

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**COMPETING MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA: ECONOMIC  
AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHIOPIA**

**By: Dagim Alemayehu**

**Advisor: Dr. Solomon Mebrie**

**July, 2021**

**Addis Ababa**

*Addis Ababa*  
*University*  
*(Since 1950)*



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**Thesis Submitted to College of Social Sciences Department of Political Science and  
International Relations in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters  
of Art in International Relations and Diplomacy**

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**BY DAGIM ALEMAYEHU**

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## List of Acronyms

AMISOM:	African Union Mission in Somalia
ATM:	Automated Teller Machine
AU:	African Union
CIC	Council of Interstate Cooperation
EPRDF:	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE:	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GCC:	Gulf Cooperation Council
GERD:	Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
IGAD:	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IR:	International Relation
ISS:	Institute for Strategic Studies
KSA:	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MoFA:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
RECs:	Regional Economic Organizations
UAE:	United Arab Emirates
TPLF:	Tigray People Liberation Front
US:	United States
USA:	United States of America
WWII:	World War the Second

## **Abstract**

*The middle East countries have maintained social, cultural, economic, and religious ties with the Horn countries for many years. However, since the 2011 Arab Spring the rift among the Middle East countries and the engagement of these countries with the Horn of Africa has shown an increase. The 2015 Yemeni civil war and the 2017 GCC crisis have exacerbated the rift among the Middle East states and resulted in increased engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa for expanding their sphere of influence and serving their respective political, economic, and security interests in the Horn of Africa.*

*The rift among the Middle Eastern countries in the Middle East and the export of their rift to the Horn of Africa in terms of proliferation of military installation and ports, increase in military training, military aid, and economic aid – coupled with their interventionist and coercive foreign policy towards the Horn has economic and security implications for the Horn of Africa in broader terms and Ethiopia in particular. The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the increased engagement of Middle Eastern countries with the Horn of Africa, and its economic and security implications to Ethiopia and put forward some policy recommendations that Ethiopia should adopt to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the benefits of such engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa. In doing so, the researcher deployed a qualitative methodology. Accordingly, investment, trade, and tourism data and data gathered from key informant interviews, and secondary sources of data were analyzed.*

*Hence, in terms of economic implication, the research has found that the economy of Ethiopia has been least impacted by the competitive engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, the research shows that the increased engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa is a threat to the security of Ethiopia. Based on the findings, the study suggests the need to ensure the continuity of inward-looking foreign policy orientation of the country, and the policy of neutrality towards the Middle East countries. Moreover, the researcher emphasizes the need to promote a negotiated settlement of rift among the Middle East states to minimize the impacts and maximize the benefits of increased engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa.*

**Keywords:** *Competition, Economy, Inward-looking, Neutrality, Rift, Rivalry, Security*

## **Declaration**

I, hereby declare that this research paper is my original work and has never been presented in any other institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, I also declare that any information used has been duly acknowledged.

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DAGIM ALEMAYEHU

JULY, 2021 G.C.

This thesis is submitted for examination with my approval as an advisor of the candidate.

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SOLOMON MEBRIE (Ph.D.)

JULY, 2021 G.C.

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Defining the term 'Middle East', the geographic location of the Middle East, and countries constituted within the Middle East is a subject of discourse among scholars. Specifically, the inclusion of the North African countries and Turkey in the spectrum of defining the Middle East constitutes one of the contested issues and point of departure among academicians in defining the Middle East. Though there is no agreement as to the definition of geographic limit and countries constituted in the Middle East to this day, for this study, the Middle East shall be defined to constitute Arab countries of North Africa, the Gulf Region, and Turkey (Tibi, 1989 and Hudson, 1976).

Among countries constituted within the Middle East, this study focuses on those countries most engaged with the Horn of Africa in terms of their alliance with the Horn countries and the level of their engagement in the Horn of Africa region's political, economic, and security dynamics. Particularly, Taking in to consideration their engagement in the Horn of Africa through proliferation of military installations and ports, the increase in military and economic aid, and involvement in conflict resolution – this paper examines the engagement of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey, which are the four most engaged countries after the Arab Spring (Mahmood,2020). Moreover, historically the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Egypt have been involved quite substantially since the 1960s and the era of decolonization ( Donelli and Cannon, 2019). Thus, for the above-stated reason, among Middle East countries, this thesis examines the engagement of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey and to a certain degree of Egypt in the Horn of Africa.

There is no consensus among scholars as to what constitutes the Horn of Africa region. Some scholars tended to incorporate Uganda while others exclude Sudan, South Sudan, and Kenya. The criterion to categorize countries as part of the Horn of Africa was first developed by Professor Mesfin Wolde-Mariam (Gashaw A. & Zelalem M.,2016). According to Mesfin (2004), the Horn of Africa contains Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, and South Sudan. Thus, for this paper, the Horn of Africa refers to the area encompassing Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and Somaliland.

The Horn of Africa is the single most geostrategically important region of the world (Gashaw A., & Zelalem M., 2016). It is strategically significant because of the Red Sea. Moreover, the gateways of the Suez Canal and the strait of Bab el Mandeb have made the region geostrategically important (Al-Yadoomi,1991). Besides, the region has paramount importance for maritime security, naval base, military base, anti-piracy and anti-terrorism operations (Gashaw A. & Zelalem M.,2016). Over the last decade, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Turkey dramatically increased their physical, economic, and political presence in the Horn of Africa (Donelli and Cannon, 2019).

What has changed over the last decade, and particularly since 2015, is the emergence of a more overtly political agenda in these countries' calculations (International Crises Group Middle East Report,2019). The shift began in 2011 with the turmoil that followed the Arab uprisings. As regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Lybia, Syria, and Yemen faltered, the Gulf states and Turkey each invested heavily in preferred allies. Two contradictory axes emerged: on the one hand, Saudi Arabia and the UAE favored strong central governments that restored security over chaotic democratic transitions ideologically led by the Muslim Brotherhood or its affiliates (Mishra, 2019). They also sought to push back against growing Iranian influence in the region. On the other hand, Qatar and Turkey cemented ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated forces during the uprisings and continued to back them financially and through the media. The June 2017 crisis between Qatar and other Gulf states accelerated their turn toward the Horn ( Melvin,2019).

In those struggles, the main rivals saw the Horn of Africa as a new arena for competition and building alliances. With their significant financial resources, the Gulf countries and Turkey saw a chance to adjust the future economic and political landscape of the Red Sea basin in their favor. They are expanding their physical and political presence to forge new partnerships and ring-fence their enemies – most often one another (International Crises Group Middle East Report,2019).

A thorough investigation of the Horn's security and political dynamics, and foreign policy behaviors of Middle East states in their engagement in the Horn is of paramount importance in examining and analyzing economic and security implications of engagement of those states in the Horn of Africa. This thesis aims to examine and analyze the engagement of Middle East

states in the Horn of Africa and its resultant economic and security implications to Ethiopia in particular.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Among the Middle East countries historically the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Egypt have been engaging with the Horn of Africa quite substantially since the 1960s and the era of decolonization. Engagement by Turkey, the UAE, and Qatar, on the other hand, dates back approximately one decade, which has its roots in the 2011 Arab Spring (Donelli and Cannon, 2019). Besides, the engagement of Saudi Arabia and UAE in the Yemeni Civil War from 2015 onwards coupled with their effort to distance Iran from the Horn of Africa region brought increased engagement of Saudi Arabia and UAE in port and military base utilization and creation of an alliance with the Horn countries with the instrumentality of their oil money.

Moreover, In June 2017, the split in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) pitting Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain against Qatar exacerbated an already tense relationship, leading to a situation whereby internal GCC political dynamics have increasingly affected relations with, and regional dynamics in various Horn states (Melvin,2019). More importantly, the 2017 GCC crisis has exacerbated the rift among the Saudi-Qatari axis, and the competition for cross-regional influence and alliance with the Horn countries drastically increased. Its divisions have raised concerns that proxy politics driven by Middle Eastern rivalries have emerged in the Horn, promoting greater militarization and destabilization (Donelli and Cannon,2019). Such rivalrous engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa has implications for the economy, and security dynamics of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia lies at the heart of the world's most geostrategic region which is unstable because of intra-state and inter-state conflicts within and among the countries forming the region, and the increased presence of foreign powers in the region has implications. Thus, this thesis aims at examining and analyzing economic and security implications attached to the engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa, and how should Ethiopia mitigate the impacts of engagement of Middle East states in the Horn and maximize its economic and security gains.

Moreover, except published articles dealing with the competition of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa region and its impacts on the Horn of Africa countries, there is scanty literature particularly dealing with economic and security implication of Middle Eastern countries engagement in the Horn of Africa region to Ethiopia in particular. A graduate thesis by

Esrael Yohannes, titled “Impacts of proliferation of military bases in the Horn of Africa”, examines the impacts of greater powers (USA, China, France, Britain, and other Western European countries) competition for military base installation in the Horn of Africa (Esrael, 2018). Esrael’s study investigates the challenges and prospects of expansion of foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa to Ethiopia's foreign policy. On the other hand, a thesis by Kidane (2018) examines the root causes of the 2017 Qatar-GCC dispute, and implications of the crisis to Ethiopia and other Horn countries, single out and studies the root causes of the crisis and impact of the GCC crisis on Ethiopia and the Horn countries in general (G/Egziabher,2018).

The above-mentioned studies with a focus on examining impacts of proliferation of military bases in the Horn of Africa (in which the great powers are heavily involved), in one way or another, do not specifically examine or address the impacts of the competitive engagement of Middle East countries through a proliferation of military installations and ports, and the increase in military and economic aid. Unlike those studies, this thesis investigates the increased competitive engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa and specifically analyzes its economic and security implications for Ethiopia.

Thus, this study aims at examining the competitive engagement of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Turkey, and the most recent increased engagement of Egypt in the Horn of Africa and its economic and security implication to Ethiopia. By doing so, the study aims at filling the gap and complementing literature associated with the subject at hand.

### **1.3 Core argument**

In recent years the geostrategic and the volatile Horn of Africa region saw an increased competitive engagement of the Turkey and Qatar led alliance vis-à-vis the Saudi and UAE led alliance aimed at expanding their sphere of influence and serving their respective economic, political, and security interests, and an increasing Egyptian presence in the region aimed at putting pressure on Ethiopia in their dispute over the use of the Nile river and the construction of the GERD. Such engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa brings region-wide and country-specific impacts. Hence, this study argues that the competitive engagement of Middle East states in the Horn of Africa had a little impact on the economy of Ethiopia, and has security threat to Ethiopia.

## **1.4 Objective**

### **1.4.1 General objective**

The objective of this study is to discuss, investigate and analyze the increased engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa, and its economic and security implications to Ethiopia. The purpose of this discussion and analysis at this point is to show how an increased engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn would impact Ethiopia, and examine Ethiopia's bilateral and multilateral engagement with its neighbors and the Middle East countries.

### **1.4.2 Specific objectives**

- 1) To discuss the competitive engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa;
- 2) To examine and analyze the economic implication of engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa for Ethiopia in particular;
- 3) To analyze the security implications of the engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa for Ethiopia in particular;
- 4) To examine the bilateral and multilateral engagement of Ethiopia with its neighbors and the Middle East countries.

## **1.5 Research questions**

- 1) Why are Middle Eastern countries competing for a powerful hold and increased influence in the Horn of Africa region?
- 2) What are the economic implications of the engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa region for Ethiopia?
- 3) What are the security implications of engagement of Middle Eastern powers in the Horn to Ethiopia in particular?
- 4) How should Ethiopia behave in its bilateral and multilateral engagement with the Horn and Middle East countries?
- 5) What should be done about all this?

## **1.6 Methodology and method of data collection**

This study is qualitative research that attempts to describe the engagement of Middle East states in the Horn of Africa and its implications for Ethiopia. Since the issues of international politics and foreign policy heavily link with the social world and human beings, it is imperative to use the qualitative methodology in this study. Moreover, the research questions are found to be effectively addressed by the qualitative approach. The concern of the qualitative approach to text and document analysis makes it fit for this study.

As a method of data collection, this study relies on primary and secondary sources of data. An in-depth interview forms the basic source of primary data for this research. In light of this, a semi-structured in-depth interview is employed to explore the views of the selected key informants. Key informants are those individuals who have a privileged social position in the research setting, which in turn gives them specialist knowledge about other people, processes, and happenings (Payne and Payne, 2004).

For this study, the key informants were selected purposively based on their specialist knowledge and positions they occupy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS Africa), IGAD, and Embassies of Middle East countries in Ethiopia. In this regard, an interview was conducted with a researcher from ISS Africa (a regional human security policy think-tank in Africa, which aims to enhance human security in the continent). Also, efforts were made to interview appropriate representative personnel from the embassies of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar in Addis Ababa. However, except for two representatives from the Turkey Embassy, the attempt to interview representative personnel from Embassies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar failed as the personnel approached were unwilling to be interviewed on this topic. Besides this, repeated attempts to interview representatives from the UAE Embassy failed to materialize because of the reluctance of the representatives to share their views, despite their initial receipt of an interview request letter and willingness to be interviewed. Moreover, an interview with two Ambassadors and three career diplomats from relevant departments of the FDRE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and one security sector head at the IGAD Addis Ababa office was undertaken. The tool used in selecting the informants is purposive sampling, where respondents were selected based on predefined purposes of direct association of the respondents' work or area of engagement in the area of study.

Also, numerical data on the last five years(2015-2019) level of investment, tourism, and import and export trade of Ethiopia with the Middle East countries were gathered from Ethiopian Investment Commission, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and Ministry of Culture and Tourism were analyzed. These numerical data are reviewed and analyzed to give full meaning to the study at hand.

The study also relies on secondary data gathered from relevant literature, such as books, published and unpublished materials, journal articles, magazines, newsletters, and internet sources. The principal web page used as an important source for this study is the ACADEMIA web page at <https://www.academia.edu>. Secondary data is used in formulating the conceptual and theoretical framework, which in turn will be crucial for the collection of primary data by providing the general framework and documents to be analyzed. In the meantime, a descriptive method of data analysis is deployed in analyzing the data obtained from the primary and secondary sources stated hereinabove.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The repeated political instability in the country and the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which has happened while conducting the research were major obstacles in conducting the study. In the initial phases of the research, because of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, most organizations were closed, and as experts were obliged to work from home, it was very difficult to reach out and interview the key informants. Even after reaching them through email, most informants were reluctant to get interviewed through technological means like zoom, skype, and others. Also, the repeated political upheavals and security situations of the country and the panic in the first few months after the declaration of the first Covid-19 case in Ethiopia influenced the researcher's focus while conducting the study.

Besides reluctance and the unwillingness of representatives from UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Embassies, despite repeated in-person visits to their respective Embassies and email and phone communications, were other obstacles to the study. Also, some informants were unwilling to significantly elaborate on their views and experiences on the topic and it has highly impacted the outcomes of the study.

### **1.8 Scope**

The scope of the study is limited to the analysis of the engagement of Middle Eastern countries (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt ) in the Horn of Africa and its economic and security implication to Ethiopia in the context of political dynamics in the Horn of Africa after the Arab spring and the 2017 GCC crisis.

The study will not go into and analyze each Middle Eastern countries engagement in each country geographically located in the Horn of Africa; rather it aims at analyzing the engagement of a selective list of Middle Eastern countries- identified in terms of their extra-territorial influence and level of economic and military presence in the Horn of Africa - which constitutes Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. Also, since the advent of those Middle Eastern countries is largely confined to certain parts of the Horn, the study aims at analyzing engagement of Middle Eastern countries especially in Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, and South Sudan.

### **1.9 Significance**

The study complements the existing works of literature on the Implications of the engagement of competing Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa. The paper also puts forward suggested solutions and recommendations on the topic at hand, which the researcher believes will be useful for policy consideration by relevant governmental institutions and other regional organizations.

### **1.10 Organization of the study**

The first chapter deals with the introductory remarks of the thesis. It encompasses background of the study, statement of the problem, research methodology and method of data collection, objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study, among others. The second chapter deals with the historical and theoretical framework of the study. Accordingly, the historical background of Middle Eastern countries' engagement in the Horn of Africa and the relation that existed between the Horn countries and Middle Eastern countries will be brought to the surface. Furthermore, the section briefly discusses Neo-realism with a particular focus on the Alliance theory and Ayoob's Subaltern realism in explaining the interaction of the Middle East countries with the Horn countries and the rivalry among the Middle East countries.

Based on secondary sources of data, the third chapter tries to explore how and why the Middle Eastern countries are competing for a powerful hold and increased influence in the Horn of Africa. Moreover, it also uncovers Ethiopia's relations in the Horn of Africa and the dynamics of its relationship with the Middle East countries.

The fourth chapter puts forward a thorough discussion and analysis of the economic and security implication of engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa to Ethiopia in particular based on data gathered from the key informants and some relevant secondary data, as appropriate.

The final chapter discusses bilateral and multilateral engagement paths Ethiopia should adopt in its relation with the Horn and the Middle East countries, in a bid to try to show what patterns of engagement would enable Ethiopia to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the opportunities of engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa. Most importantly it reflects on the importance of acting through regional integration forums in the likes of IGAD and the AU in minimizing the devastating impact of engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa. Finally, it attempts to draw lessons and suggestions for future directions, followed by a brief and separate conclusion derived from the overall study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **History of Middle East Rift, Interaction of the Middle East with the Horn of Africa and Theories of IR**

#### **2.1 Historical background of Middle East countries rift and rivalry**

“The Middle East forms one of the most dynamic and conflict-ridden parts of the international system. This is a region that served, as a strategic crossroad of the world, shaped by global forces for millennia. Developments originated in this region, moreover, have often gone on to make a much greater global impact” (Ehteshami, 2014). As a dynamic and penetrated regional system, the Middle East's fate is also heavily intertwined with that of the broader currents sweeping across the international system, be these political, economic, or linked to security ( Tibi, 1998). Indeed, the region's states' forms and structures were arguably shaped by the dialectical struggles of colonial (outside) powers with each other and a drawn-out "cycle of domination resistance" at the national level ( Saouli, 2012).

While the Cold War has been over for almost three decades, the legacy of a prolonged period of rivalry is still having an impact on the Middle East. From Syria and Lebanon gain their sovereignty in 1946 to Algeria throwing off French rule in 1962, almost all former European colonial holdings became independent Arab states (Harrison,2018). It was the convergence of the needs of the newly independent Arab countries for outside support, and the available supply of that support from the United States and the Soviet Union, that created the modern Middle East. The result of this intersection between the advent of the Cold War and the security and economic needs of independent Arab states was that the region started to mimic the bipolar structure of the international system. Evidence of this was an Arab Cold War that mirrored the global superpower conflict. This divided the Arab world into two camps, with the Soviet-backed, leftist leaning, Arab nationalist camp led by Egypt's Nasser pitted against the more conservative U.S. supported camp, consisting of Saudi Arabia and Jordan (Kerr 1971). The Cold War period engendered a Middle East political order that persisted from the 1940s until the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s (Primakov,2009).

The political order that was established during the Cold War started to fray even before the formal collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 1977 Egypt's President Anwar Sadat stunned the

Arab world and the West by going to Jerusalem, forging a peace treaty with Israel in 1978, and upending a decades-long alliance with the Soviet Union, realigning Egypt squarely in the U.S. camp. In 1979, U.S. ally Iran underwent an Islamic revolution, which at its core repudiated the Shah's close alliance with the United States. And in 1990, as the Soviet Union was close to collapse, Iraq's Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, in effect testing the strength of the prevailing regional order. While these events put pressure on the Cold War regional order that had defined the Middle East since the end of World War II, it was the formal collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 that delivered the biggest geopolitical shock to the Middle East (Harrison,2018).

Syria's response to what was perceived as a threat posed by the loss of its Soviet patron was to reinforce its alliance with Iran, which had been forged years earlier in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, much to the annoyance of its Arab brethren. This, in conjunction with Damascus's ties to Hezbollah in Lebanon, created a resistance front against what was perceived to be American hegemonic designs on the region, particularly after the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, in 2001 and 2003 respectively (Goodarzi,2009). This created a new power structure for the region, consisting of states like Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, U.A.E., and Egypt, which tilted towards the United States, on one side, and a revisionist front on the other side, consisting of Iran and Syria along with non-state actors Hezbollah and Hamas, that have arrayed themselves to resist what they see as American designs on the Middle East (Hubbard, Kershner and Barnard,2018)

After the end of the cold war follows a period of American Unipolarity. According to Zalewski, what unipolarity did was set up a new computing power structure in the region. While during the Cold War, the Middle East reflected the bipolarity of the international system, what emerged following the Soviet collapse was much more an authentically regional system, defined by competing for Iranian and Arab nationalisms and Sunni and Shi'i sectarian identities. Turkey up until the Syrian civil war was generally neutral in disputes between the Iranian-led resistance front and U.S. Arab allies. But after it got mired in Syria, Ankara found its "zero problems with neighbors" neutral policy to be untenable ( Foreign Policy, August 22nd, 2013). This tripartite contest between Iranian, Arab, and Turkish centers of power is today playing out in the civil wars of the Middle East. The civil wars in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq turned what had been competition between coexisting regional powers into hotly contested proxy battles. These wars

created security vacuums that Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey projected their power into (Harrison,2018).

To shade more light on the tripartite contest between Iranian, Arab, and Turkish centers of power in the region and as a bridge to jump into the discussion of intra-Gulf dispute, a brief discussion of the history of Saudi-Iranian relations is of paramount importance. From the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabi in 1932 until the present day, the relation between the two countries has been changing at times. Before the official establishment of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Saudi Arabia had only limited contacts. However, after the leader of Iran sided with the Axis powers during WWII, the British and Russians insisted that he abdicate. It was after Reza Shah's abduction in 1941 the nature of the Saudi-Iranian relationship change. The two conservative monarchies became Western-aligned and, although both were Islamic states, Iran chose not to compete with Saudi Arabia's important place within Islam (Saeed M, 1993).

Following Britain's departure from the region in the 1960s, which was believed to have created a power vacuum in the region that could invoke soviet interference, the Nixon administration decided to use the two countries in the region Saudi Arabia and Iran, as the Guardians of the Gulf to foster stability and hedge against potential communist influence in the area. This era of cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia came to a crashing halt with the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Iran's revolutionaries defined their regime against Saudi Arabia. Their radical ideology was opposed to Saudi conservatism and the Kingdom's Western, mainly American alliance. The friction between the two states intensified as they fought in numerous spheres in the years that followed (Richard,1981).

Shortly after the revolution, Iran became mired in a protracted conflict with Iraq. Saudi Arabia supported Iraq in the eight-years Iran-Iraq War, seeing Iraq as a bulwark against any potential Iranian aggression. When the war ended and the architect of the revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini died Iran's demeanor changed. It no longer wanted to be isolated from the world because of its revolutionary politics and wanted to reintegrate into the international system. With this change in outlook and tempering of its revolutionary ideology, Iran slowly approached Saudi Arabia. As relations between the countries normalized, they entered a period of rapprochement that lasted over a decade(Derika, 2017).

This state of affairs remained in place until the American intervention in Iraq in 2003. Saudi Arabia and Iran had shared a similar outlook towards Iraq before the intervention. Iran and Iraq

had a long history of enmity, and the cordiality between Saudi Arabia and Iraq disappeared after the 1990-1991 Gulf War when Iraq attacked Saudi Arabia. The American intervention reshaped the political order in the Persian Gulf. Iraq turned from an Iranian foe to friend because once Iraq's majority Shi'ite population came to power, it began to elicit advice from this Shi'ite brethren in Iran. Iran was eager to help Iraq because Iran saw a close relationship with Iraq as necessary to prevent a possible American intrusion into Iran through Iraq. With Iraq no longer a bulwark against Iran, Saudi Arabia began seriously looking at Iranian involvement in conflict across the Middle East. This fear was further realized with the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011. When the Arab Spring erupted in Syria and threatened Iran's only Arab ally, Iran moved to defend the Syrian regime. Saudi Arabia is now defining itself against Iran and is assisting Syrian opposition forces against the Syrian regime. Saudi Arabia is worried about the influence Iran has accumulated through its support of Syria and Iraq. Because of this influence, Saudi Arabia believes it is being pushed to the side and its role in the Gulf is being minimized (Mohammad and Saeid, 2017).

## **2.2 Intra-Gulf dispute and Turkey-Qatar alliance**

Since June 2017, Qatar has been subject to a boycott by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt (the Arab Quartet). This has created a deep and lasting rift with ripple effects across the Middle East and Horn of Africa (Kinninmont,2019). The crisis erupted in June 2017, when Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain joined by Egypt – severed diplomatic, trade, and transport links with Qatar, withdrew their nationals, and pulled out their investments. On 23 June 2017, the Saudi-led coalition announced a list of thirteen demands for the resolution of the crisis. These demands included: shutting down Al Jazeera and other Qatar-funded media organizations; curbing diplomatic ties with Iran and terrorist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB); the termination of the Turkish military presence in Qatar; and paying reparations to other Gulf countries for financial losses resulting from Qatar's policies (Human Rights Watch 2018). Qatar was required to agree to these demands within ten days (The Guardian 2017). Doha considered the demands as an assault on its national sovereignty and officially rejected them on 3 July in a letter to the Kuwaiti emir who acted as a mediator between the two sides (Katzman and Blanchard 2017). Qatar accused this Arab 'Quartet' of trying to

create a run on its currency, and there has subsequently been speculation that a military confrontation was only narrowly avoided (Kinninmont,2019).

Qatar has always been at the heart of intra-Gulf disputes since the 1970s (Cengiz,2019). However, since the Arab uprisings, Doha has pursued an independent and very different policy from the other GCC members by supporting anti-status quo movements starting from Tunisia to Libya, from Egypt to Syria, and doing this by using Al Jazeera as an effective tool of its soft power (Köse and Ulutaş 2017, 1–6). Doha also has improved its relations with Iran, whose policies are considered an existential threat from Riyadh. Qatar's relations with these actors were regarded as security risks and unacceptable by Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi (Sailer and Roll 2017, 1–5).

The first major diplomatic crisis happened in 2014 when members of the anti-Qatar coalition withdrew their ambassadors from Doha (Kabalan 2017, 12). The 2014 crisis lasted about nine months and was solved after the mediation efforts of Kuwait and Oman, the other neutral GCC members. However; despite the goodwill shown by all the actors at that time, the main problem underlying the division had never healed (Stephens 2017, 12).

From the very beginning of the Gulf crisis, Ankara stood by its long-standing ally Qatar while trying to avoid a deterioration in Turkish–Gulf relations. In the course of the Arab Spring, Turkey's support to popular uprisings meant direct support to the Muslim Brotherhood, driving a wedge with the Arab monarchies, namely Saudi Arabia, UAE, as well as Bahrain, and Egypt. In the same period, Turkey and Qatar developed special relations in political and economic terms, even adding a security dimension by the establishment of a Turkish military base in Qatar. For Turkish leadership, the blockade against Qatar in June 2017 was seen as a final attempt by the Saudi-UAE alliance to act against Turkish interests in the Gulf and possibly beyond. In response, Turkey did not hesitate to extend strong support to Qatar by providing daily products and reinforcing its military presence in Qatar to help pro-Turkish Tamim (Cengiz,2019).

Exemplifying the strains in the Turkey-Qatar alliance in the eyes of their rival bloc was the Saudi-UAE ultimatum to remove a Turkish military base in Qatar, one element of their so-called '13 Demands' (Kinninmont,2019). Turkey is a part of the "triangle of evil" together with Iran and the Islamic State in the eyes of Mohammed bin Salman. This confrontational approach put Turkey in the rival camp of the Saudi-UAE-led bloc. Turkey's military presence in Somalia, and attempts to establish a naval base on the Suakin island of Sudan also added to the enmity as

maneuvers of the rivalry centered around the Gulf Crisis. On the other side, Qatar survived the blockade, strengthened military capabilities, seemingly secured its economy, pursued a balanced regional and international diplomatic role, countered the UAE-Saudi narrative, engaged in rivalry in Africa by establishing a stronghold in Sahel (Bulent,2019).

### **2.3 The Middle East interaction with the Horn countries**

Historically and mainly due to its geographical proximity, the Horn of Africa's cultural and trade interactions with the Middle East, and vice versa, have been intense ( Donelli and Cannon, 2019). Some such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Egypt have been involved quite substantially since the 1960s and the era of decolonization. Also, engagement by Turkey, the UAE, and Qatar, on the other hand, dates back approximately one decade. The impetus for Turkey, Qatar, and the UAE may have differed, but the intensity of their recent interactions in the Horn of Africa does seem to have roots in the 2011 uprisings and upheavals (Donelli and Cannon, 2019).

The interaction between the Arab Peninsula and the Horn of Africa countries is marked by historical, economic, political, and sociocultural factors. For centuries, the societies of the Gulf have profoundly influenced the economic, political, and sociocultural landscape of the Horn and vice versa (Ehrlich 1994). The Red Sea, which is nowhere wider than 355 km, has long connected, rather than separated, the Arabian Peninsula and Northeast Africa. Geographical proximity underpins a history of relations that have swung back and forth between the two regions. The shared heritage of the Red Sea region is evident in the monotheistic traditions – from the mystical union of the Jewish Prophet-King Solomon and the Ethio-Yemeni Sheba to the Biblical land of Kush to the first Muslim hijra fleeing persecution in Mecca to Abyssinia and the sounding of the first adhan in Medina by Bilal ibn Rabah, a freed slave from Ethiopia. It also includes the dominance of Semitic languages (Arabic, Amharic, Tigrinya, etc.) and similar tastes in cuisine, dress, and music. Yet other memories, of competing imperialisms and proselytization, are less cheerful reminders of the Gulf–Horn intimacy (Verhoeven 2018).

Numerous attempts by polities on either maritime shore to incorporate both the lucrative trading routes of the Arabian Peninsula and the rich pastures and agricultural lands of the Horn in one empire failed. A durable regional hegemony only emerged when in the 19th century, the Red Sea became a ‘British Lake’, controlled at its access points in Suez and Aden by the Royal Navy and

the all-important connector of Europe and the Mediterranean to India (Serels,2013) The joint subjugation of both regions to a British order had consequences for state-society relations that endure to the present day, giving much of their domestic and international politics a structurally similar content(Verhoeven 2018).

The Cold War divided the Horn and the Gulf internally and vis-à-vis each other. A first period of the Cold War saw Egypt, Syria, Sudan, and Somalia opposing Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Ethiopia, and Yemen, most forcefully in the 1962–70 North Yemen civil war (Kerr 1971). The second phase of regional confrontation (1977–91) reshuffled those coalitions: now Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia faced Libya, Yemen, and Ethiopia (Markakis 1987, Halliday 2002). The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution had been the proximate cause of this series of new alliances. The rise of Mengistu's Derg regime and its defense cooperation with the Soviet Union and South Yemen was met with Saudi-led attempts to isolate Marxist–Leninist Ethiopia and, to the extent possible, dismember it in Eritrea and the Somali-inhabited Ogaden (Ehrlich 2007, chapter 6)

This regional polarisation coincided with a rapidly widening power gap between the Gulf States and their African counterparts. The astonishing surge in oil prices following the 1973 and 1978–79 shocks saw one side of the Red Sea emerging almost overnight as a global economic powerhouse (Held and Ulrichsen 2012). In the process, the Gulf States hugely expanded their international influence and became patrons of regimes and rebel movements in the Horn. All states on the other side of the Red Sea were net importers of oil, triggering a balance-of-payments crisis from Egypt to Somalia that coincided with economic woes of their own making (Verhoeven 2018).

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Gulf and the Horn appeared as almost opposites. One side of the Red Sea is host to not only the biggest oil reserves on the planet but also some of the world's wealthiest societies, huge Western military bases, and the two holy cities of Islam, giving it global influence. The other side has been receiving billions of dollars in aid over the last decades, regularly experiences large-scale famine(Verhoeven 2018). Moreover, the economic and security interdependence that had been crafted, first under the British regional order and then in a reworked form in the decades after decolonization through extraversion, seemed to be weakening. This led the Gulf States to focus on internal dynamics – direly needed after the post-1986 decline in the oil price and the cost of the Iran–Iraq war – and on the development of the GCC as a regional body with significant ambitions (Alnasrawi 1986).

Yet the 1990s did not herald disengagement, instead of turning out to be the kernel from which an unprecedented securitization of the Gulf–Horn relationship would spring. Despite this, Gulf and the Horn not only conjoined once again in the 1990s but have since dramatically intensified, to the extent that leading actors in either region think of regional order in terms of both shores of the Red Sea (De Waal 2004).

Moreover, there has been a wider return to the Horn by Saudis, Emiratis, Qataris, and others, most visibly through approximately US\$13 billion in investment in the Horn of Africa region between 2000 and 2017, chiefly in agriculture, manufacturing, and construction. Important as food security and economic diversification were as motives, more fundamentally it was growing regional polarisation and a perceived need to secure partnerships with African elites by channeling huge sums to the Horn (Meester et al. 2018). Concerns over revolutionary Islamism in Sudan and lingering hopes that it could provide a useful agricultural supply base had triggered the renewed political focus but soon Gulf actors returned not just to Khartoum but Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia as well. Gulf-Horn relations have been recently growing stronger. Gulf Countries are trying to expand their reach militarily, politically, and commercially into the Horn. The Gulf leaders consider the control of this area along the Red Sea coast to be essential for the delivery of goods as well as their security. However, certain main factors have led to the increased Gulf States involvement in this region (Steinberg, 2014).

Gulf-Horn economic relations were more or less dormant during the 1990s. However, in the wake of the global financial crisis in 2008 and the rise of food prices, the Gulf States became concerned about food security—primarily resulting from their lack of arable land and adequate freshwater resources for agriculture. While Qatar announced it would produce 70 percent of its food consumption by 2023 through utilizing new technologies of water desalination and hydroponics (TWN, 2015), some others in Gulf looked abroad. Gulf rulers encouraged both public and private investment in agriculture abroad, particularly in Asia and Africa (Shepherd, 2013). According to Land Matrix, Africa is the most targeted continent for land investment, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are among the top ten investor-states (Nolte et al., 2016).

The Arab Spring uprisings that started in early 2011 across many countries in the Middle East and North Africa have influenced the decision-making circles across Arab capitals in general and in the Gulf in particular (Steinberg, 2014). It was declared in a conference organized by the Doha

institute in November 2011, at the height of the uprisings, that “examining relations between the Arab world and the Horn of Africa occupied an even more important place in the context of ongoing changes in the Arab world”.

Following the deposal of long-time rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya and the continuation of the uprising in Syria, most of the Gulf States took immediate decisions to resist the popular demand for change. One of the primary concerns of the Gulf States was that the Arab uprisings would pave the way for the rise of political Islam. The Gulf rulers considered groups with political Islam backgrounds in the Middle East region, such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Tunisian Ennahda Party, as a direct threat to their regimes. For this reason, the Gulf States supported the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's democratically elected president and member of the Muslim Brotherhood, in 2013 (Steinberg, 2014). The Gulf States' anti-political Islam campaign has also influenced the Horn of Africa, which has a significant number of groups with Islamist backgrounds associated with the Muslim Brotherhood (Hanse et al., 2009). The political sphere in Somalia is dominated by Al-Islah—an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood organization established in Saudi Arabia in 1978. Currently, about 30 percent of Somali parliamentarians subscribe to groups ideologically rooted in political Islam (Yusuf, et al., 2017). Like Somalia, Sudan has an Islamist constituency and has hosted large numbers of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members who fled the 2013 military takeover in Egypt. The Gulf countries have since been more engaged in the Horn in pursuit of containing the influence of the Islamist groups (Steinberg, 2014).

The other important development which greatly impacts the Middle Eastern countries' engagement in the Horn is the Yemen Conflict. When the Houthi rebels overpowered the Yemeni Government and seized much of the country in 2015, the Gulf States led by Saudi Arabia formed an anti-Houthi military coalition. At the beginning of the military offensive, it became categorical that the Gulf States needed additional boots on the ground as well as conveniently located ports and bases. Consequently, Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti, located across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and geographically closer to most of Yemen than Gulf capitals, willingly lent a hand in exchange for monetary compensation. Since then, Sudan has contributed as many as 14,000 men—mainly comprising the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, a tribal militia previously known as the Janjaweed—to the coalition (Kirkpatrick, 2018).

On the other hand, Djibouti, Somalia, and Eritrea have supplied the infrastructure to execute the war by authorizing the use of their ports, airspace, and territorial waters for coalition bombing attacks (Taylor, 2016). Since 2015, the United Arab Emirates has had a military base in Eritrea and plans to build another in Somaliland—a breakaway region in northern Somalia. The UAE is driven by concerns over maritime security followed by an ambition to project power and influence through the Horn and the Red Sea region. In 2014, Riyadh pressured Sudan and Eritrea, both former allies of Iran, to sever ties with Tehran and expel Iranian diplomats. In 2016, Somalia followed by cutting ties and ejecting Iranian diplomats (Dahir, 2019).

The other historical factor which has largely impacted the Gulf-Horn relationship is the 2017 Qatar-Gulf Crisis. Following the rift between Qatar and its Gulf neighbors, the competition to win allies in the Horn has intensified. Djibouti and Eritrea threw their weight behind the blockading Quartet by downgrading their diplomatic links with Doha. Others, such as Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, preferred to stay neutral in the intra-Gulf rift by urging the conflicting sides to resolve the impasse diplomatically—a position endorsed by the African Union (AU) (Dahir 2019). The Gulf Crisis being the latest episode of the Middle East rift impacting the Horn of Africa, and details of the crisis being covered under the preceding section, what follows in the next section is a discussion of mainstream IR theories explaining the interaction of Middle East countries, and the countries of the two regions.

## **2.4 Theories of IR**

In this section, international relations theories, particularly different facets of realism; including, alliance theory and subaltern realism will be discussed as theoretical backgrounds explaining the interaction of actors in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. Specifically, under this section, I will try to explain sources of rift and conflict in the Middle East, and how the Middle East states are projecting their conflict in to the Horn of Africa and security implications of the same through the lenses of Subaltern Realism. Also, I will briefly explain the interaction of Middle East countries with the Horn countries, and competitive engagement of Middle East states in the Horn of Africa through the instrumentality of the Alliance theory, and Subaltern realism as well. To this end, a review of pertinent works of literature written on international relation theory will be made.

#### **2.4.1 Alliance theory and interaction of Middle East countries and the Horn of Africa**

There is no consensus as to the definition of alliance among international relation scholars. Snyder (1990, 4) defined alliance it as: "formal associations of states for the use or non-use of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their membership." However, Walt (1985, 1) defined it as: "[a] formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states." Walt's conception of alliance politics deviated from Snyder's definition, especially regarding the degree of formality and the purpose of the security cooperation. Snyder perceives alliances as formal agreements to use the military, while Walt regards informal security cooperation as a form of alliance. Thus, Walt's conception includes both formal alliances, based on a written treaty, and Adhoc agreements based either on tacit understandings or on some form of commitment, such as verbal assurances or joint military exercises (Mansour and Ahmed, 2019).

According to (Mansour and Ahmed, 2019), Walt's conception seems more realistic, since there are many historical examples when states provided considerable support to one another even without a formal treaty, while the presence of a formal agreement does not necessarily reveal the actual degree of commitment.

Middle East countries' engagement and competition in the Horn of Africa region can be explained in the context of alliance theory. According to Mansour and Ahmed (2019) Saudi Arabia and the UAE pursued a policy of building alliances with some states in the Horn of Africa to weaken Iranian and Turkish threats in the region. Their policies followed Walt's concept of developing ad-hoc informal forms of security cooperation between states relying on tacit understandings or some form of commitment, such as verbal assurances or joint military exercises, and hosting military bases. Some Horn of Africa countries agreed to cooperate on a security level with the Saudi-Emirati alliance. Riyadh declared in December 2018 the inauguration of an alliance including six countries on the coast of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden: Egypt, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, and Jordan. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir implied that it might include a degree of security cooperation, as he considers the main objective of the alliance is to stabilize the region and to decrease the negative influence of outside powers. These statements might imply regional rivals namely Iran, Turkey, and Qatar (Kalin 2018).

Saudi Arabia and the UAE used two main factors in cooperating with the Horn of Africa countries. First, they both provided financial aid to various countries in the region. It was no coincidence that Somalia received a pledge of aid for US\$50 million from Saudi Arabia on January 7, 2016, which was the very day it cut its diplomatic ties with Saudi rival Iran (McDowall and Maclean 2016). Moreover, Sudan received a US\$1 billion deposit in its central bank from Riyadh to increase Sudan's foreign reserves and ease the economic crisis it faces (The Guardian 2016). Riyadh reached a deal, facilitated by the Saudi Development Bank, to supply Khartoum with millions of tons of oil for the next five years after suffering from a growing energy crisis (Arabian Business 2018). The UAE invested about AED28 billion in Sudan, as seventeen Emirati companies are operating in various economic sectors (Emirates News Agency 2018). On the other hand, Eritrea's army received military aid from the UAE during 2016 and 2017 (Manek 2017) after Asmara cut its relations with Iran.

In return for Saudi-Emirati support, the Horn of Africa countries adopted collaborative policies. First, several Horn of Africa countries in the likes of Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia, either cut or downgraded their bilateral relations with Iran. Also, the Horn of Africa countries like Sudan and Eritrea supported the Saudi-led Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen against the Houthis. However, in the light of the ideological affinity between the Sudanese, Somali, Turkish, and Qatari regime, as they are lenient towards Islamist movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, Sudan and Somalia tried to balance relations with UAE and Saudi Arabia on one side and Turkey and Qatar on the other (Mansour and Ahmed, 2019), irrespective of their cooperation with the Saudi-Emirati alliance in containing the Iranian threat, as evident in Sudan's participation in the war in Yemen with an average of 5000 troops (Stavis Gridneff 2018).

With this, the next section will explain the interaction of Middle East countries, the interaction of countries in the Horn of Africa, and causes of a rift among the Middle East countries export of the same to the Horn of Africa and its security implications through the instrumentality of Mohammad Ayoob's Subaltern Realism.

#### **2.4.2 Subaltern Realism and interaction of the Middle East and Horn of African countries**

Both Classical and Neo- forms of Realism have been judged to have limitations, particularly when applied to developing countries that are heavily influenced by both external and internal

forces, such as the analysis of Saudi foreign policy. One study by Waltz presented the limitations of Neo-Realism in this particular type of research. He notes that perhaps the common criticism of the Neo-Realism theory is that, it does not include the effect of the 'policies and behaviors of states on international politics. True, states are omitted from structural theory. It is, after all, a theory about international politics and not a theory about foreign policy. A Neo-realist theory of international politics explains how external forces shape states' behavior but says nothing about the effects of internal forces.'(Waltz,2004). Thus, Neo-realist theory is not suited to this study because it rejects fully the impact of domestic policies on international politics, which is exactly the point that is going to be assessed through the lenses of Subaltern Realism.

In the words of Ayooob Subaltern Realism stands for the existence of subaltern in the international system which is largely ignored by the elitist historiography polarized by both neorealist and neoliberalists as a result of their concentration respectively the dynamics of interaction among great powers and the affluent industrialized states of the global north. Also, he describes that the dictionary definition of “subaltern” denotes those that are weak and inferior. Yet it is the common experience of all human societies that these are the elements that constitute the large majority of members in any social system. Ayooob further maintains that “although borrowed from the subaltern school of history, his use of the term does not conform strictly to the usage by that school. Third World states, rather than subaltern classes, form the quintessential subaltern element within the society of states, given their relative powerlessness and their position as a large majority in the international system” (Ayooob,2002).

According to Larny (2004) the approach is best understood as a supplement to traditional realist findings and is not an attempt at a new paradigm. It maintains that neither Classical Realism nor Neo-Realism adequately explains the causes of conflict in the developing world. Larny (2004) further maintains that Ayooob’s work outlines that Neo-realism in particular and Neo-realist scholars have been criticized for their inability to explain the end of the cold war and other major transformations in the international system. Neo-realists minimize the importance of culture, traditions, and identity – all factors that shaped the emergence of new communities that helped transform the Soviet Empire (Larny, 2004).

According to Ayooob, the circumstances of much of the developing world meant that the security dilemma needed to be viewed in a new light. Many states inherited arbitrary borders from the colonial period, which separated ethnic groups or groups with close historic ties and/or created

agglomerations of disparate groups. The nature of ethnic ties meant that power tended to be consolidated in dominant groups, and regimes suffered a consequent lack of legitimacy and representation. Therefore, the challenge to regime security has in many cases been a domestic concern and has sparked movements of irredentism. In the case of the Arabian world, the region was carved up against Arab wishes, and the dream of Arab unity has been at the root of several regional conflicts. The Sunni-Shia divide has similarly contributed to internal division (Ayoob,2002). This division dissects the region into two rival sects. The Saudi-led Sunni sect which constitutes Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, and the legally recognized government of Yemen and Iran led the Shai sect constituting Iran, Qatar, AL Bashir's Syria, and Somalia under the leadership of Farmajo. This divide has been the main reason for the rift among countries of the region. The recent civil wars in Yemen and Syria can be a good example demonstrating how the Sunni/Shia divide has contributed to internal division and subsequent conflicts in the region<sup>1</sup>.

Also, in support of Ayoob's claims, Herbst contends that Subaltern Realism responds to threats faced by sovereigns from internal rivals and transnational ideologies like Pan-Africanism and Pan-Arabism, but also to the separatist, irredentist and/or annexationist challenges posed by artificial and poorly defined borders (Herbst 1989). For instance, Bahrain still contests islands that formally form part of Qatar, whereas the UAE lost territory to Iran and Saudi Arabia when the Emirates coalesced in 1971 (Al-Mazrouei 2016). The Yemeni-Saudi border remains unclear across large swathes of territory and disagreement over the Emirati-Omani frontier almost sparked violence in 1977-79(Al-Mazrouei 2016). In the Horn, the Ethio-Eritrean border was the trigger of the devastating 1998-2000 war that claimed tens of thousands of lives and Somali irredentism has caused sequential conflicts with Ethiopia and Kenya. And while Sudan and Egypt dispute ownership of the Halayeb Triangle and Khartoum impugns its boundaries with Ethiopia's Amhara regional state, Yemen and Eritrea went to war in 1996 over the Hanish Islands.

Moreover, in support of Ayoob's Subaltern Realism, Verhoeven(2018) contends that although borderlands often contribute positively to community livelihoods, at the elite level contested frontiers exacerbate a deep sense of insecurity, internally and externally, and have militated against institutionalized regionalisms. Regional regimes – like the GCC and the Horn's

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: Middle East Affairs Director General at FDRE MoFA

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) – have been limp because states do not trust others to enforce them, preferring bilateralism instead (Verhoeven 2018). This has also meant that, despite their misgivings about getting embroiled in global confrontations, Gulf and Horn states have preferred extra-regional partners to intra-regional alliances because of their greater ability to subvert and manipulate the agendas of the former. Their skill at neutralizing domestic threats with international assistance and playing off external powers against each other has characterized the 'omnibalancing' strategy that has helped elites survive the turbulence of bipolarity and the post-Cold War (Nonneman 2005).

Ayoob's Subaltern Realism asserts that the developing world is characterized by the post-war decolonization process in which new countries emerged and other states were dissolved. In this context, the need for resources and state building is a key characteristic of these states (Ayoob, 2002). The priority of developing countries is to establish themselves as legitimate political entities. They are, however, currently in transition processes dominated by conflict over religion, ethnicity, language, and authority relations that are fragmented (Ayoob, 2002). According to Ehteshami (2014) the Middle East is an unreformed and largely dysfunctional regional system in which power and relationships are mediated through a complex set of lenses which includes contested identities (national, sub-national, ethnic, and confessional), competing ideologies, and nation-building narratives, a legacy of state formation itself, the growing voice of well-endowed but small "family-state" regimes of the GCC, uneven power relations, and, last but not least, the lasting geopolitical legacy of colonialism. This negative process has been reinforced by the intrusive role of outside powers, as the legacy of regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrates (Ehteshami, 2014).

Also, the Subaltern Realism perspective assumes that issues relating to maintenance and creation of domestic order, and those of international order are inextricably intertwined especially in the area of conflict and security. In Ayoob's words (Ayoob 1998, p. 41) 'sovereign state-making-including both domestic authority and external recognition over clearly demarcated territorial domains is imperative for the participation in the international system.' In support of Ayoob, Maoz also maintains that for states in the Gulf and the Horn, international order and domestic order cannot be separated (Maoz 2010). Verhoeven (2018) also contends that faced with predicaments of war and the condition of historically weak nationhood, states on both shores of the Red Sea have pursued Subaltern Realism as they did after independence during the Cold War

and continue to do today – linking state-building and foreign policy by focusing on expanding their margins and increasing their autonomy (externally, vis-à-vis stronger states and internally vis-à-vis their populations). The Iran–Iraq conflict was the beginning of a series of insurgencies, invasions, and terrorist attacks that have for the last 30 years rattled the entire region: Saddam's annexation of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War; 1994 failed re-secession of South Yemen; the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing; the 2000 attack on the USS Cole and neoconservative regime change in Iraq in 2003 and its calamitous fallout, to name but a few insecurities experienced by the states in the Arabian Peninsula (Verhoeven 2018). Today the Middle East is enduring another transformation, perhaps the most consequential of this region's already fraught political history. Even though Russia and the United States are engaged in the region's hotspots, the metamorphous ongoing today is mostly driven by local and regional factors. The Arab Spring, the ensuing collapse of the Arab political order, and the ongoing civil wars are the drivers of an emerging new Middle East political order(Lynch,2017).

Thus, per the above brief discussion of Subaltern Realism, contested borders both in the Middle East and Horn of Africa region, contested identities and the condition of historically weak nationhood coupled with Gulf and Horn states preferred extra-regional partnership to intra-regional alliances resulted in conflicts in both regions. Particularly, the rift in the middle East due to domestic factors of contested borders and identities, and export of their rift in to the Horn of Africa in search of extra-regional partnership exacerbates conflict in the Horn of Africa due to arbitrary borders inherited from colonial period which separated groups with close historic ties. This pattern of relation between states on both shores of the Red Sea perusing Subaltern Realism impacted the security of the Horn of Africa region in broader terms and has security implication for Ethiopia as well.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Middle East Countries Engagement in the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia's Relation with the Horn and the Middle East Countries**

#### **3.1 Middle Eastern Countries Engagement in the Horn of Africa**

The Middle Eastern countries had historical and religious ties with the Horn of Africa countries. The two sides of the Red Sea had maintained economic and security interactions for a long time. However, since the 2011 Arab spring the engagement of Middle Eastern actors has shown tremendous increase. The 2015 Yemeni civil war and the 2017 GCC crisis have exacerbated the rift in the Middle East and resulted in increased engagement of middle East countries in the Horn of Africa.

The increased presence of Middle Eastern states in the Horn of Africa has taken place for a number of reasons, including food security, commerce and trade, and foreign policy and security issues. A key driver of the engagement of Turkey, Qatar, Iran, the UAE and Saudi Arabia in the Horn of Africa has, however, been regional and international geoeconomic and geopolitical competition with each other (Malvin,2019). From 2011, the political dislocations of the Arab Spring promoted a growing split in the Middle East, between Turkey and Qatar, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt, on the other. The fragmentation was also exacerbated by differences over Iran. For Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in particular, a combination of the unrest in the Middle East, the rise of countries supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran's perceived growing regional strength promoted a new focus on the Horn of Africa. The region became a core strategic interest that promoted an interventionist foreign policy (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019)

As the Yemeni civil war developed from 2015, the USA backed the Saudi Arabian-led coalition of African and Middle Eastern countries to intervene in Yemen, including providing the coalition with military support and intelligence. In order to enable military operations in Yemen, the GCC established a military base in Assab in Eritrea, having been forced to leave Djibouti following a dispute with the government. The UAE has since begun construction of a military facility at the port of Berbera in Somaliland. Saudi Arabia has been negotiating for military facilities in Djibouti and, together with the UAE, it has deployed naval forces to support operations in Yemen. ( Malvin,2019). Reflecting the growing ties between the Horn of Africa and countries in

the Middle East and the Gulf, the 2017 GCC crisis has further increased external competition in parts of the region. Its divisions have raised concerns that proxy politics driven by Middle Eastern and Gulf rivalries have emerged in the Horn, promoting greater militarization and destabilization (Donelli and Cannon,2019).

In order to enable military operations in Yemen, the GCC established a military base in Assab in Eritrea, having been forced to leave Djibouti following a dispute with the government. The UAE has since begun construction of a military facility at the port of Berbera in Somaliland( Malvin,2019). The UAE's DP World was granted a port concession at Berbera in 2016. These deals were part of a seven-point economic and military pact, which also included a major highway, cargo airport, dams, a series of development projects, and security guarantees for Somaliland. Also, Somalia's Puntland region and a UAE ports conglomerate inked an April 2017 deal in Dubai to update and expand a multi-purpose commercial port at Bosaso. Bosaso further extends the UAE's strategic footprint in the Horn of Africa (Vertin,2019).

This investments in port infrastructure and establishment of military base is part of UAE's wider strategic aim of projecting its geopolitical influence in to the Horn. The UAE has therefore established military bases and commercial ports in the region, and built alliances along the coast of Yemen, which points to a long-term strategy(Malvin,2019).Also, connected to the Red Sea region's geostrategic importance and commercial opportunities connected to the region, UAE, has leveraged its superior shipping and port infrastructure to become the largest GCC trader with Africa. It now manages commercial ports at Berbera and Boosaaso (Bosaso), close to its new military base (Donelli and Cannon,2019).

The UAE has also sought to capitalize on unexpected political changes. In Ethiopia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed moved quickly to establish a personal relationship with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed after the latter took office in April 2018. UAE saw potential business opportunities in real estate, infrastructure, logistics, energy, telecommunications, and air travel, some linked to Abiy's promised privatization plans (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). Also, Where it has failed to establish strong relations or lost ground to rivals, UAE has attempted to isolate and undermine those it cannot bring to its side. In Somalia, for example, the UAE ruled out working with President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmajo) and has instead crippled his ability to reconcile with and govern federal member states. Abu Dhabi has

invested, given aid to and hosted the leaders of Somalia's regional governments (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019)

In an effort to curb Iranian influence in the Red Sea region, Saudi Arabia is also extending its presence in the Horn of Africa governments (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). From the early 2000s, the principal security focus of Saudi Arabia and its GCC allies in the Horn of Africa was countering Iranian efforts to project force into the region (Todman,2018). GCC states successfully used their tools of influence, principally via economic incentives, to convince African states to limit their ties to Iran. As the war in Yemen developed from 2015, the Saudi Arabian-led coalition concluded security agreements with Eritrea and Sudan that blocked Iranian access to their Red Sea ports (Malvin,2019).

As the war in Yemen developed from 2015, the Saudi Arabian-led coalition concluded security agreements with Eritrea and Sudan that blocked Iranian access to their Red Sea ports (Todman,2018). Saudi Arabia has cooperated with the UAE in the Red Sea, particularly with regard to prosecution of the war in Yemen and the establishment of a military base in Eritrea(Vertin,2019). Saudi policymakers finalized their first overseas basing agreement with Djibouti after two years of discussion in 2016 and 2017 (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). However, Djiboutian officials and other local sources report that, while talks with Riyadh are ongoing, no site has been identified nor terms agreed (Vertin,2019).

Saudi Arabia prefers to work bilaterally in most cases and has ignored – if not intentionally sidelined – multilateral organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). The Saudis and Emiratis share a preference for cooperation with security states and often coordinate their efforts, for example by working together to broker a peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2018 and to jointly pledge \$3 billion in combined aid to Sudan's military-led transition in 2019 (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019).

Also, Riyadh made the first attempt to establish a multilateral forum of Red Sea states in December 2018 (Vertin,2019). Saudi Arabia is currently seeking a leading role as the driver of new multilateral security arrangements that span both sides of the Red Sea. In December 2018, it convened a meeting to bring together the states of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden( Malvin,2019). Saudi Arabia excluded Ethiopia and Somaliland, while Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia

and Sudan were included from the Horn of Africa (International Crisis Group, Report no. 206, 2019).

The other Middle East actor, growing its engagement in the Horn is Turkey. Turkey's growing presence in the Horn of Africa forms part of its wider Africa strategy. Its initiatives to establish bases and port access arrangements in the Horn are seen as part of an effort to expand Turkey's regional military and intelligence infrastructure and thereby to strengthen its role in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and along the East African coast. Somalia has been a particular focus of Turkish commercial, diplomatic and security policies (Malvin,2019). Allies such as Somalia are critical to Ankara's domestic narrative that Turkey is a custodian of Islamic solidarity in support of oppressed or downtrodden Muslims worldwide. The country has significant cultural appeal in the Horn of Africa(International Crisis Group, Report no. 206, 2019).

Turkey started to establish a military presence in the Horn of Africa, which was evident in the establishment of the Turkish Military Training Center in Mogadishu in September 2017, which provides training to the Somali National Army (Hussein and Coskun 2017). Turkey's training facility—its largest such overseas investment—and its operation of Mogadishu's air and seaports build on the back of increased humanitarian, political, and aid investments in Somalia since 2011. Though no Turkish military assets are hosted at the training facility, and the site is reportedly home to just 200 Turkish officers, rivals see Ankara's unparalleled presence in Mogadishu as evidence of strategic expansion in the region(Vertin,2019).

Several months later, Ankara signed an agreement with Khartoum to redevelop the Sudanese island and seaport of Suakin. These agreements bring Turkey more directly into regional competition in the Horn(International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). In late 2017, the Sudanese Foreign Minister announced that Turkey would establish a naval facility on the island of Sawakin (Suakin) in Sudan as part of a multimillion-dollar commercial project. The announcement was greeted with concern in Saudi Arabia and among its allies, as it raised the prospect of a Turkish naval base on the Red Sea and near to Saudi Arabia's western coast (Nail Malvin,2019). The tensions generated by the announcement of the Sawakin (Suakin) naval facility also triggered a crisis in relations between Sudan and Egypt, due to a long running territorial dispute over the so-called Hala'ib Triangle and Egypt's opposition to Ethiopian plans to dam the Nile. (Malvin,2019). However, the April 2019 collapse of Sudan's regime puts all

such cooperation agreements in doubt, as political and economic relationships may evolve in light of new governance arrangements in Khartoum(Vertin,2019).

On the other hand, Qatar's push into the Horn began in the mid-2000s, but has accelerated since 2017, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with it. Doha sees the continent as fertile ground for new relationships and investments that can bolster its diplomatic and economic position while under blockade (International Crisis Group Middle East Report, 2019). The crisis offered Qatar a chance to capitalize on its outsider profile and broaden its foreign policy priorities to include a more intensive focus on Africa, Eastern Europe, Russia and China (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019).

Doha's status in Africa was precarious in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf crisis: at least eight African countries downgraded ties in favor of the Saudi bloc. In response, since 2017 Qatar has opened several new embassies on the continent. Qatar built 11 new embassies between 2013 and 2015 (Todman,2018). Its Emir visited West Africa for the first time, and Doha has hosted several East African leaders. Qatar's stock rose further with the 2006 launch of Al-Jazeera English. Within a few years, the channel's Africa coverage far surpassed existing outlets in breadth and resources, bringing a Qatari perspective into the African mainstream (International Crisis Group Middle East Report, 2019).

From Qatar's side there has also been significant initiatives to promote stability and peace in the Horn. Qatar, for example, took a prominent role in deploying peacekeepers to the border between Eritrea and Djibouti from 2010–17, and in mediating the Darfur conflict (Malvin,2019). Also, despite the UAE's experience and comparative advantage, Qatar has also attempted to enter the port development game. Planned projects in Sudan and Somalia would represent Doha's first foray into overseas port developments. The collapse of Sudan's ruling regime in April 2019 could jeopardize existing contracts, however, and Doha's future relationship with Khartoum will depend on the character of the transitional government that emerges (Vertin,2019)

Doha and Khartoum penned a deal in the Spring of 2018 to develop what Qatari officials call "the largest container port on the Red Sea." Work on the port reportedly began in April 2018, and Qatar's port authority delivered the first cranes and infrastructure, but little has happened since (Vertin,2019). Besides this, in December 2018, Qatar and Somalia signed a series of new cooperation agreements, including on port development. Some reports indicate that this will

include reconstruction of a port at Somali coastal city Hobyo, some 300 miles northeast of Mogadishu(Vertin,2019).

Qatar's new relationships in Africa are partly its way of evading the blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia and its allies in June 2017 – both for immediate, practical reasons and broader strategic ones. When the Gulf spat began, Qatar was importing some 80 percent of its food and 20 percent of its total imports (by value) from its Gulf neighbors; the blockade forced it to rethink its vital supply chains. Sudan and Ethiopia offered the promise of arable land that could boost food security in the medium term(Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). The Horn of Africa was also a place to claim back allies lost to the Saudi-UAE bloc in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, and in doing so, exact a strategic cost on its rivals. Qatar successfully rolled back its diplomatic isolation in much of the continent. In Somalia, where it laid the most significant footprint, Doha has made itself indispensable to the federal government. Djibouti keeps channels opens; the Ethiopian prime minister visited Doha in March 2018(Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019).

### **3.2 Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa and Dynamics of its relation with the Middle East Countries**

As it is discussed in the preceding sections, the engagement of Middle Eastern countries shows significant change since the 2011 Arab Spring and the 2015 Yemen war. More importantly the 2017 GCC crisis has exacerbated the rift among the Saudi-Qatari axis and the competition for cross-regional influence and alliance with the Horn countries drastically increased. This extra-territorial competitions coupled with recent political transitions in Ethiopia and Sudan, Ethio-Eritrean rapprochement and state building process in Somalia has significantly changed the political dynamics of the region. This section examines interaction of the dynamics of Ethiopia's relation with other countries in the Horn and important shift in the approach of Middle East states to the Horn of Africa since the 2015 Yemen War.

Ethiopia is located at the center of the Horn of Africa region. Horn of Africa constitutes Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, and South Sudan (Mesfin, 2004). Ethiopia shares border with all the states of the Horn of Africa which are very difficult to fully monitor. Indeed, Ethiopia is bordered in the east by Djibouti (349 km), in the south-east by Kenya (861 km Eritrea (912 km), in the south-west by Somalia (1,600 km) both Sudan and South Sudan(8). This

geopolitical location of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa means that Ethiopia is more prone to regional issues than any other state in the region (Berouk, 2012). According to Berouk (2012) being surrounded by this number of states comes with the challenges of dealing with varied and often contradictory interests and claims of neighboring countries (Berouk, 2012). Horn of Africa is a region known for political instability, internal conflicts, incessant famine and food insecurity, and massive displacement. This condition in turn generated other threats and vulnerabilities impacting the lives of all in the region. Due partly to this problem, and conversely, the increasingly felt geopolitical importance it conjures up, it has caught the attention of many local and global actors. Among others, the role of great powers such as USA and China stands out. Also, after the Yemen war and the 2017 GCC crisis the engagement of Gulf countries and Turkey in the region has shown some shifts.

### **3.2.1 Eritrea's Cozy Relation with Gulf Countries, Ethio-Eritrean Relationship and Regional Dynamics After the Rapprochement**

Since Eritrea's independence from in 1991 until the 1998 Ethio-Eritrean war the two countries mentioned some socio-economic relations. Since 1998 until the 2018 rapprochement, the relation between the two countries remained hostile. The rivalry between Eritrea and Ethiopia had ramifications that extended far beyond the narrow confines of their bilateral relationship. Since ruling elites in each country had long regarded the other as the primary external threat, their mutual enmity came to define their foreign policies toward the entire Horn of Africa and other countries with interests in the region. (Redie Bereketeab, 2019).

Eritrea's tensions with Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia, and its broader international isolation, largely derived from the feud with Ethiopia. Meanwhile, Ethiopia's troubles with Egypt and the Gulf states were worsened by the frictions with Eritrea. Following the inception of Yemen war in 2015, Eritrea made Assab port available to the Emirati military for operations related to the war in Yemen. Since then relations between Eritrea, Saudi and UAE have deepened. Despite Ethiopia's successful effort to sideline Eritrea from the international community, both countries provided Asmera with the much needed economic support. Also, Eritrea participated in the establishment of a new regional body which omitted the participation of Ethiopia among the Horn countries—the Council of Arab and African Coastal States of the Red Sea and Gulf of

Aden (or Red Sea Council,)—launched by the Saudi Government, adapting a platform that Egypt had been advocating for some time (International Crisis Group, Report no. 206, 2019).

Following the coming in to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, UAE's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed moved quickly to establish a personal relationship with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.(International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). Also, The Saudis and the Emiratis were both keen to support the rapprochement process between Ethiopia and Eritrea after 20 years of animosity. While Eritrea and Ethiopia's initiative to repair relations was overwhelmingly driven by domestic political considerations, the support of Saudi Arabia and the UAE provided a useful additional benefit to both governments(Mosley,2020). For Ethiopia, the embrace of Saudi Arabia and the UAE produced some quick financial support to (temporarily) alleviate foreign exchange pressure amid economic disruption and tepid export performance. For Eritrea, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's embrace (as well as Ethiopia's new stance) provided an avenue to the elimination in 2018 of the UN Security Council's sanctions regime, first initiated in 2009(Mosley,2020).

Moreover, Hawas argues that apart from furthering inter-state peace and stability, the Ethio-Eritrea peace deal has also a wider regional implication for about two decades. The conflict between the two neighbors affected the political economy of many regional countries such as Somalia, as the later served as a proxy in the conflict. Addis Ababa and Asmara were sponsoring rival groups in Somalia to further their socioeconomic and political agendas. This, in turn, severely constrained the overall peace and security of the wider Horn of Africa. He also, argues that, in the presence of stifling engagement of Middle Eastern powers in the Horn of Africa, promoting peace and stability between the two countries enhances the geopolitical significance of the Horn of Africa-through strengthening the bargaining power of the states of the Horn of Africa, especially in their negotiation with non-regional powers(HASS Quarterly Bulletin,2018).

However, some scholars are pessimistic about the spillover effects of the rapprochement in Ethiopia's relation with its neighboring countries and the Horn regional dynamics in general. After an initial flurry of goodwill meetings—including awards ceremonies for both leaders in Saudi Arabia and the UAE and the reopening of border crossings for the first time since 1998—by early 2019 momentum had begun to drain out of the process. In some sense the loss of momentum was inevitable: neither the initial Asmara declaration in June 2018 nor the

subsequent Jeddah declaration signed by Abiy and Isaias in September provided clarity on the path forward, beyond agreement by the two countries to cooperate (Mosley,2020).

Bilateral ties between Ethiopia and Eritrea after the rapprochement remain to be institutionalized and depend in part on willingness of the leaders of the two countries to cooperate. This in turn renders the rapprochement to be fragile and puts Ethiopia's internal political and security situation in danger, as relation between Abiy's administration and the TPLF worsens (Estelle,2018). Moreover, this informal cooperation between the two countries undermined Ethiopia's relations with historic allies Djibouti, Somaliland and Kenya(Foreign Affairs Magazine,2020). Moreover, Estelle argues that UAE's facilitation of the agreement also occurs in dangerous context, as it is trying to strengthen its regional influence by distancing Qatar and Turkey from the region through creation of alliance with the Horn countries (Estelle,2018).

In this regard, the recent unprecedented wind of changes blowing in the Horn of Africa region has created both hopes and anxieties. the ensuing rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the following war that has developed in Ethiopia's Tigray region, and a new integration framework in the Horn between Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia which has materialized on January 27,2020, in which the leaders of the three countries proposed to form a new regional bloc which is referred as "Horn of African Cooperation" and the increased intervention of the Gulf Countries through short term assists intended at solidifying their interest in the region has raised concerns from the academia. According to most commentators over issues pertinent to the region, the new bloc called "Horn of African Cooperation" , which would be an addition to the countries membership to AU, COMESA and IGAD, bears the risk of alienating the other countries of the region, which in turn might affect the efforts to bring lasting peace and stability in the region(the reporter, 2021).

Similarly Abdeta Beyene, also argues that the current state of affairs in the Horn will keep the Horn weak with armed stretched towards the Gulf patrons. Furthermore, Abdeta argues that despite the injections of support and security, the Gulf's approach remains unsustainable. As effective as it is now, without a norms based approach the Horn will not solve its sorrows. In essence, a formation of a new regional bloc in addition to the existing regional organization would exacerbate the Horn's sorrows. Hence, a collaborative stance towards the Red Sea and the Gulf is something the Horn countries cannot afford to miss. (the African Report, 2020).

### **3.2.2 Middle East Countries Power Play in Somalia and Ethiopia's Relation with Somalia**

Ever since Somalia emerged alongside Ethiopia as an independent African nation in 1960, the two neighboring countries have never experienced friendly relations, but instead suffered deep enmity and instability. Following the costly and ultimately failed war of expansion by the Somali military regime against Ethiopia in 1977, in which it sought to incorporate the Ogaden into a 'Greater Somalia' the two countries sought to destabilize each other through proxy conflict and support for each other's armed opposition forces, but, following the collapse of the Somali central government in 1991 Somalia has become a collapsed state. Currently, its government is still grappling with efforts to merely consolidate control of the capital city of Mogadishu (Muhumed,2018).

Recently after the coming in to power of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed the relation between the two Horn countries has been showing some positive progres. In September 2018, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia signed a tripartite Agreement to prom regional cooperation, which was reaffirmed with a 'Joint Plan of Action' in January 2020 (Mosley,2020). Moreover, on June 16, 2019 Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmajo" Mohamed agreed to "strengthen their brotherly bilateral relations" and to collaborate with the African Union in seeking solutions to problems on the continent. They have also made an announcement of plans to invest in four key seaports and international highway network as a way of attracting foreign investment (Muhumed,2018). The meetings have provided a platform for the multilateral engagement over regional issues. However, Abiy's positive relations with Farmajo and the Federal government of Somalia have complicated Ethiopia's links to Somaliland over the Berbera port investment and corridor plans (Mosley,2020).

Also, the governments of Somalia and Somaliland have been cough up in the gulf rivalry since 2017. In particular, Somalia's federal and regional governments have been drawn into the Saudi–Emirati–Qatari rift since 2017; this has affected the relations of the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar, and complicated relations between the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States as well as those between the Federal Government of Somalia and Somaliland(International Crisis Group Africa report,2018) . Moreover, Turkey's military base in Mogadishu has proven equally contentious for the Gulf, in part because of its vast scale: the facility can accommodate up to 10,000 recruits for the Somali National Army (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,

2019). Following the 2017 Gulf crisis Qatar and Turkey strengthened their support to the Farmajo led Federal government. Whereas, the Federal Member States criticized the Farmajo administration and formed the Council of Interstate Cooperation (CIC) that announced its support for the Saudi–Emirati position against Qatar(International Crisis Group Africa Report,2018).

Similarly, Somaliland has backed the UAE, which was a convenient pressure point on the Federal Government of Somalia. Since Somaliland had reached an agreement with Dubai Ports World in late 2016 and early 2017 to redevelop Berbera port, it had additional incentive to support the Emirati position. Ethiopia’s concerns over the role of the UAE in the project were allayed over the subsequent months as negotiations between Ethiopia, Somaliland and the UAE reached an accommodation deal in March 2018 just before Abiy came to power, giving Ethiopia a 19 per cent stake in the port and road upgrade project, with 51 per cent for Dubai Ports World and the remaining 30 per cent for the Government of Somaliland (Gulf News,2018).

As discussed above on their June, 2018 meeting, following a break in diplomatic ties between UAE and Farmajo’s administration because of the Somali security services’ seizure of \$9–10 million in cash carried into Somalia in April by an Emirati flight, Abiy and Farmajo promised ‘brotherly’ cooperation and Abiy, somewhat surprisingly, announced that Ethiopia would jointly invest in four Somali port projects(Sheikh,2018). The move may have been an attempt by Abiy to smooth diplomatic relations as it seemed to re-announce the Berbera accommodation deal but with support from the Federal Government of Somalia.

Also, Power plays among the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey have caused political turmoil in Somalia. These have weakened the Somali Federal Government, and faltered relation between the center and the peripheries. Ethiopia’s support to the Federal Government of Somalia bears some regional spillover effects. Ethiopia’s recent support for the Federal Government of Somalia in its attempt to influence events in Juba land unsettled the Kenyan Government. Kenya’s 2011 military intervention in Somalia, and its backing of President Madobe in asserting Jubaland’s interests as an emerging federal member state over the influence of the federal government. This situation in Juba land has also put Ethiopia and Kenya at odds (Mosley,2020). Besides, Ethiopia’s ties to Mogadishu puts its relation with its long term ally Somaliland at odds. Moreover, in order to halt the constriction of the GERD, Cairo believes it must rebuild its relation in the Horn in order to more effectively balance Ethiopia. To further this efforts, Cairo

sought to enhance diplomatic ties with Somaliland (Foreign Affairs,2020). Days after an Egyptian delegation met Somaliland President Musa Bihi Abdi in Hargeisa where the two sides discussed Cairo's proposal to set up a military facility in the self-declared state, Ethiopia warned Egypt to refrain from establishing any military base that would pose a security threat to the East African region (Daily Nation,2020). Besides, Farmajo's antagonistic relation with the Federal Member States which are backed by the Emirati-Saudi alliance may cost him reelection and leave Ethiopia without an ally in the presidential palace (Foreign Affairs,2020).

In general, the relationship between Somalia and Ethiopia have shown some positive progresses after the coming in to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018. Somalia has benefitted most from Abiy's more supportive position on the Federal Government of Somalia. However, the Gulf-Turkey involvement in Somalia have caused political turmoil in Somalia and leaves a bigger crack between the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States. This creates a political challenge for any country pursuing relation with the center or the peripheries. Following Abiy's relation with the Farmajo administration, Ethiopia's relation with Somaliland and other countries in the Horn has suffered challenges, paving the way for Egyptians ambition of rebuilding alliance in the Horn of Africa in order to pursue its interest pertaining to utilization of the Nile and the GERD dispute.

### **3.2.3 Transactional Diplomacy, Sudan's Political Transition , the GERD and Ethio-Sudan Relation**

Ethiopia has strong economic, political and social ties especially with Sudan. The Ethio-Sudanese relation is tied eternally to the Nile River and different areas of cooperation. The annual trade between the two countries is increasing due to better trade facilities and the currency swap agreements made in 2017. Ethiopia uses Port Sudan for its international trade and imports oil from Sudan. Movement of people between the two countries is increasing especially for investment and tourist purposes (HASS Quarterly Bulletin,2018).

The relation between the two countries witnessed some ups and downs after the coming in to power of EPRDF in 1991. After 1991, relation between Sudan and Ethiopia, where political change occurred and led to a drastic transformation in foreign policy, began on a smooth path. However, the relation went sour in 1995 as Sudan become a hub of Islamist militancy. More gravely, the 1995 assassination attempt in Addis Ababa from which former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak narrowly escaped was obviously masterminded by the Sudanese intelligence

services. Afterwards, Sudan and Ethiopia normalize their relation after the 1998-2000 Ethiopian-Eritrean war with the reason of maintaining regional stability by combating the Issayas dominated Eritrean state. (Berouk, 2012)

In recent times besides Ethiopia, Sudan is also undergoing a political transition since 2019 after a military coalition overthrows the long reigning President Omar al-Bashir. The two Gulf states (the UAE and Saudi Arabia) recently played a huge role in installing another strongman sympathetic to their regional politics, who would maintain Sudan's participation in the war in Yemen and curb Turkish and Qatari influence. To this effect, Prime minister Abiy led government of Ethiopia played remarkable role in negotiating Sudanese parties to the peaceful transition of power in Sudan. The Sudanese regional governor made the positive comments as the Ethiopian government, in partnership with the African Union (AU), took the lead in bringing the disputing Sudanese parties to the negotiating tables (Mosley,2020).

Currently, the relation of the two countries revolves around two interlinked strands of regional foreign policy. The first relates to the development of the GERD on the Blue Nile River, over which tensions have been sustained for several years between Ethiopia and Egypt—with Sudan's position shifting between the two (Whittington,2016). The second relates to Ethiopia's relations with the government in Sudan, which has been undergoing a political transition of its own since 2019. With regard to, development of the GERD on the Blue Nile River Since Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took power in a 2013 coup, Egypt has pushed for more influence over the dam-building process. Egypt's concerns center on any impact of water flow to Egypt, which claims the lion's share of water rights under colonial era treaties established between 1929 and 1959; the Arab League, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, has been consistent in supporting Egypt's position on its rights to Nile waters. However, Ethiopia, from which more than 80 per cent of Nile waters flow, rejects these colonial era treaties to which it was not party and continues construction of the GERD abiding to the principle of mutual benefit and cooperation (Mosley,2020).

When it comes to Sudan's political transition, Abiy's mid-2019 diplomatic intervention in the Sudanese political transition, which contributed to the brokering of a transitional administration, is linked at least in part to Ethiopia's Nile interests. Ethiopia has a long history of engagement in Sudan and South Sudan, and its military currently provides the bulk of peacekeepers for the UN monitoring mission along the disputed Abyei region of their post-2011 international boundary (UNISFA Fact Sheet). However, Abiy's mid-2019 intervention put him at cross purposes with

Saudi Arabia and the UAE, both of which were prioritizing the emergence of a reliable security partner in Sudan over an outcome which addressed the concerns of the civil society actors at the core of the protest movement (International Crisis Group, Report no. 206, 2019). For Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Abiy's intervention complicated their efforts to produce a stable outcome with Hemedti as leader. Hemedti had developed a relationship with the Saudi and Emirati leaders through the deployment of the RSF in Yemen. Subsequent international and multilateral engagement brought Saudi Arabia and the UAE to support the negotiated outcome and the transitional Sudanese Government led by civil society figure Abdalla Hamdok (International Crisis Group, Report no. 206, 2019).

These contradictory goals illustrate a conundrum for the Saudis and Emiratis in their Horn of Africa strategies. Saudi Arabia and the UAE support al-Sisi in Egypt. However, they are also keen to cultivate relations with Ethiopia, which is essential to wider Horn of Africa stability (Mosley,2020). 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. In December 2018's launching of the 'Red Sea Council' Saudi Arabia excluded Ethiopia, while Djibuti, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan were signatories of the charter from the Horn back in January 2020 (International Crisis Group, Report no. 206, 2019).

### **3.2.4 Race to Military Base and Port Installation in Djibouti and Ethio-Djibouti Relation**

the backbone of these two countries' relations has been economic in nature. Economic ties of the two countries can be expressed mainly in terms of railway and port related activities (Bayeh and Atinafu,2015). Djibouti and Ethiopia have established amicable relations since the down fall of the Derg regime. The relations between the two countries have developed since the signing of a trade protocol in 1996 to the extent of concluding a military cooperation protocol in 1999 so as to provide conducive environment to their economic interaction (Berouk, 2008).

The 1998 Ethio-Eritrea war has diverted all the trade Ethiopia passed through Eritrean ports to the Port of Djibouti. As a result of the war, Ethiopia's access to the Sea has been limited to Djibouti. Also, the diversion of Ethiopian trade to Djibouti is a great opportunity for the latter's economic betterment. In other words, dramatic change has been witnessed in Djibouti's economy in relation to its port service, which accounted for 80 % of the country's economy in the year

2012. Also, Djibouti has been dependent on supply of electricity from Ethiopia since the completion of the Ethiopia Djibouti Power Interconnection Project back in 2011 (African Development Bank Group, 2013; IRENA, 2013).

Moreover, infrastructural linkage has also enhanced the economic relation of the two countries. Needless to mention, Addis Ababa Dwele-Djibouti rail route is a major step forward in furthering infrastructural linkage between the two countries. Hence such situations increased both countries' interdependence in terms of economic, political, and security relations. Also, developments between the two countries, especially, the hydropower export which started in 2011 as well as the underway rehabilitation of the railway and ongoing constructions of roads have also played pivotal role in facilitating their relations activities (Bayeh and Atinafu,2015). Besides the economic relations, the two countries have also been cooperating in regional security issues. This is apparent from their coordinated involvement in AMISOM and their joint military operation in their border areas (Addis Standard, 2014).

Some 90-95 percent of Ethiopia's exports are delivered by sea, and most of them pass through Djibouti, which has one of Africa's few deep-water container port terminals. Depending so heavily on such a small country for virtually all of its exports is a huge vulnerability, and Addis Ababa is growing increasingly concerned about the presence of foreign naval forces (military bases) in Djibouti. Djibouti hosts the largest number of operational foreign military bases totaling 9, followed by Eritrea (GCC military base) and Somalia Turkish military base in Mogadishu (Mabera,2020). Estelle maintains that militarization of the Horn and the southern Red Sea region and Djibouti in particular has already affected commercial trade and threatens freedom of navigation as more states establish competing military positions (Estelle,2018). This in turn would affect Ethiopia's access to port and its cross boarder commercial activities via Djibouti.

In order to reduce effects of external powers engagement in Djibouti and to affect regional distribution of power to its advantage, Ethiopia coined strategy of proliferation of access to ports that would alleviate the major economic and political liabilities associated with being a landlocked country. This includes landlocked Ethiopia's strategic drive to reduce its dependency on Djibouti's port for imports and exports through the refurbishment, development and use of other, regional ports: Port Sudan in Sudan, Berbera in the Somaliland region of Somalia, and Mombasa in Kenya. Also, after rapprochement with Eritrea Ethiopia is planning to use Eritrean

ports in the long run (Cannon,2017). Djibouti worries about Eritrea-Ethiopia rapprochement and Ethiopia's move to gain port access elsewhere, as Eritrea's opening following the rapprochement and Ethiopia's port proliferation efforts elsewhere threatens to divert revenue from Ethiopian goods passing through its ports(Foreign Policy,2020).

### **3.3 Dynamics of Ethiopia's relation with Middle East**

The relationship between the Horn of Africa and the Gulf dates back to the early days of Islam. The migration to Abyssinia, also known as the first hijra, occurred in the early days of Islam in which Prophet Muhammad's first followers fled from the persecution of the ruling Quraysh tribe. They first arrived in the Aksumite Empire, where Ashama ibn Abjar (also known as Al - Nejashi), a Christian ruler, received and allowed them to settle in Negash, a village in the country's Tigray Region (Offiong,2015). Over centuries, the number of Muslims in Ethiopia has increased significantly and their role in politics and economy has become very notable. Middle Eastern countries and Ethiopia's shared history goes as far back as when ancient African Christian rulers in what is now Ethiopia gave refuge to the persecuted followers of the Prophet Mohammed who were fleeing the Arabian Peninsula. Much more recently, in the mid-20th century, relations between Ethiopian monarch Haile Selassie and Saudi King Saud were respectful. But, when Ethiopia has gone to war in recent decades with Somalia and Eritrea, Arab nations have supported the other side (Benaim,2019).

Among the Gulf courtiers, it is Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar that have significant economic investments in Ethiopia. Also, Turkey has notable prescience in Ethiopia (Fakude, 2017). The most important and the oldest economic partner of Ethiopia in the Gulf has been Saudi Arabia. Between 2010 and 2015, the kingdom put into operation around 22 investment projects with a capital of 6.7 billion Birr (Ethiopian currency), making it the fourth largest investor in Ethiopia(Billal,2017). Qatar strategizes to invest in Ethiopian food industry, arable lands, livestock, tourism, real estate, and energy sectors (Sinishaw,2020).

Saudi a large investor, hosts about 400,000 laborers, leases large agricultural land, influences Ethiopian economic and politics strongly via Mohammed Alamoudi, the largest private sector employer in Ethiopia with massive investments in the banking, agriculture, cement, and gold mining, making Saudi the primary export destination and source of Foreign Direct Investment (Sinishaw,2020).

According to the Ethiopian Investment Commission, Turkey is the second-biggest investor in Ethiopia with an investment capital of \$2.5 billion. The people-to-people contacts and changing perceptions have led Turkish companies to employ 30,000 Ethiopians, as both countries have successfully built multi-faceted relations (Anadolu Agency Website,2020). Such Turkish investment in Ethiopia is part of wider Turkey's Africa Policy. It was initiated with the adoption by the Turkish Government of the "Africa Action Plan" in 1998 and continued with the implementation of the open to Africa Policy by the AKP government since 2002. The Turkish-Ethiopian Relations can thus be placed in the framework of this Turkish-Africa Policy (Bacchi,2015).

On the other hand, the oil endowed Arabian Peninsula countries adopt transactional, Unilateral and money-driven (ATM diplomacy) foreign policy towards the Horn countries(Benaim,2019). In their foreign policy orientation targeting Iran's presence in the Red Sea region, they have also adopted a policy of coercion towards the Horn countries, in which they would dictate poorer Horn countries to take side in their rift with their rival Middle Eastern counter parts. An evidence that would support this claim is that during the 2017 GCC crisis they have applied diplomatic and economic pressure against the Horn countries in pressuring them to take side to their end. Eritrea, for example, appears to have taken advantage of the situation and further cemented its relationship with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi (Donelli and Cannon,2019).

Also, to halt Iranian naval activity in the Red sea, GCC states successfully used their tools of influence, principally via economic incentives, to convince Horn states to limit their ties to Iran . Moreover, as the war in Yemen developed from 2015, the Saudi Arabian-led coalition concluded security agreements with Eritrea and Sudan that blocked Iranian access to their Red Sea ports. Besides, Where it has failed to establish strong relations or lost ground to rivals, UAE has attempted to isolate and undermine those it cannot bring to its side. In Somalia, for example, the UAE ruled out working with President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmajo) and has instead crippled his ability to reconcile with and govern federal member states (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019).

Abu Dhabi has invested, given aid to and hosted the leaders of Somalia's regional governments, thereby allowing them to subsist and operate without Mogadishu. Moreover, emirates abrupt termination of support to the Somalian hospital, following a political crisis, shows the magnitude of their foreign policy reference towards the Horn countries. Gulf asymmetrical and transactional

engagement doesn't favor the regions need of multilateral long-term commitment to development (Sinishaw,2020).

In spite of Gulf countries transactional and unilateral foreign policy attached with a stirring of coercion to choose sides, Ethiopia has maintained a neutral stance on the Gulf Crisis preferring a non-partisan approach. Ethiopia's position on the Gulf Crisis is derived from its long-standing policy of non-interference and mutual respect of sovereignty (Fakude,2017). Ethiopia have reacted by attempting to play both blocs off against each other, signing various agreements with Turkey and Qatar on the one hand and the UAE and Saudi on the other Dhabi (Donelli and Cannon,2019). Abiding to its neutral policy towards the Middle East rift, Ethiopia has also managed to stay out of Yemeni conflict, despite pressure from the Gulf to support the military campaign against the Houthis like that of Sudan and Somalia (Benaim,2019).

Also, after the coming in to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed back in 2018,Ethiopia has maintained its policy of maintaining neutrality outside Africa. Despite consistence pressure, Ethiopia resisted taking sides in the Gulf rivalry, at least publicly, and avoided entanglement, became a recognized guarantor of collective regional security in peacekeeping in Somalia, Darfur, Sudan, and South Sudan (Sinishaw,2020).

Some are adamant that Ethiopia's newly found ties to Saudi Arabia and UAE, after the coming in to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed runs counter to the country's longstanding policy of maintaining neutrality outside Africa (Benaim, 2019). Also, some others claim that the signature of the Ethiopia and Eritrea peace agreement outside Africa, in Saudi, is indicative of growing Gulf's dominance in the Horn and the shift from multilateral commitment. Abiy' first official visit outside Africa, to Saudi and to Emirates, and the subsequent investment and oil from Emirates and Saudi, respectively, is indicative of Ethiopian inclination, which forced many to doubt Ethiopian neutrality(Sinishaw,2020). Despite Ethiopia's proximity with Saudi and Emirates, however, Ethiopia exchanged head of state visits with Qatar. Abiy visited Qatar the same day he visited Emirates. Thus, so far beyond some rumors and scholarly arguments, there is no official statement or any plausible evidence suggesting shift in Ethiopia's traditional policy of maintaining neutrality outside Africa.

### 3.4 Ethiopia's Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East Countries

Ethiopian foreign policy has historically stemmed from a siege mentality referencing the threat of Islamic encirclement. Under the EPRDF, Ethiopia's foreign policy was redefined in 2002. This policy sought to move away from the encirclement conception, but largely maintained the idea of external forays and interventions as a function of internal imperatives (Billal,2017). Stemming from this inward looking insight, the policy prescribes democratization, globalization and development as its building blocks (FDRE Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy,2002). Ethiopia's foreign policy towards the Middle East was also crated under this framework. The policy depicts our policy direction towards the middle east in the following terms:

*“The policy we pursue towards the Middle East should proceed from the principle that we devote everything toward the transformation of our economy and the building of our democratic system. How we handle the obstacles against our development and democracy should centre on the principle of conflict resolution through negotiation and tolerance, and pursuing political and diplomatic options. We should maximize and exploit all elements in the relationship that have a positive contribution to our development.”*

Also, with respect to countries of the Arabian Peninsula the policy considers the oil endowed rich countries as important destination for investment and finance for development. Besides, it underscores Peace and stability in the Peninsula is linked to that in the Horn of Africa, and cooperation in assuring peace and stability is important to the country's national security. Moreover, in portraying Ethiopia's policy direction towards those countries the policy stresses the need to focus on seeking development, finance, investment, and markets for Ethiopia's products. From the security vintage point, the need to cooperate with those countries to the establishment peace and stability in the region is also given due consideration blocks (FDRE Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy,2002).

Moreover, with respect to relation with Turkey, the policy considers Turkey as “committed to the principle of equitable utilization of water resources among countries, and opposed to religious extremism” and posing no threat to our national security and well disposed towards Ethiopia. Also, a country experiencing rich economic development. Taking this in to consideration, the policy provides that it is essential that we draft and implement a policy toward Turkey that

focuses on the economy and aims at fostering strong ties (FDRE Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy,2002).

Reflecting predominance of economic incentives and economic diplomacy as a cornerstone in Ethiopia's Foreign Policy towards countries of the Arabian Peninsula and Turkey, Ethiopia's relations with the Middle East countries has been largely entered on issues of development. For instance, Ethiopia's Diplomats career in foreign service has been largely related to diplomats' ability to secure foreign investment, reflecting the prominent role accorded to foreign investment in the key legitimating metric of the regime: development of the country and the reduction of poverty (Meester,Verhoeven,2018).

Regarding Ethiopian foreign policy direction, specifically after the coming in to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the introduction of reform works by the incumbent, key informants from the FDRE Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>2</sup> informed me that the revision of the 2002 foreign policy document has been in place for so long and it's only left with approval and publication by the concerned body after long awaited process of reviewing the policy document in force. However, according to my interview with Ambassador Fisseha, the continuity of the inward-looking orientation, and the policy prescriptions of democratization, globalization and development (stemming from the inward looking policy direction) as building blocks of the 2002. 'Foreign Relations and National Security policy and strategy' is evident under prime minister Abiy Ahmed's tenure. The Ambassador added that, "in our dialogue with the Prime Minister over the new draft foreign policy document, the Prime Minister assured us the vitality of principles of development, democratization, and globalization to Ethiopia's foreign policy orientation under his tenure."<sup>3</sup> Thus, per my informants the inward-looking orientation of Ethiopia's foreign policy is still intact under the reform leadership.

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Mr. Roba Dame; Career Diplomat at Middle East Affairs Directorate General of FDRE MoFA

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring Countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

## **Chapter Four**

### **Economic and Security Implication of Middle East Countries Engagement in the Horn of Africa for Ethiopia**

The competitive engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa has economic and security implications to the region in broader terms and Ethiopia in Particular. Thus, this chapter tries to discuss and analyze the economic and security implications of the engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa for Ethiopia. In doing so, the researcher uses investment, trade, and tourism data gathered from different government agencies, data gathered from the key informants, and some secondary data as appropriate.

#### **4.1 Economic Implications**

The foreign policy of Ethiopia considers the oil endowed Middle East countries as an important destination for investment and finance for development (FDRE Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy,2002). Turkey has been implementing its ‘open to Africa’ policy since 2002 (Bacchi,2015). This had led Turkey to earn the status of the second-biggest investor in Ethiopia following China (Anadolu Agency Website,2020). On the other hand, the oil endowed Arabian Peninsula countries adopt transactional, unilateral, and money-driven (ATM diplomacy) foreign policy towards the Horn countries with a focus on ensuring food and water security issues and coercing Horn countries to take their side (Benaim,2019). Particularly, their policy towards ensuring food security issues led Saudi Arabia and UAE to invest heavily in agriculture and agro-processing industry and assume the status of the highest investors from the Gulf countries having significant economic investment in Ethiopia (Fakude, 2017).

With this in mind, and taking into consideration the increased rift and competitive engagement of the Saudi/UAE and Turkey/Qatar alliance in the events following the 2011 Arab Spring, the 2015 Yemen war and the 2017 GCC, analysis of the last 5 years tourism, investment and import/export trade of these countries with Ethiopia is made below. Also, data obtained from informants and complementary secondary data are used to discuss and analyze the implications of the rift on Ethiopia's access to the port.

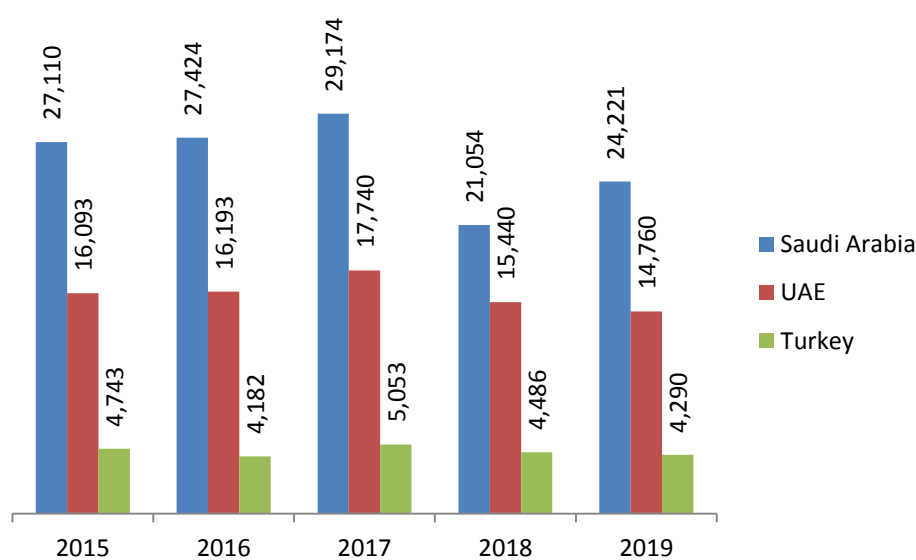
#### 4.1.1 Tourism Arrival from Middle East Countries and Its Implication

Ethiopia is a possible destination for tourists coming from various Middle Eastern countries. These tourists coming from Middle East countries are a source of foreign exchange which is one of the crucial sources of foreign currency. For this study and as per the available data gathered from the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Tourism, tourism inflow from Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Turkey from 2015-2019 is provided below.

**Table 1. Tourism Data based on the number of arrivals (2015-2019)**

Country of origin	No. of Arrival				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Saudi Arabia	27110	27,424	29,174	21054	24221
UAE	16093	16193	17,740	15,440	14,760
Turkey	4743	4182	5053	4486	4290

Source: Ethiopia's Ministry of Culture and Tourism Obtained on August 27/2020



Source: Ethiopia's Ministry of Culture and Tourism; Obtained on August 27/2020

As can be observed from the above table and graph, Saudi Arabia is the highest tourism contributor followed by UAE. Besides, Turkey contributes the least tourism inflow throughout the last 5 years. Moreover, beyond being the highest contributor of tourists, tourist inflow from

Saudi Arabia keeps increasing from 2015-2017. With a slight decrease in 2018, and an increase in 2019. In the case of UAE, which is the second-highest contributor among the three countries, the number of arrival from UAE had been increasing from 2015-2017, with a slight decrease in the following years consecutively. In the case of Turkey, apart from being the lowest contributor to the number of tourism arrival among the three countries, the number of arrival from Turkey has shown fluctuation for the given period. The number of arrival from Turkey has decreased in 2016, has shown a slight increase in 2017, and decreased from 2018-2019 consecutively. The highest number of arrival from Saudi Arabia is indicative of the significance of Saudi as a great contributor to the tourism-related foreign currency from among the Middle East countries. Also, the UAE's contribution is considerable and shows the significance of the Gulf countries for the country's foreign currency aspiration. Even though Turkey is the lowest contributor of tourist arrival compared to their rival Gulf countries under consideration, their economic contributions in the field of foreign direct investment and import/export (can be referred from the analysis made in the following sections) trade make it formidable to the development aspiration of Ethiopia in general.

Apart from this, the average increase in the number of arrival from 2015-2017, and the decrease in the number of arrival from 2018-2019 is indicative of the internal political and security dynamics of Ethiopia than the rift in the Middle East following the Yemen war and Gulf crisis - for the reason that - decrease in the number of arrivals was evident for Turkey and UAE, which seat in the opposite sides of the alliances, and during these years Ethiopia has witnessed political instability which results in political unrest and instability in different parts of the country.

Therefore, according to the available data on the number of tourist arrival from the Middle East countries, and its significance to the economy of the country in terms of being a source of foreign currency and source of income for the countries youth, it is safe to conclude that the slight decrease in the number of tourist arrival in 2018-2019 from the Middle East countries (UAE and Turkey) is not attributable to the continued rift among the middle eastern countries – rather it is a warning sign to Ethiopia to prioritize and work upon its internal security situation, which is supportive of the need to maintain and work upon its inward-looking foreign policy orientation.

## **4.1.2 Import/Export Trade Relation with the Middle East Countries and Its implication**

### **1. Export volume to Middle Eastern countries and Its Implications**

The Middle East countries are export destinations to Ethiopia's agricultural products such as coffee, flowers, oilseeds, spice, meat and meat products, live animals, fruit, and vegetable among others. The export volume to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Turkey from 2015-2020 is provided below with a table and graph.

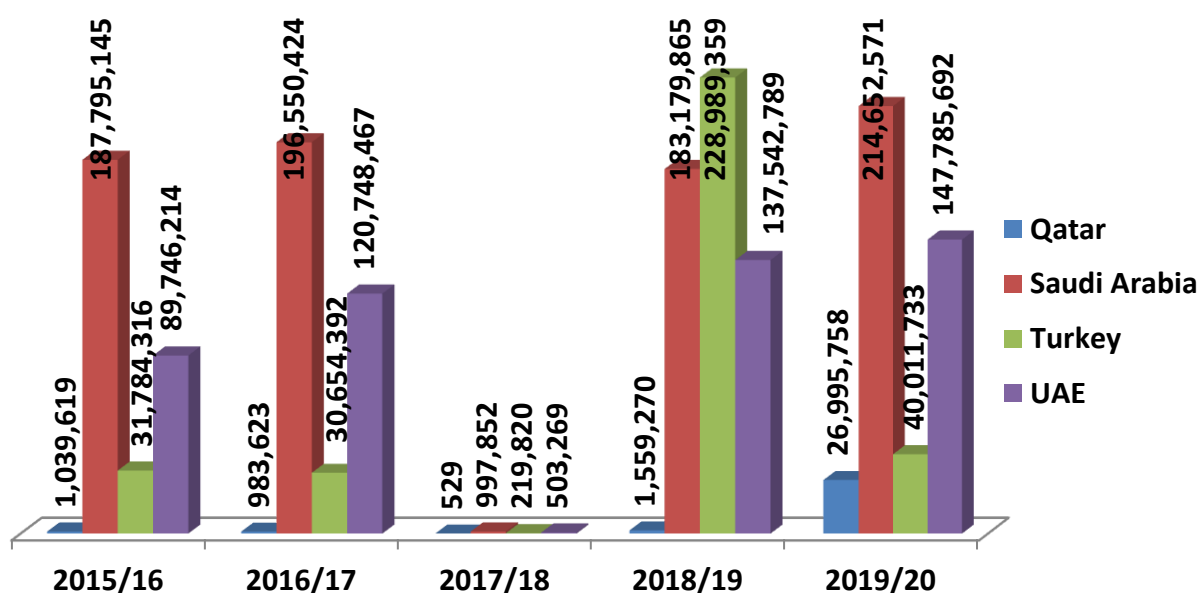
As it is provided under a table and graph displayed below, for the last five years Saudi Arabia has been the highest recipient of Ethiopia's export items and highest contributor of foreign currency in USD, followed by UAE, Turkey, and Qatar. The graph illustrates that Saudi Arabia and UAE are the highest export destinations to Ethiopia's export items and the highest contributors of foreign currency compared to the USD contribution of Turkey and Qatar. The export to Saudi Arabia has shown an increase in 2015/2016, and 2016/2017, and has shown a significant decrease in 2017/2018. However, it has shown an increase in the following years. Also, the receipt by UAE has shown the same trend as that of Saudi Arabia, with a significant decrease shown in 2017/2018. The receipt by Turkey shown a decrease in the first three consecutive years and has shown a significant increase in 2018/2019 and decreased in the following year. Qatar's contribution has kept decreasing for the first three consecutive years and keeps increasing in the following years.

Thus, despite the increased rift and competition in the Horn of Africa with the Turkey/Qatar alliance following the 2015 Yemen war and the 2017 GCC crisis, Saudi Arabia and UAE have shown an increase in their export receipt from Ethiopia, despite the significant decrease evidenced in 2017/2018 which was evident for all of the Middle East countries. This implies the need for Ethiopia in strengthening diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia and UAE which are the source of the highest export earnings and considerable contributors to Ethiopia's economy compared to their rivals.

**Table 2. Data on Export from Ethiopia to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and UAE (2015-2020):**

	FOB value in USD				
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Qatar	1,039,619	983,623	529	1,559,270	26,995,758
Saudi Arabia	187,795,145	196,550,424	997,852	183,179,865	214,652,571
Turkey	31,784,316	30,654,392	219,820	228,989,359	40,011,733
UAE	89,746,214	120,748,467	503,269	137,542,789	147,785,692

Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry; Obtained on September 3/2020.



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When it comes to Turkey and Qatar which are the lowest contributors to Ethiopia's export earnings respectively, the export earnings from Turkey in 2018/2019 which is the highest-earning of all time compared to the 5 years earning from all the four countries shows its potential to be the considerable export destination to Ethiopia's export items. Moreover, the continuous increase in export earnings from Qatar for 2017-2020 indicates its openness to Horn countries' export items after its heated rivalry and isolation from the GCC in 2017 which has necessitated receipt of export items from the Horn countries and enhancement of its trade relationship with the Horn countries. Also despite the rivalry, Ethiopia's export earnings from the rival Middle East countries have shown an average increasing trend apart from the 2017/2018 year which was evident for all.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the rift among the Middle Eastern countries doesn't negatively affect Ethiopia's economic gains from its export trade with both alliances. Also, the lower contribution and the increasing trend of export to Turkey and Qatar is indicative of the need to enhance diplomatic ties with both countries. Moreover, the highest-earning from and the increasing trend of export to Saudi Arabia and UAE implies the need to maintain diplomatic ties with those countries and maintain a policy of neutrality which is bearing, fruits in terms of increasing export earnings from both sides.

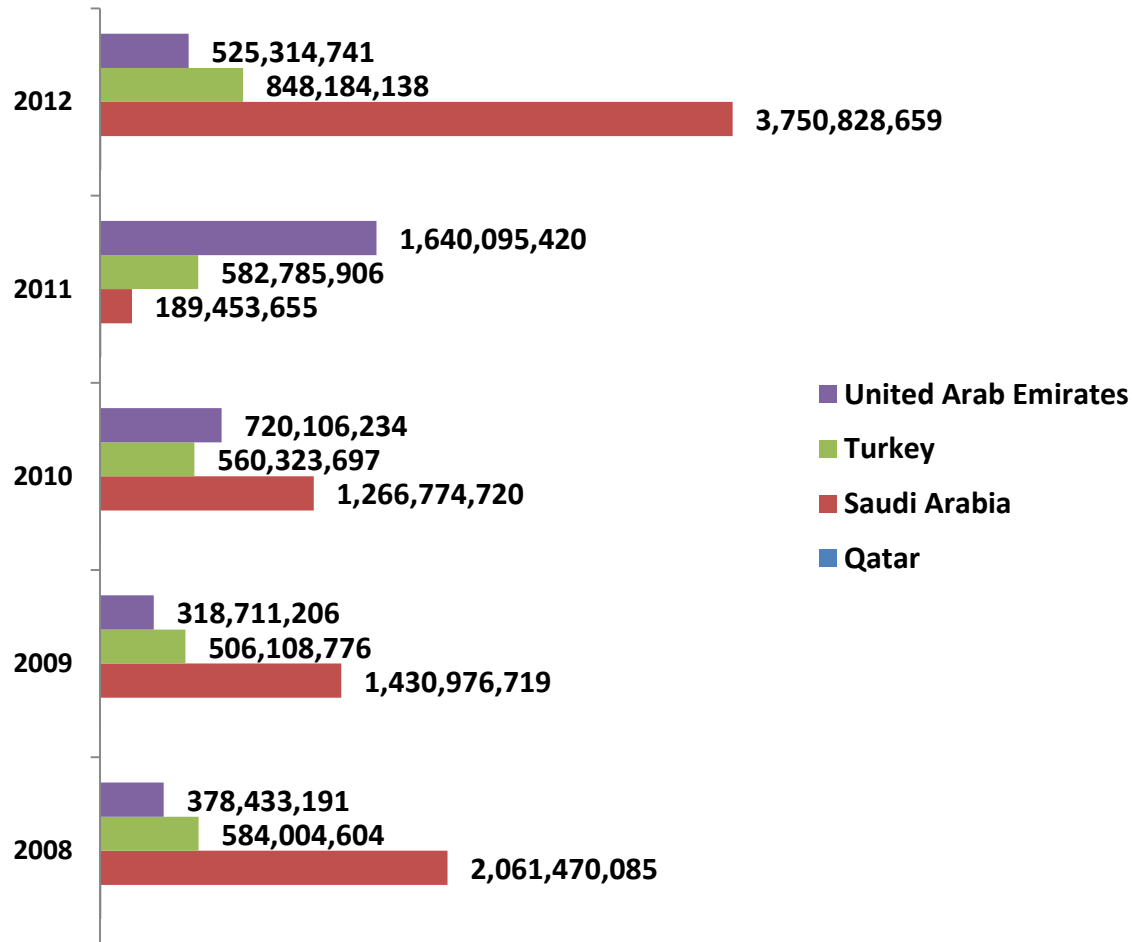
## 2. Import Trade with the Middle East countries and Its implication

Ethiopia's import-export trade balance indicates that Ethiopia is highly dependent on imported capital goods from abroad and the resultant deficit in the trade balance. Ethiopia imports capital goods like machinery, construction materials, stationery, oil, petroleum, furniture, parts and accessories, and other related materials from the Middle East countries. The table and graph below show the import volume for the last 5 years in USD.

**Table 3. Data on Import from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and UAE (2015-2020): Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry; Obtained on September 3/2020**

	Import				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Qatar	8,130,891	3,660,038	6,227,701	7,985,443	7,752,989
Saudi Arabia	2,061,470,085	1,430,976,719	1,266,774,720	189,453,655	3,750,828,659
Turkey	584,004,604	506,108,776	560,323,697	582,785,906	848,184,138
United Arab Emirates	378,433,191	318,711,206	720,106,234	1,640,095,420	525,314,741
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,032,038,771</b>	<b>2,259,456,739</b>	<b>2,553,432,351</b>	<b>2,420,320,423</b>	<b>5,132,080,526</b>

Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry; Obtained on September 3/2020.



Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry; obtained on September 3/2020.

As it can read from the above table and graph Saudi, UAE, Turkey, and Qatar are the highest to lowest contributors to Ethiopia's import trade in their respective order. As shown in the export trade trend above, the last 5 years' import trade volume in USD also indicates that the Saudi alliance is the highest import trade contributor compared to the lower contribution by the Turkey alliance. Also, Saudi and Qatar seat in their respective order as the highest and lowest contributors to the import trade. Though Ethiopia's highest import expenditure goes to Saudi Arabia, its import trade with Saudi has been decreasing for the first four consecutive years and has shown a tremendous increase in 2019/2020. Also, the import trade with UAE kept increasing despite some decline in 2016/2017 and 2019/2020. Turkey's export earnings from Ethiopia also

kept increasing despite a slight decrease in 2016/2017. Import trade with Qatar has also shown some increase, despite declines in 2016/2017 and 2019/2020.

Overall Saudi Arabia and UAE's comparable advantage on import trade with Ethiopia over their Qatar/Turkey rivals as that of the export trade volume indicate their smooth trade relation with Ethiopia in comparison to their rivals. Also, the average increasing export earning of Turkey and Qatar's trade relation with Ethiopia is indicative of their smoothening trade relation with Ethiopia despite the increased rift with their counterparts and their increased competitive engagement in the Horn of Africa after the 2015 Yemen war and the 2017 GCC crisis.

Also, despite Saudi's decreasing export earnings from Ethiopia (which has shown the highest increase and the highest-earning above all others in 2019/2020), the average increasing figure of export earnings by Saudi, Qatar, and Turkey also indicates that the economic relation of Ethiopia with both alliances is list affected by their heated rivalry following the Yemen war and the GCC crisis.

Therefore, Ethiopia's better trade relations with Saudi and UAE in terms of import-export trade implies Ethiopia's need to maintain its diplomatic ties with the Gulf countries and, the lower but increasing trend of import-export trade relation with Qatar and Turkey also shows the need to strengthen diplomatic ties with both countries. Overall, Ethiopia's trade relation with both alliances is not as such impacted by the rift between those alliances. Thus, this is indicative of the need to maintain a policy of neutrality and enhancement of diplomatic ties with both alliances.

#### **4.1.3 Ethiopia's Investment Tie with the Middle East Countries and Its Implication**

Depending on the available data obtained from Ethiopia's investment commission this subsection will discuss and analyze Ethiopia's investment ties with the Middle Eastern countries and will try to uncover its economic implications and implications on Ethiopia's diplomatic ties with the Middle East countries. The below tables show the number of investment by origin and the last five years investment projects of Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Turkey in Ethiopia

**Table 4. Investment by origin (2015-2020)**

Origin	Total Projects	Pre-Implementation	Implementation	Operational	Capital in '000' Birr
UAE	19	10	2	7	35,059
UAE/Ethiopia	12	7	3	2	93,048
Saudi Arabia	6	5		1	59,191
Saudi Arabia/Ethiopia	11	4	5	2	114,491
Turkey	36	11	6	19	894,897
Turkey/Ethiopia	16	6	2	8	43,295

Source: Ethiopian Investment Commission; obtained on Nov 2/2020

**Table 5. Yearly investment by Turkey (2015-2019)**

Year	Total projects	Pre-implementation	Implementation	Operation
2015	14	6	1	7
2016	19	4	3	12
2017	6	2	3	1
2018	5	2	-	3
2019	7	3	-	4
Total	51	17	7	37

Source: Ethiopian Investment Commission; obtained on Nov 2/2020

**Table 6. Yearly investment by UAE (2015-20219)**

year	Total projects	Pre-implementation	Implementation	Operation
2015	5	2	-	3
2016	3	2		1
2017	2	1	1	-
2018	3	1	1	1
2019	8	3	3	2
Total	21	9	5	7

Source: Ethiopian Investment Commission; obtained on Nov 2/2020

**Table 7. Yearly investment by Saudi Arabia (2015-2019)**

year	Total projects	Pre-implementation	Implementation	Operation
2015	6	5	-	1
2016	8	4	3	1
2017	2		2	-
2018	1	1	-	-
2019	-	-	-	-
Total	17	10	5	2

Source: Ethiopian Investment Commission; obtained on Nov 2/2020

As is indicated in table 4, Turkey is the highest investor in Ethiopia with 52 total projects in Ethiopia. Then comes UAE with 31 projects followed by Saudi Arabia with 17 total projects. Also in terms of the number of operational projects Turkey comes first with 27 projects, being followed by UAE with 9 projects and Saudi Arabia with 3 projects. As can be read from table 5, Turkey's largest share of total investment was in 2016. The least being in 2018. Its investment has shown some decreasing figures from 2016-2018. Also, as is indicated under table 6 UAE's largest number of investment projects was marked in 2019. The lowest being marked in 2017. Its number of projects has decreased from 2015-2017 and shown some increase in 2018 and 2019. Table 7 shows that Saudi Arabia's highest number of projects was marked in 2016, the lowest being in 2018. Its investment has marked a continuous decline from 2016-2019.

From this, all that I can comprehend is that Turkey is the biggest investor in Ethiopia in terms of both total projects and operational projects compared to other Middle East countries. UAE and Saudi Arabia taking the following places. When we see the yearly investment contribution, all countries marked a decline in investment contributions - the least being running for three consecutive years. Also, Turkey's and UAE's investment share marked an increase from 2018-2019, and 2017-2019 respectively. These trends imply that the decline marked by both rival alliances and rise in the investment share of Turkey and UAE after 2017 which marks the GCC crisis is indicative of the fact that the reason for the decline could be attributable to the internal stability of the country than the rift among the Middle East rival state since the figure has shown some increment after the GCC crisis and the marked decline was evident for countries from both alliances.

Therefore, the economic implication of the investment trend for the last five years is that Turkey is an indispensable economic contributor to Ethiopia's economy as it is a contributor of the

highest investment projects in terms of both total projects and projects being made operational. It is also evident from the given investment data that the rift between the Qatar vis-à-vis Turkey alliance and their competitive engagement in the Horn of Africa following the 2015 Yemen war and the 2017 GCC crisis is hardly impacting the economy of the country in terms of the number of investment arrival in the given years. Last but not least, the decline in investment arrivals particularly from 2016-2018/2019 might be attributable to the unstable peace and security situations of the country following the outbreak of the Oromo protest and other protests against the then EPRDF government. These in turn implies the need to work upon the domestic peace and security dynamics of the country.

#### **4.1.4 Militarization of the Horn, Access to Port and Cross-Border Commercial Activities**

Some 90-95 percent of Ethiopia's exports are delivered by sea, and most of them pass through Djibouti, which has one of Africa's few deep-water container port terminals. Depending so heavily on such a small country for virtually all of its exports is a huge vulnerability, and Addis Ababa is growing increasingly concerned about the presence of foreign naval forces (military bases) in Djibouti. Djibouti hosts the largest number of operational foreign military bases totaling 9, followed by Eritrea (GCC military base) and Turkish military base in Mogadishu/Somalia, and UAE's military base at the port of Berbera in Somaliland (Mabera,2020). The militarization of the Horn and the southern Red Sea region has already affected commercial trade and threatens freedom of navigation as more states establish competing military positions (Estelle,2018). This in turn would affect Ethiopia's access to the port and its cross-border commercial activities via Djibouti and other neighboring states.

To reduce the effects of external powers' engagement in Djibouti and to affect regional distribution of power to its advantage, Ethiopia coined the strategy of the proliferation of access to ports that would alleviate the major economic and political liabilities associated with being a landlocked country. This includes landlocked Ethiopia's strategic drive to reduce its dependency on Djibouti's port for imports and exports through the refurbishment, development, and use of other, regional ports: Port Sudan in Sudan, Berbera in the Somaliland region of Somalia, and Mombasa and Lamu in Kenya. Also, after a rapprochement with Eritrea Ethiopia is planning to use Eritrean ports in the long run (Cannon,2017).

In a key informant interview Ambassador Fisseha maintained that, if the rivalry among the Middle East countries continues to evolve, and if their focus becomes more on competitively enhancing their military presence, it will affect the economy of Ethiopia and the region in general. However, scenarios on the ground show that the rivalry doesn't seem to evolve beyond this. It is decreasing through time and the impacts will also keep dropping with time.

If the rivalry and competitive engagement of middle East states in the Horn of Africa is more of a commercial one, it will benefit the region in terms of diversifying Ethiopia's access to ports, attracting foreign direct investment, drawing aid money, and boosting our cross-border commercial activities. If Ethiopia manages to maintain strong bilateral ties and diplomatic engagement with Djibouti, while pushing forward its efforts towards diversification of access to the port ( our 19% share in Berbera port, port Sudan via Gonder, the Lamu port via Kenya, Port of Assab via Eritrea) through maintaining and strengthening its bilateral and multilateral ties with its neighbors, Ethiopia will avoid dependency and ultimately secure the bargaining power in dealing with pressures from either alliance in its commercial aspirations in the region.<sup>4</sup>

Also, according to a key informant interview with Mr. Kenea Kuma, as a landlocked country, Ethiopia is working bilaterally with neighboring states in securing and diversifying its access to port. Ethiopia owns 19 % share of the Berbera port alongside the majority shareholder DP world. "We know it has implications in our relationship with the Federal government of Somalia and we are working carefully towards maintaining our diplomatic ties with Farmajo's administration both bilaterally and multilaterally."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as per an interview with Mr. Roba Dame, one of the implications of Middle East countries' engagement in the Horn of Africa is on Ethiopia's access to ports. UAE's DP world investment in Somaliland allowed us to invest in and own a 19% share of the Berbera port. This implies the positive impact of Gulf investment in the Horn of Africa. "It enables us to diversify our access to ports, and boost our cross-border commercial activities via outlets other than Djibouti ports."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the militarization of the Horn of Africa region does entail threats to Ethiopia's port access and cross-border commercial activities, which in turn would impact the country's economy.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: FDRE MoFA Neighboring Countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General (07,28,2020)

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Kena Kuma: FDRE MoFA IGAD Affairs Directorate Director (7,29,2020)

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Mr. Roba Dame; CareerDiplomat at Middle East Affairs General Directorate of EFDRE MoFA (8,27,2020)

However, Ethiopia's successful diplomatic engagement with its neighbors in implementing its strategy of the proliferation of access to port would alleviate the major economic and political liabilities associated with being a landlocked country, and it, in turn, would minimize the economic impact of militarization of the Horn of Africa.

To sum up, the above made discussion and analysis of tourism, import/export trade and investment index from 2015-2019, and data gathered from informants and other secondary sources imply that the Middle East countries' competition in the Horn of Africa had minimal impact on the economy of Ethiopia in a general sense. However, the militarization of the region does entail threats to Ethiopia's access to the port and cross-border commercial activities.

## **4.2 Security Implication of Middle East Countries Engagement in the Horn of Africa to Ethiopia**

The Middle East countries competitive engagement in the Horn of Africa in terms of proliferation of military installation and ports, increase in military training, military aid, and economic aid coupled with their interventionist foreign policy and money-driven transactional diplomacy (Benaim, 2019) becomes impactful to the peace and security of the Horn of Africa region in general and Ethiopia in particular. Thus, this sub-section will examine the security implications of such engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa for Ethiopia in particular. Moreover, since the dynamics of Middle East countries' engagement in the Horn of Africa region has far-reaching effects to the whole region, the researcher will try to pinpoint the wider implication of such engagement to the Horn of Africa region, as appropriate.

### **4.2.1 Middle Eastern Countries Engagement in Somalia and Its Implications for Ethiopia**

According to a key informant interview with Selam Tadesse, the security implication of Middle East countries' engagement in the Horn of Africa is more evident in Somalia's state-building efforts. Applying their policy of coercion and transactional (carrot and stick) diplomacy, Saudi Arabia and UAE coerce the Horn of African countries to take side with them. In Somalia, Saudi Arabia and UAE are using their oil money as a soft power to pressure the member states of Somalia to take sides with them in pushing Qatar and Turkey out of the region and exerting pressure on the Farmajo government. This undermines the state formation and peace-keeping efforts in Somalia which is spearheaded by the AU and the IGAD. This in turn affects the completion of state formation efforts of Somalia and undermines the anti-terrorism operations in Somalia. Ultimately, Al-Shabab and Al-Qaida, and other terrorist groups in Somalia would get

fertile ground for their extremist objective of destabilizing the region. This is an imminent security threat to Ethiopia - as these extremist groups are targeting Ethiopia because of the role it is playing in anti-terrorism and peacekeeping activities in Somalia.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Qatar/Turkey alliance is providing support for the Farmajo's central government. According to a Turkish Diplomat from the Embassy of Turkey in Addis Ababa, when it comes to security issues, Turkey is helping the central government of Somalia in peacekeeping operations in Somalia (TURKISOME mission in Somalia). In its military training operations in Somalia, Turkey trained more than 10,000 soldiers in Somalia. Turkey is also actively working with the IGAD over the Somalia peacekeeping activities.<sup>8</sup> However, according to Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo, in Somalia, following the increasing ties of Farmajo's government with Turkey and Qatar - UAE and Saudi are supporting regional governments to weaken and exert pressure on Farmajo's central government. Such power play among the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey has caused political turmoil in Somalia. This has weakened the Somali Federal Government and faltered relation between the center and the peripheries. This is creating a space for terrorist groups such as Al-Shabab to threaten the stability of the region and affecting efforts of Ethiopia and other regional actors aiming at bringing a strong government in Somalia and maintaining regional security.<sup>9</sup>

Also, as per an interview with the MoFA Middle East Affairs Director-General, In Somalia, UAE and Saudi are supporting regional authorities to weaken Farmajo's central government. UAE provides monetary support to the regional authorities. Saudi Arabia also supports the member states towards implementation of its Wahabis ideology, whose objective is bringing in to power a religious government in the long run. This is creating a space for terrorist groups and religious radical groups in Somalia and it is detrimental to the security and stability of Ethiopia, as it is giving fertile ground for terrorist groups like Al-Shabab targeting civilians in Ethiopia from their base in Somalia.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, according to Ambassador Fisseha, The ATM diplomacy of the Gulf countries in Somalia has divided Somalia. This gives fertile ground for religious extremist groups(bread of

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Selam Tadesse: Researcher at African Institute of Security Studies(ISS Africa think tank): (8,13,2020)

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Evren Muderrisoglu: Counselor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey (9,2,2020)

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: FDRE MoFA Middle East Affairs Director-General (7,29,2020)

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: Middle East Affairs Director General at FDRE MoFA (7,29,2020)

the Muslim brotherhood) basing in Somalia to organize themselves and destabilize the region. This has also posed a direct security threat to Ethiopia, as these groups are targeting it as part of their terrorist agenda in the region.<sup>11</sup> Besides, a Career Diplomat at FDRE MoFA informed me that, the imminence of the terrorist threat and the reality on the ground is an alarming alert for the government to give proper attention to, and work with the government of Somalia and its neighboring states towards containment of Middle Eastern states coercive engagement in Somalia, and enhancement of anti-terrorism operations against religious radical groups trying to destabilize the country, having their base in Somalia.<sup>12</sup>

To sum up, according to my informants the interventionist and coercive engagement of the Saudi alliance vis-à-vis the Turkey alliance in Somalia's internal political and security dynamics is causing security threat to Ethiopia by distorting state-building efforts in Somalia which are aimed at ensuring lasting peace and security in Somalia – which in turn would ensure lasting stability of the region and Ethiopia in Particular.

#### **4.2.2 Security Implication of the Middle East Rift Before and After the Rapprochement**

Before the 2018 rapprochement, the bitter rivalry between Ethiopia and Eritrea had ramifications that extended far beyond the narrow confines of their bilateral relationship. According to the International Crisis Group, Eritrea's tensions with Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia, and its broader international isolation are largely derived from the feud with Ethiopia. Meanwhile, Ethiopia's troubles with Egypt and the Gulf states were worsened by the frictions with Eritrea. Following the inception of the Yemen war in 2015, Eritrea made Assab port available to the Emirati military for operations related to the war in Yemen. Since then relations between Eritrea, Saudi, and UAE have deepened. Despite Ethiopia's successful effort to sideline Eritrea from the international community, both countries provided Asmera with much-needed economic support. Such engagement of the Saudi/UAE alliance with Eritrea, regardless of Ethiopia's tension with Eritrea, was impacting the territorial integrity of Ethiopia and the regional order as Eritrea's tension with its neighbors were worsening with the support accorded to it by the Saudi/UAE alliance (International Crisis Group, Report no. 206, 2019).

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring Countries, Nile Basin, and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Mr. Tofik Mohammed: Peace and security senior expert at FDRE MoFA Africa Union Affairs Directorate (7,21,2020)

According to Ambassador Fisseha, the tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea before the rapprochement had a far-reaching impact on the security and stability of the Horn of Africa region as Eritrea conflicted with its neighbors until its rapprochement with Ethiopia - which has culminated in the tension between the two countries.<sup>13</sup> However, according to Ambassador Fisseha within the past two years impact of the rift in the Horn of Africa has decreased by half. The Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement, the Sudan transition, and reforms in Ethiopia since the coming into power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed are the major factors for the stabilization of dreadful effects of the rift to the two countries and the whole region as well. After the rapprochement, Ethiopia managed to calm down its tension with Asmara; which was aided by the Saudi alliance in a way that bears far-reaching effects to the security dynamics of the region beyond culminating the confrontation of the two countries.

Also, according to Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo, before Ethiopia's rapprochement with Eritrea UAE and Qatar used to pay salaries for Eritrea's soldiers. UAE uses to provide monetary support to the Eritrean government, while Asmera was under international influence through economic and military sanctions. This was against the national interest of Ethiopia and detrimental to the security and stability of the Horn of Africa region, as Asmera was in military tension with most of the Horn of Africa countries.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, according to the available data, the engagement of the Saudi/UAE alliance in Eritrea, before the Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement was against the national interest of Ethiopia and it had dreadful effects on the security and stability of the Horn of Africa region. The culmination of confrontation between the two countries after the rapprochement, however – not only improves the relation of the two countries – but also culminates Eritrea's tension with Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia, as this was largely the result of its feud with Ethiopia.

#### **4.2.3 Security Implication of Middle East Countries Engagement in Sudan**

Sudan is also undergoing a political transition since 2019 after a military coalition overthrows the long-serving President Omar al-Bashir. The two Gulf states (the UAE and Saudi Arabia) recently played a huge role in installing another strongman sympathetic to their regional politics, who would maintain Sudan's participation in the war in Yemen and curb Turkish and Qatari

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: FDRE MoFA neighboring countries, Nile basin, and IGAD Affairs Direct General (07,28,2020)

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: FDRE MoFA Middle East Affairs Director-General (7,29,2020)

influence(Mosley,2020). The Saudi's and Emirati's share a preference for cooperation with security states and often coordinate their efforts, for example by working to jointly pledge \$3 billion in combined aid to Sudan's military-led transition in 2019 (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). On the other side, Turkey signed an agreement with Khartoum to redevelop the Sudanese island and seaport of Suakin. These agreements bring Turkey more directly into regional competition in the Horn (International Crisis Group Middle East Report,2019). Qatar has also attempted to enter the port development game. Planned projects in Sudan would represent Doha's first foray into overseas port developments (Vertin,2019). The collapse of Sudan's ruling regime in April 2019 could jeopardize existing contracts, however, and Qatar and Turkey's future relationship with Khartoum will depend on the character of the transitional government that emerges (Vertin,2019). According to an interview with a counselor at the Embassy of Turkey, Turkey has historical and cultural appeal in the Horn of Africa. "As part of its historical ties with Sudan, Turkey has agreed to redevelop the Sudanese island and seaport of Suakin, and we are working with the transitional council towards the realization of the agreement", said the counselor.<sup>15</sup>

However, according to a key informant interview with a career diplomat at FDRE MoFA, interference of the Saudi alliance in Sudan's transition through transactional diplomacy and agreement of the Turkey alliance to invest in military and port infrastructure and their continued engagement to this end despite the overthrow of the al-Bashir administration is consequential to the smooth transition in Sudan and may harden the task of the transitional council in bringing smooth transition in Sudan, given the internal political dynamics of the country. Such consequential engagement of Middle East countries in Sudan, may jeopardize peaceful transition and result in further conflict in Sudan. This would in turn impact the security of Ethiopia, and the Horn of Africa region by large.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, according to an interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo, Al-Bahir had a strong alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood and he was a recipient of aid from Qatar to this end.

<sup>17</sup>However, Ambassador Fisseha informed me that after the overthrow of President Omar al-

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Evren Muderrisoglu: Counselor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, Addis Ababa (9,2,2020)

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Mr. Roba Dame; Career Diplomat at Middle East Affairs Directorate General of FDRE MoFA (8,27,2020)

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: FDRE MoFA Middle East Affairs Director-General (7,29,2020)

Bashir in Sudan – who supports the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan - and after the formation of a secular transitional council in Sudan, the Muslim Brotherhood extremists' existence in Sudan is in its demise.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, during the Al-Bashir regime, Sudan was home to Muslim Brotherhood radical groups financed by Qatar and which had posed terrorist threats to the security and stability of the Horn of Africa region. Now, Sudan is under the leadership of a secular transitional council which has significantly diminished the existence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan. As this is crucial to the peace and stability of the region, Ethiopia and the rest countries in the Horn are supporting the Sudanese transitional council, despite the continued divisive engagement of the two rival Middle East alliances in the transition process in a way that would destabilize the internal order in Sudan, and bear ramification effects to the security of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa region.

#### **4.2.4 The Nile Issue and Egypt's Engagement in the Horn of Africa**

According to a key informant interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo, to control the Nile from its source and to contain Ethiopia's regional influence in the Horn of Africa, Egypt has signed a security alliance with South Sudan in 2013. They are providing military training and providing support in healthcare and other projects in South Sudan. Also, Egypt took a free trade zone and open a trade office in Djibouti. Moreover, they provide medical assistance to Djibouti's military through provisions of medical experts who perform medical tasks in Djibouti and do intelligence works through surveillance of Ethiopia's trade items passing through Djibouti ports. They also have an intelligence infrastructure in Somaliland. Their intelligence personnel in Somaliland created linkage with Somaliland traders who trade in Egyptian pharmaceuticals to Ethiopia to launder the Dollar into Ethiopia and use it for destabilizing the country. They are also working to establish a military base in Somaliland. Such moves, coupled with the Nile basin dispute and the GERD issues, bears an imminent threat to the security and stability of Ethiopia, and there is a direct linkage between Egyptians engagement in the region, interference in the internal political dynamics of Ethiopia, and the civil and political unrest in Ethiopia.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: FDRE MoFA Neighboring Countries, Nile Basin, and IGAD Affairs Direct General (07,28,2020)

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: Middle East Affairs Director General at FDRE MoFA (7,29,2020)

Also, according to Ambassador Fisseha, Egypt is recently increasing its presence in the Horn of Africa. It's working with Somaliland and South Sudan in an effort directly aiming at putting diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia and undermining Ethiopia's economic and security significance in the region and leveraging pressure on Ethiopia to halt its stance on the GERD negotiation and its firm stance towards utilization of the Nile. To this end, Cairo is also trying to maneuver and influence lower Nile Basin riparian countries to its end. So, as this is a direct threat to our internal security and stability, we are countering such threat by adopting a diplomatic strategy of "keeping negotiating while building the GERD and building GERD while negotiating" and strengthening and enhancing our bilateral and multilateral ties with our neighbors and the Nile riparian countries.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, as per an interview with Mr. Roba Dame, The gulf states adopt transactional diplomacy to coerce the Horn of African countries to take their sides. This has to be seen in line with Ethiopia's foreign policy orientation and Egyptian political influence within the Arab world. Ethiopia's historical soar relation with the Arab world coupled with the influential figure of Egypt in the GCC may jeopardize Ethiopia's national interest towards the Nile and the GERD. Thus, Ethiopia is in a position necessitating improvement of its relation with the Gulf countries abiding by its policy of neutrality to counter Egyptian threat to its security and internal political dynamics through diplomatic pressure and false propaganda in the Nile and GERD negotiation.<sup>21</sup>

Besides, according to Mr. Tofik, Egypt's increasing presence and engagement in the Horn of Africa bears negative implications to the security and development aspirations of Ethiopia. Egypt wants to sterilize the development aspirations of Ethiopia, as Ethiopia is building the GERD with its finance and the development of Ethiopia would, in the long run, jeopardize the interest of Egypt in the Nile river, as Ethiopia is going to invest heavily in the Nile through hydroelectric and irrigation activities.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, according to all my informants, Egypt's growing presence in the Horn of Africa and its interference in the internal political dynamics of Ethiopia is a direct threat to the security and stability of the country and also the recent civil and political unrest in the country is a direct

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring Countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mr. Roba Dame; Career Diplomat at Middle East Affairs Directorate General of FDRE MoFA (8,27,2020)

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mr. Tofik Mohammed: Peace and security senior expert at EFDRE MoFA Africa Union Affairs Directorate (7/21/2020)

consequence of Egyptian engagement in the region and interference in the internal affairs of the country.

#### **4.2.5 Militarization of the Region and Its Security Implication**

According to Mabera, Ethiopia is growing increasingly concerned about the presence of foreign naval forces (military bases) in Djibouti. Djibouti hosts the largest number of operational foreign military bases totaling 9, followed by Eritrea (GCC military base) and Somalia's Turkish military base in Mogadishu (Mabera,2020). This trend of proliferation of military bases in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the adjacent Horn of Africa region owned by the great powers and Middle Eastern countries, increases Ethiopia's security concerns, as this trend has the tendency to destabilize the conflict-prone region and poses a security threat to Ethiopia (Estelle,2018). Estelle maintains that militarization of the Horn and the southern Red Sea region and Djibouti, in particular, has already affected commercial trade and threatens freedom of navigation as more states establish competing military positions (Estelle,2018).

Also, according to a key informant interview with ambassador Fisseha, the powerful states like China, the USA, European countries, and middle power countries in the likes of Middle Eastern countries are heavily investing in military base installation in the Red Sea region and the Horn of Africa. The state of armament and manpower deployed in those military bases makes the region full of tension. Thus, if any conflict arose in the region, it will be exacerbated by the armament and military infrastructure present on those bases. This would easily destabilize the conflict-prone region and may hurt Ethiopia's security as well.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, according to Ambassador Sharamo, the presence of foreign naval forces (military bases) coupled with the political dynamics of the region, in particular as Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh is getting old there is growing concern as to political transition in Djibouti - as the country is venerable to external influence and home to a large number of operational foreign military bases, unfinished state formation business in Somalia and Eritrea, the border issues among the regions neighboring countries, and overall proneness of the region to the escalation of conflict at any time poses a security threat to the region. Moreover, escalation of conflict in the region is consequential to

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at EFDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

Ethiopia's security and those military facilities might be used against it in any event of possible conflict with its neighbors.<sup>24</sup>

To this end, as per Ambassador Fisseha, the militarization of the red sea and Horn of Africa should be watched closely as the competitive engagement in military base development might jeopardize the security of Ethiopia. Besides, because of the security threat posed by the increasing militarization of the region we aiming at and working on having a naval base that would enable us to monitor the military activities of those countries in the region.<sup>25</sup>

To sum up, the rift among the Middle Eastern countries in the Middle East and the export of their rift to the Horn of Africa in terms of proliferation of military installation and ports, increase in military training, military aid, and economic aid – coupled with their interventionist and coercive foreign policy towards the Horn has economic and security implications to Ethiopia and it has far-reaching effects to the security dynamics of the Horn of Africa region as well.

In terms of economic impacts, the analysis made in this study indicates that the competitive engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa had a little impact on the economy of Ethiopia. However, the militarization of the region may impair Ethiopia's access to the port and cross-border commercial activities.

When it comes to the security, competitive engagement of Middle Eastern countries in Eritrean, particularly before the rapprochement had impacted the territorial integrity and security of Ethiopia and had far-reaching consequences to the peace and security of the region as well. Also, the competitive engagement of Middle East countries in Sudan, specifically while Sudan is in political transition after the downfall of former President Omar al-Bashir also would have an impact on the security of Ethiopia. Moreover, Middle East countries interference in Somalia's internal political dynamics, Egypt's growing presence in the Horn of Africa region because of its tension with Ethiopia over the Nile and the GERD issues, and the alarming militarization of the region are posing a threat for the security of Ethiopia.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: Middle East Affairs Director General at FDRE MoFA (7,29,2020)

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring Countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

## **Chapter Five**

### **Enhancing Ethiopia's Diplomatic Engagement with the Horn and the Middle East Countries, and Other Suggested Solutions**

Under this final chapter, the researcher will discuss the bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagement of Ethiopia with its neighboring states and Middle Eastern countries to counter or deter the competitive engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa, and its resulting economic and security impacts in the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia in particular. Particularly Ethiopia's exercise of the policy of neutrality in its bilateral diplomatic relations and Ethiopia's multilateral engagement through IGAD and AU to address the impacts of Middle Eastern countries' engagement in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the East African region will be discussed. Besides, the chapter discusses the solutions suggested by the key informants and ends the study with a recommendation and concluding remarks of the researcher.

#### **5.1 Enhancing Bilateral Diplomatic Relations with the Horn and Middle East countries**

##### **5.1.1 Ethiopia's Bilateral Diplomatic relation with the Horn Countries**

The geopolitical location of Ethiopia in the Horn and the dynamics of its relationship with the Horn countries influence and determines the internal security, political stability, and economy of Ethiopia. The geopolitical location of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa means that Ethiopia is more prone to regional issues than any other state in the region (Berouk, 2012). According to Berouk being surrounded by several states in the Horn comes with the challenges of dealing with varied and often contradictory interests and claims of neighboring countries (Berouk, 2012). The Horn of Africa is a region known for political instability, internal conflicts, incessant famine and food insecurity, and massive displacement. This condition in turn generated other threats and vulnerabilities to external influence and interference. These regional conditions coupled with the competitive engagement of Middle Eastern countries based on their coercive and interventionist foreign policy bears challenges to the security and economic integrity of Ethiopia. To deal with such regional challenges Ethiopia needs to maintain its influence in the region and enhance its bilateral ties with the Horn countries.

According to Ambassador Fisseha, the FDRE MoFA is engaged in diplomatic activities aimed at minimizing the impacts of Middle Eastern countries' engagement in the Horn, through bilateral and multilateral engagement with the Horn countries. “We are enhancing our bilateral ties and diplomatic engagement with our neighboring countries in an attempt to deal with the threats posed by the competitive engagement of middle East actors in the Horn of Africa, and avoiding the possibility of entering into conflict with our neighbors because of the rift.” For instance, taking into consideration the militarization of Djibouti and its impact on our access to the port, we are working with the government of Kenya, Sudan, Djibouti, and Eritrea to diversify our access to the port. Also, regarding the increased engagement of Egypt in the Horn to serve its interest over the Nile and the GERD, we are following the issue cautiously and working closely with South Sudan and Somaliland administration through all available diplomatic means.<sup>26</sup>

Besides, Mr. Kenea Kuma informed me that “Ethiopia’s 19 % share of the Berbera port alongside the majority shareholder DP has implications on Ethiopia’s relation with the Federal government of Somalia and we are working carefully towards maintaining our diplomatic ties with the Federal government of Somalia.”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, according to an interview with Mr. Roba Dame, “after the rapprochement, we are working closely with Isayas’s administration to institutionalize bilateral ties with Eritrea and avoid any spillover effect of the rapprochement in our relation with other Horn countries and the Gulf countries as well.”<sup>28</sup>

### **5.1.2 Ethiopia’s Bilateral Diplomatic Relation with the Middle East Countries**

According to an interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo, Ethiopia’s relation with Middle East countries is largely bilateral. “Our bilateral relation with the Middle East countries is based on the policy of neutrality towards the Middle East countries.” Despite the rift in the Middle East, the country is enhancing its bilateral ties with both sides of the alliances, avoiding taking sides with either side. Ethiopia has a defense agreement with the UAE. Also, the Ministry is working with Saudi to this end, and it will have one with them shortly. Ethiopia is entering into a security agreement with both countries. “We are working with them in dealing with terrorism in the region. We are also strengthening our economic ties with both countries.” They are investing

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Kena Kuma: EDRE MoFA IGAD Affairs Directorate Director (7,29,2020)

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Mr. Roba Dame; Career Diplomat at Middle East Affairs Directorate General of FDRE MoFA (8,27,2020)

in big projects in Ethiopia such as the Legahar project which is underway in the Legehar area in Addis Ababa. On the other hand, Ethiopia has built strong ties with Qatar and Turkey. “We are working with them on issues of terrorism and are creating economic ties with them. We are working with them to strengthen the central government of Somalia.”<sup>29</sup> Strengthening Ambassador, Sharamo’s claims, a counselor at the Embassy of Turkey informed me that, they have a good security relation with Ethiopia, they like to increase their defense cooperation with Ethiopia. Turkey has a military attaché here in Ethiopia to that end. They are regularly conducting military meetings with Ethiopia.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, according to Ambassador Fisseha, “as long as the rift among Middle East countries continues to exist on the ground, Ethiopia will keep pushing for a negotiated settlement of their differences.” This is the way Ethiopia responded while the GCC countries were pressuring it to take a side in the GCC crisis, and the 2015 Yemen war. Also, Ethiopia will maintain its policy of neutrality in a way that enables it to maximize its national interests.<sup>31</sup> Besides, Mr. Roba Dame, informed me that, while engaging with the Middle East countries, Ethiopia always maintains its policy of neutrality and tries to engage in a bilateral tie that maximizes opportunities and serves its national interest.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, according to my informants, based on its policy of neutrality Ethiopia is engaged in bilateral diplomatic ties with all Middle Eastern countries avoiding taking sides with either block. Also, concerning the rift in the Middle East, Ethiopia advocates for and engages in a negotiated settlement of disputes among Middle Eastern countries.

## **5.2 Ethiopia’s Engagement through IGAD and AU**

Ethiopia's multilateral diplomatic engagement in a response to the impacts of competitive engagement of the Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa is by large channeled through the IGAD and at times the AU. As a founder state, Ethiopia is using IGAD to enhance its

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: Middle East Affairs Director General at FDRE MoFA (7,29,2020)

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Evren Muderrisoglu: Counselor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey (9,2,2020)

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring Countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Mr. Roba Dame; Career Diplomat at Middle East Affairs Directorate General of FDRE MoFA (8,27,2020)

multilateral relation with its neighboring states and tries to approach regional peace and security issues through the instrumentality of IGAD.

According to an interview with Mr. Kenea Kuma, The objective of IGAD is to keep peace and security of the Horn of Africa and to bring about economic integration within the sub-region. It is working on peacekeeping in the Horn. It is also actively working on rebuilding Somalia under the auspice of the AU. Moreover, it is engaging in reconciliation and negotiation efforts both in Somalia and in South Sudan. Ethiopia has assumed chairmanship for the past 11 years (2009-2018). Now, Sudan is chairing it. Even under Sudan's leadership, Ethiopia is working closely with Sudan. “We are using Dr. Wekneh Gebeyehu’s leadership as soft power.” This multilateral engagement within the sub-region is of paramount importance in dealing with external challenges brought to the Horn. Concerning enhancing the relationship of the Horn countries through economic ties - the economic integration effort is underway through our bilateral and multilateral relationships with the Horn countries. The integration effort through the instrumentality of the IGAD has begun back in 2002. Compared to the role we play in keeping peace and security of the region, the economic integration efforts are way behind the goal we set.<sup>33</sup>

According to an interview with Commander Abebe Muluneh, Ethiopia is playing a greater role within IGAD in keeping the peace and security of the region. We desire to see the formation of a strong central government in Somalia. We are working to bring about lasting peace in South Sudan. IGAD played a role in the formation of a pre-transitional government in South Sudan in Feb 2019. We are part of The AMISOM peacekeeping mission in Somalia and the UNMISS peacekeeping mission in South Sudan. We are doing all this to decrease the vulnerability of the region to external influence and interference by ensuring the peace and stability of the region. These are our major priorities and we are working tirelessly in ensuring peace and security of the Horn of Africa region.<sup>34</sup>

Also, according to Mr. Kenea Kuma, concerning the competitive engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa, there are some initiatives under the IGAD aiming at countering challenges coming from the actors in the red sea and Gulf of Eden. To this end, IGAD’s Declaration of principles on Cooperation in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden is approved in

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Kena Kuma: IGAD Affairs Directorate Director at FDRE MoFA (7,29,2020)

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Commander Abebe Muluneh: Director of IGAD SSP (8,6,2020)

November 2019. It is Ethiopia that has initiated the Declaration. The Declaration puts forward further endorsement of the preparation of an integrated regional strategy and plan of action by the IGAD Taskforce to respond to the challenges and opportunities in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Also, it is provided under the declaration that the IGAD resolves to ensure regular follow-up of the situation in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The task force has already been organized and preparation of strategy and plan of action is already underway. Senior experts from the relevant bodies have been selected and are working on it.<sup>35</sup>

Ambassador Fisseha also added that IGAD has launched a common agenda on winning the situation in the Gulf of Aden and the Middle East, which is 'the Declaration of principles on Cooperation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden' approved in November 2019. It aims at maximizing the benefits and minimizing the harms of Middle Eastern countries' rival engagement in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden through a collaborated stance of IGAD member states towards such engagement of Middle East states in the Horn of Africa region.<sup>36</sup> Besides this, according to Commander Abebe Muluneh IGAD has assigned Mr. Mohammad Guyo as a special envoy to deal with the impacts of the Middle East countries' engagement in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to IGAD, Ethiopia is also resorting to a multilateral engagement through the AU, to curb the increased interference and influence of Middle East countries in the Horn's economic, political, and security dynamics. A good illustration of this is AU's response to Ethiopia's complaints on its exclusion from the 'Red Sea forum'. Saudi Arabia excluded Ethiopia and Somaliland, while Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan were included from the Horn of Africa (International Crisis Group, Report no. 206, 2019). According to Mr. Kenea Kuma, after launching of Red Sea forum between the Middle East and the Horn countries excluding Ethiopia because of pressure from Egypt and KSA, AU has issued a resolution and Ethiopia has been given an observer status after exerting diplomatic pressure through the instrumentality of the IGAD and the AU.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Kena Kuma: IGAD Affairs Directorate Director at FDRE MoFA (7,29,2020)

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring Countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Commander Abebe Muluneh: Director of IGAD SSP (8,6,2020)

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Kena Kuma: IGAD Affairs Directorate Director at FDRE MoFA (7,29,2020)

Moreover, according to an interview with Tofik Mohammed, the increased rivalry and engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa has drawn the attention of the AU. The AU has also recently taken on increased interest in the Red Sea maritime space, expanding the engagement of its High-Level Implementation Panel, led by former South African president, Thabo Mbeki, in November 2018 to include the Red Sea (African Union, Peace and Security Council, Communiqué of the 811th meeting, 22 November 2018). This shows the emphasis the AU has given to the alarming situation in the Horn of Africa.<sup>39</sup>

When it comes to integrated effort of the AU and IGAD on Red Sea dynamics, Mahmood(2019) maintains that the principles of subsidiarity, in which the AU relies on regional economic organizations (RECs) such as IGAD to be the primary means of intervention in areas of peace and security given their greater familiarity with the context, in addition to complementarity and comparative advantage, underpin interactions between the AU and IGAD. In this context, while IGAD is closer to the Red Sea space, the AU is more inclusive given Egyptian membership. These dynamics thus drive a closely coordinated effort between the two on Red Sea dynamics, in line with the working principles guiding AU–REC relationships (Omar S Mahmood 2019).

To sum up, in its multilateral effort to address the impacts of competitive engagement of the Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa, and in countering the Middle East multilateral diplomatic leverage through the Red Sea forum, Ethiopia is exploiting its influential figure in the IGAD and the AU, as a means to leverage multilateral diplomatic pressure on Middle East countries together with its neighbors and its African brothers and sisters.

### **5.3 Suggested solutions**

This sub-section discusses the suggestions put forward by the key informants as a potential solution to contain and minimize the economic and security impacts of competitive engagements of Middle Eastern countries in the Horn of Africa

#### **5.3.1 Ensuring continuity of an inward-looking foreign policy orientation**

In my interview with Ambassador Fisseha, the Ambassador emphasized that most Horn of African countries are dealing with internal political and security issues. Ethiopia and Sudan are

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mr. Tofik Mohammed: Peace and Security Senior Expert at FDRE MoFA Africa Union Affairs Directorate (7,21,2020)

in reform and transition. South Sudan has been engaging in perpetual civil war since its independence in 2011. Somalia is struggling to stand with its own feet, as they are dealing with their unfinished state formation business. Eritrea also has its own unfinished business in terms of state-building. Kenya and Uganda are far from the hotline(the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden). These internal situations are factors that are increasing the vulnerability of the Horn countries to external actors' influence and interferences. These influences and interferences in the internal political and security dynamics of the countries are in turn negatively impacting the economy and stability of the region and the Horn countries as well. These Horn realities are more pressing matters necessitating the priority of ensuring peace and security of the region and sorting out internal political and security dynamics of countries of the Horn. The countries internal situation is its pressing issue and sorting out these internal issues will be of paramount importance in dealing with and minimizing the economic and security impacts of competitive engagement of Middle Eastern countries in the region. Failing to deal with internal situations through these trying times of transition and reform increases the Horn of Africa region's vulnerability to external threats and influences.

In Ethiopia too, as the country is in a reform process, its vulnerability to external influence and interference has increased due to the recent instability and political unrest in the country. This suggests the need to ensure the continuity of inward-looking foreign policy orientation. The continuity of the inward-looking orientation of the 2002 'Foreign Relations and National Security policy and strategy' is evident under prime minister Abiy Ahmed's tenure. The objective existing situations in the ground dictate us to ensure the continuity of it. For instance, the government's stance on GERD negotiations and the finalization of the project illustrates the focus on pressing internal developmental issues. Also, governments move in relaunching an independent election board and its commitment towards elections evidence the focus given to democratization. Moreover, "in a dialogue with the Prime Minister over the new draft foreign policy document, the Prime Minister assured us the vitality of principles of development, democratization, and globalization to Ethiopia's foreign policy orientation under his tenure."

Thus, the inward-looking orientation of our foreign policy is still intact under the reform leadership. In dealing with Middle East countries' rival engagement, our policy orientation is fixing our pressing internal situations - which increases our vulnerability to external pressure and interference if left to be sorted out. The countries smooth transition, reform, and stability take

priority. Then follows, the need to act on our foreign relations focusing on enhancing our diplomatic relations with the external world and aiming at securing our national interest.<sup>40</sup>

Also, according to Mr. Roba Dame, “domestic political and security issues are our main problems increasing our vulnerability to foreign powers' influence.” For instance, to materialize its rhetoric of historical right over the Nile and to halt the construction of the GERD, Egypt is trying to take advantage of Ethiopia’s internal political situation by financing nationalist groups and extremists who stood against Ethiopia’s interest. “We need to focus on addressing internal political problems and vulnerability to outside influence. We should create a platform that facilitates national consensus among opposing political parties. We have to avoid any violent political engagement and have to solve our internal problems peacefully through dialogue and negotiation.” Concerning the economy, the country needs to work tirelessly towards the creation of jobs for the youth. Also, it needs to work towards social and cultural transformation and improve working culture to address the increasing job demand of the youth.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, according to Tofik Mohammed, Any peace and security issue in Ethiopia depends on the internal situation of the country. If the country manages to control its internal peace and security, its vulnerability to external pressure and security threat would easily be managed. Most of Ethiopia’s enemies engaging in the Horn of Africa region try to exploit the internal political vulnerability of the country to their advantage. Thus, the government should give appropriate attention and priority to the internal political and security situations of the country.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, ensuring the internal peace and security of the country by dealing with the countries internal social, economic, and political issues through continuity of the inward-looking foreign policy orientation of the country, is suggested by most of my informants, as a solution to deal with the impacts of engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa.

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring Countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Mr. Roba Dame; Career Diplomat at Middle East Affairs Directorate General of FDRE MoFA (8,27,2020)

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Mr. Tofik Mohammed: Peace and security senior expert at FDRE MoFA Africa Union Affairs Directorate (7,21,2020)

### **5.3.2 Adhering to Policy of Neutrality Towards the Middle East Countries and advocating for Negotiated Settlement**

According to Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo, because of its longstanding policy of non-interference and mutual respect of sovereignty, Ethiopia has avoided the possibility of being dragged into the 2015 Yemen War despite pressure from the Gulf to support the military campaign against the Houthis like that of Sudan and Somalia. Moreover, to serve our national interests, currently, we are engaged in economic, military, and security cooperation by entering into bilateral cooperation agreements with both alliances without taking sides with either side. “To maximize the benefits and minimize the impacts of competitive engagement of the Middle East countries, we need to focus on our national interests and adhere to our policy of neutrality.”<sup>43</sup> Also, according to Selam Tadesse, despite the coercive and interventionist nature of the foreign policy of the Middle East countries, “we should keep up with our policy of neutrality, when dealing with the Middle East countries. That is the necessary evil to secure our national interests in these trying times of increased engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa.”<sup>44</sup>

Also, according to Mr. Roba Dame, While engaging with the Middle East countries, “we should always maintain our policy of neutrality and try to engage in a bilateral tie that maximizes our opportunities and serve our national interest.”<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, according to Ambassador Fisseha, So far Ethiopia’s position towards the Middle East countries is very neutral. “Without siding with anyone and without being a client of either side of the alliance, we are implementing a policy of neutrality to benefit from both sides. Through our mature diplomatic engagement, we are trying to play our part in minimizing the consequences of the rift and negotiated settlement of differences among rival Middle East alliances.” Thus, as long as the rift among Middle East countries continues to exist on the ground, Ethiopia shall keep pushing for a negotiated settlement of their differences. Ethiopia also shall maintain its policy of neutrality in a way that enables it to maximize its national interests.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo: Middle East Affairs Director General at EFDRE MoFA (7,29,2020)

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Selam Tadesse: Researcher at African Institute of Security Studies(ISS Africa think tank): Her research works focus on the Horn of Africa (8,13,2020)

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Mr. Roba Dame; Career Diplomat at Middle East Affairs Directorate General of FDRE MoFA (8,27,2020)

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

### **5.3.3 Strengthening IGAD and enhancing our Multilateral Engagement Via AU and IGAD**

According to Selam Tadesse, Ethiopia needs to resort to all available multilateral platforms in dealing with the pressures exerted by the competent engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa. In terms of our influence and significance, The IGAD and the AU are the best available venues to this end.<sup>47</sup> Also, according to Tofik Mohammed, Multilaterally Ethiopia has to exploit the IGAD and the AU to leverage diplomatic pressure on the Middle East countries and to bring the best out of them in their engagement in the Horn of Africa.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, as per Ambassador Fisseha, multilaterally Ethiopia has to put to use its sphere of influence in the IGAD and AU as a foreign policy instrument in dealing with the possible threats and maximizing its benefits.<sup>49</sup>

Concerning IGAD, according to an interview with Commander Abebe Muluneh, IGAD is a weak institution from the very beginning because of the absence of trust among its member states. Ethiopia as a founding state should work towards building trust among member states. This needs political commitment from the leaders of the member countries. Building trust among member states in turn will help in lifting it to the required level. Also, IGAD has been working based on consensus among its member states, which has also contributed to the weakness of the organization. Thus, the establishing agreement needs to be updated into a treaty document to bring about the required changes within the organization.<sup>50</sup>

Also, according to Mr. Kenea Kuma, We need to strengthen the works of IGAD underway. Gaps in the sphere of economic integration efforts have to be identified and worked upon accordingly. IGAD has to learn from other sub-regional organizations like ECOWAS. It has to identify its challenges and act swiftly upon its gaps.<sup>51</sup>

To sum up, according to my informants, Ethiopia needs to maintain and ensure the continuity of its inward-looking foreign policy, maintain and keep adhering to its policy of neutrality towards the Middle East countries and promote, advocate for and engage in a negotiated settlement of

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Selam Tadesse: Researcher at African Institute of Security Studies(ISS Africa think tank): Her research works focus on the Horn of Africa (8,13,2020)

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Mr. Tofik Mohammed: Peace and security senior expert at FDRE MoFA Africa Union Affairs Directorate (7,21,2020)

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Ambassador Fisseha Shawel: Neighboring countries, Nile basin and IGAD Affairs Direct General at FDRE MoFA (07,28,2020)

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Commander Abebe Muluneh: Director of IGAD SSP (8,6,2020)

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Kena Kuma: FDRE MoFA IGAD Affairs Directorate Director (7,29,2020)

disputes among Middle East countries. Last but not least, Ethiopia needs to enhance its multilateral engagement through IGAD and AU, and work towards strengthening the IGAD taking lessons from other successful sub-regional organizations like the ECOWAS.

## **Conclusion**

The resurgence of competition among middle eastern countries in the Horn of Africa region after the 2015 Yemen war and the 2017 GCC crisis entails some implications to the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia in particular. This thesis argues that the resurgence of Middle East countries competition in the Horn of Africa had little impacts on the economy of Ethiopia and it has security threats to the country.

Analysis of investment, trade, and tourism data and data gathered from key informant interviews imply that the investment and tourism inflows from the Middle East countries is little impacted by the competitive engagement of Middle East countries in the Horn of Africa. Also, the import/export trade relation with those countries implies that the economy is least impacted by the competition and that Ethiopia needs to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relation with the Middle East countries adhering to and ensuring the continuity of its policy of neutrality to the Middle East countries.

Also, the analysis of the available data shows the competition of Middle East countries in Somalia, the resurgence of Egypt's engagement in the Horn, and militarization of the Horn of Africa region is a threat to the security of and Ethiopia.

Based on the findings, the study suggests the need to ensure the continuity of inward-looking foreign policy orientation of the country, and the policy of neutrality towards the Middle East countries. Moreover, the researcher suggests the need to promote a negotiated settlement of rift among the Middle East states.

Last but not least, this thesis emphasizes the need to maintain and enhance Ethiopia's bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagement with the Middle East countries. Besides, Ethiopia needs to strengthen its multilateral diplomatic engagement through the instrumentality of sub-regional and regional organizations such as the IGAD and the AU.

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# Appendices

## Appendix One

### Interview guiding Questions:

#### Part One: Interview guiding questions to MoFA

##### 1. Interview guiding Questions to Middle East affairs General Directorate

- 1) How do you see Middle Eastern countries (Turkey, Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia, Egypt in particular) increased competitive engagement in the Horn of Africa?
- 2) What is Ethiopia's foreign policy towards Middle East countries (Turkey, Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia, Egypt in particular) after coming in to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed?
- 3) What is the economic implications of their engagement in the Horn to the region and Ethiopia in particular?
- 4) What is security implications of their activity in the Horn to the broader region and Ethiopia in particular?
- 5) How would you describe the interconnection of the domestic issues with the international issues in this context?
- 6) What possible foreign policy orientations(bilateral and multilateral relations with the outside world) would best serve the interest of Ethiopia in dealing with the impact of their activities in the Horn of Africa?
- 7) Can regional and sub-regional organizations(IGAD, AU) play a role in dealing with the impact of Middle East countries engagement in the Horn of Africa? If yes, How?
- 8) Is there any suggestion/way forward you may put forward that could enable to contain/manage the impact of Middle East countries competition in the Horn of Africa?

## **2. Interview guiding Questions to Horn Countries and IGAD Affairs Directorate**

- 1) Why are ME countries competing in the Horn of Africa?
- 2) What is Ethiopia's position towards the IGAD?
- 3) How would you describe the Role of IGAD in dealing with security implications of the situation to the region in general and Ethiopia in particular?
- 4) How would you describe the Role of IGAD in dealing with economic implications of the situation to the region in general and Ethiopia in particular?
- 5) What should be the role of Ethiopia within IGAD to deal with the existing situation?
- 6) Currently is there any active case/activity or future plan your organization is engaged with IGAD in dealing with the situation?
- 7) Is there any recommendation or way forward you would suggest?

## **3. Interview guiding Questions to Neighboring Countries, Nile Basin, and IGAD Affairs General Directorate**

- 1) How do you see Middle Eastern countries (Turkey, Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia, Egypt in particular) increased competitive engagement in the Horn of Africa?
- 2) What is Ethiopia's current relation with the Horn of African countries?
- 3) What is economic implication of their engagement in the Horn to Ethiopia in particular? Positive and negative economic impacts of their engagement?
- 4) What is security implication of their activity in the Horn to Ethiopia in particular? Positive and negative security impacts of their engagement?
- 5) What possible foreign policy orientations(bilateral and multilateral relations with the outside world) would best serve the interest of Ethiopia in dealing with the impact of their activities in the Horn of Africa?
- 6) Can regional and sub-regional organizations(IGAD, AU) play a role in dealing with the impact of Middle East countries engagement in the Horn of Africa? If yes, How?
- 7) Is there any suggestion or recommendation you may put forward that could enable to contain/manage the impact of Middle East countries competition in the Horn of Africa?

## **Part Two: Interview guiding questions to embassies**

### **1. Interview guiding question to Embassy of Turkey**

- 1) Can you briefly describe Turkey's activity/engagement in the Horn of Africa?
- 2) What is Turkey's foreign policy towards the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia in Particular?
- 3) What is economic implication/impact of Turkey's activity/competition with the Gulf in the Horn to the region and Ethiopia in particular? Particularly, would you briefly describe economic impact of Turkey's active engagement in the region to Ethiopia?
- 4) What role is Turkey actively engaged in towards enhancing the region's economic development and development aspirations of Ethiopia in particular?
- 5) What is security implication/impact of UAE's activity/competition with other Middle East countries in the Horn to Ethiopia in particular?
- 6) Is Turkey engaged in activities of maintaining and enhancing the regions peace and security in the broader Horn of Africa region and Ethiopia in particular?
- 7) What possible suggestions would you deliver towards enhancing the positive impact of engagement of Turkey in the Horn of Africa to Ethiopia? Particularly, in terms of enhancing Turkey and Ethiopia's bilateral ties?
- 8) Is there any suggestion, recommendation or way forward that would minimize impact of ME competition in the Horn of Africa?

## **Part Three: Interview guiding questions to IGAD and ISS Africa**

### **1. Interview guiding question to IGAD security sector program**

- 1) What is Ethiopia's policy towards IGAD and the role it plays in the region?
- 2) What are the security implications of Middle East countries rivalry in the Horn of Africa to the broader region and Ethiopia in particular?
- 3) What are economic implications of Middle East countries rivalry in the Horn of Africa to the broader region and Ethiopia in particular?
- 4) How would you describe the Role of IGAD in dealing with security implications of the situation to the region in general and Ethiopia in particular?

- 5) What activities is IGAD currently actively engaged in dealing with the security impacts of Middle East countries rivalry in the region?
- 6) How would you describe the Role of IGAD in dealing with economic implications of the situation to the region in general and Ethiopia in particular?
- 7) What activities is IGAD currently/actively engaged in dealing with the economic impact of ME engagement in the HA?
- 8) What is/should be the role of Ethiopia within IGAD to deal with the existing situation?
- 9) Currently is there any active case/activity or future plan your organization is engaged with the Ethiopian government in dealing with the situation?
- 10) Is there any recommendation or way forward you would suggest?

## **2. Interview guiding question to ISS Africa**

- 1) Would you briefly describe Middle Eastern countries(Turkey, Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia in particular) engagement in the Horn of Africa?
- 2) How do you describe the interplay of Gulf-Turkey competition in the Horn countries and Ethiopia's relation with the Horn countries? Specifically situations in Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti and Ethiopia's foreign policy towards this countries?
- 3) What is economic implication of their activity/competition in the Horn to the region and Ethiopia in particular?
- 4) What is security implication of their activity/competition in the Horn to the region and Ethiopia in particular?
- 5) What possible foreign policy orientations would best serve the interest of Ethiopia in dealing with the impact of their activities in the Horn of Africa?
- 6) Can regional and sub-regional organizations(Au and IGAD respectively) play a role in dealing the impact of Middle East countries engagement in the Horn of Africa? If yes, What ,and How?
- 7) Is there any possible solution, recommendation or way forward you would suggest?

## Appendix Two

### List of Key Informants

No	Name	Position	Date	Place
1.	Ambassador Fisseha Shawel	FDRE MoFA Neighboring Countries, Nile Basin, and IGAD Affairs General Directorate, Director General	July 28,2020	MoFA Premise
2.	Ambassador Sharamo Fitamo	Middle East Affairs General Directorate, Director General at FDRE MoFA	July 29, 2020	MoFA Premise
3.	Mr. Kena Kuma	FDRE MoFA IGAD Affairs Directorate Director	July 29,2020	MoFA Premise
4.	Mr. Roba Dame	Career Diplomat at Middle East Affairs General Directorate of FDRE MoFA	August 27,2020	MoFA Premise
5.	Mr. Tofik Mohammed	Peace and security senior expert at FDRE MoFA Africa Union Affairs Directorate	July 21,2020	MoFA Premise
6.	Selam Tadesse	Researcher at African Institute of Security Studies(ISS Africa think tank)	August 13,2020	Via Zoom
7.	Evren Muderrisoglu	Counselor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey	Sept 2, 2020	Embassy of Turkey premise
8	Mehmet Ali Yetis	Program Coordinator at Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency	Sept 2, 2020	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency Addis Ababa Program Coordination office
9	Commander Abebe Muluneh	Director of IGAD security sector program	August, 6,2020	IGAD Addis Ababa Office