

# The New Global Super-Power Geo-Strategic and Geo-Economics Rivalry in the Red Sea and its implications on Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa

Surafel Getahun Ashine<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

*The main objective of this article is to analyse the recent year's port and military base competitions and rivalries between international, regional and local powers in the Red Sea and its implication on peace and security of Horn of Africa the region. Methodological the study used qualitative Approach and data was gathered from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, magazines, newspaper reports, and internet sources. Accordingly, the data collected from secondary sources are discussed analytically. The article argues, that super power global ambitions, military capability, political and economic influence made the Horn of Africa a pivotal role of geopolitics in shaping the security and economic trajectory. In this context, Security developments in the Horn are being integrated into geopolitical and geo-economics agendas that stretch far beyond the immediate region. As the result, in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea, external actors' engagement, and their attendant interests, alliances and agendas have negative and positive implication for the states in the region. Regarding positive implication of Super power engagement it offers opportunities for development and integration, whereas, negative consequences it poses considerable risks since Horn of Africa region are vulnerable to intra- and interstate conflict. Further, it raises the prospect of proxy struggles and growing geopolitical interest and tensions which is an obstacle to conflict resolutions lasting peace in the region. Thus, the articles argue Rather than seeking to undermine one another, the regimes of the Horn have increasingly tended to support one another. In addition, this paper recommends regional institutions such as IGAD need to reconsider dynamics within the Red Sea in line with the aim of building confidence among actors in order to advance common economic and security interests, as well as to ensure the future development of the shared interest.*

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<sup>1</sup> Department of political Science and International relations , Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa City, Ethiopia. [surafegeta@gmail.com](mailto:surafegeta@gmail.com)

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## 1.Introduction

In the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century and long after the end of the cold war, brief international disengagements and indifference and the changing shift from the global “war on terror”, geopolitical, strategic, and economic realities are increasingly leading to a new global superpower competition in Africa. The Red Sea and Horn of Africa is one of the most geostrategically important regions of the world. According to one U.S. defense official referred the Red Sea as the "Interstate-95 of the planet," since it has long been a vital link in a network of international waterways that stretches from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> The Red Sea arena's geopolitical environment has seen a significant transformation during the past five years. Geopolitical dynamics on both sides of the Red Sea, in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, are rapidly changing due to new economic and security interests.<sup>3</sup>

The current activity of super power interactions in the area demonstrates how the Red Sea has quickly developed into a scene of fresh geopolitical intrigue as engagement between Gulf and African governments defies preconceived notions and dissolves borders.<sup>4</sup> The Middle Eastern nations of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Turkey are competing for supremacy, power, and influence in the Horn of Africa on the basis of state actors. Additionally, there are international players like the United States, China, Russia, and maybe the European Union competing in the new race for Africa in the twenty-first century. The recent super power competition includes wide-ranging activities including geo-economic, diplomatic, military, ideological, and geopolitical dynamics that shape foreign policy and political developments in the region.<sup>5</sup>

Due to the strategic significance of the Red Sea and the rivalry for influence over the states that border it and depend on it for trade and transit, the Horn of Africa is now an essential component of and the link between the security systems of the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific, and the Mediterranean<sup>6</sup>. The Red Sea geopolitical map is

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<sup>2</sup> Delozier, E. “The Case For A Holistic U.S. Policy Toward The Emerging Red Sea Region” .The Washington Institute For Near East Policy. 2021.33

<sup>3</sup> Yusuf,O.”New geopolitical dynamics are at play in the Red Sea area .Middle East Monitor. [http://www. Middleeast Monitor.com](http://www.Middleeast Monitor.com). August 27, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Delozier, 2021; Nathan, 2019)

<sup>5</sup> Tesfay, G. “Foreign Military Bases in the Horn of Africa and their Implications to Ethiopia’s National Security (2002-2019)” .M.A.Thesis.Unpublished.

<sup>6</sup> Faith, M. “The Horn of Africa-Persian Gulf nexus: inter-regional dynamics and the reshaping of regional order in geopolitical flux”. Institute for Global Dialogue Issue 136 /2020.3

beginning to include strategic regions of the western coast and the Horn of Africa, and Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, and Eritrea have changed into battlegrounds for a fresh scramble in the Horn of Africa.<sup>7</sup> As a number of military forces compete for influence, the Horn is now connected to several Strings of Pearls, which are networks of military bases<sup>8</sup> and dual-use ports.<sup>9</sup> The rising expansion of and competition among global and regional power in port development in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea corridor have raised a number of issues with regard to its implications for the already fragile and conflict-ridden Horn of Africa region.<sup>10</sup>

The emerging competition among Middle Eastern powers and the global superpower rivalry in the Horn of Africa is intensive in its engagement, multi-dimensional and complicated in its nature, often unpredictable in its futurity and far-reaching in its implications for the peace, security and international relations of the region. Analytically, the red Sea Horn and the Horn of Africa geographical, historical, Geo-strategic and Geo –economic relevance in the context of the recent super power rivalry for ports and military bases are discussed, the first section in this article analyses the geostrategic relevance and security issues of the Horn Region. The second section investigates the geo-economics relevance of Red Sea. Section 3 discusses a new security, economic and strategic developments in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea. In Section 4 the article analyses the implication of super power rivalry on peace and security in the Horn of Africa. In Section 5 the article propose way forward to regional security and economic development in the region with a view to minimizing the risk of conflict and increasing opportunities for cooperation. Final section of the article summarizes the main discussion and recommendation for the states in the region in the light of changing geo strategic dynamics in the Red sea region.

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<sup>7</sup> The United States Institute of Peace. “Final report and recommendations of the Senior Study Group on Peace and Security in the Red Sea arena” .2020

<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, the term ‘base’ can be understood as a geo-strategically important location from which foreign forces conduct operations to launch or support that constitutes military forces, troops, installations or facilities that provide timely, effective, logistical or other support

<sup>9</sup> Melvin,N .“Managing the New External Security Politics of the Horn of Africa Region.” SIPRI Policy Brief April 2019, [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/hoa\\_pb\\_april\\_2019\\_1.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/hoa_pb_april_2019_1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>Vertin.Z.“Red Sea Geo politics: six plotlines to watch”.somtribune.com.  
<https://www.somtribune.com/2019/12/17.accessed on March 3,2022>.

## 2. Methodology

This disk review paper is conducted based on secondary sources. The data were collected from internet. In conducting this study qualitative method has been employed. Different relevant literature associated with super power competition in Red Sea and Horn of Africa has been reviewed as part of this study. Previously, a lot of studies have been conducted on the subject super power competition within Horn of Africa. Those studies on Super power race for geo strategic were carefully analyzed to draw the importance of discussion. Data was gathered from sources such as books, journal articles, magazines, newspaper reports, and internet sources. The data collected from secondary sources are discussed analytically.

## 3. An Overview of Geostrategic Relevance and Security Issues of the Horn Region

The Horn of Africa is the northeastern region of the African continent that faces the Red Sea to the east, the Indian Ocean to the southeast, and the Nile Basin to the west.<sup>11</sup> The geostrategic relevance of the HoA is primarily structural, rather than a new or recent phenomenon. Yet, since the turn of the millennium both international and African developments greatly raised external interest in the region.<sup>12</sup> First, the region has been lying in coastlines of Gulf of Aden, Bab el- Mandeb, and the Red Sea, a route that is one of the most important passages for world naval trade. Second, the region is also considered as the most important entry point to African market by the leading countries of Asia and Middle East. Third, the substantial population of the region which consists of over 200 million people contributes for potential power base in securing their interests in global politics.<sup>13</sup> The region's geostrategic location also links Muslim and Christian Africa.<sup>14</sup> Today, an expanding number of global, emerging and regional powers have become increasingly engaged in the region. The

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<sup>11</sup> Berouk M . "The Horn of Africa as a Security Complex: Towards a Theoretical Framework"[UK The Horn of Africa as a Security Complex \(open.ac.uk\)](https://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/bisa-africa/confpaper). ww.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/bisa-africa/confpaper. 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Giovanni, C. "Africa's Thorny Horn Searching for a New Balance in the Age of Pandemic" [Ledizioniispi\\_report\\_africas\\_thorny\\_horn\\_2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/ledizioniispi_report_africas_thorny_horn_2020_0.pdf)(ispionline.it). <https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files>.accessed on February 13, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> The United States Institute of Peace . "Red Sea Rising: Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East" 2021 18 .<https://www.usip.org/programs/red-sea-rising-peace-and-security-horn-africa-and-middle-east>.accessed April 19,2022.

<sup>14</sup> Humanitarian Development Program East Africa and the Horn in 2020: an outlook for strategic positioning in the region.Humanitarian Foresight Think Tank.2017.

overarching concern is the protection of key, strategic sea trade routes in a historically turbulent area straddling distinct world regions.<sup>15</sup>

In history due to the geostrategic importance, the Horn of Africa has always been given security attention.<sup>16</sup> In terms of security; the Horn is a conflict-stricken region which poses enormous constraints.<sup>17</sup> The Horn of Africa can be conceived as a regional security complex<sup>18</sup>. A regional security complex, which is described as "a group of states whose major security preoccupations and concerns are so interconnected that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another."<sup>19</sup> The region's conflicts occur at several levels, including direct inter-state wars and intra-state armed conflicts and civil wars as well as inter-communal conflicts.<sup>20</sup> For instance, in the course of the cold war era, the Horn of Africa was constantly affected by conflicts, ideological confrontations, territorial disputes, cross-border destabilization and continued militarization which was mainly a battle ground between the United States and the former Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> As a result, the countries of the Horn have fought many proxy wars against each other by engaging in support for each other's insurgency movements.<sup>22</sup>

Today, four distinct external security engagements overlap and interlink simultaneously in the region, creating a complex and increasingly unstable environment: support for African regional and international multilateral actions; efforts to combat nontraditional security threats; the expansion of the Gulf and Middle Eastern security space into the Horn; and the integration of the Horn region into Indo-Pacific security dynamics.<sup>23</sup> The Horn of Africa has recently once again becomes a contested region between international as well as regional actors. As a result, the region attract the attentions of the US, Europe, China, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia,

<sup>15</sup> see Giovanni, 2020

<sup>16</sup>De Waal, A. Horn of Africa and Red Sea synthesis paper. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.2017.

<sup>17</sup> Tewodros M. and Halelluja Halie L. "Ethiopia, regional integration and the COMESA free trade area". 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Berouk Mesfin . "The Horn of Africa as a Security Complex"

<sup>19</sup> Buzan, B. "People, States and Fear". New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.1991

<sup>20</sup> Kidane, M., "Critical factors in the Horn of Africa"s Raging Conflicts" Nordiska AfrikaInstitutet, UPPSALA. 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Sharamo, R. and Mesfin, B., Regional security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa. Institute for Security Studies Monographs, 2011(178), p.436

<sup>22</sup>Kidane, M., "Critical factors in the Horn of Africa"s Raging Conflicts "

<sup>23</sup>Melvin, N., "The new eternal security politics of the Horn of Africa region". SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security. 2019. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/sipri-insights-peace-andsecurity/new-external-security-politics-horn-africa-region> Accessed March, 2021.

Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Israel, South Africa, and Egypt. These new relationships will potentially present new security challenges and opportunities to the region.<sup>24</sup> The historical patterns of amity and enmity among the countries of the region, coupled with multifaceted layers of security interdependence has constantly animated the foreign policies of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia, particularly with regard to state formation, regime security and visions of regional order.<sup>25</sup> Over the past decades: a civil war in Somalia and continued attacks by Al-Shabaab; piracy off the coast of Somalia; civil war in Darfur and South Sudan; proximity to the civil war in Yemen; political instability and ethnic unrest in Ethiopia; and, not least, the securitization of the Red Sea, as exemplified by Djibouti, which now hosts more foreign military bases than any other country in the world. There are currently about 10 foreign military bases in the region.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4 The Geo-Economics Relevance of Red Sea

Around 10% of worldwide trade flows via the waters of the Red Sea, which is sandwiched between two continents and borders six African and four Middle Eastern nations.<sup>27</sup> Currently, more than 12% of the world's seaborne cargo and 40% of commerce between Asia and Europe pass via the Red Sea<sup>28</sup>. Around 80% of all worldwide trade is transported by marine routes.<sup>29</sup> Three maritime chokepoints—the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait of Bab al-Mandab—that decide which nations in the area have access to this important trade route add to the high degree of susceptibility to chokepoints. Many global actors are deeply concerned about these chokepoints. Free and unrestricted access and freedom of passage are important for the economies of Southeast Asia, China, Japan, South Korea, India, and the European Union.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Humanitarian Development Program. “East Africa and the Horn in 2020: an outlook for strategic positioning in the region.” Humanitarian Foresight Think Tank.2017.

<sup>25</sup>Faith, M. “The Horn of Africa-Persian Gulf nexus: inter-regional dynamics and the reshaping of regional order in geopolitical flux”.

<sup>26</sup> Dahir A.H., “Foreign Engagements in the Horn of Africa: Diversifying Gains and Minimizing Risks” TRTWORLD researchcenter.www;<https://independent.academia.edu/TRTWorldResearchCentre>.accessed February 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Nathan, H. “ A Red Sea Geopolitics Primer” <https://www/sites.tufts.edu/farescenter/> accessed February 2022.

<sup>28</sup> DW. "Suez Canal blockage: 4 of the biggest trade chokepoints," 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/suez-canal-blockage-4-of-the-biggesttrade-chokepoints/a-57020755>

<sup>29</sup> DW. "Suez Canal blockage: 4 of the biggest trade chokepoints,"

<sup>30</sup> Luigi, N and Cyril, W. “The Red Sea link. Geo-economic projections, shifting alliances, and the threats to maritime trade flows”. Research Project Report Regional Security Initiative Issue. European University Institute. 2021.

The Red Sea's strategic location near several leading energy producers explains the region's current prosperity and foresees continued economic progress. Egypt and Sudan alone generate more than 500,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd) in Africa. Saudi Arabia and Oman generate more than 12 million bpd of oil on the Middle Eastern side. Total oil production from countries including the United States, Russia, China, Libya, and Iran exceeds 50 million barrels per day (bpd) Combined with around 3.5 billion cubic feet per day of liquid natural gas on a daily basis. In addition to the \$700 billion in seaborne trade that currently travels along the route annually, power players in the area and beyond have been talking about Beijing's new maritime Silk Road, Africa's growing middle class, and oil discoveries in the Horn. The deep-water ports, highways, and railroads required to operate such a network are also essential.<sup>31</sup>

The red sea also serves as a strategic zone a core node in the global energy market and inextricably linked both in political terms and with respect to its significance as a transit route to the competition over hydrocarbon resource extraction in the eastern Mediterranean and in the African interior. This competition encompasses both US-China competition, whereby the United States should seek to preempt a Chinese monopoly on the extractive resource sector, and competition among regional actors such as Egypt, Israel, the UAE, and Turkey. The A cargo ship docked at the port in Hodeida, Yemen, on September 29, 2018.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, since 2010, Middle Eastern and Asian nations have spent billions of dollars acquiring ports and land to set up military outposts in an effort to get better access to the Red Sea. Suakin Island, a historic Ottoman outpost in the Sudan, is being developed by Turkey.<sup>33</sup> To build a port from which a ferry may go from the Sudanese mainland to the Saudi port of Jeddah, Qatar is investing \$4 billion in the area<sup>34</sup>. Similarly, in 2018, the United Arab Emirates put down \$450 million to develop Berbera's port, as part of an effort to counter Qatari, Turkish and Russian influence in the region<sup>35</sup> Generally, Gulf Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have increasingly embraced an aggressive growth, investment, and development model for the broader Middle East and an expanding sphere of influence north to Jordan and Egypt, south to Yemen, and

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<sup>31</sup> Nathan, H. "A Red Sea Geopolitics Primer"

<sup>32</sup> The United States Institute of Peace. "Final report and recommendations of the Senior Study Group on Peace and Security in the Red Sea arena"

<sup>33</sup>Emirates policy center. "The presence of Turkish in red sea: forms, objectives and prospects" . EPC/Emirates policy center. 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Karen E. Young, "Gulf Financial Aid and Direct Investment Tracker," American Enterprise Institute, August 13, 2020, <https://www.aei.org/multimedia/fadi-tracker/https://www.aei.org/profile/karen-e-young/>

<sup>35</sup>Hisham, A. "Geo-Politics in the Horn of Africa. Policy Center for the New South". Policy Brief. PB-20/2022

southwest to the vital trade corridor around the Arabian Sea toward the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea.<sup>36</sup>

## **5 A New Security, Economic and Strategic Developments in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea**

### **5.1 The Geo-Politics of Ports in the Horn of Africa**

Broadly speaking, the main activity of ports in history has been transferring goods from ships to other means of transport and vice versa.<sup>37</sup> Due to lower transaction and transportation costs, ports also serve as nodes for production and manufacturing. For these reasons, ports often form the centrepiece a country's overall economic plan, especially in developing nations.<sup>38</sup> For over 35 years, maritime strategy and port development in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea corridor and the Gulf of Aden showed no significant change. Eritrea looked inward, neglecting its coast, Djibouti flourished, and lucratively embracing Ethiopia's trade, overseas investors and foreign military bases and broadly Somalia's shores became synonymous with piracy.<sup>39</sup>

However, in the last five years, given the strategic position of the Horn, this competition has led to a securitization of the race for ports. For instance, in 2016 and 2017, the UAE negotiated agreements to spend \$442 million to develop the Berbera port in Somaliland and \$336 million to develop the Bosaso port in Puntland, respectively.<sup>40</sup> Reflecting the growing ties between the Horn of Africa and countries in the Middle East and the Gulf, the GCC crisis has further increased external competition in parts of the region.<sup>41</sup> In the race for ports developments in the Horn of Africa, China as a global super power is the predominant actor in this region with its heavy investments in the Horn of African ports linking with its global flagship infrastructure project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The ports in the Horn of Africa play a key role in China's expanding network of infrastructure projects linking

<sup>36</sup> Luigi, N and Cyril, W. "The Red Sea link. Geo-economic projections, shifting alliances, and the threats to maritime trade flows".

<sup>37</sup> De Langen, P. W. "The economic performance of seaport regions". In Wang, J. J. Wang, Dentice, Giuseppe & Donelli, Federico. (2020) "Fluctuating Saudi and Emirati Alignment Behaviours in the Horn of Africa", *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 2007)

<sup>38</sup> De Langen, P. W. "The economic performance of seaport regions". see also Humphrey, J. & H. Schmitz. (2002). How does insertion in Global Value Chains affect upgrading in industrial clusters? *Regional Studies*, 36

<sup>39</sup> Tesfay, G. "Foreign Military Bases in the Horn of Africa and their Implications to Ethiopia's National Security (2002-2019)"

<sup>40</sup> Matina, S and Asa, F. 2016. "Dubai's DP World Agrees to Manage Port in Somaliland for 30 Years," *Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/dubais-dp-world-agrees-to-manage-port-insomaliland-for-30-years-1464549937>

<sup>41</sup> Melvin, N



China with Europe, East Africa and broader Middle Eastern region. Forming the backbone of China's "Maritime Silk Road," investments in African ports provide a gateway to the region's trade and economic development, empower China with political leverage and clout on the continent, and provide a foothold for People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) activities.<sup>42</sup>

China is the key actor in the development and financing of mega infrastructure projects in the Horn of Africa. Djibouti's major port development initiatives are being financed and led by Chinese transnational companies.<sup>43</sup> Its half a billion Dollar Multi-Purpose Port (MPP) with new container and cargo facilities at Doraleh is managed and part owned by Chinese Merchants Group (CMG). Given the rise of China as an economic super power and being the largest trading partner for Africa, port investments are part and parcel of the broader Chinese commercial supremacy in the Horn.<sup>44</sup>

The other important actor in the new geo-politics of competition and rivalry for ports, bases and resources in the Horn of Africa is the UAE. The UAE's regional infrastructure conglomerate Dubai Ports World (DP World), of which the government is the largest shareholder, signed its first agreement in the region in 2006 to develop Djibouti's Doraleh port. The company is one of the world's largest logistics and maritime firms with the capacity in directing operations for 40 countries cementing the UAE's place in this strategically significant region.<sup>45</sup>

In the new geopolitical competition involving infrastructure development including logistics and transportations, the UAE government plays a huge role. In its July 19, 2018 Middle East and Africa edition the Economist magazine described the development in the region as the UAE's foreign policy as the scramble to control ports in the Horn of Africa in the broader Red Sea Scramble. Despite DP world's loss of the concession to operate Djibouti's Doraleh container terminal in 2018, the company maintains a strong presence in the Horn. DP World operates the port of

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<sup>42</sup> Henry, J. "China's Military Deployments in the Gulf of Aden: Anti-Piracy and Beyond". IFRI Policy Paper no. 89, 21 Nov. 2016, pp. 14–23. Further see, Melvin, N., 'The foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Background Paper, Apr. 2019.

<sup>43</sup>Devermont, J. "Assessing the Risks of Chinese Investments in Sub-Saharan African Ports" .2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessing-risks-chinese-investments-sub-saharan-africanports?ampa&-twitter-impression=true>. accessed June 4, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Tesfay, G. "Foreign Military Bases in the Horn of Africa and Their Implications to Ethiopia's National Security (2002-2019).

<sup>45</sup>The Economist. "The UAE is scrambling to control ports in Africa", The Economist, 19 July 2018, at [www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2018/07/19/the-uae-is-scrambling-to-control-ports-in-africa](http://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2018/07/19/the-uae-is-scrambling-to-control-ports-in-africa)

Berbera in Somaliland and the port of Bosaso in semi-autonomous Puntland.<sup>46</sup> Here it is important to note that there is a necessary link between DP World's private and commercial interests and the Emirati foreign policy despite the former's insistence that that it acts interpedently. The interlocking relationship between state and private capital, the growing authority of Abu Dhabi over political decision making, and an increasingly expansionist foreign policy have all served to ensure that the activities the DP World continue to move in lockstep with the "strategic interests of the Emiratis."<sup>47</sup>

Dubai Ports World has been buying controlling interests in numerous ports, profiting from the fast-growing economies of East Africa, while also consolidating its extended maritime security strategy.<sup>48</sup> A key driver of the engagement in the Horn by Turkey, Qatar, Iran, the UAE and Saudi Arabia has, however, been regional and international geo-economic and geopolitical competition with each other.<sup>49</sup> Another driving interest is the Blue Economy, including the development of trade corridors, is important for the Gulf States, in this regard Dubai World is a relevant player in the Horn of Africa. Furthermore, the Arab Gulf states are pursuing ambitious plans to diversify their economies and see the Horn of Africa as an ideal region for future investment. Already the GCC states have invested in more than 430 projects in the Horn of Africa since 2000. Their total aid to and direct investment in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Djibouti has amounted to just under \$18 billion since 2003.<sup>50</sup>

The other two key regional actors shaping the new geopolitical dynamics of ports are Qatar and Turkey. The Qatar-Turkey alliance in the Horn of Africa is most visible in Somalia where the UAE faced several challenges with the Mogadishu based Federal Government. The UAE's regional rival has indicated via Qatar Ports Management Company that it will build a new port at the Northern Somali town of Hobyo.<sup>51</sup> The Somali port is important due to its proximity to the Babel-Mandab Strait, which is one of the most important sea crossing points in the world with the potential for access to international markets. Turkey is the other key actor in the region. It has also rapidly enlarged its footprint in the Horn of Africa since 2011 – most notably in Somalia.

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<sup>46</sup> Matina, S and Asa, F. "Dubai's DP World Agrees to Manage Port in Somaliland for 30 Years,"

<sup>47</sup> Advani, 2019

<sup>48</sup> De Waal, A. "Pax Africana or Middle East Security Alliance in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea?" Occasional Paper No. 17/ January 2019. world peace foundations.

<sup>49</sup> Melvin, N. "Managing the New External Security Politics of the Horn of Africa Region".

<sup>50</sup> Karen J, M, Willem, B and Harry, V. "Riyal Politik: The political economy of Gulf investments in the Horn of Africa," Clingendael, April 2018, [www.clingendael.org/pub/2018/riyal-politik](https://studies.clingendael.org/pub/2018/riyal-politik)

<sup>51</sup> Aljazeera Center for Studies. "The Econ-political Impact of the Gulf Crisis on SubSaharanAfrica".2018..Retrievedfrom: <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2018/06/econpolitical-impact-gulf-crisis-saharan-africa-180607070242239.html> Accessed 6 June, 2021.

Turkey's increasingly ambitious foreign policy and growing presence in the Horn of Africa is considered as a factor of both its own domestic drivers and strategic interests in the region. Qatar's regional partner, Turkey, with its strong ties to the Federal Government of Somalia, already manages the port of Mogadishu and the country's airport via Turkish companies.<sup>52</sup>

In the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is the other key actor interested in the business of ports given its external trade heavily relies on sea ports. In the post-1991, with the independence of Eritrea, Ethiopia was forced to pay the painful price of the geopolitical reality of being one of the few landlocked countries in the world with economic and political implications. With its evergrowing populations, rising demand, fast-expanding economy, and landlocked geography, Ethiopia has short-term and long-term interest strategic interest to access to all of these ports on the Horn and the Indian Ocean to conduct its international trade.<sup>53</sup> For the Government of Ethiopia, diversification of ports and reducing the overreliance on Djibouti has become a new foreign policy and national security priority for its fast-growing economic development projects and population. After the Ethio-Eritrea war of 1998, Ethiopia became over-dependent on neighboring Djibouti for its international trade creating strategic and national security vulnerability for the country.<sup>54</sup>

A recent Ethiopia's interest in other neighboring countries ports including in Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan, and Somalia's Somaliland certainly makes sense from a geostrategic perspective and foreign policy perspective. The 2018 Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement has created a new geo-political opportunity for both countries for port investments in rehabilitating Eritrean ports of Assab and Massawa. The Abiy administration has also signed deals with Sudan for access to Port Sudan, in a bid to diversify its port outlets and reduce port fees and create new options for Ethiopian shipping interests. The country has also agreed a deal with the self-declared Somali state of Somaliland for a 19% stake in the port of Berbera which includes a plan to build a road from its border to the port involving the 51% stake of the UAE.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ardemagni, E. "Gulf Powers: Maritime Rivalry in the Western Indian Ocean", ISPI Analysis, no. 321, April 2018

<sup>53</sup> Rebuma, D. "The New Geo-politics in the Horn of Africa and its Implications for Ethiopia's Foreign Policy". M.A.Thesis. Unpublished. 2020.

<sup>54</sup>Gessesse,A. "Ethiopia to trade using regional ports".The East African. 2015.<http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Ethiopia-to-trade-using-regional-ports/2558-2682324-11idtdp/index.html>

<sup>55</sup> BBC News, 2018).

## **5.2 The Geopolitics of Military Bases in the Horn Foreign**

Military base (FMB) refers to an area on land or on sea beyond a sovereign state's jurisdiction, which is stationed with a certain number of armed forces having military activities, organized institutions and military facilities.<sup>56</sup> Strategically speaking, it's an important aspect for military power projection in international relations, a springboard to make military operations, military interventions, safeguard overseas interest, showcase of soft power and enhance political influence abroad. A primary observation of the Horn of Africa's security landscape after the beginning of the 21st century indicates, the ever-increasing involvement of foreign powers in the regional security complex of the Horn of Africa involving different means, mechanisms, and methods including but not limited to the establishment of military installations, bases, training and funding.<sup>57</sup>

### ***The Foreign Military Bases in the Horn of Africa***

Ten foreign military base are already established in the Horn of Africa by various powers based on their hierarchical levels, though many of them are in Djibouti. Accordingly the powers are arranged as follow as based on Buzan and Waever (2003) classification cited also Tesfaye (2021). They are military base by regional powers; military base by super powers and military base by great powers .below each of them are discussed separately.

### ***Military Bases by Regional Powers***

Regional powers are look like great with high competence in their regions, but do not register much in a wide-ranging way at the world stage.<sup>58</sup> In line with this, the security engagement of Middle Eastern and Gulf States in the Horn of Africa has undergone a steady evolution over the past decade.<sup>59</sup> The Horn Africa and the Middle East are two regions but highly interconnected. The central part of these two regions, the Red Sea, is the main connector of the sub-regions. The Gulf States increased presence in the Horn of Africa Initially; the main driver of the expansion was the security contest

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<sup>56</sup>Harkavy, R. "Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases: The Geopolitics of Access Diplomacy". Pergamon Press. 1982 see also Harkavy, 2007.

<sup>57</sup>Tesfay, G. "Foreign Military Bases in the Horn of Africa and Their Implications to Ethiopia's National Security (2002-2019)".

<sup>58</sup> Buzan, B., and Waever, O. "Regions and powers: the structure of international security". Cambridge University Press. No. 91. 2003;

<sup>59</sup> Melvin, N,. "The new eternal security politics of the Horn of Africa region".

between Iran and the GCC states.<sup>60</sup> The onset of the war in Yemen in 2015 then greatly accelerated the military engagement by GCC states, including the establishment of bases in the region.<sup>61</sup>

In the Horn of Africa not only the Gulf States, Egypt, Turkey and also and Iran – compete in building military base. As in the eastern Mediterranean, the export of Middle Eastern rivalries into the Horn of Africa with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and Egypt contesting Turkey and Qatar for dominance.<sup>62</sup> The UAE staged operations in Yemen out of a base in Eritrea and reportedly pursued building another in Somaliland, the largely autonomous northern region of Somalia.<sup>63</sup> Saudi Arabia has reportedly sought a base in Djibouti and has been active diplomatically, going so far as to convene the Red Sea Forum in 2018 in an effort to position itself as the center of gravity in a region that includes the volatile Horn of Africa. Meanwhile, the diplomatic split within the Gulf Cooperation Council was exported to the Horn, as Turkey and Qatar bolstered their presence in Somalia, which hosts Turkey’s largest overseas military facility.<sup>64</sup> Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UAE, and Qatar have increased their engagement in the Horn of Africa significantly in recent years for a host of economic, political, and geostrategic reasons.<sup>65</sup> The Middle Eastern and Gulf states have pursued „economic statecraft“, using strategic economic investments to achieve their political, military and economic aims in the region.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Military Bases by Super Powers***

Those countries which are categorized as super powers, according to Buzan and Waever possess, first class military political proficiencies as well as economic strengths to back such capabilities. In the post- WWII, two countries, the US and Soviet Russia remained super powers whereas the U.S becomes the only super power

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<sup>60</sup> Omar, S.M. “The Middle East’s Complicated Engagement in the Horn of Africa”.

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/01/middle-east-complicated-engagement-horn-africa>

<sup>61</sup> The United States Institute of Peace. “Final report and recommendations of the Senior Study Group on Peace and Security in the Red Sea arena”

<sup>62</sup> The United States Institute of Peace. “Final report and recommendations of the Senior Study Group on Peace and Security in the Red Sea arena”.p.43

<sup>63</sup> Frank, G. “How the UAE Emerged as a Regional Powerhouse,” BBC, September 22, 2020, <http://bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-54235209> ; and “Why Is UAE Building a Military Base in Somaliland?,” BBC, February 22, 2017, <http://bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-39051551>

<sup>64</sup> Michelle, D. G. “Major Power Rivalry in Africa. Discussion”. Paper Series on Managing Global Disorder No. 5 May. Council on Foreign Relations. Center for Preventive Action.2021.

<sup>65</sup> USIP, 2020

<sup>66</sup> Melvin, N. “Managing the New External Security Politics of the Horn of Africa Region”.

following the end of Cold War.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, the United States has maintained a significant military footprint in the Red Sea region for several decades. In the Horn of Africa, its military presence has grown markedly since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, largely out of a concern for violent extremist groups based in Somalia. Its footprint in the Arab Red Sea littoral states of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen as well as in the adjacent Persian Gulf has fluctuated in this period based on the intensity of US engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup>

### ***Military Bases by Great Powers***

Great powers are in between super and regional power mostly which are in the order of global power and with some degree of military capability task. During the Cold War it was held by China, Germany, and Japan, with Britain and France coming increasingly into doubt. After the Cold War it was held by Britain, France, Germany-EU, Japan, China, and Russia. India is knocking loudly on the door.<sup>69</sup>

Several EU member states also have security interests related to counterterrorism and migration. France has maintained a long-standing military presence in the Indian Ocean, notably at its military bases in Djibouti and on Réunion and Mayotte.<sup>70</sup> Germany and Spain also maintains small contingents of forces, each numbering a few dozen, at the French base in Djibouti. Italy also maintains a small contingent at a base it opened in Djibouti in 2013. All three countries are participants in EU NAVFOR. The United Kingdom participates in counter piracy task forces in the Red Sea region. It also has a permanent military base and training center in central Kenya and has expanded its footprint in Somalia, opening a small training center for Somali soldiers in June 2019.<sup>71</sup>

Japan's main interest in the Red Sea is free passage for commercial vessels.<sup>72</sup> Japanese assets first arrived in Djibouti in 2009 as part of global anti-piracy efforts, operating as a sub-tenant at Camp Lemonnier before establishing their own base, their

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<sup>67</sup> Buzan, B., and Waever, O. "Regions and powers: the structure of international security". Cambridge University Press. No. 91. 2003.

<sup>68</sup> United States Institute of Peace. "2020. Final report and recommendations of the senior study group on peace and security in the red sea arena"

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Melvin, N., "The new eternal security politics of the Horn of Africa region".

<sup>71</sup> United States Institute of Peace. "2020. Final report and recommendations of the senior study group on peace and security in the red sea arena"

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

first overseas, in 2011.<sup>73</sup> Planned improvements signal a more permanent presence, possibly in response to expanding Chinese footprint in Djibouti.<sup>74</sup>

Historically, the governance of China redefined a close relations with countries in the Horn of Africa from the time of the mid- 1990s motivated by economic involvement mainly for resource utilization in the region.<sup>75</sup> With regard to the China's military base in the Horn region, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) base is established in Djibouti, in August 2017<sup>76</sup> for the first time mainly for the purpose of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) project.<sup>77</sup> Another major development in military base race is the establishment of the military base of People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 2017 at the mouth of the Red Sea, breaking a long-established policy against basing Chinese troops abroad. The new PLA Navy facility overlooks not only a major strategic chokepoint and one of the world's most heavily-trafficked shipping lanes, but also a major U.S.<sup>78</sup> However, Beijing has not indicated interest in becoming the region's primary security provider, and has no prospect of equaling the US military commitment in the region in the foreseeable future.<sup>79</sup> The Chinese government justifies its military presence in Djibouti by pointing to its participation in antipiracy operations and UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, as well as the need to have a standby force for evacuations of Chinese citizens from regional hot spots.<sup>80</sup>

Russia has shown renewed interest in the Red Sea region in recent years, primarily for security purposes. Even though Russia has no major trading partners in the Red Sea region, Russia signed an agreement with Egypt to build a nuclear power plant on the Mediterranean coast.<sup>81</sup> Russia maintains a regular but non-permanent naval

<sup>73</sup> Fujiwara, S. "Japan to expand SDF base in Djibouti in part to counter China". Asahi Shimbun, 15 Nov. 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Japan Times. "Japanese sharply divided over revising Article 9 amid regional security threats, poll finds". 30 Apr. 2017.

<sup>75</sup> Dahir A.H., (2019), Foreign Engagements in the Horn of Africa: Diversifying Gains and Minimizing Risks, TRTWORLD research center. <https://independent.academia.edu/TRTWorldResearchCentre> 2019: 10).

<sup>76</sup> Melvin, N., "The foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa region". SIPRI Background Paper, Apr. 2019,

<sup>77</sup> Dahir A.H. "Foreign Engagements in the Horn of Africa: Diversifying Gains and Minimizing Risks" TRTWORLD research center. 2020.

<sup>78</sup> Vertin, Z. "Great Power Rivalry In The Red Sea: China's Experiment In Djibouti and Implications for the United States". in partnership brooking institution Doha center Ve, 2019: 15) .(2020 ),.

<sup>79</sup> Vertin, Z. "Great Power Rivalry In The Red Sea: China's Experiment In Djibouti and Implications for the United States"

<sup>80</sup> United States Institute of Peace. "Final report and recommendations of the senior study group on Peace and Security in the Red Sea Arena". 2020.p47.

<sup>81</sup> United States Institute of Peace. "Final report and recommendations of the senior study group on Peace and Security in the Red Sea Arena". 2020. p23

presence in the Horn of Africa.<sup>82</sup> Russia launched an independent anti-piracy operation off the Horn of Africa in September 2008 by deploying a frigate, and it has maintained a regular but non-permanent regional presence since then.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Russia and Sudan also signed a draft military agreement in March 2019 that may have involved a fleet logistics center that Sudan had reportedly offered the previous year.<sup>84</sup>

## **6 The Implication of the Recent Super Power Rivalry on Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa**

Super and regional powers race for port and militarization of Red Sea and the proliferation of foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa hold seeds of confrontation and conflict that could eventually impact peace, and security of the region including the economic development. Below this paper discussed both positive and negative as well as the opportunities and danger of super power rivalry in the Horn of Africa and the way forward in order to devise policies that could maximize the former and minimize the latter.

### **6.1 Positive effects: More investments, Economic Security, Regional Integration**

Geopolitical developments including but not limited to maritime security, energy security, economic development and global and regional contestations have increased the geo-strategic significance of the region. In line with the establishment of the various oversea military bases in the Horn of Africa sub region, different literatures revealed that having an economic security implication. On one side writers like Melvin (2019) and Esrael (2018) argues the foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa sub-region have an economic security advantages.<sup>85</sup> In addition, Melvin (2019) contends the augmented presence of the Middle Eastern and the Gulf countries in the Horn region has also brought some economic security benefits due to the emergence of new commercial opportunities connected to the Horn region.<sup>86</sup> As a result, access to port facilities in the Horn, particularly in close proximity to the entrance to the Red Sea, has become a source of increasing international competition.

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<sup>82</sup> Neil, M. "The New External Security Politics of the Horn of Africa Region". Stockholm International Peace Research Institute no. 2019/2 .p2 3

<sup>83</sup>Sputnik International, 'Russia sends warship to fight piracy near Somalia', 26 Sep. 2008.

<sup>84</sup>United States Institute of Peace. "Final report and recommendations of the senior study group on Peace and Security in the Red Sea Arena".

<sup>85</sup> Melvin, N., "The foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa region".

<sup>86</sup>Melvin, N. "Managing the New External Security Politics of the Horn of Africa Region". Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 2019.14



Given the strategic position of the Horn, this competition has led to a securitization of the race for ports. Melvin also added that, Saudi Arabia has the most agricultural investment, close 70 %, in Sub-Sahara Africa among Arab states, primarily in Ethiopia and Sudan and it has reportedly invested in Ethiopia's agriculture more than any other country.<sup>87</sup> The new super power rivalry simultaneous involvement in the Horn of Africa has the potential to bring markedly positive outcomes for the region.

First of all, the infrastructure projects yields positive-sum outcomes for Horn countries, which have generally welcomed the growing inflow of investments. A new investment on infrastructures have also contributed to economic integration, for instance, the construction of railway by Chinese company hastened regional economic integration of Ethiopia and Djibouti. In addition to that, the presence of multiple investors could increase competition, potentially triggering a 'race to investments' and increasing the aggregate inflows of finance into the Horn's underdeveloped infrastructure sector.<sup>88</sup> The sprawling number of projects launched and developed over the last few years lends credence to this hypothesis. In terms of ports, for instance, besides the sites developed by the UAE (in Berbera, Somaliland and in Bosaso, Puntland) and China (in Djibouti), additional infrastructure projects have already been recently completed in the region (e.g. rehabilitation of Somalia's Mogadishu port by Turkey), and more are in the pipeline (e.g. Turkish and Qatari efforts to revive the old Sudanese port of Suakin; development of a port at Hobyo, in Somalia's Galmudug region, by an Anglo-Turkish consortium).<sup>89</sup>

Given the underdevelopment of the Horn's infrastructure sector and its growing market potential, such an investment race could bring substantial economic benefits to the region. In addition to bringing higher investment levels and consequent economic advantages, the presence of multiple investors could have a positive political impact in Horn countries. Faced with a wider array of would-be investors, local governments might be able to play them off against each other, thus having one more tool in their hands to have their voice heard. For instance, as the government of Djibouti grew increasingly skeptical about DPW's commitment to the development of Doraleh's ports, the presence of alternative sources of investment, most notably

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<sup>87</sup>Melvin, N. "The new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region". Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 2019. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/sipri-insights-peace-andsecurity/new-external-security-politics-horn-africa-region>

<sup>88</sup> Jos, M & Guido, L. "A careful foot can step anywhere' The UAE and China in the Horn of Africa: Implications for EU engagement" Policy Brief. 2021.

<sup>89</sup> Jos, M & Guido, L. "A careful foot can step anywhere' The UAE and China in the Horn of Africa: Implications for EU engagement". see also Advani, 2019

China's CMP, may have allowed government officials to take a harder line in its dealings with DPW. Similarly, the fact that DPW, China Harbour Engineering and a Qatari company are all vying for a role in Sudan's ports is likely to improve the Sudanese government's bargaining power vis-à-vis all three actors

In peace and conflict resolution as well as Gulf States have played a positive role in tamping down regional conflicts; Qatar playing a mediating role in the Darfur conflict, or helping to negotiate a deal between Eritrea and Djibouti. Likewise, Saudi Arabia facilitated the peace accord between Ethiopia and Eritrea, signed in Jeddah in September, 2018.<sup>90</sup> The reconciliation between Ethiopia and Eritrea provides the UAE an opportunity to minimize opposition to its existing military facility in Assab, Eritrea by reducing disapproval from Horn actors like Ethiopia and because the lifting of U.N. sanctions on Eritrea removes obstacles to financial and military support. It also provides potential economic opportunities to connect Eritrean ports to the world's most populous landlocked country in Ethiopia though little concrete activity has materialized to date.<sup>91</sup> Generally, the international political and economic shifts that are driving the new external security dynamics of the Horn region are, at the same time, also a major opportunity, bringing new investments, infrastructure and connections to world markets. Taking advantage of the opportunities and managing the challenges will, however, require a significant shift in the approach of the Horn countries to their relations with external security actors.

## **6.2 Negative effects: Instability, Proxy Struggle and Patrimonial**

The Horn of Africa is located on a fault-line between two distinctly different strategies and philosophies for peace and security: the multilateral norms, principles and institutions, and the transactional politics of money and force of the Gulf monarchies.<sup>92</sup> The proliferation of military bases and facilities and the growth of naval forces mean that a variety of countries are now operating in the region through a complex set of bilateral security agreements, and with diverse national and international mandates linking the Horn to an array of geopolitical and geo-economics agendas. The external security politics of the Horn has several implications for the regional security order.

The immediate effect notably, the growth of foreign security interests in the Horn region, and the increasing significance of mixed military-commercial relations, has

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<sup>90</sup> Hisham,A. "Geo-Politics in the Horn of Africa. Policy Center for the New South".

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Dahir.A. "Horn of Africa Caught between the Qatar-GCC Crisis: Case Studies of Somalia and Sudan,".TRT World Research Center, March 2018), 12.

led to the rise of proxy competition.<sup>93</sup> The recent jostling for dominance in the Horn among the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia on the one hand and Turkey and Qatar on the other are fueling instability and insecurity in an already fractious environment.<sup>94</sup> In a commentary titled, “A Dangerous Gulf in the Horn: How the Inter-Arab Crisis is Fueling Regional Tensions” Rashid Abdi, Crisis Group’s Horn of Africa Project Director clearly articulated that the ever-growing scramble for military bases in the Horn of Africa are exacerbating regional tensions that risk triggering a conflict.<sup>95</sup> Some practical examples can be the situation where the already tense situation between Djibouti and Eritrea was exacerbated following the withdrawal of Qatari forces maintaining an armistice on the Red Sea island of Doumeira after the two countries sided with the Saudi-led alliance in June, 2017.<sup>96</sup>

Similarly, the rival Gulf countries have exported their political conflicts to the countries located around the Red Sea, which are generally already reeling under their own internal problems.<sup>97</sup> Even more than Sudan, the fallout from the intra-GCC dispute and the competition between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, on the one hand, and Turkey and Qatar, on the other hand, has had a negative impact on the situation in Somalia and has contributed to its centrifugal pressures.<sup>98</sup> While Saudi interest in Somalia was mostly in the context of its competition with, and concern about, Iranian interventions, the UAE presence there historically was mostly focused on business and commercial interests. However, the decision of the DP World to sign the first large international contract with Somaliland government led to political tensions and diplomatic dispute with the Federal Government of Somalia which does not recognize the latter sovereignty over Berbera.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the central government in Mogadishu has supported Turkey and Qatar, five of Somalia’s six 6 federal states (Somaliland, Puntland, Hirshabelle, Galmudug, and Southwest) have challenged the government’s position and advocated for a pro-Saudi stance. These conflicting views

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<sup>93</sup> Melvin, N. “The new eternal security politics of the Horn of Africa region”.

<sup>94</sup> Melvin, N. “The new eternal security politics of the Horn of Africa region”.

<sup>95</sup> Abdi, R. “A Dangerous Gulf in the Horn: How the Inter-Arab Crisis is Fueling Regional Tensions” International Crisis Group. 3 August 2017.

<sup>96</sup> Hisham, A. “Geo-Politics in the Horn of Africa. Policy Center for the New South”.

<sup>97</sup> Yusuf, O. “The Impact of the Gulf Conflict on the Horn of Africa (The Somalia Case).” 2018. [https://www.hiiraan.com/op4/2018/may/158254/accessed April 2022](https://www.hiiraan.com/op4/2018/may/158254/accessed%20April%202022).

<sup>98</sup> Gerald M. F. “The Impact of Middle East Regional competition n security and stability in the Horn of Africa”. August 2020 .Middle East Policy Paper. 2020.

<sup>99</sup> Styan, D. “The Politics of the Ports in the Horn: War, Peace and Red Sea rivalries”. 2018. Retrieved from: <https://africanarguments.org/2018/07/18/politics-horn-war-peace-red-sea-rivalries>

have generated tensions within Somalia's political classes.<sup>100</sup> The link between ports beyond commerce to the broader regional security dynamics is a clear manifestation how complex the emerging geopolitical dynamics can be consequential to the region. Gulf states and Turkey each claim to have interest in the "peace and security" of the Horn, but their definitions differ dramatically and conflicting interests bear seeds of confrontation.<sup>101</sup>

The oversea military bases in the Horn region would pose the potential of the augmentation of fundamentalism. This is mainly due to the religious lining up among the Middle Eastern countries. On one side the Saudi Arabia led groups and on the other hand Iran and Qatar camp by containing the expansion of one another.<sup>102</sup> Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt generally seek to limit the Brotherhood's influence at home and abroad, whereas Turkey and Qatar are more supportive of the movement and similarly aligned groups. The Saudi and Emirati concern over the Brotherhood is largely rooted in the movement's transnational nature, which Riyadh and Abu Dhabi view as potentially undermining their respective monarchies.<sup>103</sup> This competition has also undermined efforts to stabilize the most conflict-afflicted parts of the region. In Somalia, both Qatar and Turkey have backed the central government in Mogadishu against the federal states supported by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, undermining cohesion in a country that is a byword for state collapse.<sup>104</sup>

Furthermore, Gulf power politics in the Horn have revived an intense cross-border water conflict on the Nile River conflict particularly the rivalry of Gulf rivals would contribute for the Potential of conflict over GERD (Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam).<sup>105</sup> Particularly, Egypt has been using the Arab League as a foreign vehicle to

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<sup>100</sup> Dahir.A. "Horn of Africa Caught Between the Qatar-GCC Crisis: Case Studies of Somalia and Sudan," TRT World Research Center, March 2018, 2018.12

<sup>101</sup> Crisis Group "Intra-Gulf Competition in Africa's Horn: Lessening the Impact", Middle East Report N°206, 2019.

<sup>102</sup> Esrael Y. "The Expansion of Military Bases in the Horn of Africa: Analysis of its Challenges and Opportunities to Ethiopia's policy in the region". 2018

<sup>103</sup> Guido, S. "Regional Power United Arab Emirates: Abu Dhabi is No Longer Saudi Arabia's Junior Partner," German Institute for International and Security Affairs, SWP Research Paper no. 10, July 2020.

[www.swpberlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research\\_papers/2020RP10\\_UAE\\_RegionalPower.pdf](http://www.swpberlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2020RP10_UAE_RegionalPower.pdf)

<sup>104</sup> United States institutes of peace. "Senior Study Group on Peace and Security in the Red Sea Arena". Final Report and Recommendations. 2020.25

<sup>105</sup> Abigail K. & Timothy M. "Security and Development in the Horn of Africa: Emerging Powers, and Competing Regionalisms". 2018.

advances its hydro-hegemony in the Horn region.<sup>106</sup> In addition, Egypt takes advantage on the Sudanese-Turkish-Qatari partnership to renew its interest to fight over the Nile River, mainly the GERD project and to fight against Sudan, since they have a borer problem. With Egypt and Ethiopia at loggerheads over the development of the GERD, the Saudis and Emiratis are unable to keep both allies happy. For the moment, this appears to be preventing engagement with Ethiopia on a multilateral initiative for security in the wider Red Sea region. Therefore the quarrel between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt over GERD and divergent the geopolitical and geoeconomics race in the Horn of Africa have wider security implication.<sup>107</sup>

Middle Eastern participation in the Horn has worsened already-existing conflicts or stoked fresh tensions in other actions that were less blatantly focused on conflict settlement. An illustration of the latter is the UAE's breakup with both Djibouti and Somalia. Furthermore, the GCC conflict put the Horn's smaller nations under a lot of pressure to choose a side. Despite these extensive initiatives, results have been inconsistent. The majority of treatments have not yielded ground-breaking outcomes. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) crisis, which started in 2017 when Saudi Arabia and the UAE put an embargo on Qatar, has recently been accompanied by a sense of competitiveness. For instance, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates' involvement in the Ethiopia-Eritrea peace agreement might be interpreted as a geopolitical move to isolate Ethiopia. In advance of the altering regional dynamics are Qatar and Turkey.<sup>108</sup>

Despite years of discussions and several agreements, violence has continued in Darfur, implementation has been difficult, and the root causes of the conflict have not been addressed. After a new administration was sworn in in Khartoum in August 2019, it looks that Qatar's procedure has also been surpassed. This is because South Sudan is now the scene of continuing negotiations with armed players.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, Turkey's facilitation efforts between Somalia and Somaliland stalled in 2015, without producing substantial results, and Somaliland criticized Turkey for perceived biases in favor of Mogadishu.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, a territorial fault line exists between Sudan and Egypt over Halayeb Triangle is unresolved, while the border between

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<sup>106</sup> Addis Standard News, "Ethiopia Condemns Arab League's "Blind Support" to Egypt, Commends Sudan's "Principled Position". Retrieved from: [addisstandard.com/news/Ethiopia-condemns-arab-leagues-blind-supportegypt-commends-sudans-principled-position](https://addisstandard.com/news/Ethiopia-condemns-arab-leagues-blind-supportegypt-commends-sudans-principled-position)

<sup>107</sup> (Berg and Meester, 2018)

<sup>108</sup> Omar, S.M. "The Middle East's Complicated Engagement in the Horn of Africa". <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/01/middle-east-s-complicated-engagement-horn-afric>

<sup>109</sup> Omar, S.M. "The Middle East's Complicated Engagement in the Horn of Africa".

<sup>110</sup> Omar, S.M. "The Middle East's Complicated Engagement in the Horn of Africa".

Eritrea and Djibouti remains unresolved, despite the normalization of relations in late 2018. In addition, following the overthrow Saudi and Emirati involvement in the removal of Al Bashir in Sudan initially faced the risk of playing more of a spoiler role by supporting the Transitional Military Council (TMC) over the civil protest movement. Support like the provision of economic aid to the TMC was less focused on conflict resolution and more to support one side. This was due to a combination of interests to ensure the Muslim Brotherhood does not gain a foothold in the post-Bashir era, to retain Sudanese troops for the war in Yemen, and to contain spillover of popular movements on the domestic front. Whether it is successful or not, the resurgence of interaction between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East shows that the relationship between these two regions is likely to demonstrating the potential for Middle Eastern engagement to aggravate tensions.<sup>111</sup>

The ever-militarization of the Horn of Africa region and the increasing presence of Asian powers in the Horn of Africa also represent another major geo-political risk.<sup>112</sup> In the backdrop of China's expanding presence in Djibouti, the coming Asian strategic rivalry in the Horn has developed in which there is increasing fear of Japanese and Indian presence to in the Indian Ocean. Further, as China draws closer to both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, heightened tensions and perhaps even proxy confrontations could develop between U.S.-aligned actors and those supported by former Gulf partners if naval supremacy in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden is at stake, but this is an outside possibility, not a probability.<sup>113</sup>

## **7 Managing Complex Interactions: Way Forward**

This article has shown that the Horn of Africa cannot be understood as a standalone geopolitical space. Rather, the region should be seen as part of the broader Red Sea region, through which the crucial Europe, Asia maritime route transits, and also as part of the broader Indo-Pacific region, of which the Horn is the north-westernmost tip. The ongoing economic dynamism of littoral states in the Red Sea arena is coupled with political fragmentation, geopolitical polarization and unchecked military expansionism by many actors. Furthermore, these Red Sea trends are linked to the development of other regional hotspots, such as the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean, and involve an evergrowing number of regional and international

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<sup>111</sup>Omar, S.M. "The Middle East's Complicated Engagement in the Horn of Africa".

<sup>112</sup>Melvin, N.J., 2019. Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

<sup>113</sup> Michelle, D. G. "Major Power Rivalry in Africa".

players pursuing diverging and often conflicting strategies.<sup>114</sup> In order to manage the unchecked global and regional super power rivalry in the Red Sea and in the Horn of Africa, First, active diplomatic efforts are needed by regional players and the international community to prevent rivalry, un ruled competition and conflicts from prevailing over regional aspirations.<sup>115</sup> The build-up of military forces in the Horn of Africa has taken place without regional consultation on the strategic implications for the Horn countries of being integrated into wider security agendas.

Second, regional multilateral organization including IGAD and the AU should develop short and long term strategic plan to prevent super power scramble. Weak, vulnerable, and divided states in the region will not be capable of handling and managing the new global and regional geopolitics rivalry.. Thus, there is a dire need to set the agenda for trans-regional cooperation through multilateral organizations like the IGAD and the AU to withstand the destabilizing effects of such rivalry in the region with a plenty of its own. The two African institutions can play a critical role in advancing the mutual interests of their member states given their important international role they play. In this regard AU should take urgent measure and push the agenda forward. Among other one of the areas of involvement of AU is to make Horn of Africa an integral part of the African Union's peace and security architecture. Recently, there has been discussion at the African Union about developing an 'external action policy' for peace and security in the 'shared space' of the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden, including establishing political and security partnership with the GCC.<sup>116</sup>

Further, apart from the risks associated with foreign military presence and the AU's call for member states to be circumspect in their dealings, there is also need to established continental consensus on the modalities for regulating bilateral initiatives that result in bases being established. For their part, the countries of the Horn have not been passive beneficiaries, opting to leverage their geostrategic significance and the renewed interest by foreign powers for their benefit. The Horn countries should take greater responsibility for tackling regional non-traditional security, notably in the maritime domain; this will reduce the need for outside powers to deploy forces to

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<sup>114</sup> Luigi, N and Cyril, W. "The Red Sea link. Geo-economic projections, shifting alliances, and the threats to maritime trade flows".

<sup>115</sup>Luigi and Cyril, 2021.

<sup>116</sup>De Waal, A. "Pax Africana or Middle East Security Alliance in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea?"

the region. Strengthening regional security capacities is, therefore, a means of reducing external militarization.<sup>117</sup>

Not least but the last, establishment of new multilateral cooperation and efforts to promote peace has also the possibilities to manage the security challenges of the Horn region. The absence of an organized and inclusive regional forum for dialogue and cooperation around the Red Sea impedes progress on a wide range of issues, including economic integration and regional peace and security.<sup>118</sup> As the Horn/Red Sea region attracts a growing number of external players, coordination among these players is of paramount importance. Both regional and external players, therefore, would benefit from a more stable multilateral platform from which to discuss and coordinate their strategies. In recent years, countries in the region have created new structures for this purpose, most notably the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Red Sea Task Force and the Saudi-sponsored Red Sea Council. The Red Sea Council with its broader membership and its focus on the widely shared concern of maritime security provides a particularly interesting entry point for further multilateral cooperation. So far, the Council's membership has been restricted to littoral states. Yet, interest in ensuring the safe flow of trade through the region is shared by a much broader set of global players involved in, or dependent on, this trade. Thus, IGAD should intensify its engagement with all the countries in the Red Sea region and other relevant regional and international actors, to encourage dialogue and work to mitigate negative influences on regional stability. In light of geopolitical and strategic importance of the Red Sea region for global trade, the regional economy and overall instability as well as, the unfolding geopolitical shifts at play have a number of implications for policymakers in the Horn: For the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 1) as the peace, security and development of this wider region would benefit from more cooperation rather than competition, the IGAD encouraged the creation of an organized and inclusive regional forum for dialogue and cooperation around the Red Sea as a matter of urgency.

2. The IGAD should intensify its engagement with all the countries in the Red Sea region and other relevant regional and international actors, to encourage dialogue and work to mitigate negative influences on regional stability.

For the states of the Horn of Africa

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<sup>117</sup> Melvin, N. "Managing the New External Security Politics of the Horn of Africa Region".

<sup>118</sup> Luigi, N and Cyril, W. "The Red Sea link. Geo-economic projections, shifting alliances, and the threats to maritime trade flows"



1. The states of Africa need to continue work towards reinforcing inter- and intra-regional cooperation with partners across the Horn of Africa, using all available instruments.
2. All states of the horn of Africa need to readiness to engage with all the relevant actors and to contribute to reviving ties and building a community of shared interests, commerce, investment and security

## **8 Conclusion**

The Red Sea space is marked by a history of complex geopolitical relations, combined with increasing external interest in the area. over the past decade, the Red Sea region's strategic environment has been experiencing a fast transformation, as a result of intensifying competition and military build-up by Middle Eastern countries and global powers. As unprecedented contact between Gulf States and the Horn of Africa reframes politics, economics, and security atop one of the world's busiest waterways, the Red Sea has quickly emerged as the focus of fresh geopolitical interest. According to Alex.De Waal (2019), there is conflict on a national and regional level in the Horn of Africa. Influences on the region are risky because they open up additional avenues for ambitious players to acquire outside backing, making it harder for the region's leaders to keep control as money and influence flood the political market. The most destabilizing trend in the Red Sea region is the zero-sum competition for influence among Middle Eastern actors and the risks that competition poses to state integrity in the Horn of Africa. Where geopolitical interests are contested and help set the playing field for regional rivalries. This paper observe, If the Horn is not able to manage the growing presence and regional interests of foreign military actors, it risks increased fragmentation and becoming a part of wider international security competition, over which it is likely to have little influence

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