *Foreign Policy*, September, 28, 2017. http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/28/a-field-trip-to-the-front-lines-of-the-qatar-saudi-cold-war/.

[2] ‘Qatar, Ethiopia sign accords to cement bilateral relations’. *Gulf Times*, November 15, 2017.

BAHRAIN,DJIBOUTI,ERITREA,ETHIOPIA,KENYA,KUWAIT,OMAN,QATAR,SAUDI ARABIA,SOMALIA,SOUTH SUDAN,SUDAN,UGANDA,UNITED ARAB EMIRATES,UNITED NATIONS,YEMEN

# Entre le GCC et l'IGAD, les relations bilatérales priment sur l'aspect régional

By Patrick Ferras

Les relations bilatérales entre Etats font partie des fondamentaux des relations internationales. Une des étapes suivantes peut être la création de regroupements régionaux avec notamment des intégrations économiques voire politiques et sécuritaires. Les débats actuels autour de la construction européenne, son évolution sont des marquants importants pour analyser les comportements des acteurs étatiques. Comme l'a rappelé le Président français Emmanuel Macron lors de son discours à l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies, le multilatéralisme (« fort et responsable ») est la solution préconisée et la plus optimale pour trouver des solutions aux problématiques internationales, résoudre les crises[1]. La Péninsule arabique et la Corne de l'Afrique, séparées par la mer Rouge, sont deux blocs régionaux qui restent relativement peu marqués par leurs relations. Si la richesse des uns n'est plus à commenter, la pauvreté des autres ne peut passer inaperçu. Depuis l'accueil par l'Ethiopie des compagnons du prophète qui ont fui l'Arabie saoudite jusqu'aux migrations légales et illégales des pays de la Corne de l'Afrique vers la Péninsule arabique ces dernières années, il y a lieu de constater que les relations existent et pourraient être beaucoup plus soutenues. Il existe des raisons pour comprendre que ces relations restent avant tout bilatérales et auront de grandes difficultés à prendre une dimension régionale, de bloc à bloc.

**Deux Blocs régionaux incomplets**

Le Conseil de Coopération du Golfe (GCC) est composé de six Etats : l'Arabie saoudite, le Bahreïn, les Emirats arabes unis, le Koweït, Oman et le Qatar. Le Yémen est le seul Etat de la Péninsule arabique qui n'appartient pas au GCC. Il a un statut d'observateur. Sa population de 26 millions d'habitants représente plus de 31 % de celle de l'ensemble de la Péninsule arabique. Sa façade maritime permet le contrôle de l'entrée de la mer Rouge à partir du Golfe d'Aden.

L'IGAD comprend sept Etats : L'Ethiopie, le Soudan, le Soudan du Sud, l'Ouganda, le Kenya, Djibouti et la Somalie[2]. Seule l'Erythrée n'appartient plus à l'IGAD. Elle avait quitté cette organisation en 2007 et son retour est bloqué par les membres de cette institution en raison de l'embargo onusien de 2009. Il est surtout empêché par l'Ethiopie qui conserve la présidence tournante depuis 2008. Comme pour le Yémen, sa façade maritime est conséquente et ouvre sur la mer Rouge.

Le GCC et l'IGAD sont donc des blocs régionaux « incomplets » et le Yémen comme l'Erythrée ont pour vocation de les rejoindre comme membre à part entière. L'absence de ses deux Etats au sein des structures déséquilibre l'espace géographique et manque de cohérence.

**L'IGAD et le GCC : un déséquilibre majeur**

Nous pouvons nous focaliser sur les trois dimensions économique, sécuritaire et politique.
De très nombreux analystes étudient le potentiel d'un pays à sa croissance. Cette démarche est insuffisante. Il faut lui associer un critère beaucoup plus réaliste et dimensionnant, le PIB/hb[3]. Celui-ci donne une idée du salaire moyen, de la redistribution de la richesse nationale. Si nous étudions ce critère pour le GCC, nous arrivons à un PIB/hb moyen de 32 400 dollars (courants). De l'autre côté de la mer Rouge, le PIB/hb moyen représente 1 180 dollars[4]. La différence est d'un tel niveau que l'on voit mal ce fossé se combler dans les prochaines décennies. Les ressources pétrolières et gazières sont pour une large responsable de la richesse du GCC. Le faible développement reste l'apanage de l'IGAD.

La puissance militaire est aussi un critère notable. Les budgets de la défense sont importants et les matériels sont récents dans les armées du GCC. Mais les derniers conflits et notamment celui contre le Yémen soulignent le peu de qualité de ces armées et de ceux qui les servent. Du côté de l'IGAD, si les armées ont une expérience opérationnelle certaine, elles sont pour la plupart rustiques et participent de très (ou trop) près à la vie politique voire économique du pays. Les armées du GCC et la brigade de l'Est sont loin d'être des outils cohérents. La présence de garnisons américaines, françaises, allemandes, espagnoles, italiennes, chinoises, japonaises soulignent à l'évidence l'incapacité des deux blocs à générer une politique de défense et donc l'obligation de recourir à des forces armées étrangères pour trouver des solutions aux problématiques sécuritaires régionales (terrorisme, piraterie).

Le poids politique des Etats de la Corne de l'Afrique est négligeable. Ils ne sont membres d'aucun forum. Les pays de la Péninsule arabique sont relativement présents sur la scène internationale (G20 pour l'Arabie saoudite, OPEP[5]).

Peu d'éléments rapprochent ces deux blocs régionaux.

**L'IGAD et le GCC ne sont pas des ensembles intégrés sur le plan économique**
L'IGAD est la moins avancée des huit Communautés économiques africaines. Elle est, en fait, marquée par le couple Ethiopie-Djibouti qui développe une forte activité économique due principalement à l'enclavement. La majeure partie des relations au sein de la Corne de l'Afrique sont bilatérales et il n'existe pas de réels programmes menés par l'IGAD et concernant l'ensemble des membres. De plus, nombre de pays appartiennent à d'autres communautés économiques régionales (COMESA, EAC). Le GCC est un marché commun mais n'a pas réussi à passer à l'étape supérieure (un système financier et économique commun). Il est surtout une base de coopération militaire.

Les deux ensembles n'étant pas des communautés économiques régionales au sens propre du terme, la coopération ne peut être que bilatérale.

**Deux régions crisogènes**
Plus d'un tiers des forces de maintien de la paix des Nations Unies (37.5%) sont déployées (41 446 hommes[6]) et principalement au Soudan et Soudan du Sud. Il faut

rajouter les missions menées par l'Union africaine fortes d'environ 23 000 hommes[7]. Le tableau pour être complet doit comprendre les missions de lutte contre la piraterie, les missions de formation de l'armée somalienne par l'Union européenne. La situation de ni paix ni guerre entre l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée, les crises qui perdurent en Somalie et au Soudan du Sud, le mini-conflit Erythrée – Djibouti ne semblent pas devoir se résoudre rapidement. L'IGAD ne présente pas d'espoir à court terme de stabilisation sécuritaire.

La guerre civile yéménite s'est régionalisée avec l'intervention militaire des pays du GCC (sauf Oman) et dirigée par l'Arabie saoudite. Les raids aériens saoudiens sont particulièrement meurtriers. Depuis que le Qatar a été accusé de soutien au terrorisme, il a été exclu de la coalition.

Les deux zones respectives ne sont pas stabilisées. De surcroît, l'armée de l'air émirienne s'est déployée en Erythrée pour faciliter ses opérations aériennes[8] au Yémen. Issayas Afeworki trouve de nombreux avantages à cette coopération militaire qui n'est pas appréciée à Addis Abeba. L'absence de paix dans les deux régions ne peut que déboucher sur une incapacité à établir des relations entre le GCC et l'IGAD. La volonté saoudienne de disposer d'une installation militaire à Djibouti et celle des EAU au Somaliland ne sont pas des gages rassurants pour la stabilité de la zone[9].

**Des politiques étrangères trop personnalisées**

Elles relèvent des décisions d'un petit nombre de décideurs et ne s'appuient pas sur un outil diplomatique affirmé et reconnu[10]. La visibilité diplomatique est très souvent liée aux seuls intérêts des souverains pour la Péninsule arabique. Cette conception de la politique étrangère déséquilibre les relations quelle qu'elles soient. Elle s'appuie sur une vision à court terme et des financements. Pour l'IGAD, les intérêts nationaux priment et il n'y a pas de cohérence entre membres. Le cas de l'intervention de l'Ouganda au Soudan du Sud alors que l'IGAD négociait un accord de paix est révélateur. Les interventions kényanes et éthiopiennes en Somalie puis l'intégration de leurs contingents nationaux au sein de l'Amisom sont aussi la preuve de vision à court terme.

Le financement des populations musulmanes par les Etats du GCC et les migrations depuis la Corne de l'Afrique pour l'IGAD sont les signes les plus visibles des politiques étrangères. L'absence de leadership régional est un élément prépondérant. L'attitude récente de l'Arabie saoudite et de ses proches alliés contre le Qatar ne prédispose pas à la cohérence d'un bloc[11]. Les mesures demandées par l'Arabie saoudite lors de cette crise en disent long sur son incapacité à se projeter comme un acteur régional responsable. Les rivalités Soudan – Ethiopie – Kenya dans la Corne de l'Afrique ne pourront être génératrices d'une quelconque relation de bloc à bloc tant qu'une nouvelle génération de leaders n'émergera pas. Les tentatives de médiation n'ont pas montré un grand élan de réussite de part et d'autre de la mer Rouge. Le processus de Doha pour le Darfour est au point mort ainsi que la médiation qatarienne sur le différend frontalier Erythrée – Djibouti. L'échec de l'IGAD (et IGAD +) sur la résolution de la crise au Soudan du Sud est consternant mais était prévisible.

**Conclusion**

Il n'y a pas de réelles relations entre l'IGAD et le GCC. Elles restent du domaine bilatéral et s'habillent parfois d'une dimension régionale. Il ne peut y avoir de développement économique sans stabilité, sans paix. Les récentes accusations de l'Arabie saoudite envers un Etat membre du GCC, les divergences des Etats de l'IGAD sur la crise au Soudan du Sud ne sont pas des signes annonciateurs d'une quelconque évolution d'intégration et d'une volonté de parler d'une voix.

Sur le plan international, le GCC est une coquille vide avec une dimension militaire. Quant au traité tripartite de zone de libre-échange en Afrique, il a été signé entre le COMESA, l'EAC et la SADC. Au vu de l'appartenance multiple des Etats dans différentes communautés économiques régionales, l'IGAD est la grande absente de cette ébauche d'intégration économique.

Les activités commerciales, de part et d'autre, de la mer Rouge existent depuis bien longtemps mais demeurent du ressort des Etats. Les migrations, qui représentent un problème fondamental pour les deux régions[12], et la lutte contre le terrorisme auraient pu servir de première étape de coordination et de coopération entre le GCC et l'IGAD.

Il n'y a que peu d'espoir de voir ces deux régions devenir des acteurs régionaux et internationaux.

**Patrick Ferras** a effectué la totalité de sa carrière militaire comme officier renseignement au sein d'unités et d'états-majors de l'Armée de l'air et Interarmées. Il est docteur en géographie spécialité géopolitique de l'Université de Paris 8 (Institut français de géopolitique). Il dirige l'Observatoire de la Corne de l'Afrique (www.csba-ferras.eu).

[1] Discours du Président Macron à l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies (20 septembre 2017). Il s'oppose sur ce point à la politique américaine et notamment au regain de tension bilatérale entre Washington et Pyongyang.

[2] Nous n'étudions pas le cas du quasi-Etat du Somaliland dans cette étude. Il serait un point négatif supplémentaire pour le manque de cohérence de la région.

[3] Pour l'Afrique, le PIB/hb le plus élevé est celui des Seychelles avec 15 390 dollars. Le PIB/hb le plus faible est celui du Burundi avec 303 dollars. Les Etats-Unis et la France ont un PIB/hb respectif de 56 207 dollars et de 36 526 dollars (www.banquemondiale.org).

[4] Les données proviennent du site de la banque mondiale consulté le 27 septembre 2017.

[5] Arabie saoudite, EAU, Qatar, Koweït.

[6] Au 31 août 2017, les Nations Unies déployaient 110 481 personnes. A noter, que la mission au Soudan du Sud devrait être renforcée de 4 000 hommes dans les prochaines semaines (www.un.org, consulté le 29 septembre 2017).

[7] La mission en Somalie (22 000 hommes) et l'Initiative de coopération régionale contre l'Armée de Résistance du Seigneur (1 000 hommes).

[8] Zeenat Hansrod, « The UAE expands military presence in the Horn of Africa », http://en.rfi.fr/auteur/zeenat-hansrod/, 25 décembre 2016.

[9] Beruk mesfin, « Could Emirati activism in the Horn make the situation worse? », 26 mai 2017

[10] Beruk Mesfin, « Qatar's diplomatic incursions into the Horn of Africa », ISS, Novembre 2016.

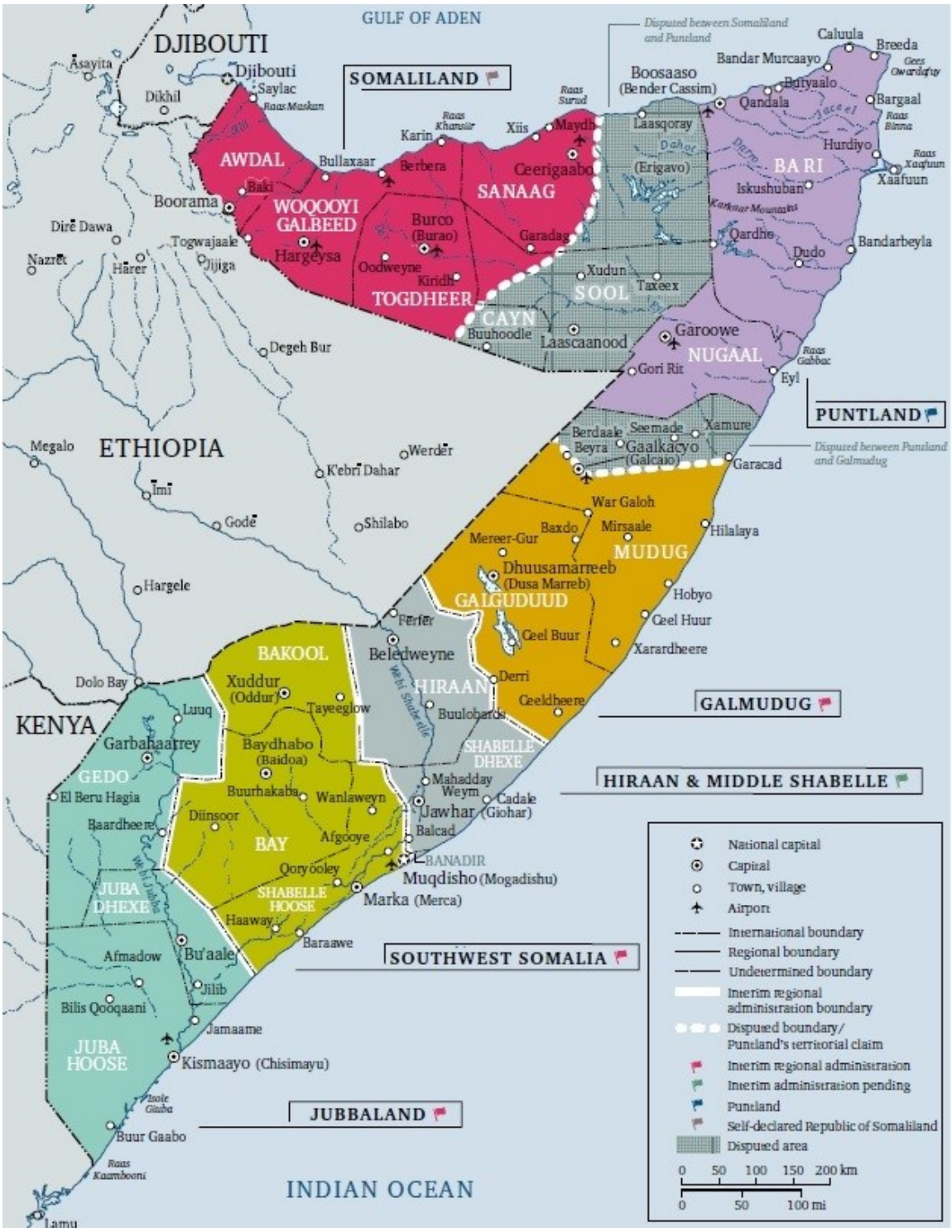
[11] Fatiha Dazi-Héni, « Les ambitions saoudiennes contrariées – Drôle de guerre dans le Golfe », Le Monde Diplomatique, Juillet 2017.

[12] Décisions de l'Arabie saoudite de rapatrier les « illégaux » en provenance de la Corne de l'Afrique (2013 et 2017).

# The Gulf Crisis: The Impasse between Mogadishu and the regions

By Muhyadin Ahmed Roble

The on-going Gulf crisis is also destabilising Somalia. It has created friction and political tensions between the federal government based in Mogadishu, and the five regional states[1]. It has equally negatively impacted on the security situation in the country, slowing down the fight against insurgent al-Shabaab, halted the reform agenda and threatens the country's nascent institutions.




Somalia's Federal Member States and regions. Source: Chatham House [2]

Since the onset of the crisis in the Gulf in June 2017, the five semi-autonomous federal member states have been at odds with Mogadishu's "neutral" position over the stalemate in the Middle East, pitting Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on one hand, and Qatar on the other. The regional states, while notionally under Mogadishu's authority, but practically possessing wide-ranging autonomy, have thrown their support behind the Saudi-Emirati led alliance, demanding the federal government change its "neutral" position, arguing that this is in line with Somalia's strategic economic and commercial interests[3].

The federal member states opposition towards Mogadishu's position is majorly informed by their close economic and security relationships with the two middle-east powers, particularly the Emirati. Both Saudi Arabia and UAE are the country's biggest trading partners, importing 80 per cent of livestock (Somalia's leading foreign exchange earner), compared to the Qataris which import approximately 3.5 per cent[4]. Equally important, the states' concerted rejection is also based on the wide perception among regional leaders and political elites that President Farmaajo's "neutral" decision is not entirely informed by national interest, but rather it is a way of payback to Qatar in the role it played in his campaigns and his eventual clinching of the presidency.

As part of its expanding presence in the Horn over the years, alongside the support it gives to the federal government, UAE has been providing direct military training and equipment, as well as paying salaries for regional security and intelligence units, while also pursuing its own commercial interests. For instance, the Dubai-based DP World recently secured[5] a twenty five and thirty year concession for Somaliland and Puntland's main sea ports respectively, alongside a controversial military base in the port city of Berbera – mainly to provide air support for the war in Yemen.

UAEs direct relationship with the regional governments tend to bypass Mogadishu, and have arguably affected its working relationship with the federal government, with the latter seeing the former's actions as contributing to the undermining of its authority within Somalia. Farmaajo at one point raised his frustrations with leaders in both Abu Dhabi[6] and Riyadh[7] earlier this year, but seemingly to little avail[8].

Qatar on the other hand has been very involved in Somalia's past two presidential elections mainly to buy political support. In a country where presidential elections are largely tied to the size of the candidate's pocket, or those of their financiers, Doha lavishly funded favourite candidates with millions of dollars. And money from Qatar was a major determining factor for the elections of both current president Farmaajo, and his predecessor Hassan Sheikh Mohamud[9].

Farmaajo's government is clearly in a tough spot. The "neutral" stance is already seen as an attempt to minimize damage to the UAE-Saudi relationship, while also attempting to retain a positive impression with the Qataris, and keeping happy the president's close circle of advisors with historical close links to Doha.

The Gulf impasse has destabilised the already fragile relations between the federal government and its member states. The 'neutrality' stance has angered the regional

government's leaders and they have publicly come out to oppose Mogadishu. Mogadishu has argued when it comes to making foreign policy decisions the responsibility lies with the central government, while regional leaders have argued the government cannot make any major decision affecting them without consultation[10] . Both assumptions have a basis in the federal constitution that has greatly empowered the regional leaders and promoting a culture of them co-managing and co-leading the country with federal leaders in order to create a political stability and togetherness in a nation already somewhat polarized by several decades of anarchy and chaos.

The tensions have created suspicion and mistrust with some regional leaders accusing the federal government of covertly undermining their authority and interfering with their internal politics. They have accused the federal government, for instance, of having an explicit goal of ousting regional leaders and replacing them with others who will implement its preferred policies and priorities. For example, the successful ousting in August, of Ali Abdullahi Osoble, the regional president of the HirShabelle state, a leader who was unpopular with his local state leaders and also at odds with the federal leadership, is a case in point. He was barely a year into his first four year term in the office. He was, however, replaced by Mohamed Abdi Ware who was a close contender in the state's first election in October 2016.

In Galmudug state, the federal government is accused of having initiated a concerted campaign aimed at replacing the regional president Ahmed Geelle Haaf, who is just barely six months in office. On 26 September in a meeting in a hotel in the regional capital Adado, members of Galmudug's regional parliament claimed to have 'impeached' Haaf. Instead of sending conciliatory messages and intervening appropriately, the federal government instead issued a statement in support for the impeachment within hours[11]. Four other regional state leaders rallied against the impeachment indicating the government's support on the move is evident for its campaign to remove the state president over the federal and member states disagreement on Gulf crisis[12].

However, other members of the state's regional parliament also 'impeached' the regional Vice President and their state speaker on September 30 in support of the regional president, further exacerbating the worsening political tensions. With the federal government aligning itself with one side in the crisis, coupled with an absence of other institutions who could have played a mediation and conciliation role, anything including a divided Galmudug state with two presidents and two parliaments is a possibility in the weeks to come. In South West state, the federal government in Mogadishu is also blamed for mobilizing political opponents and members of the state's parliament in a bid to replace the regional president Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden[13].

Responding to the mounting pressure from the federal government, all regional leaders met in Kismayo, without the blessing of the federal government, on October 11, and in their final communique bitterly condemned Mogadishu calling on it to stop interfering in their internal affairs. They accused the federal leadership of making crucial decisions unilaterally, demanding consultations on all issues affecting the regional states, and suspended all their activities with Mogadishu on constitutional review activities[14].

Political tensions and friction between the federal states and the federal government have been a perennial feature of recent Somalia political history, but it is only under President Farmaajo that these tensions have become so potentially divisive. Unlike his predecessor Hasan Sheikh who frequently met and engaged regional leaders on some of the important issues affecting the country under the banner of the National Leadership Forum, Farmaajo's one-year old regime has suspended the caucus and has made important decisions unilaterally without much consultation and consensus.

The constant political confrontations and bickering have distracted political leaders, especially those at the federal level, from the priorities of state-building and going ahead with key reforms, including rebuilding a Somali National Army (SNA) capable of taking on al-Shabaab. The focus has also shifted from the broader tasks of security and the war on al-Shabaab to the fractious political competition and infighting between Mogadishu and the regional states.

The political impasse has also frustrated the implementation of National Security Architecture; a roadmap towards building a functional and unified SNA agreed by both sides in April. No progress has been made towards the unification and integration of federal and regional forces which was supposed to be completed by the end of September 2017. The National Security Council which includes the federal president and prime minister and regional presidents as well as other ministers from Mogadishu have failed to hold their quarterly meeting scheduled to take place early this month mainly due to the current tension between them.

In the past few months, Al-Shabaab has scaled up attacks across the country, attacking a total of six military bases, killing approximately 100 Somali security forces and captured military hardware and equipment. On the 14 October, the group also carried out their single deadliest Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) attack ever, killing close to 400 people, mostly civilians, in the heart of the capital Mogadishu, two days after the resignation of the defence minister and army chief over internal schisms[15].

As president Farmajo declared a "state of war" against al-Shabaab in a response to the attack, it has become clear that the government is ironically caught between a rock and a hard place facing two major issues simultaneously; the fight against al-Shabaab and the political impasse with regional states – a security problem and a political one. Ending the infighting within the country's political power blocs, and navigating the dangers of assorted geopolitical conflicts will be crucial for the success of any offensive against al-Shabaab.

The reason is simple. Al-Shabaab attacks in Mogadishu are planned and prepared from Mogadishu's peripheries – regions and territories outside the capital – administrated by regional states. Both Lower Shabelle and Middle Jubba which are partially under the administration of South West and Jubaland states are key strongholds for al-Shabaab. Averting attacks in Mogadishu and pushing al-Shabaab out of these regions will require close cooperation with the regional states and their security forces.  The current tensions, however, are impeding such a working relationship.

Therefore, the federal government ought to first diffuse the prevailing situation of political instability and devise a strategy for building political consensus on major decisions by offering dialogue with regional governments. That approach could create a stable environment leading to a joint and coordinated exhaustive strategy and unity of purpose among the country's putative political leaders towards al-Shabaab. This way, with political stability both sides can concentrate their energies and resources in pushing the offensive against al-Shabaab forward.

A move seems to have been taken in that direction with the president inviting all the regional leaders to attend a consultative meeting in Mogadishu on the 28 October to sort out their disagreements.

However, the federal government and its constituent states should discuss and address the constitutional questions that lie at the root of much of the political infighting, especially those related to devolved powers and resource sharing. Defining roles and responsibilities including sharing of resources is clearly more critical than ever. This way they could avoid the current conflicting roles created by ambiguity in the provisional constitution.

In conclusion, the establishment of the existing regional administrations is one of the country's major achievements in the last five years. They have their own governance and capacity challenges. The government is expected to assist them to enable their institutions to mature and become effective, as their existence is a critical input for Somalia's state-building. The federal government in Mogadishu should avoid taking measures that could lead to their downfall or weakening. Unity of purpose between the federal government and its member states should be a top priority.

In the current conjuncture, the pressing need to revive the national leadership caucus to revive a platform which allows critical issues of national importance including the current political crisis to be deliberated upon. Therefore, the National Security Council architecture needs to move forward. The third meeting that was scheduled did no go ahead as planned because of the current impasse. The creation of a constitutional court which has the legal authority in deciding constitutional matters is equally more important too. When established it could play a role in interpreting the constitution and resolving disputes between the regional states and the federal government in Mogadishu.

**Muhyadin Ahmed Roble** is Editor of Radio Ergo and a former advisor to Somalia's Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team (FIEIT). He is a journalist and political analyst focusing on the Horn of Africa politics and security as well as humanitarian situation. He tweets @MuhyadinR and may be reached at muhudin01@gmail.com.

[1] Somalia has officially become a federal state when the provisional federal

constitution was approved by the National Constitutional Assembly in Mogadishu in 2012 though it awaits public referendum for its final approval. The country is divided into 6 regional states including Somaliland which has no relations with the Federal government in Mogadishu and is seeking its own recognition as a sovereign state. Other regional states are Puntland, Galmudug, Jubaland, South West and Hirshabelle.

[2] Mosley, Jason.,"Somalia's Federal Future: Layered Agendas, Risks, and Opportunities," Africa Programme Research Paper, Chatham House: 2015.

[3] http://www.africanews.com/2017/09/22/somalia-calls-regions-to-order-for-breaching-state-s-neutrality-in-gulf-crisis/, 22.09.2017.

[4] http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/en/c/284952//

[5] http://www.poports.com/media/po-ports-wins-30-year-concession-for-port-of-bosasso-in-puntland

[6] http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-president-farmajo-arrives-uae-for-a-state-visit

[7] http://goobjoog.com/english/somali-president-seeks-saudi-intervention-uae-naval-base-pact-somaliland/

[8] http://africanarguments.org/2017/08/16/neutral-somalia-finds-itself-engulfed-in-saudi-arabia-qatar-dispute/, 19.08.2017.

[9]Ibid

[10] http://goobjoog.com/english/you-must-consult-us-state-leaders-tell-federal-government/, 11.10.2017.

[11] http://hornobserver.com/articles/613/Somalia-Federal-Government-Backs-Galmudug-Parliaments-Decision-to-Boot-President-Haaf-out-of-Office, 27.09.2017.

[12] http://www.africanews.com/2017/09/28/four-somali-state-leaders-rally-against-impeachment-of-colleague-president//, 28.09.2017.

[13] http://goobjoog.com/english/federal-government-keen-on-replacing-state-presidents-south-west-state/, 30.09.2017.

[14] http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-federal-states-suspend-constitutional-reviews, 11.10.2017.

[15] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/15/truck-bomb-mogadishu-kills-people-somalia, 16.10.2017.

# Turkish and UAE Engagement in Horn of Africa and Changing Geo-Politics of the Region

By Umer Karim

The Horn of Africa occupies an important strategic position on the map of the world. It looks over the Bab al-Mandab straits which is a major marine transportation hub. The changes in the political and security situation of the broader Middle East have affected the region, and the Horn is increasingly seen as an important strategic asset by regional and international powers. This has resulted in its becoming a key battle front in this balancing game for political influence playing out between several regional players. These new political dynamics are shaping the relations between the states of the Horn and also affecting their domestic political and security outlook. Many Middle Eastern states have initiated political and security engagement with Horn of Africa states, but the most prominent amongst them have been Turkey and United Arab Emirates (UAE)[1]. Attempts by both nations to consolidate their foothold in the region have had an impact on the political stature and fortunes of their local allies. These complexities in the geo-political dynamics of the Horn region have been further complicated by the political rift between Qatar and the quartet countries including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt[2]. Countries in the Horn have enjoyed simultaneously, close ties with Qatar as well as Saudi Arabia and UAE, but this latest crisis has compelled them to choose between the two sides.

This article will discuss how the manoeuvrings of UAE and Turkey in the Horn are impacting its politics and the repercussions of the Qatar crisis will also be analysed.

**The struggle in Somalia and Somaliland**

Somalia due to its strategic location has been the focus of attention from different world powers. The recent surge in external interest in Somalia began with the Turkish engagement in 2011 after Somalia was hit by a famine. President Erdogan was the first foreign head of state to visit Somalia. This marked the beginning of a Turkish campaign to embark upon a foreign policy rooted in humanitarian aid and development that would enhance its soft power on the international stage[3]. The foray into Somalia was a unique exhibition of Turkish policy to enhance its international prestige by providing aid and assistance to failed states while simultaneously capitalising on the economic and trade opportunities emerging in these states. This approach has made Turkey as argued by one writer, an indispensable actor in Somalia and thus has made it an important political actor in the Horn of Africa[4]. Turkish business firms have won contracts for operating the Mogadishu port and its airport. The other firms that showed interest in getting operations of the port include Dubai's DP World. This showed that Turkey was not the only actor interested in getting a stake in the improvement and management of Somali infrastructure.[5]

The peak of Turkish power in Somalia was exemplified when Turkey finally opened its largest military base outside Turkey which is used as a facility to train Somali security forces[6]. This marked the formal start of a security partnership between the two states

and a development that signifies a deepening of a relationship which in the past had been limited to the traditional Turkish assistance in the form of humanitarian aid, capacity building in health and education sectors and infrastructure development[7]. This Turkish engagement in Somalia and the close relations of the current Somali government with Qatari royalty, have in turn affected Somalia's position in the current Gulf crisis. Somalia has opted for neutrality and has also offered to mediate between the two sides while simultaneously rejecting a Saudi donation of 80 million USD[8]. This Somali approach of continuing cordial relations with both sides has not gone down well particularly with its Gulf partners Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Saudi Arabia showed its frustration by giving a cold welcome to a Somali delegation, but the UAE government chose a more explicit approach by calling back its ambassador from Mogadishu[9]**.** Ties between Somalia and UAE have historically been cordial, but Turkish successes over UAE in terms of gaining strategic contracts in Somalia has compelled UAE to look elsewhere. The problem started with the Somali Presidential elections early this year which saw Turkey and UAE backing different candidates. Turkey and Qatar extended support to political Islamists mainly the bloc of former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and his political grouping while the Emiratis supported the former Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke widely seen as a non-Islamist political personality. The victory of Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed whose chief of staff is rumoured to be linked with Qatar effectively meant that Somalia will tread a path of its own choice[10]. This assertion as explained above proved to be true.

UAE started engagement with Somaliland a breakaway region of Somalia and was given the rights to develop its port of Berbera. The Emirati ambitions in Somaliland reached a higher level when they formally reached a deal with Somaliland government to build an Emirati military base in return for a one billion USD aid package. Interestingly, the agreement's language hinted at an acceptance of Somaliland as an independent state and not as an autonomous region of Somalia as well as affirming UAE's commitment towards the security of Somaliland[11]. The relations between Somalia and UAE are expected to further deteriorate due to Somali stance in Gulf crisis and the opening up of a Turkish military base there.

The decision by Somaliland highlights the criticality of acquiring Emirati support from a security and economic perspective. It is also pertinent to keep in context local political dynamics of Somaliland where President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo's political fortunes are not very bright[12]. This deal with the Emiratis has been marketed by him and his party as revolutionary for the republic and one that will result in huge economic opportunities for its citizens[13]. Other than Somalia's contestation of this agreement on legal grounds, Somaliland's neighbour and the only country with a consulate in Somaliland, Ethiopia is perturbed about these developments despite the fact that this agreement will result in the provision of an additional trade route for Addis Ababa[14]. These Ethiopian concerns need to be contextualised in the broader politics of the Horn and are explained in the section below.

**UAE's New Security Doctrine and Changing Geo-politics in the Horn Region**

If the Turkish designs in the Horn are more centred on raising their soft power index

and developing partnerships through humanitarian aid, the Emirati strategy on the other hand is more security oriented. The principle threat for Emirati interests have always been perceived as emanating from Iran, and more specifically the possibility of an Iranian move to block the Strait of Hormuz which would lead to the blockage of Emirati oil exports. This particular dynamic has forced the Gulf state to develop a dynamic security strategy. This involves not only securing key ports on the Southern Yemeni shore but also across the coastline of the Horn region[15]. Emiratis recognised the critical value of Horn region in terms of geo-political security during the Yemen war when they had to rely on their base in the Eritrean port of Assab, as an operation hub. The military and naval installations developed by UAE in Assab were instrumental in successfully launching the military and aerial offensive to dislodge Houthi rebels from the southern Yemeni city of Aden[16]. Emirati agreement with Somaliland to open a military base in Berbera and develop its port is a continuation of this very policy of building strategic assets along the coastline of the Horn. This development will transform the UAE into a crucial player and raise its profile in the domains of regional security and politics, and give it significant leverage to check the growth of political Islam as well as terrorist organisations in the Horn.

The Emirati decision to build a military base in Somaliland and operate its port of Berbera has several political ramifications. The principal trading port in the Horn region had been Djibouti and Dubai's DP World had been operating it. Its contract was canceled by the Djibouti due to corruption allegations. The Emirati move to develop port of Berbera will end Djibouti's hegemony as the central transactional point for regional trade[17]. The UAE-Somaliland agreement to develop the port of Berbera could also be interpreted as an Emirati response to the expulsion of Dubai's DP World and the tense diplomatic relations with Djibouti.

The Qatar crisis has added a new dimension to regional geo-politics which are already shaped by the influence of Gulf States. Eritrea which hosts a massive Emirati military and naval installation had a history of conflict with both Ethiopia and Djibouti. The conflict between Djibouti and Eritrea was mediated by Qatar through negotiating with both sides and also by deploying its own troops at some sections of the border between the two states[18]. As the Gulf crisis unfolded both Eritrea and Djibouti cut their ties with Qatar. This led to Qatar calling back its forces and Eritrea rapidly deploying its own in the disputed territory[19]. Now, this has led to a further deterioration of bilateral ties between Djibouti and Eritrea.

The political position of Ethiopia in this issue is critical. Ethiopia has its own historical conflict and also boasts a strategic alliance with Djibouti. There are reports that Ethiopia might intervene against Eritrea in order to expel its forces from the disputed territory. The recent dimension of this tri-party conflict cannot be understood completely without keeping in mind the broader political dynamics of the region and also how the Qatar crisis has only been a trigger for the latest tensions. Ethiopia is the most powerful and politically stable country in the region and is building the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) over the Blue Nile River. This project has in turn faced resistance from Egypt, which as a response has ratcheted up defence cooperation with Eritrea. The close

ties between Egypt and the UAE on one hand, the Emirati military presence in both Eritrea and Somaliland and rise in Eritrean confidence owing to its security partnership does not paint a good picture for Ethiopia. From an Ethiopian perspective all these developments point toward a "strategic encirclement" of the country on the behest of Egypt to isolate it both politically and pressurize it militarily. Reports suggesting that after UAE, a deal for a military base might have also been finalised between Egypt and Eritrea will further stoke regional tensions. An Egyptian foothold within Eritrea may constitute a red line for Ethiopia. This indicates that new political confrontation is in the offing and this time Gulf States especially UAE will play a very important role while on the other hand the traditional Qatari influence may have been eroded.

**Conclusion**

Both Turkey and UAE are pursuing strategic goals in the Horn. For Turkey it is mainly about cementing strong economic linkages with the countries in the region and positioning itself as their principle trade partner. For these purposes Turkey has moved ahead full throttle with its soft power offensive and has poured an enormous amount of humanitarian aid into Somalia as well as initiating projects centred on improving infrastructure and capacity development. Its security engagement with Somalia – constructing a military base and training Somali security forces -essentially means that Turkey will have an impact on a core aspect of the project of Somali nation building.

The UAE on the other hand has strategic goals that are more security oriented. It wants to strengthen its strategic footprint in the region and to become a principle actor when it comes to Horn politics and security. This approach is directly linked with Emirati designs in Yemen. Both the Horn of Africa and Yemen overlook the Bab al-Mandab strait. UAE understands that in order to become an indispensable actor for the security of this strait, a bulwark against Iranian influence in the region and to check terrorist outfits, it has to expand its presence on both sides of the Bab al-Mandab. This elevates UAE's political status from a Gulf commercial hub to a blue water power and enhances the incentives for international engagement with the Gulf State. The nature of strategic goals pursued by both Turkey and UAE will have a huge impact not only on politics within the Horn region but also on its future political order.

**Umer Karim** is a PhD researcher at the University of Birmingham. His research project focuses on Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy and Saudi Politics with a particular interest in the evolution of Saudi Foreign Policy since the ascension of King Salman and how Saudi foreign policy has been affected by the changing decision-making patterns and power hierarchy within the Kingdom. He also works on International Relations of Middle East and Horn of Africa with topics varying from Saudi-Iran relationship, Syrian conflict, Turkey in Middle East, Gulf States engagement in the Horn Region and Pakistan's engagement within the Middle East. In the past he has worked on Arab Spring and the principle of humanitarian intervention specially the concept of Responsibility to Protect. Social movements and the role of discourse within social movements has also been an arena of research.

[1] Burke, Jason. “Middle East’s leaders cross the Red Sea to woo east Africa.” The Observer. September 12, 2016. Accessed October 22, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/12/middle-east-scramble-power-east-africa-sudan-kenya-ethiopia.

[2] Salacanin, Stasa. “The Qatar crisis hits the African continent.” Alaraby. October 12, 2017. Accessed October 22, 2017. https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2017/10/12/the-qatar-crisis-hits-the-african-continent.

[3] Shabana, Ayman. “Dimensions of the Turkish Role: Reasons behind Turkey’s Military Base in Somalia.” Future Center. April 11, 2017. Accessed October 25, 2017. https://futureuae.com/m/Mainpage/Item/2686/dimensions-of-the-turkish--ole-reasons-behind-turkeys-military-base-in-somalia.

[4] Cannon, Brendon (2016) “Deconstructing Turkey’s Efforts in Somalia,” Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies: Vol. 16, Article 14.

[5] Omar, Feisal, and Abdi Sheikh. “Somali port poised for facelift with Turkish help.” Reuters. October 23, 2014. Accessed October 30, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somali--ports/somali-port-poised-for-facelift-with-turkish-help-idUSKCN0IC1DW20141023.

[6] Harper, Mary. “Target Somalia: The new scramble for Africa?” BBC News. April 23, 2017. Accessed October 22, 2017. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-39654795.

[7] Hussein, Abdirahman, and Orhan Coskun. “Turkey opens military base in Mogadishu to train Somali soldiers.” Reuters. September 30, 2017. Accessed October 30, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-turkey-military/turkey-opens-military--ase-in-mogadishu-to-train-somali-soldiers-idUSKCN1C50JH.

[8] “Somalia turns down $80m to cut ties with Qatar.” Middle East Monitor. June 12, 2017. Accessed October 26, 2017. https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170612-somalia-turns-down-80m-to-cut-ties-with-qatar/.

[9] Tawane, Abdi Adan. “The Gulf Crisis is hitting the Horn of Africa.” International Policy Digest. June 23, 2017. Accessed October 30, 2017. https://intpolicydigest.org/2017/06/23/the-gulf-crisis-is-hitting-the-horn-of-africa/.

[10] Soliman, Ahmed. “Gulf Crisis Is Leading to Difficult Choices in the Horn of Africa.” Chatham House. June 29, 2017. Accessed October 30, 2017. https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/gulf-crisi--leading-difficult-choices-horn-africa.

[11] Thenational-somaliland. “Somaliland, UAE sign historic economic and military pact.” The National-Somaliland. June 09, 2017. Accessed October 30, 2017.

http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/03/21/somaliland-uae-sign-historic-economic-military-pact/.

[12] Abdi, Rashid. “A Dangerous Gulf in the Horn: How the Inter-Arab Crisis is Fuelling Regional Tensions.” Crisis Group. August 03, 2017. Accessed October 25, 2017. https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/dangerous-gulf-horn-how-inter-arab-crisis-fuelling-regional-tensions.

[13] Shafqat, Shazar. “UAE to open second military base in east Africa.” Middle East Eye. February 13, 2017. Accessed November 01, 2017. http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-eyes-military-expansion-eastern-africa-2028510672.

[14] Patinkin, Jason. “Testing the waters: Somaliland dives into the international arena.” The Messenger. October 23, 2017. Accessed October 30, 2017. https://messengerafrica.com/2017/04/03/testing-the-waters-somaliland-dives-into-the-international-arena/.

[15] Ibish, Hussein. The UAE’s Evolving National Security Strategy. Issue brief no. 4. April 6, 2017. Accessed October 20, 2017. http://www.agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/UAE-Security_ONLINE.pdf.

[16] Mello, Alex, and Michael Knights. “West of Suez for the United Arab Emirates.” War on the Rocks. September 02, 2016. Accessed October 25, 2017. https://warontherocks.com/2016/09/west-of-suez-for-the-united-arab-emirates/.

[17] Maina, Judy. “UAE’s military base plan in Somaliland fuels concern over relations with neighbors.” Alleastafrica. January 15, 2017. Accessed October 25, 2017. http://www.alleastafrica.com/2017/01/14/uaes-military-base-plan-in-somaliland-fuels-concern-over-relations-with-neighbors/

[18] Martin Plaut Senior Research Fellow, Horn of Africa and Southern Africa, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study. “Qatar’s conflict with its neighbors can easily set the Horn of Africa alight.” The Conversation. November 01, 2017. Accessed October 29, 2017. https://theconversation.com/qatars-conflict-with--ts-neighbours-can-easily-set-the-horn-of-africa-alight-79644.

[19] Davison, John, Aaron Maasho, and Sylvia Westall;. “Qatar withdraws troops from Djibouti-Eritrea border mission.” Reuters. June 14, 2017. Accessed October 30, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-djibouti/qatar-withdraws-troop--from-djibouti-eritrea-border-mission-idUSKBN1950W5.