

## THE GULF STATES AND THE HORN OF AFRICA: A NEW HINTERLAND?

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Within the last three years, the Gulf states (especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) have increasingly widened their sphere of influence in the Horn of Africa. While their relations with the Horn have had a long history, their renewed focus on the area is of a far deeper and wider nature than ever before. Today, their proactive role in this part of Africa extends beyond the cultivation and strengthening of commercial and investment ties to include important security aspects. What prompted their preoccupation with East Africa? Does Gulf involvement there mark an era of more active international policy? What kinds of possible constraints might the relationship with the Horn face in the future? Finally, does this power shift indicate a newfound desire of the Gulf countries to assert their “regional” power?

### REGIONAL POWERS

The term “regional power” is highly contested in international-relations theory.

This should not come as a surprise since the concepts “region” and “power,” though widely used in academic papers, are seldom clearly defined. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver have created a typology in order to understand how regional powers act within the structure of a Regional Security Complex (RSC).<sup>1</sup> Their central idea is that “since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, security interdependence is normally patterned into regionally based clusters.”<sup>2</sup> RSCs are characterized by a degree of security interdependence. Buzan and Wæver treat the Middle East as an RSC and identify three Middle Eastern “sub-regional security complexes”: the Levant, the Gulf and the Maghreb. Countries like Somalia, Djibouti and Sudan are members of the Arab League and interact with Arab countries, but do not belong to the Middle Eastern region. “The Horn sub-complex,” they conclude, “is part of Africa and should not be considered part of the Middle East.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the sophistication of their work,

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Buzan and Wæver have adopted a very restrictive definition of security (ignoring economic factors), focusing mainly on intraregional logics and tending to view regions as mutually exclusive. Moreover, their work on regional power hierarchies largely fails to explain the sometimes opportunistic behavior of what they define as regional powers.

In the last decade, the exercise of regional power has proved much more unstable than realists or constructivists would have expected. Sometimes regional hierarchies changed as new powers emerged and, more often, lost influence or interest in exerting influence. Potential and ambitions have been highly conditional on many factors, ranging from the policies of the United States to the distribution of regional power capabilities, and from threat perceptions to economic priorities. In a recent paper, Detlef Nolte has concluded that “there is still a lack of analytical tools and empirical research with regard to how regional powers exercise influence in their corresponding regions.”<sup>4</sup>

Within the last three years, the Gulf states have been considered by many observers as “rising” powers in the Horn of Africa. This has been especially pronounced with respect to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The formation of new military alliances and the strengthening of economic ties have been offered as “proof” of their expanding influence. Their increasing presence in the Horn, however, raises significant questions and an opportunity to rethink regional power dynamics. Are Saudi Arabia and the UAE becoming the new regional powers in the Horn of Africa? Are their policies prompted by concerns of the here and now, or are they part of a wider regional vision? Moreover, do these policies define the regional-security agenda

in a significant way? Accordingly, how do countries within the region perceive the Gulf states’ newfound ambitions and regional involvement? In short, is the Horn of Africa becoming part of a “regional-security complex” where Saudi Arabia and the UAE are determining the agenda?

It may be too soon to definitively answer these questions; the transformation of the Gulf states themselves and regional and geopolitical power realignments are increasingly in flux. There is undoubtedly, however, a growing interest in the Horn of Africa on the part of a number of competing international actors with different agendas responding to long-time instability there, aggravated by the presence of failed states. Moreover, geopolitics, security issues, competing religious affiliations, resource competition, food shortages and crises resulting from a changing climate — but also the opportunity for business investments in a number of sectors — all draw Gulf states and other nations into this difficult region.

## SECURITY

For decades, the Gulf states have been buyers, rather than suppliers, of security. Relying on outside protection, they persistently avoided the use of military means. Two analysts used the term “quiet diplomacy” to describe the external policies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE during the pre-Arab Spring period.<sup>5</sup> Oil and Islam have been the main leverage used by the Saudis since the 1960s, while foreign aid and personal networks were the basic policy tools of the Emiratis. Both countries were characterized by low-profile initiatives and the behind-the-scenes negotiations with their regional partners that aimed at promoting amicable relations and guaranteeing the peaceful settlement of disputes.<sup>6</sup> However,

until very recently the Horn of Africa was a rather low priority in the foreign policies of both states of the Gulf.

Much of the Gulf's current interest in the Horn is related to competition with Iran. The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 led to increased Iranian activity in the Horn of Africa that included an alliance with Eritrea, various agreements with Djibouti, and the further strengthening of relations with Sudan.<sup>7</sup> By the early 2010s, as Iran increased its influence in Iraq and Syria, Saudi Arabia and the UAE were forced to re-examine their foreign and security policies. Their disquiet over Iranian hegemonic ambitions was further heightened in July 2015 with the nuclear agreement between Iran and the West. Saudi and UAE leaders decided to increase military and political coordination and developed a strategy to counter what they perceived as Iranian "expansionism" in the wider region.

The change in their foreign and security policies, however, is not exclusively tied to their competition with Iran; it is also related to the wider political developments brought about by the Arab Spring. Concerned about the possible spillover effects of the uprisings that swept the Middle East in 2011, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE began to gradually exhibit a newfound assertiveness in international affairs, adopting at times a more active stance in their foreign involvements, and even becoming more willing to use their militaries in support of their national interests. Both countries, for example, have sent their armies to Bahrain and Libya and later to Iraq and Syria to fight against ISIS. In place of their prior "quiet diplomacy" there was increasingly a show of assertiveness and muscle flexing in response to security concerns. The Obama administration's fatigue with

Middle Eastern affairs (Libya, Syria, the Iraq war and of course Afghanistan) and its pronounced pivot toward Asia also fueled this desire to bolster their own security "independence," without sacrificing the strong strategic partnership with the United States. Times were changing and, having previously relied on the British until they militarily disengaged from the region, the Gulf countries had no excuse to not plan ahead. They were keenly aware of the need to avoid a repeat of history.

Saudi Arabia's defense spending, for instance, reached a record \$82 billion in 2015, and in February and March 2016 the country hosted its largest-ever joint military exercise, North Thunder, with the involvement of troops from 20 countries.<sup>8</sup> In parallel, the United Arab Emirates became the world's third-largest importer of arms. So pronounced was the shift in security concerns and the strengthening of the country's military capabilities that James Mattis, the American defense secretary, even went so far as to characterize the UAE as a "little Sparta."<sup>9</sup> While this is a highly exaggerated comparison, the UAE is looking to not only bolster its military capabilities, but also forge a greater unity and common national identity among its different Emirates through the recent institution of obligatory military service for all Emirati males.

Piracy and Islamic terrorism were among the major threats that led to the upgrade of the African Horn's importance in the Saudi and Emirati foreign-policy agendas. Seeing threats from al-Qaeda offshoots across the Sahel to the al-Shabab movement in Somalia that had developed close ties with the Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf states recognized that across East Africa's countries with signifi-

cant Muslim populations a host of violent and extremist Islamic groups were ranged against both their interests and the security of their nations.

The war in Yemen, moreover, led to an escalation of Gulf-Iran tensions and was a major factor in persuading the Saudis and the UAE of the need to strengthen their regional presence. Both countries were apprehensive about the growth of the Shiite Houthi insurgency in Yemen and the perceived associated Iranian encroachment on the Arabian Peninsula, evaluating them as major threats. Furthermore, the perception that the United States was reluctant to contain Iran made Gulf policy makers more apprehensive. In fact, the Obama administration's desire to quickly normalize relations with Iran was a source of both tension and contention with the Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which argued, albeit discreetly, that the United States was moving too swiftly without having obtained the guarantees necessary to assuage their traditional allies' security concerns. When, in March 2015, Saudi Arabia and the UAE decided to militarily intervene in the Yemeni war, it became clear that they would need additional ground forces, ports and air bases. Moreover, it was imperative to secure the support of countries across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden with whom Iran had developed close relations since the 1990s.

The Horn of Africa has a 4,000 km coastline that runs from Sudan in the north to Kenya in the south and lies astride vital Indian Ocean trade routes. At the Bab al-Mandab straits, where the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean meet, Yemen is just 30 km from Eritrea and Djibouti; and the port of Aden is closer to Mogadishu and Hargeisa than Riyadh. Gulf states estimated that Iran could threaten shipping through the Bab al-Mandab, as it has long sought to do with

the Strait of Hormuz. This meant that Yemen's location was strategic both because it represented the soft underbelly of Saudi Arabia and because of the importance of the straits for both Gulf and world trade.<sup>10</sup>

In this coastline, "where cash-strapped regimes often teeter on the brink of financial survival,"<sup>11</sup> the Gulf states have found willing partners. In return for financial aid, Sudan, Eritrea, Somaliland and Djibouti proved willing to support the Saudi-led Operation Decisive Storm against the Houthis. Sudan deployed 4,000 to 10,000 men in Yemen — mainly to secure Aden and its vital port — as Emirati special forces fought Houthi rebels in the rest of the country.<sup>12</sup> The deployment was rewarded with significant monetary support: in August 2015; Sudan's central bank announced that it had received a \$1 billion deposit from Saudi Arabia. Eritrea leased the port of Assab and the strategically located Hanish Islands to the UAE in return for financial compensation and oil. In December 2016, the UAE signed a renewable 25-year contract for the establishment of an air and naval base in Berbera on the coast of Somaliland. In June 2015, the UAE foreign minister visited Somalia, and a few days later a shipment of armored vehicles arrived in Mogadishu.<sup>13</sup> In return, Somalia's government has allowed its airspace, land and territorial waters to be used by the coalition. By 2016, it was revealed that Djibouti was negotiating the leasing of a military base to Saudi Arabia "to further enable the encirclement of Yemen."<sup>14</sup> As an analyst argues, "The internationalization of the Yemeni war is proving a major windfall for the Horn of Africa, providing a source of ready cash and diplomatic support for governments in the region."<sup>15</sup>

Another member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Qatar, while also

engaging in the Horn, took a somewhat different approach. Its troubled relations with Saudi Arabia have resulted in its “minimal participation in every security framework under Saudi influence.”<sup>16</sup> Instead, it opted for a low-profile, rather neutral, policy based on mediation in East African conflicts, often using financial inducements and investments to facilitate the settlement of conflicts. Qatar’s 2003 constitution had established mediation as a cornerstone of its foreign policy.<sup>17</sup> The emir and the prime/foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani, had been involved in the Darfur peace process after violence escalated in 2008. Qatar’s mediation efforts led to a ceasefire agreement signed in February 2010<sup>18</sup> between the Khartoum government and the largest opposition group, the Justice and Equality Movement. Qatar has also mediated a truce in the Eritrea-Djibouti border dispute and deployed a small contingent of peacekeepers along the border in 2010. However, when Eritrea broke its diplomatic ties with Qatar in 2017, following the sanctions imposed on Qatar by the other Gulf states, Doha decided to withdraw its peacekeepers from the border.<sup>19</sup> In general, Qatari mediating efforts have not proven particularly successful as its “reliance on business ties to lubricate political relationships has [given it] only limited diplomatic influence.”<sup>20</sup> Like Qatar, Oman was careful not to upset its relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran, and remained neutral throughout the conflict in Yemen, offering to mediate on several occasions.<sup>21</sup>

### ECONOMIC TIES

Gulf exports to East Africa are still dominated by oil and gas.<sup>22</sup> Traditional imports include primary resources like precious stones, copper and food. Kenya

is now importing most of its oil from the UAE and in return exports coffee, tea and textiles. Despite several reports about the rising importance of Gulf-Horn trade, the EU and China continue to dominate the region. And for both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the Horn of Africa countries are not significant trading partners. The UAE is Djibouti’s main partner; for Sudan, both the UAE and Saudi Arabia are important export markets (gold, sheep and goat meat). Oman is Somalia’s main export market (livestock).

Gulf companies have heavily invested in East Africa, especially in banking, agriculture, extractive industries, real estate, retail, education and, above all, transport. Dubai Ports (DP) World signed a 30-year deal to upgrade the Berbera port in Somaliland, offering \$442 million.<sup>23</sup> DP World operates a global portfolio of 65 marine terminals since 2000 and has been managing the Doraleh Container Terminal in Djibouti, where it has invested \$1.5 billion, transforming it into the third-largest container port in Africa.<sup>24</sup> DP World has also made a bid to manage a concession at the port of Mombasa and has also expressed interest in the Lamu port project in Kenya.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, DP World has won concessions to manage a string of ports in Kismayo, Bossaso and, most recently, Barawe (southern Somalia). According to a senior EU diplomat, the UAE is “pursuing a one-belt-one-port strategy in the Horn, mimicking China’s One Belt and One Road.”<sup>26</sup>

In the last decade, Gulf states, which depend on imports for 80-90 percent of their food, bought tens of thousands of hectares of cheap farmland and other agricultural assets in East Africa. These investments were largely triggered by the 2007-8 spikes in global grain prices.

Mohammed al-Amoudi, a Saudi-Ethiopian billionaire, owns a 10,000-hectare rice plantation in Gambela, in southwestern Ethiopia, irrigated with water diverted from River Alwero. The Qatari Investment Fund recently signed a \$1 billion contract to support plans by a Doha-based food conglomerate, Hassad Foods, to develop 20,000 hectares in Sudan.<sup>27</sup> And in 2009, Qatar negotiated with Kenya to obtain 40,000 hectares of land in the fertile Tana Delta, though local reactions have put the talks on hold.<sup>28</sup> Local hostility linked to the resettlement of villagers to clear the way for commercial farming was a serious issue in several of these deals, and some agreements have come under fire from international and local NGOs. Security also proved a challenge. In 2012, an armed group killed five Saudi Star employees in Ethiopia. In general, land purchases in East Africa have not fulfilled their once-high expectations. Lack of infrastructure, poor irrigation and technological deficits have plagued the ventures, and many are lagging in implementation.<sup>29</sup>

The Qatar National Bank has invested in Sudan, where it has six branches, while the Bank of Khartoum has expanded its operations with the help of Emirati shareholders.<sup>30</sup> The growth of Islamic finance and the popularity of sharia-compliant bonds (*sukuk*) have provided significant opportunities for Gulf investments. In April 2017, the Central Bank of Kenya licensed the Dubai Islamic Bank, with an asset base of \$47.6 billion, to carry out operations in the country.<sup>31</sup>

In other sectors there was also much activity: UAE's Etisalat moved into Tanzania, and Dubai's conglomerate Al Futtaim, the Toyota distributor in the Emirates, took over the Kenyan car dealership CMC Holdings.<sup>32</sup>

The Gulf countries have provided significant aid to the region, especially in the form of soft loans. Much of this aid has been provided bilaterally with no conditionalities<sup>33</sup> and has substantially increased in the recent past in both volume and sectoral spread. Since 2011, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia "have generated novel aid mechanisms, including non-restricted cash grants, injections to central banks, and in-kind oil and gas deliveries,"<sup>34</sup> and they have given significant amounts to facilitate private investments.

In general, Gulf aid and its private sector have tended to focus on different infrastructure areas. The majority of state funds have gone to transport and energy projects, while the telecom sector has been the main infrastructure focus of the private sector.<sup>35</sup>

Ethiopia and Kenya have received large loans from the UAE and Kuwait to finance infrastructure projects. Kenya has tried to attract Qatari investment for the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) project,<sup>36</sup> and Qatar Electricity and Water Company (QEWCo) is to build a gas plant in Mombasa in a joint venture with the Qatari state.<sup>37</sup>

There is a general lack of transparency in financial transactions, making reliable data hard to come by. In addition, a number of investments are privately initiated. Moreover, not all investments have been success stories; quite often, high expectations have not been fulfilled. A senior investment expert concluded that "there are probably more funds than fundable projects."<sup>38</sup> High political risk and instability posed significant problems, as Gulf companies feared "that once-welcoming governments w[ould] one day change their minds."<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, the Gulf states have provided a substantial labor market for

East African nationals. Remittances from the Gulf have, over the years, become an important source of income for East African societies and have constituted a strong negotiating leverage for the Gulf countries. Saudi Arabia, for instance, hosts nearly 900,000 Sudanese migrant workers, and the UAE approximately 75,000. In 2014, Riyadh, deeply concerned about Sudan's close ties with Iran, threatened to deport thousands of migrant workers. Khartoum responded by making a spectacular policy shift away from Iran, closing Iranian cultural centers in Khartoum and accusing Tehran of promoting Shia fundamentalism.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, the GCC countries provide a robust labor market for Ethiopia. More than 400,000 Ethiopians work in Saudi Arabia, many of them illegally, having used traffickers to get there or by overstaying their visas. In the spring of 2017, Saudi Arabia offered Ethiopians a 90-day grace period for voluntary repatriation. The government urged its citizens to take the Saudi offer, but thousands hesitated.<sup>41</sup> Tensions grew between the two nations as the amnesty expired and it was rumored that Saudi Arabia threatened Ethiopia with a mass expulsion of its nationals if Addis Ababa did not sever its diplomatic relations with Qatar.<sup>42</sup>

The offer of increased access to the East African labor market has often served as a lure to obtain concessions. In 2015, the Kenyan government, for example, announced that it had secured 100,000 jobs in the UAE although, disappointingly for Nairobi, results have yet to materialize. Two years later, in the spring of 2017, a similar number was announced, this time for employment opportunities in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, during a visit to Nairobi by the emir of Qatar, investment for the

financial hub was discussed; Qatar also reportedly showed willingness to open its market to Kenyan meat.<sup>43</sup> Other issues such as illegal migration, poor labor standards, and the maltreatment of domestic workers also periodically affect the Horn of Africa's relations with the Gulf.

Although the Gulf has turned its attention toward the Horn, it is not alone in the region. In fact, it faces growing competition, especially from China and increasingly from Turkey as well. China, in particular, has made great inroads in sub-Saharan Africa using both its soft power and strong investment portfolio to ensure that it has access to resources and the growing market in that region. Through the one-belt, one-road policy launched by President Xi, China is making sure that Africa plays an integral role in this ambitious global project. Its unwavering strategic focus makes it a strong competitor to possible GCC aspirations as a leading regional influence. Nevertheless, there is also much complementarity to the China-GCC relationship in the Horn and more widely. Gulf seaports and airports, for example, have acted as transit points for international dealings with Africa, and Chinese banks are using Dubai as a launch pad for operations in East Africa.<sup>44</sup>

In summary, the current picture of Gulf involvement in the Horn of Africa is mixed. The reputed overwhelming financial boon to the region is only partly true; a number of projects have either underperformed or have yet to materialize. Moreover, low returns on existing projects may lead the Gulf states to write off many of their loans. Given this uneven record of engagement, will the major Gulf players maintain their commitment there, or will this be a project that fizzles and dies off? The answer to this question will also

reflect the seriousness of the commitment of Gulf nations, in particular Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to pursue an agenda of regional supremacy.

## CONSTRAINTS

The withdrawal of superpowers from the Horn of Africa after the end of the Cold War gave more freedom of maneuver to the countries of the region. However, this freedom was distributed unequally. Larger countries, such as Kenya and Ethiopia, found more scope to develop a stronger regional presence. Conversely, smaller and weaker states had fewer opportunities for autonomous foreign policies in relation to their more powerful neighbors. Thus, they looked for support from other external powers seeking to expand their influence. The Gulf states' interest in the Horn provided them with significant opportunities to counterbalance the unequal distribution of power within their own region. Countries like Eritrea, Djibouti and Somaliland found more room for maneuver and welcomed the Saudis and Emiratis.

Indeed, Gulf relations with East Africa are deeply asymmetrical. No country in the Horn can match the financial and military power of Saudi Arabia or the UAE. However, the obvious existence of patron-client relationships obscures the often important role of African agency.<sup>45</sup> Regional governments, in return for access to strategic sites, demanded concessions from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. They skillfully exploited the Iran-Saudi antagonism to obtain large amounts of aid with no strings attached. If the material resources given were considered inadequate, regimes used their sovereign power to play one patron off against the other.

A good example is Eritrea, whose security strategy is focused on countering

the perceived Ethiopian threat. Among the main objectives of the Asmara regime is to strengthen Assab against any attempt by landlocked Ethiopia to seize the port in order to regain access to the sea.<sup>46</sup> For years, Eritrea supported the Houthi rebels in Yemen by training them at Assab (with possible Iranian involvement). Then in early 2015, Eritrea switched sides.<sup>47</sup> In April 2015, it signed a bilateral security and military agreement with Saudi Arabia. Then it was revealed that it had leased for 30 years the deep-water port of Assab and the nearby hard-surfaced airfield to the UAE in exchange for an unspecified amount of financial aid, oil, military supplies and new infrastructure (including the modernization of Asmara International Airport). Now anti-Houthi forces are trained in Assab.

The same change of course happened with Sudan, long considered an ally of Iran. Following a visit to Khartoum of Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir in February 2016, Sudan agreed to participate with troops and provide aircraft to the anti-Houthi campaign in exchange for military aid worth \$2-4 billion — originally intended for Lebanon but canceled following a diplomatic spat.<sup>48</sup> In return, Riyadh has pushed the United States hard to lift the sanctions on Sudan.<sup>49</sup> The Obama administration temporarily lifted these economic restrictions, but Donald Trump, under pressure from evangelical groups and human-rights activists, seemed reluctant to offer permanent relief.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, the propensity of some countries in the Horn of Africa to change sides according to expediency raises doubts about the longevity of the military alliances with Gulf states. In addition, the dependence of the current security ties on the war in Yemen makes the sustainabil-



ity of the current close Saudi and Emirati relations with the small countries of East Africa quite doubtful.

Moreover, the strained relations among the countries of the Horn add another layer of complication for Gulf influence in the region. Somalia's president, for instance, criticized the Emirates' agreement with Somaliland (considered by Mogadishu a "breakaway region") for the Berbera base as "unconstitutional."<sup>51</sup> And the close relationship of Eritrea with the UAE and Saudi Arabia has worried Ethiopia.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the UN Monitoring Mission in Eritrea claimed that the country's military cooperation with the UAE violates the UN sanctions imposed on the country for its support of the Al-Shabab rebels in Somalia.<sup>53</sup>

Other occasional disagreements further complicate bilateral relations. For example, in 2015, there was a diplomatic row between Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates, although relations were restored following the Djibouti agreement with Riyadh to open a military installation for the Saudi air force.

The recent crisis pitting Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Qatar has also affected Gulf relations with the Horn. President Mohammed Abdullah Farmajo of Somalia has resisted pressure to sever links with Doha.<sup>54</sup> Ethiopia, too, which has a strained relationship with Egypt — another ally of Saudi Arabia and the UAE — over the waters of the Nile,<sup>55</sup> decided to remain neutral.<sup>56</sup> The withdrawal of Qatar's 400 observers from the disputed Red Sea island of Doumeira, claimed by both Eritrea and Djibouti, moreover, added to tensions. Immediately after the Qatari monitors left, Asmara deployed its forces in the island aiming at a *de facto* annexation. There were fears that Ethiopia, a strategic ally of Djibouti and Eritrea's main rival, would

respond militarily. One analyst concluded that "turmoil in the Gulf has sharply escalated the [Horn of Africa's] already dangerous militarization."<sup>57</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the level and nature of engagement in the Horn is not spread equally among the Gulf countries. Nonetheless, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE are proving that their strategic outlook points to the necessity of a long-term commitment there. Security concerns, especially their rivalry with Iran, indicate that these two major actors in the Gulf will not be reverting to their previous low-profile international roles. As one analyst argues, though "making predictions seems especially hazardous ... one thing is certain: the GCC countries will continue to fear Iranian intentions toward them."<sup>58</sup>

The need to spread their influence is further accentuated by other concerns that are products of climate change and the search for new markets and resources to power their own diversifying economies. Their overall strategy for engagement in the Horn continues to develop, although there is no guarantee that it will achieve the effectiveness and influence its ambitions seem to imply. Complications with Qatar, whose own strategy at the moment is in direct opposition to that of the two strongest regional players and serves to aggravate their security concerns, will also define the future of Gulf-Horn relations. Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain, moreover, are largely absent from the area.

With respect to the economic aspect of Gulf-East Africa relations, there is significant potential for investment in transport. However, in agriculture and other sectors, while GCC countries such as Qatar and Kuwait are displaying a presence, pros-

pects for promising investments are still embryonic and have thus far yielded mixed results. Trade continues to be largely one-sided: the Gulf states export oil and import a rather limited list of consumable goods (mainly agricultural products). The extent of further investment will depend on oil prices, which have been low for a considerable time, but will also require Gulf nations to diversify their economies, if they are to continue to grow and provide for their own people.

In short — despite the impressive number of diplomatic contacts, financial deals and military bases — we are still quite far from an era in which the Gulf states could

“integrate” the Horn in an expanded “sub-region” with its own structure and dynamics. Nonetheless, it is a relationship that is becoming increasingly important and will reflect the level of regional influence the Gulf can aspire to in the future. Though the Horn “Subregional Complex” continues to be located in Africa and should not be considered part of the Middle East, the idea that regional security complexes are mutually exclusive is becoming less and less credible. It has become apparent that security issues include more than “existential threats.” Military and economic priorities are intimately related, creating new and complex regional boundaries.

<sup>1</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>4</sup> Detlef Nolte, “How to Compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Topics,” *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (October 2010): 883.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Richter, “Saudi Arabia: A Conservative Player on the Retreat?” in *Regional Powers in the Middle East: New Constellations after the Arab Revolts*, ed. H. Fürtig (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); and Khaled Almezaini, *The UAE and Foreign Policy: Foreign Aid, Identities and Interests* (Routledge, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Eman Ragab, “Beyond Money and Diplomacy: Regional Policies of Saudi Arabia and UAE after the Arab Spring,” *The International Spectator* 52, no. 2 (2017): 38.

<sup>7</sup> Alieu Manjang, “Beyond the Middle East: Saudi-Iranian Rivalry in the Horn of Africa,” *International Relations and Diplomacy* 5, no. 1 (January 2017): 52-3.

<sup>8</sup> International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), *Strategic Survey 2016: The Annual Review of World Affairs* (2016), 173.

<sup>9</sup> *The Economist*, “The Gulf’s ‘Little Sparta’: The Ambitious United Arab Emirates,” April 6, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Magnus Taylor, “Horn of Africa States Follow Gulf into the Yemen War,” International Crisis Group Africa Report, January 22, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Emile Hokayem and David B. Roberts, “The War in Yemen,” *Survival* 58, no. 6 (December 2016): 171.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin J. Kelley, “Three EA States Going to War — in Yemen!” *The East African*, October 31, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, “Horn of Africa States.”

<sup>16</sup> Yoel Guzansky, “The Foreign-Policy Tools of Small Powers: Strategic Hedging in the Persian Gulf,” *Middle East Policy* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 115.

<sup>17</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Qatar’s Mediation Initiatives, Policy Brief,” Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center, February 2013, 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Reuters, “Qatar Withdraws Troops from Djibouti-Eritrea Border Mission,” June 14, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Lina Khatib, “Qatar’s Foreign Policy: The Limits of Pragmatism,” *International Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2013):

431.

<sup>21</sup> IISS, *Strategic Survey 2016*, 185.

<sup>22</sup> Data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT (<http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/>); and European Commission Trade Statistics (<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/statistics/>).

<sup>23</sup> Kennedy Senelwa, "Somaliland Gets \$442m to Upgrade Berbera Port," *The East African*, May 25, 2017.

<sup>24</sup> EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit), *Risk and Reward: The Gulf's Push into African Infrastructure* (EIU, 2014), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Allan Odhiambo, "Why New Order Beckons in Africa, Middle East Trade and Investment Ties," *Business Daily*, October 19, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Cited in Rashid Abdi, "A Dangerous Gulf in the Horn: How the Inter-Arab Crisis Is Fuelling Regional Tensions," International Crisis Group Commentary, August 3, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Reuters, "Gulf States Seek Food Security in Europe, U.S. after African Problems," December 30, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Simeon Kerr, "Gulf Finance Renews Africa Trade," *Financial Times*, November 25, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Brian Ngugi, "Dubai Islamic Bank Gets Nod to Operate in Kenya," *The East African*, April 28, 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Kerr, "Gulf Finance."

<sup>33</sup> Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw, *The Role of Gulf States in Peace and Security and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (IAI, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> Karen E. Young, "A New Politics of GCC Economic Statecraft: The Case of UAE Aid and Financial Intervention in Egypt," *Journal of Arabian Studies* 7, no. 1 (April 2017): 114.

<sup>35</sup> EIU, *Risk and Reward*, 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit), *GCC Trade and Investment Flows* (EIU, 2014), 16.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Peel, "Africa and the Gulf," *Survival* 55, no. 4 (August-September 2013): 153.

<sup>40</sup> Taylor, "Horn of Africa States."

<sup>41</sup> Salem Solomon and Mestawet Shumye, "Ethiopians Race to Leave Saudi Arabia as Mass Deportations Loom," VOA, July 13, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Abdi, "Dangerous Gulf."

<sup>43</sup> Wanjobi Githae, "East Africa: Kenya to Export 100,000 Workers in Saudi Arabia," *The East African*, April 16, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Kerr, "Gulf Finance."

<sup>45</sup> See William Brown and Sophie Harman, eds., *African Agency in International Politics* (Routledge, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> International Institute of Security Studies, *The Military Balance 2017* (IISS, 2017), 491.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-5.

<sup>49</sup> "Sudan Thanks Saudi Arabia for Helping Lift Sanctions," *Arab News*, January 15, 2017, <http://www.arab-news.com/node/1039151/saudi-arabia>.

<sup>50</sup> *The Economist*, "Deal or No Deal? Sanctions on Sudan," July 15, 2017; and Josh Lederman, "President Trump Delays Decision on Whether to End Sudan Sanctions," Associated Press, July 12, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> *Economist*, "The Gulf's 'little Sparta.'"

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, "Horn of Africa States."

<sup>53</sup> Michelle Nichols, "Foreign Help Building Eritrea Bases Violates Embargo: UN Experts," Reuters, November 4, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Abdi, "Dangerous Gulf," 4.

<sup>55</sup> Fred H. Lawson, "Egypt versus Ethiopia: The Conflict over the Nile Metastasizes," *The International Spectator* (online), July 3, 2017, 1-14.

<sup>56</sup> Abdi, "Dangerous Gulf," 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>58</sup> Mark N. Katz, "The Gulf and the Great Powers: Evolving Dynamics," *Middle East Policy* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 109.