

Transregional Conflict Crossing the Red Sea: The Horn of Africa

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ABSTRACTS

In diesem Beitrag werden die Sicherheitsinterdependenzen und Freund-Feind-Muster zwischen den Akteuren am Horn und am Golf diskutiert, um einige der besonders komplexen Konflikte am Horn von Afrika zu erklären. Der Einfluss der Golfstaaten auf die Konfliktodynamik am Horn steigt wieder und wird immer wichtiger. Dieser Einfluss ist nicht nur einseitig. Akteure am Horn treten zunehmend in der Rivalität am Golf auf. Einige Golfstaaten, vor allem Saudi-Arabien und die Emirate, zielen darauf ab, den Einfluss des Iran, der Türkei und Katars in der Region einzudämmen. Dies wird anhand von drei Fallbeispielen veranschaulicht: Die Sicherheit des Roten Meeres, die Intervention der Golfstaaten in die Konfliktodynamik in Somalia und der Golfaktor bei der jüngsten Annäherung zwischen Äthiopien und Eritrea. Diese Fälle und zusätzlich die zunehmenden militärischen, diplomatischen und wirtschaftlichen Interventionen der Golfstaaten am Horn deuten darauf hin, dass beide Regionen enger zusammenrücken. Was wir also haben, ist eine aufkommende Sicherheitsinterdependenz, die durch ein sich zunehmend verfestigendes Muster von Freundschaft/Feindschaft gekennzeichnet ist. Da dies zwei Regionen umfasst, ist ein Regulierungssystem vermittels einer kooperativen Plattform erforderlich, die Staaten und Organisationen der aufstrebenden Region zusammenbringt.

This contribution argues security interdependence and patterns of amity/enmity between Horn and Gulf actors help in explaining some of the peculiarly complex conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Gulf influence on conflict dynamics in the Horn is resurging, and is becoming more consequential. The influence is not merely unidirectional. Actors in the Horn are increasingly featuring in the Gulf's own rivalry. Some Gulf countries, primarily Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, aim to curb the influence of Iran, Turkey and Qatar in the region. This is illustrated using three case studies: the Red Sea's maritime security; Gulf intervention in conflict dynamics in Somalia, and the Gulf 'factor' in the recent Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement. These cases, on top of the Gulf's increasing military, diplomatic and economic interventions in the Horn, indicate that the two regions are being knit tightly closer. What we have thus is an emergent security interdepen-

dence marked by an increasingly solidifying pattern of amity/enmity. As this straddles two regions, it calls for a regulatory scheme through a cooperative platform that brings together states and organizations representing the emerging region.

1. Introduction

In his most recent foray into understanding politics and statehood, *The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay*, the British scholar Christopher Clapham attempts to get to the roots of the undergirding factors explaining the peculiarity of the region from the rest of Africa. The Horn has experienced more inter-state and intra-state conflict and the only two successful secessions on the continent. Clapham,¹ bordering on ecological determinism, found the reason in the Horn's political geography, mainly Ethiopia's high plateaus and their affordances for creation and sustenance of a strong state.

Many also take the Horn as the “most conflict-ridden region in the world”² and attribute its predicament to internal regional dynamics of enmity, subversion, and (rapidly shifting) alliances and counter-alliances.³ In terms of understanding actors and processes shaping the security dynamics in the Horn, Berouk Mesfin⁴ went the farthest from these group of authors by stressing that the London School of Economics International Relations emeritus professor Barry Buzan's⁵ regional security complex (RSC) is a “conceptual framework [...] that] fits the Horn of Africa like a glove”,⁶ after analysing regional amity and enmity dynamics over more than half a century.

We argue that currently available explanations do not sufficiently account for “extra-regional” factors and processes, mainly from across the Red Sea. We complement this effort with what others consider as “spillover” of political, economic, and security considerations from the Gulf.⁷ Rather, we take the presence of Gulf countries as an inherent feature of conflict and security dynamics in the Horn of Africa. From an analytical point of view, consideration of Gulf actors as external to the Horn security dynamics could mainly be attributed to the conceptualization of space as “container” and “medium” of

1 C. Clapham, *The Horn of Africa. State Formation and Decay*, London 2017.

2 D. Shinn, *Horn of Africa: priorities and recommendations*. Testimony to the Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, Washington DC 2009, at 1, quoted in: B. Mesfin, *The Horn of Africa security complex*, in: R. Sharamo and B. Mesfin (eds.), *Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa (ISS Monograph 178)* (2011), pp. 1–29, at 4.

3 S. Healy, *Lost opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel*, Horn of Africa Group Report (2008); B. Mesfin, *The Horn of Africa security complex*, in: R. Sharamo and B. Mesfin (eds.), *Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa, ISS Monograph 178* (2011), pp. 1–29; R. Sharamo and B. Mesfin (eds.), *Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa, ISS Monograph 178* (2011).

4 Mesfin, *The Horn of Africa security complex*.

5 B. Buzan, *People, States & Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, London 1991.

6 Mesfin, *The Horn of Africa security complex*, p. 23.

7 See J. Meester, W. van den Berg and H. Verhoeven, *Riyal Politik: The political economy of Gulf investments in the Horn of Africa*, CRU Report (April 2018), <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2018-04/riyal-politik.pdf> (accessed 23 January 2019).

socio-economic and political relations.⁸ This limitation has led to bounding RSCs predominantly with geographical features, for example the Sahara, as dividing sub-Saharan Africa from North Africa, and the Red Sea, as a dividing line between the Horn and the Gulf. As such, the RSC in the Horn of Africa was conceptualized as analytically and empirically different from security and conflict dynamics across the Red Sea, which at its farthest point is not more than 355 km wide.

We depart from this perspective by adopting a constructivist understanding of space,⁹ viewing regions (and RSCs) as products of regionalizing logics of conflict and security dynamics.¹⁰ Following a transregional perspective to understand contemporary conflicts in and around the African continent, we argue that the Horn's own "patches" of transregional conflicts are being shaped and defined by dynamics across the Horn as much as by what is conventionally determined as intra-regional dynamics.

Our alternative conception is based on an expanded version of the RSC, which is essentially rooted in the assumption that "all the states in a system are enmeshed in a global web of security interdependence".¹¹ Following the same assumption, the analytical category of transregional conflicts that we apply in this article introduces a transregional perspective to understand security interdependence between the Horn and the Gulf. Buzan's revised conception defines RSC as "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both, are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another".¹² In this article, we sketch similar processes of interdependent security dynamics on the two sides of the Red Sea. The article is structured as follows. Following this introduction, we present three cases to illustrate the security relationship that links conflicts in the Gulf to the Horn as they unfold. Next, we briefly sketch the contours and dimensions of transregional conflict in the Horn of Africa, based on transregional security interdependence with the Gulf. This section also shows that alliances are being continuously made and broken, enmeshing states in the two regions in broad patterns of amity and enmity similar to the regional security complexes conceptualized by Buzan and colleagues. The last section concludes the article and highlights some policy implications.

2. The Gulf in the Horn: Understanding Transregional Security Dynamics

This section presents three case studies to highlight that security dynamics in the Horn of Africa are inextricably connected to interests and influences coming from the Gulf. As the cases demonstrate, this interdependence has been growing and patterns of amity /

8 J. Agnew, The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of international relations theory, in: *Review of International Political Economy* 1 (1994) 1, pp. 53–80.

9 Ibid.

10 See Engel's introduction, this volume.

11 B. Buzan and O. Wæver, *Regions and Power. The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge 2003, p. 141.

12 B. Buzan, O. Wæver and J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder CO 1998, p. 201.

enmity have been shifting over the past decade. The cases focus on three different issue areas: on maritime security of the Red Sea, on stabilization and rebuilding Somalia, and on the most recent rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

(In)Security of the Red Sea

Arguably one of the most poignant indicators of the emergence of a transregional security complex between the Horn and the Gulf is the issue of maritime security of the Red Sea. Maritime security of the region is underpinned by the strategic significance of the Red Sea passage shared by the Horn and the Gulf and further amplified by the agency of actors on both sides to impact security dynamics along the sea lanes and the littoral areas. The Red Sea is a vital gateway for international commerce almost hosting “all of the seaborne trade between Europe and Asia to the tune of \$700 Billion every year”¹³ and more than ten per cent of world trade.¹⁴ Along the Red Sea, the Bab-el-Mandeb is the most strategic point that connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden between Yemen and Djibouti. As such, control of this narrow strait is tantamount to choking the trade route along the Red Sea passing to the Indian Ocean and beyond. In addition to the global implications, the immediate threat of such an event will affect the oil exporting Gulf countries.

Various states have vested interests in the stability of the Red Sea and the trade route that extends southward. The Suez Canal has always been an object of great powers’ interest. In 1882, Britain had launched a military attack on Egypt for defaulting on its debt accrued in the process of constructing the canal. The attack on Egypt by Israel, the United Kingdom and France during the second Arab-Israeli war, in 1956, is another stark historical reminder of great power’s interest that had extended throughout the Cold War period. The end of the Cold War with the attendant decline of interest and presence of the United States in the region and the increasing bifurcation of the international order had paved the way for competition among a plethora of new players, not least between aspiring regional players such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Iran as well as involving emerging global players, notably China and Turkey. The ensuing rivalry is in part responsible for the ironical accolade the Red Sea arena has received as being “increasingly fractious”.¹⁵

For Egypt, maritime security of the Red Sea is vital as “any disruption to shipping through the Bab-el-Mandeb would immediately impact traffic to the Suez Canal, which is one of Egypt’s most important sources of revenue”.¹⁶ The country is currently embark-

13 A. De Waal, *New Challenges for the Horn of Africa*, in: *Discourse* 1 (2017) 1, pp. 22–25, at 23.

14 F. al Rasheed, *Red Sea – artery of global trade*, in: *Arab News*, 12 February 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/columns/news/879221> (accessed 23 January 2019).

15 A. De Waal, *Beyond the Red Sea: A new driving force in the politics of the Horn*, in: *African Arguments*, 11 July 2018, <https://africanarguments.org/2018/07/11/beyond-red-sea-new-driving-force-politics-horn-africa> (accessed 23 January 2019).

16 T. Von Lossow and S. Roll, *Egypt’s Nile Water Policy under Sisi Security Interests Promote Rapprochement with Ethiopia: Security Interests Promote Rapprochement with Ethiopia*, *SWP Comments* 11 (2015), p. 3, <https://>

ing on a massive expansion of the Suez Canal aiming to increase its annual revenue. It is therefore not surprising if Egypt gets increasingly wary of developments in the region, such as the civil war in Yemen, lest the conflict would have repercussions on shipping lanes along the Red Sea, due to militant Islamists assuming power and entrenching the Iranian influence in the area.¹⁷ Egypt is responding to growing threats in the Middle East and the Red Sea pathways by expanding its navy, which recently included the formation of Southern Fleet Command, tasked with ensuring the safety and stability of maritime traffic at Bab Al-Mandeb and navigation through the Suez Canal.¹⁸

Likewise, Saudi Arabia has been reliant on the Red Sea for exporting oil, which is behind the country's much touted wealth. From the perspective of maritime security, Saudi Arabia's principal fear stems from Iran and the possibility that – because of the stiff competition between Sunni and Shia denominations of Islam – it might interrupt the shipment of oil through the Straits of Hormuz to Saudi Arabia's east.¹⁹ Saudi Arabia is therefore constructing pipelines and oil refineries along the Red Sea coast, therefore needing security at both ends of the Red Sea.²⁰ The UAE similarly shares a concern of expanding Iranian influence in the region lest it would not infringe its strategic economic interest in the Red Sea. Iran, which is competing for regional hegemony with Saudi Arabia, is naturally on the opposite side of the “aisle” and is a reference point against which the Saudis and the Emiratis calibrate the different facets of their interests in the region (i.e. culturally, economically, politically, and military).

In addition to these Middle Eastern countries, some of the coastal countries in the Horn have been benefitting from the trade and commercial activity in the Red Sea area. Of late, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somaliland raised their stakes by leasing military and naval bases along their coasts to external powers and by hosting massive port expansion projects, which were considered a welcome addition to their local economies.

From the perspective of maritime security, the Red Sea is increasingly confronted by multifaceted threats, in part as a result of the exportation of regional rivalry in the Gulf and in part due to the instability arising from the coastal countries on both sides. Militarization and securitization of the Red Sea is the net effect of such regional rivalry, manifested with a spike in military and naval bases along the African coast, which lately included landlocked Ethiopia's ambition of (re-)establishing a navy after nearly three decades. The above context is more or less emblematic of a “traditional conception of

www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C11_Jsw_rll.pdf (accessed 23 January 2019).

17 Ibid.

18 World Tribune, Egypt expands navy with formation of Southern Fleet Command, 15 January 2017, <https://www.worldtribune.com/egypt-expands-navy-with-formation-of-southern-fleet-command/> (accessed 23 January 2019).

19 De Waal, *Beyond the Red Sea*.

20 S. Oneko, *East Africa: Arab Gulf States in the Horn of Africa – What Role Do They Play?*, Deutsche Welle, 23 September 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/arab-gulf-states-in-the-horn-of-africa-what-role-do-they-play/a-45602930> (accessed 23 January 2019).

maritime security that is linked inextricably to the projection of naval-military power over the sea".²¹

Other sources of maritime insecurity of the Red Sea area, in part due to the instability of coastal countries in the Horn, broadly encompass

*[the] illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, dumping of chemical and toxic waste in the waters off the Somali coast, illegal migration and human trafficking over Somali waters and the Gulf of Aden and the illegal trade or trafficking in small arms and light weapons [and] piracy.*²²

More importantly, piracy has emerged as conventionally the most glaring manifestation of maritime insecurity in the region.²³ At the peak of the crisis of what came to be known as the Somalia piracy saga around 2011/12, piracy as a notable maritime security threat had warranted and drawn unprecedented and coordinated response from a wide array of international actors, including the US, EU, China, Japan, and others.

Of late, Yemen (which constitutes the northern shore of the strategic Bab-el-Mandeb) has become the space where this regional rivalry is unfolding in its various forms with evident adverse consequences on the maritime security of the Red Sea. Leaving the details of the crisis aside, the implications of the war in Yemen, which involves states on both sides of the Red Sea divide, has added to existing concerns of maritime security. These include collateral damage and alleged deliberate targeting of ships using anti-ship missiles, sea mines, and Water-borne Improvised Explosive Devices.²⁴

In essence, as Gulf states jostle among themselves for having strategic control over the Red Sea and ensuring their maritime security, their footprints are directly impacting the conflict complex in the Horn. In some cases, the Gulf countries' presence augmented the strategic relevance of countries, such as Sudan and Eritrea, enabling them to better withstand international pressure in the past. As will be discussed in the next section, the UAE's concerns for maritime security and the ensuing expansion of ports in Somaliland buttressed the latter's quest for international recognition, though exacerbating its tense relation with Somalia. In the case of Eritrea, and combined with the reform policies in Ethiopia under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed since 2018, it almost helped ending Asmara's predicament as a pariah state in the face of United Nation Security Council sanctions.²⁵

21 F. Demessie, Regional Approaches to Maritime Security in the Horn of Africa, FES Peace and Security Series 16 (2014), p. 11, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/aethiopien/10880.pdf> (accessed 23 January 2019).

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 IMO (International Maritime Organisation), Interim Guidance on Maritime Security in the Southern Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb (2018), <http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Security/Documents/Maritime%20Security%20in%20The%20Southern%20Red%20Sea%20and%20Bab%20al-Mandeb.pdf> (accessed 23 January 2019).

25 Key informant interview, Horn expert, Addis Ababa, 11 January 2019.

Gulf Countries in Somalia: Impacting the Horn's Protracted Conflict

Somalia's lingering conflict is another microcosm to analyse the revived trend of growing security interdependence between the Horn of African and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Different forms of entanglements between Somalia and the Gulf countries are underpinned by geographic contiguity and cultural affinity and most importantly by spillovers from the Gulf's own geopolitical rivalry and protection of emerging economic interests in the Red Sea. Conversely, spillovers from Somalia's protracted fragility impacts on the Gulf's security through, for example, inability to control its land and maritime territory. This leads to arms flow, human trafficking and unfettered presence of violent extremist groups/terrorists.

Arab power has always considered Somalia as part of the Muslim *umma* (community) and view Somalia's strategic location as crucial for protecting the "Arab homeland" and *al-amm al qawmi al-Arabi* (Arab national security).²⁶ Historically, Islam as a religion has bound the two sides together. With a rise in Salafist version of Islam, some of the GCC countries had been increasingly wary of the Muslim Brotherhood's possible rise to power in Somalia.²⁷ Somalia has also been at the centre of the Gulf's recurrent internal rivalry even long before the outbreak of the current standoff between the Saudi / UAE bloc, on the one hand, and Qatar, on the other. At the close of the 20th century, Somalia sided with Saudi Arabia and its allies during the first Gulf war and used its ports for US-led coalition forces.²⁸ As with other countries in the Horn, Somalia therefore became an extension of the geopolitical rivalry among the Gulf countries, which was pitting Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, backed by the US allied coalition against Iraq. Perhaps as a possible remake of another round of exportation of the Gulf's geopolitical rivalry, Somalia has continued to be courted by competing Gulf countries in the 21st century: this time around, the rivalry shifting first between Saudi Arabia and Iran and of late expanded to include Qatar and Turkey.

In the early 2000s, the Gulf countries were also part of the stop-and-go process of rebuilding the Somalian state in the midst of the civil war that unfolded after the fall of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. Recently, the Gulf states' engagement in Somalia's volatile political and security dynamics have percolated into various forms reflecting a shifting interest in the Horn of African country. From the perspective of peacemaking in Somalia, Qatar, albeit with limited success, in 2007 attempted to reconcile the Islamic Court Union and the Somali government and also tried to mediate different Somali factions.²⁹ The UAE had trained regional and national security forces, including Puntland's anti-piracy maritime force. Similarly, Saudi Arabia had pledged to offer training to Somalia

26 A. Rashid, A Dangerous Gulf in the Horn: How the Inter-Arab Crisis is Fuelling Regional Tensions, ICG Commentary, 3 August 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/dangerous-gulf-horn-how-inter-arab-crisis-fuelling-regional-tensions> (accessed 14 April 2019).

27 M. Mehari Tadele, The UAE and its Relations with the HoA, in: Discourse 1 (2017) 1, pp. 36–49.

28 Ibid.

29 D. Shinn, Horn of Africa and the Gulf States, in: Discourse 1 (2017) 1, pp. 25–35.

as part of Islamic Military Counterterrorism Coalition.³⁰ Among other diverse engagements, Turkey was also involved in the construction of military encampment facilities for the Somalia National Security Forces.

The Gulf countries' engagement in Somalia is indeed multifaceted and it has been driven by a number of imperatives. For the major part, the Gulf countries have "jockeyed for influence in a country of enormous strategic value, given its proximity to the Gulf, centrality to Red Sea security and string of ports with vantages on key shipping routes".³¹ These long-standing strategic economic and security interests were further amplified by a newly emerging shared interest to fight violent extremist groups, in this case, fighting al-Shabaab and other Islamist militant and religious groups based in Somalia.

Notwithstanding some positive contributions, the role of some Gulf countries towards the re-establishment of a political and security order in Somalia proved to be an ambiguous one, especially following the outbreak of the Yemen conflict and the Gulf crisis. Ironically, protagonists on the different sides of the Yemen conflict used Somalia for furthering their military interests in Yemen. Nearly, all the major Gulf countries at one time or another maintained military or naval bases on Somalia's coasts. There were allegations that Iranians used access to Somalia as a principal gateway for smuggling arms and supplies to the Houthi rebels fighting against the Saudi-backed Yemeni government.³² This appears to change later as Somalia, as with other countries in the Horn, used its airspaces, waters and military bases for the war for the Saudi-led coalition against Houthi rebels.³³ This came after Mogadishu broke its ties with Iran in 2016 when Saudi Arabia offered USD 50 million.

It has become more evident that Gulf countries' recent foray in Somalia is having profound shortcomings and part of it nearly upended in the aftermath of the GCC crisis. Following the crisis, despite the professed interest to support the security forces of the fledgling Somalia government and countering violent extremism, the training and capacity building support offered by some Gulf countries was prematurely interrupted, though the support of Turkey and the UAE went on unimpeded. Evidently, external support was entangled within the Gulf's own political turmoil in Somalia, especially as evinced by the case of the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Refusal by the Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmajo) to support Saudi Arabia and the UAE in their avowal of imposing a blockade on Qatar, reportedly turning down a large aid package, escalated into a diplomatic spat resulting in the UAE increasing its support for Somalia's federal states instead and ending a military training programme in Mogadishu.³⁴ This

30 For details see G. Feierstein and C. Greathead, *The Fight for Africa: The new focus of the Saudi-Iranian rivalry*, in: *Middle East Institute Policy Focus* (2017) 2, https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/PF2_Feierstein_AfricaSaudiIran_web_4.pdf (accessed 23 January 2019).

31 ICG (International Crisis Group), *Somalia and the Gulf Crisis*, Africa Report 260 (2018), p. 1, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/260-somalia-and-gulf-crisis> (accessed 23 January 2019).

32 Feierstein and Greathead, *The Fight for Africa*.

33 Onoko, *East Africa*.

34 W. Todman, *The Gulf Scramble for Africa*. GCC States' Foreign Policy Laboratory, Center for Strategic and Interna-

move was widely condemned, including by the EU, since it would deprive Somalia of regular budgetary support payments and destabilize the country by weakening the government's ability to pay its security forces.³⁵

Therefore, despite its initial intent of fostering security links, the presence of some of these Gulf countries appears to have the adverse effect of fomenting instability and heightening Somalia's vulnerability.³⁶ The rivalry and the fallout from the GCC crisis and the attendant quest for clients in Somalia complicated Somalia's "centre-periphery" relation. As Gulf countries cajole Somali politicians to choose sides in the Gulf crisis, the existing political crisis deepened with the Mogadishu based federal government maintaining its neutrality in the crisis while some of the regional states openly opted to side with the Saudis and the Emiratis.³⁷ Related to this, the "federal" tensions in Somalia became intertwined with "local" tensions, for example as in Galmudug, which each (federal government and member states) picking a side in the dispute. Though the Gulf influence is not so direct on Galmudug, it was more an exacerbating factor as it made the federal-member state relationship so bad, which in turn is playing out via proxy in Galmudug.³⁸ As such, this distracted the country from focusing on one of the major tasks of defeating al-Shabaab and consolidating the unity of the Somali state.³⁹

In addition, the aggressive economic and military venture by some of the Gulf countries, notably by the UAE, led to a deterioration of the relationship between Somalia and the self-proclaimed breakaway region of Somaliland. Though Somalia and Somaliland were not on best of terms even before the UAE's "advent", at least they were participating in a series of talks and negotiations, which had gradually fizzled out in 2016. The coming of new national administrations both in Mogadishu and Hargeissa in 2017 led to positive indications that the two sides were desirous of continuing the discussion, if not to resolve the big issues but at least to work on less critical issues of shared interests such as managing the air space control rights and undertaking other confidence-building measures. However, the planned talk were suddenly interrupted in March 2018 with the announcement of the news of the UAE venturing into upgrading and expanding the port of Berbera and building military bases and specifically the official announcement that the port of Berbera would give Ethiopia a 19 per cent stake. This set off another round

tional Studies Briefs (2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/gulf-scramble-africa-gcc-states-foreign-policy-laboratory> (accessed 23 January 2019).

35 Ibid.

36 Key informant interview, Horn expert, Addis Ababa, 11 January 2019.

37 Puntland, Hirshabelle, Southwest, and Galmudug announced they were breaking from the Somali government's position of neutrality, citing their strategic relationships with Saudi Arabia and the UAE (SIDRA, The Gulf Crisis: Why Somalia should take a Critical Distance, Somalia Institute for Development and Research Analysis SIDRA Policy Brief No. 6 [2017], p. 2, https://sidrainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The_Gulf_Crisis.pdf [accessed 23 January 2019]).

38 Key informant interview, Horn expert, Addis Ababa, 11 January 2019.

39 Ibid. This view was similarly reflected by the analysis conducted by the Somalia Institute for Development and Research Analysis, which concluded, "In a way, the political differences in Hirshabeel and Galmudug are a result of the Gulf conflict" (SIDRA, The Gulf Crisis, at 3).

of war of words, with Somaliland this time seemingly emboldened by having this sort of international backing.

Overall, one could observe the Gulf's engagement in Somalia – driven by the overriding imperative of preserving the self-interest of these external actors and less in dealing with the country's deep-rooted and protracted challenges – is to an extent shaping the conflict dynamics in the country. In this case, curtailing Iranian influence and of late isolating Qatar took precedence over the idea of contributing to Somalia's long-term security. Furthermore, Gulf countries recent venture into Somalia amplified intra-Somali disputes⁴⁰ as it was not thoroughly conscious of the existing complexities of Somalia's protracted conflict. Despite some piecemeal gains here and there, the net effect of the various engagements of the Gulf countries in Somalia therefore appears to have fostered the latter's instability. In the final analysis, the diverse implications of the Gulf's engagement in Somalia, as highlighted above, should not be lost as indicators of a transregional security interdependence across the Red Sea divide, a relationship that is significantly shaping the nature of conflict complexes in the Horn.

Ethio-Eritrean Relations: The Gulf Factor

Following the 1998–2000 “border war”, one of the major successes of Ethiopia's foreign policy was “containing” and “isolating” Eritrea. This materialized through a UNSC Resolution 1907 in 2009, which punished Eritrea for training and arming groups, including al-Shabaab, in Somalia and the border conflict with Djibouti.⁴¹

Eritrea was taken as “Africa's North Korea”,⁴² and was known for its destabilizing role in the region. According to Tanja Müller,⁴³ “Eritrea's assertive and often rather un-diplomatic foreign policy overtures” should be understood within the constraints of the context of the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia's ambitions to be a regional hegemon. At any rate, however, Eritrea became a pariah state for most of the past two decades. Many saw an opportunity to change this state of affairs in 2013, following the death of Ethiopia's long-time strongman, Meles Zenawi, in August 2012. Following statements from Meles' successor, Prime Minister Haile Mariam Dessalegn, calls have been made that the time has come to “bring Eritrea in from the cold”.⁴⁴ These calls were not heeded, even though

40 ICG, Somalia and the Gulf Crisis.

41 R. Bereketgab, The Morality of the U.N. Security Council Sanctions against Eritrea: Defensibility, Political Objectives, and Consequences, in: *African Studies Review*, 56 (2013) 2, pp. 145–161; H. Cohen, Time to Bring Eritrea in from the Cold, in: *African Arguments*, 16 December 2013 <https://africanarguments.org/2013/12/16/time-to-bring-eritrea-in-from-the-cold-by-hank-cohen> (accessed 23 January 2019).

42 See, for example, *The Economist*, Why Eritrea is called Africa's North Korea, 14 August 2018, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2018/08/14/why-eritrea-is-called-africas-north-korea> (accessed 3 February 2019).

43 T.R. Müller, Assertive foreign policy in a 'bad neighbourhood': Eritrean foreign policy making, Paper presented at the International Conference on Eritrean Studies, 20–22 July 2016, Asmara, Eritrea, 2016, p. 1.

44 Cohen, Time to Bring Eritrea in from the Cold; see also G. Gebreleul and K. Tronvoll, Ethiopia and Eritrea: brothers at war no more, *Al Jazeera*, 8 December 2013, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/12/ethiopia-eritrea-brothers-at-war-no-more-201312111228604587.html> (accessed 23 January 2019).

there was no hard evidence of Eritrea supporting al-Shabaab at least since 2016, an accusation that triggered UNSC sanctions.⁴⁵ As such, the sanctions against Eritrea kept being extended.

The time for Eritrea to “come in from the cold” was in mid-2018. Martin Plaut,⁴⁶ a long-time observer of Eritrean politics, attributed this to lack of evidence of Eritrean support to al-Shabaab, Eritrea’s alliances with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (over the war in Yemen) and with Europe (over migration),⁴⁷ and the reconfiguration of the political landscape in Ethiopia. Without reducing the importance of the contribution of political changes in Ethiopia, we want to highlight here the contribution of Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

These Gulf countries for long were concerned about the alleged use of Eritrean ports by Iranian ships to supply weapons to the Houthi in Yemen.⁴⁸ Another concern was the Qatari assertive foreign policy, expressed in the negotiated settlement of the border contestation between Eritrea and Djibouti under the auspices of Qatar and then the stationing of Qatari peacekeepers to oversee implementation (Qatar also attempted to do the same in Darfur and Red Sea states of Sudan, and Somalia). The Qatari peacekeepers returned when Eritrea chose to side with Saudi Arabia in the Gulf crisis in June 2017.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Eritrea in addition to leasing army bases to Saudi Arabia and the UAE for the Yemen war has sent troops to fight in Yemen (Sudan did the same).

It is these dynamics that contributed to direct Gulf influence in how the Ethio-Eritrea stalemate has been resolved. In fact, Abiy Ahmed’s first visit outside Africa has been to Saudi Arabia on 18 May 2018, some six weeks into his premiership. On 15 June, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan was in Addis Ababa,⁵⁰ following discussions the UAE pledged to give USD 3 billion in aid and investment, relieving the severe foreign currency shortage at the time.⁵¹ Similarly, the Eritrean president visited the UAE and Saudi Arabia in July 2018.⁵² It is in between these two major trips that the

45 Tesfa News, Security Council Expresses Intention to Review Eritrea Sanctions, 11 November 2016, <https://www.tesfanews.net/security-council-intention-review-eritrea-sanctions/> (accessed 23 January 2019).

46 M. Plaut, After decades of UN and self-imposed isolation, Eritrea is coming in from the cold, Quartz Africa, 14 November 2018, <https://qz.com/africa/1463506/un-security-council-lifts-eritrea-sanctions-arms-embargo> (accessed 23 January 2019).

47 Eritreans make up among the largest group of migrants reaching Europe (mainly through Italy), and Eritrea has also been referred to “the fastest emptying nation” (Guardian, 28 September 2016, Trapped and bereft in the world’s “fastest emptying country”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/28/eritrea-military-service-life-people-left-behind> (accessed 23 January 2019)). Europe aimed to counter this by giving aid packages to the Eritrean government.

48 A.J. Lefebvre, Iran in the Horn of Africa: Outflanking U.S. Allies, in: *Middle East Policy* 19 (2012) 2, pp. 117–133.

49 Reuters 2017. Qatar withdraws troops from Djibouti-Eritrea border mission, 14 June 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-djibouti/qatar-withdraws-troops-from-djibouti-eritrea-border-mission-idUSKBN1950W5> (accessed 23 January 2019).

50 Gulf News, Mohammad Bin Zayed and Ethiopian PM hold talks, 15 June 2018, <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/mohammad-bin-zayed-and-ethiopian-pm-hold-talks-1.2237480> (accessed 23 January 2019).

51 A. Maasho, UAE to give Ethiopia \$ 3 billion in aid and investments, Reuters, 16 January 2018, <https://af.reuters.com/article/africaTech/idAFKBN1JC07G-OZABS> (accessed 23 January 2019).

52 Arab News, Saudi Arabia’s King Salman meets Eritrean President, 23 July 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1344056/saudi-arabia> (accessed 23 January 2019).

government of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front announced the commitment to unconditionally accept the peace deal on 5 June 2018.⁵³ Another testament of the extent to which Saudi Arabia and the UAE had influenced the process is the fact that the agreement was signed at a summit in Saudi Arabia in mid-September 2018. After the conclusion of the agreements, both Prime Minister Abiy and President Isaias Afwerki appreciated the role played by Saudi Arabia and the UAE and received the Order of Zayed at the Abu Dhabi summit, and the highest Saudi Arabian award.⁵⁴ This definitely tells of the increasing influence of these Gulf countries on security complexes in the Horn of Africa, while others simply state that the Saudis mainly wanted to use the opportunity to have a good "publicity time", taking respite from bad publicity related to the Yemen war.⁵⁵ At any rate, one can argue that their increasing reliance on Eritrea to continue (and hopefully win) the war in Yemen triggered them to take bold actions. But this is not to say that the Horn was simply at the receiving end: Ethiopia's desire to change its Eritrea policy was stated before 2018. As such, this might not be the first time rapprochement was attempted from Ethiopia's side. The point here is that, as de Waal⁵⁶ observed, "Eritrea [...] used its links with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt to escape from its isolation imposed by Ethiopia."

3. Analysing Security Interdependence and Emergence of a New Security Space

The analytical category of transregional conflict, which the editor of this volume seek to develop, stems from recognizing the merits of a transregional perspective to understanding conflict complexes. A key thrust of the transregional approach is a desire to disentangle hybridity, complexity, interconnectivity, and overlaps among world regions, both formal and informal (see the introduction of this volume). It is an epistemological and methodological critique of extant approaches' inability to capture the complexity of contemporary conflicts. Such perspective seems to aptly fit to attempts of unravelling the security entanglements between the Horn and the Gulf countries, a phenomenon with historical precedents but is currently resurging in full force. But what are some of the various dimensions of the transregional conflicts in the Horn, both as an analytical category and as an empirically observed regionalizing process, which is bringing the Horn and the Gulf into intricate security relations?

53 R. Gladstone, Ethiopia to 'Fully Accept' Eritrea Peace Deal from 2000', 5 June 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/05/world/africa/ethiopia-eritrea-peace-deal.html> (accessed 23 January 2019).

54 See <http://hornofafrica.de/president-isaias-afwerki-and-prime-minister-abiy-ahmed-presented-with-highest-saudi-arabia-award/> (accessed 23 January 2019).

55 Authors' note from an oral presentation of a senior African peace and security expert, ISS Seminar on "Impact of closer links between the Gulf and the Horn", Sheraton Hotel, Addis Ababa, 5 December 2018.

56 De Waal, *Beyond the Red Sea*.

Explaining Interdependence

One of the essential features in defining an RSC is boundary.⁵⁷ As such, the existence of neighbouring RSCs, such as the Horn of Africa RSC and the Middle East (be it across the Red Sea or between Sudan and Egypt), implies a conceptualization of where one ends and another begins. Buzan and Wæver⁵⁸ also add that there are insulator and buffer states, defining the outer limit of a region.

What we see in the case of the Horn and the Gulf, however, is a complex interplay between key states in the two regions, to the extent that the security region's boundary is nearly irrelevant. The original conceptualisation and further refinements of RSC by Buzan and colleagues did not fully capture security independence between neighbouring regions (see the critique of RSC by Engel in this volume). This characterization barely captures security dynamics and conflict complexes linking the Horn and the Gulf. Many authors recognized the "influence" of Middle Eastern countries in security dynamics of the Horn RSC, which became more visible in more recent years.⁵⁹ The intense security relationship, interdependence and complexity of the past decade (as illustrated in the cases above) however push us to go beyond a mere description of it as "influence"/"interference".

After defining regions as neatly categorized, having buffer or insulating states in between, Buzan and Wæver⁶⁰ use concepts of "penetration" and "overlay" to capture external influences in a RSC. These concepts purely define unidirectional interferences of external powers in the dynamics of a certain region, not interdependence. Moreover, the Gulf is not powerful enough to overwhelm and reduce security interdependence in the Horn to invisibility (like during the times of the Cold War), thus "overlay" will not be a proper characterization of the reality.

As illustrated in the above three cases, the Gulf countries' security is affected by security dynamics in the Horn. Geographic proximity, coupled with other drivers of security interdependence, meant security dynamics occurring on one side will pull states on the other side into it. The case with isolation of Qatar, the war in Yemen, and re-building the Somali state illustrate this. Of course, we are not denying that the Horn is much weaker and more dependent than the Gulf countries. In this, we are in agreement with Ethiopia's veteran diplomat, Tekeda Alemu,⁶¹ who recently argued that "the relationship is asymmetrical requires no elaboration. It is as clear as noonday". That, however, should not automatically make the Horn of Africa a victim.

57 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*, p. 53.

58 Ibid.

59 Mesfin, *The Horn of Africa security complex*; De Waal, *New Challenges for the Horn of Africa*; De Waal, *Beyond the Red Sea*; Shinn, *Horn of Africa and the Gulf States*.

60 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*.

61 T. Alemu, *The conundrum of present Ethiopian foreign policy – in search of a roadmap for Ethiopia's Foreign and National Security Policy and Strategy*, in: Centre for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation (CDRC) Digest 4 (2019) 1, pp. 2–17, at 14, <http://www.cdrcethiopia.org/index.php/resorces/publications/send/2-cdrc-digest/25-cdrc-digest-january-2019> (accessed 25 April 2019).

From the façade, it looks like countries in the Horn are mere supplicants or clients to their Gulf principals,⁶² and there is a general expectation for continuance of the prevailing trend. But one must also appreciate the increasing leverage or agency of the latter to impact security dynamics of the Gulf states, as evidenced, for example, in the selective leasing of naval and military bases along their coasts or in the indispensable role they play, for instance, in fighting piracy and ensuring maritime security.

A country as small as Djibouti gave the marching orders to the UAE's DP World despite its decades-long investment in the country. Likewise, Somalia's federal government, regardless of its political and security predicament, banned the UAE's DP World from operating in Somalia. Countries in the Horn indeed jockeyed between alternative suitors such as Saudi Arabia versus Iran or Saudi Arabia/UAE versus Qatar. Sudan was able to withstand pressure from Saudi Arabia and the UAE to sever ties with Qatar mainly leveraging its participation in the Yemen war.⁶³ Even the fledgling Somali federal government aspired to remain neutral in the GCC crisis, despite facing resistance from its regional governments. All of these, combined with the fact that the Horn emerged as base for some of Africa's biggest military interventions hosting military and naval bases for Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey, and Qatar, seem to confirm Alex de Waal's assertion that "every coastal state in the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden has suddenly increased its strategic value".⁶⁴

As such, neither side is immune to the security dynamics of the other, meaning we do not have isolated cases of "intervention". What we have instead is a complex pattern of security interdependence between the two regions, whether in the context of the discussion of maritime security of the Red Sea or within the complexities of the protracted Somali and Yemen conflicts. This transregional security relation is a function of both the structural context of the competitive international order of the post-Cold War period and the ensuing imperative to maximize the self-interest of states within their immediate neighbourhood, as agents within such structural milieu. Tekeda Alemu made a succinct observation of this emerging security interconnectivity between the two regions and the increasing leverage of countries in the Horn exercise:

*The Red Sea area's geopolitical situation has been transformed so thoroughly that occasionally one sees the tail wagging the dog. For pecuniary reasons sometimes the small are observed holding the hands of the big, and the result is not more but less readiness to use wisdom in the exercise of power. Yemen is a good example and a warning of what might happen to others – not in the same way, certainly, but as a result of a variety of manifestations of the irresponsible use of power. The chaotic situation in Somalia, which has become a theatre in which the rivalry among middle powers is on display, is another facet of this change under way in the region.*⁶⁵

62 De Waal, *Beyond the Red Sea*.

63 Key informant interview, Horn expert, Addis Ababa, 11 January 2019.

64 De Waal, *Beyond the Red Sea*, p. 23.

65 Alemu, *The conundrum of present Ethiopian foreign policy*, p. 4.

This interdependence between the two regions can further be elucidated through the patterns of amity and enmity and converging securitization / desecuritization dynamics, discussed below.

Patterns of Amity and Enmity

The various cases explored in this article are meant to illustrate an emerging security interdependence that links the Horn of Africa across the Red Sea to conflict dynamics that are determined by some of the key actors, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran, and Qatar. The prevalence of a complex and constantly shifting pattern of amity and enmity is one of the key features of the cluster of conflicts in the Horn, where each conflict is linked to others in the region and is increasingly bringing on board players from the Gulf. The idea of amity and enmity, as applied to understanding conflict dynamics on a much broader scale than the state level, was borrowed from its application by Buzan and Wæver.⁶⁶

Just like within Buzan and Wæver's RSC, amity and enmity are critical to structuring the transregional patterns of interdependence between the Horn and the Gulf countries, and these patterns have both positive and negative implications. In this case, shifting alliances across the Red Sea divide are recurrent and are emblematic of the security relations between the Horn and the Gulf states. The quest for one's allegiance, recently taking very aggressive dimension of overt financial incentives and sometimes coercive measures, has become profoundly clear in the Somalia case discussed in this article. Though not thoroughly treated in this article, the Nile hydro-power politics, which entangles upstream and downstream countries, is another indication of continual making and remaking of fragile alliances. Major protagonists in securitizing the Nile, namely Egypt and Ethiopia, have been competing to align other states, notably Sudan and South Sudan, in the recent past. For Ethiopia, getting the support of these countries, particularly Sudan, was pivotal for the construction of its Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile. On the converse side, the pledge of support by these countries was tantamount to vexing Egypt and by extension its Gulf allies. Likewise, the Ethio-Eritrea conflict, which is one of the most protracted crises in the Horn, had featured a similar pattern of amity and enmity, bringing on board state actors across the Red Sea divide. For instance, the rocky relation between Ethiopia and Qatar was illustrative of this. The two countries severed their diplomatic ties in 2008, Ethiopia accusing Qatar of supporting Eritrea and arming insurgent groups opposed to Ethiopian troops in Somalia.⁶⁷ Qatar had responded to these allegations, claiming that Ethiopia threatened stability and security in the Horn.⁶⁸ As we are to see later, the relation between the two countries was to significantly improve as evinced, for example, by the various investment agreements concluded between Qatar

66 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*.

67 Shinn, *Horn of Africa and the Gulf States*.

68 *Ibid.*

and Ethiopia.⁶⁹ This is a clear indicator of changing relations that swing between the different extremes of amity and enmity and everything else in between. These changing relations are driven by states drawn from both sides, concurrently securitizing/desecuritizing particular issues, state/non-state actors, and processes.

In the broader scheme of the Gulf's own rivalry, states in the Horn also defining their relation along the amity-enmity spectrum, both vis-à-vis Iran and of late Qatar. It is interesting to see the role of state actors in the Horn in shaping relations, especially in shaping alliances, not just as passive recipients of support but also sometimes in the way they manage different Gulf actors. This could be illustrated, for example, by President Omar al-Bashir's most recent attempt to manoeuvre support from Qatar and the UAE within few days as a way out of Sudan's crisis in the midst of mass protests. Bashir was alleged to have quickly turned "to the UAE for aid, as he leaves Qatar empty-handed".⁷⁰ If existing trends are any indication, one can deduce the security implication of Bashir's manoeuvre as Sudan is "the centre of a geopolitical competition between different camps mainly Turkey and Qatar from one side, Saudi Arabia and the UAE from another".⁷¹

The Emergence of a New Security Space

Recognizing existing patterns of security interdependence, amity and enmity, and intertwined processes of securitization / desecuritization, and taking a social constructivist view of regional space as an outcome of security actions, we want to further ask whether the current division between the Horn and Gulf states in security thinking and practice would have materialized if the Red Sea was a landmass. Academics and policy analysts are simply being trapped on their respective sides of the sea, despite the recognized security interdependence.

Alex de Waal recently made a strong case for transcending this "artificial" dichotomization of the Gulf and the Horn's security dynamics and the attendant epistemological barrier by calling for a strong focus on Red Sea politics by academic and policy analysts.⁷² He went on to attribute this to the "thin line of water [the Red Sea] act[ing] as a deep gulf which has proven remarkably hard to cross". He further strengthens his argument on what Ali Mazrui wrote in 1986 about what he called Africa's three religious-cultural heritage in *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. The argument is that if the "Sahara desert joins North Africa with sub-Saharan Africa as much as it divides them", the Red Sea could do that as well. The division is more due to the "thin line of water" than other geographical, cultural, or historical attributes.

69 See <https://debirhan.com/2017/02/qatar-eyes-build-five-star-hotel-near-au-addis-350-million/> (accessed 23 January 2019).

70 The New Arab, Sudan turns to UAE for aid, as Bashir leaves Qatar empty-handed, 23 January 2019, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/1/23/sudan-seeks-uae-aid-after-leaving-qatar-empty-handed> (accessed 3 February 2019).

71 Ibid.

72 De Waal, *Beyond the Red Sea*.

Our three cases further substantiate Mazrui's and de Waal's arguments. Security and conflict complexes in the Horn are not insulated from influences coming from across the Red Sea. Empirical observations show that this "thin line of water" is not "a deep gulf difficult to cross". That is true only in our academic and policy analyses, which are yet to catch up and adopt a more comprehensive understanding of reality in the region. What we see is the emergence of a new security space – an "emerging region" – in which the conflicts in the Horn are significantly shaped by dynamics/influences from the Gulf (and, to an extent, vice versa).

Transregional Conflict Complexes in the Horn and the Gulf Influence: Ungoverned Security Spaces

As argued throughout this article, a mutually impactful security interdependence has re-surfaced between the Horn and the Gulf regions. Nevertheless, growing security relations between the two regions is unfolding amidst deficits of institutions and frameworks governing these relations. Both the Horn and the Gulf have their own cooperation platforms in the form of IGAD and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with largely "internal" mandates only. However, these institutions are to a large extent paralysed to effectively manage broader transregional security dynamics, in part due to their own intra-regional rivalry and to an extent due to the lack of capacity and political will of member states. In addition, there is little interface between these institutions to regulate their security relations, in contrast to some attempts of working on "soft" matters of shared interest such as migration.⁷³ One can conclude that these institutions would not serve as platforms for governing transregional security relations, at least in the current context, where each was considered as an extension of regional competition.

Likewise, the African Union, though a platform for various strategic partnerships with other regions such as EU and other global players for managing security relations, has been either largely side-lined or lacks the mandate to deal with transregional security dynamics between the Horn and the Gulf.⁷⁴ While Gulf actors such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE are considered to have played a key role in peace making processes in the region, the AU was largely absent and its role was "unrecognized or totally dismissed".⁷⁵ A most recent reminder of this will be the glaring absence of AU's representation at the signing of Ethio-Eritrea peace agreement in Riyadh, in the presence of Saudi king and crown prince and the UN secretary general. Alex de Waal emphasized the implication of this by arguing "this is an interesting and significant symbolic switch from the peace and security of the Horn of Africa being grounded in African institutions and to being

73 The IGAD Migration Programme, for instance, includes convening high-level dialogue between IGAD member states and relevant countries from the Gulf on issues related to labour migration and advocating the placement of a labour attaché for IGAD member states in the GCC Countries.

74 See de Waal, *New Challenges for the Horn of Africa*; Alemu, *The conundrum of present Ethiopian foreign policy*.

75 Alemu, *The conundrum of present Ethiopian foreign policy*, p. 5.

grounded in Middle Eastern principles and processes”.⁷⁶ In addition other attempts to form institutions and platforms of security cooperation – such as the Saudi-led attempt of forging a new political bloc along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, comprising Egypt, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, and Jordan⁷⁷ – could be the least preferred option for managing transregional security relations between the Horn and the Gulf. This is mainly as the effectiveness of such platform for managing transregional relations is undercut from the very outset, not least for lack of inclusivity and the ensuing question concerning the impartiality of the initiative. It will likely be seen as an attempt to exclude and “gang up” against Ethiopia, the aspiring hegemon of the Horn. In a manner of sorts, this will be the *déjà vu* of what Ethiopia did with (mainly) Yemen to further isolate Eritrea by establishing the inactive (not to say stillborn) Sana’a Forum in 2002.

4. Conclusions

The three cases presented here show that what made conflict and security dynamics more complex and fragile in the Horn of Africa is their intermeshing with more powerful actors and processes from the Gulf. Indeed, no major security situation in the Horn is without some alliance from the Gulf. Similarly, changing security situations in the Gulf often bring the Horn of African states into the mix. This is unique to the Horn. From the continent, it is only the Horn and North African states that are exposed to such permanent external non-African actor influences. Buzan and Wæver place Northern African states (i.e. Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt) in the Middle Eastern RSC.⁷⁸ These North African states have Europe to their north, which does not expose them to negative security externalities comparable to the Gulf’s onto the Horn. As such, what explains the nature of contemporary conflicts in the Horn is the complex, intermeshed security relationship and interdependence with the Gulf.

The patterns of security interdependence and amity/enmity relations between states of the Horn of Africa and the Gulf are decades old, but they are getting stronger with the increasing Gulf’s economic wealth, diplomatic presence, and ambition to project power and influence across the Red Sea. The trend of consolidation of the patterns of interdependence and amity/enmity relations will add new layers, cementing and reifying the relationships. Taking space as socially constructed, we can then argue that a security region linking the Horn and the Gulf is in-the-making. The concrete security discourses and practices are contributing to the creation of this region.

76 See All Africa, East Africa: Arab Gulf States in the Horn of Africa – What Role Do They Play?, 23 September 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201809240210.html> (accessed 23 January 2019).

77 Riyadh-Asharq Al-Awsat, Saudi Arabia Announces New Political Bloc for Red Sea, Gulf of Aden States, 12 December 2018, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1501906/saudi-arabia-announces-new-political-bloc-red-sea-gulf-aden-states> (accessed 23 January 2019).

78 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*.

What does this mean for academic and policy analyses regarding the Horn's conflict and security dynamics? The crucial implication is the need to readjust our optics, and properly view and start understanding and analysing the emerging region. Security relations and (counter) alliances of states of the Horn with Gulf States should no longer be seen as external to the Horn's security complex. The emergent regionalization logic linking the Horn of African RSC and the Gulf sub-region makes both entities present in the security affairs of each other. One's security cannot be developed, and fully understood, without considering influences coming from the other side. As such, we argue that a conflict complex straddling the borders of the two regions is emerging. There are no effective boundaries, buffers, or insulators between the two. Policy should also be of this emergent security space, with the implication that the AU and IGAD should collaborate with the Arab League and the GCC to effectively govern such security dynamics.