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**Foreign Interventions in the Horn of Africa : a
Comparative Study of Motives, Mechanisms and
Repercussions.**

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the master degree of
International Relations

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« At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority and is distinguished by free institutions, representative governments, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of the minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. »

President Truman, in his famous speech to Congress in march 1947, in which he proclaimed the Truman Doctrine.

« Some contemporary Africans seem to feel a sort of nostalgia for the modern. In my work in Zambia, for instance, mineworkers did not say : we are modern, but in our own alternative way ! or even ; we have never been modern ‘...They said, in effect, ‘We used to be modern – or at least, well on our way, but now we have been denied that opportunity.

Modernity, for them, was not an anticipated future but a dream to be remembered from the past. The real future was almost universally understood as bleak, even apocalyptic. »

This was articulated by James Ferguson, writing about contemporary Zambia in words that resonate across the Horn of Africa.

To the woman to whom I owe my Intelligence, my strength, and my resilience, My Mother

To my guardian angels and my treasure, My grand-parents

To my lifelong pride and joy, My siblings

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Acronyms

ICU : Islamic Courts Union

TFG : Transitional Federal Government

ARS : Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia

UN : United Nations

ICJ : International Court of Justice

UN Charter : United Nations Charter

UNSC : United Nations Security Council

UNGA : United Nations General Assembly

R2P : Responsibility to Protect

DIIS : Danish Institute of International Affairs

ICISS : International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty

ICRC : International Committee of Red Cross

AMISOM : African Union Mission in Somalia

AU : African Union

RPF : Rwandan Patriotic Front

EPRDF : Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

NGOs : Non- Governmental Organizations

JTF : Joint Task Force

GERD : Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

DP World : Dubai Ports World

PACC : The Paris Agreement on Climate Change

IRENA : International Renewable Energy Agency

COP28 : 28th Climate Change Conference

SDGs : Sustainable Development Goals

AWF : Assela Wind Farm

GCC : Gulf Cooperation Council

SFD : Saudi Fund for Development

G20 : Group of Twenty

ISIS : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
TEU : Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit
EFZ : Economic Free Zone
ADFD : Abu Dhabi Fund of Development
ENOC : Emirates National Oil Company
AIAA : Aden Adde International Airport
TIKA : Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
ASGHAL : Qatar Public Works Authority
EAP : Emirati Advanced Projects
SNA : Somali National Army
JEC : Joint Economic Commission
FDI : Foreign Direct Investment
MoU : Memorandum of Understanding
JSDS : Jeddah Security and Development Summit
PLAN : People's Liberation Army Navy
SLOCS : Sea Lines of Communication
CM Port : China Merchants Port
DMP : Doraleh Multipurpose Port
DCT : Doraleh Container Terminal
CPEC : China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
BDS : BeiDou Navigation Satellite System
SINOSURE : China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation
RSEC : Red Sea Exhibition Center
BRI : Belt and Road Initiative
IMF : International Monetary Fund
PLA : Chinese People's Liberation Army
IOG : Ismail Omar Guelleh
RPP : Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progrès
NDP : National Democratic Party
PRD : Democratic Renewal Party

FRUD : Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy
IGAD : Intergovernmental Authority on Development
USSR : Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
ELF : Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF : Eritrean People's Liberation Front
GSE : Government of the State of Eritrea
PFDJ : People's Front for Democracy and Justice
WB : World Bank
TPLF : Tigray People's Liberation Front
OCHA : Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
TFG : Transitional Federal Government
PMPF : Puntland Maritime Police Force
UNOSOM: United Nations Operation in Somalia
SCS : Sterling Corporate Services
FGS : Federal Government of Somalia
FMSs : Federal Member States
SCIC : Supreme Council of Islamic Courts

Abstract

The dynamism of the international system continuously drives states toward the pursuit , preservation, and maximization of power , making intervention a central instrument of geopolitical competition . Despite the growing body of literature on foreign intervention and the Horn of Africa , both subjects remain insufficiently explored in relation to one another , particularly regarding whether the extensive foreign presence in the Horn constitutes merely a symptom of the region's profound fragility or , rather, a major enabling factor in perpetuating and deepening that fragility .

Accordingly, this study seeks to identify the principal international and regional actors operating within the Horn of Africa and to examine the motives, mechanisms, and the repercussions of their interventions. Adopting a comparative approach, the research analyzes the patterns of external involvement across the region and evaluates their political, economic, and strategic implications.

The preliminary findings reveal a complex paradox. Political dynamics within the Horn increasingly operate through what can be described as a « political marketplace », characterized by transactional politics, personalized power relations, and the marginalization of institutional governance and state-building processes. Simultaneously, rival regional and international actors exploit the structural fragility of these states to secure strategic footholds, particularly in the context of shifting global economic priorities and the ongoing global energy transition, which has encouraged the development of adaptive and increasingly sophisticated mechanisms of intervention such as infrastructure investment.

The conclusions drawn from this study suggest that the geopolitical contest in the Horn of Africa has evolved beyond traditional security concerns and has become profoundly economic in nature. The colonial legacy remains deeply embedded within the structural foundations of these states , many of which have historically functioned as proxies , buffer zones , or arenas of external competition rather than fully consolidated political entities . As a result, chronic institutional weakness and limited state-building capacities have often led ruling elites to rely on foreign actors as a means of prolonging political survival , even as such dependency gradually drives these states closer to the abyss of collapse and fragmentation .

Keywords : The Horn of Africa ; Foreign Interventions ; The political Marketplace ; State-building ; Infrastructure ; fragility.

Résumé

La configuration anarchique du système international, marquée par une perpétuelle fluctuation des rapports de force, contraint les États à une quête perpétuelle de puissance, faisant de l'intervention un instrument intrinsèque de la compétition géopolitique. Malgré l'intensification des recherches portant sur l'ingérence étrangère et la Corne de l'Afrique, peu d'études analysent de manière systématique le lien entre la présence exogène massive et pléthorique dans la région et la persistance de sa fragilité structurelle.

Cette recherche a pour objectif d'identifier les principaux acteurs étatiques et institutionnels – tant internationaux que régionaux – engagés en Corne de l'Afrique, et d'analyser les motivations, les modalités et les externalités de leurs interventions. Une approche comparative est employée afin de confronter les différentes formes d'implication extérieure et d'en appréhender les implications politiques, économiques et stratégiques.

Les résultats préliminaires mettent en évidence un paradoxe complexe : les dynamiques politiques régionales s'inscrivent dans une logique de « marché politique », caractérisée par des pratiques transactionnelles, la personnalisation de l'autorité et l'érosion d'institutions étatiques parfois vétustes. Simultanément, les puissances régionales et internationales exploitent cette fragilité institutionnelle afin de consolider leurs positions stratégiques, notamment dans le contexte des recompositions économiques mondiales et de la transition énergétique. Cette dernière favorise des formes d'intervention plus sophistiquées, parmi lesquelles figurent en premier lieu les investissements dans les infrastructures névralgiques, vecteurs d'une influence renouvelée. L'étude démontre que la rivalité géopolitique dans la Corne de l'Afrique transcende désormais les enjeux sécuritaires traditionnels pour s'ancrer profondément dans une dimension économique prédominante.

L'héritage colonial, conjugué à une faiblesse institutionnelle chronique, a confiné plusieurs États faillis de la région dans une logique d'extraversion et de dépendance accrue vis-à-vis des acteurs extérieurs, conditionnant leur survie politique au prix d'une accentuation des dynamiques centrifuges et des risques d'effondrement étatique.

Mots clés : Corne de l'Afrique ; Interventions étrangères ; Marché politique ; États faillis ; Construction de l'État ; Infrastructures ; Fragilité étatique.

ملخص

تدفع ديناميكية النسق الدولي الدول بصورة مستمرة إلى السعي نحو اكتساب القوة والحفاظ عليها وتعظيمها، مما يجعل التدخل أداة محورية في التنافس الجيوسياسي. وعلى الرغم من كثافة الدراسات المتعلقة بالتدخل الأجنبي ومنطقة القرن الإفريقي، فإن العلاقة بين الموضوعين ما تزال غير مستكشفة بما يكفي، لا سيما فيما يتعلق بالتساؤل حول ما إذا كان الحضور الأجنبي المكثف في المنطقة يُعد مجرد انعكاس لهشاشتها البنوية العميقة، أم أنه يشكل في المقابل عاملاً أساسياً في تكريس هذه الهشاشة وتعميقها.

وانطلاقاً من ذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد أبرز الفاعلين الدوليين والإقليميين الناشطين في القرن الإفريقي، وتحليل دوافع تدخلاتهم وآلياتها وانعكاساتها. وبالاعتماد على مقارنة مقارنة، تسعى الدراسة إلى فحص أنماط الانخراط الخارجي في المنطقة وتقييم أبعاده السياسية والاقتصادية والاستراتيجية.

وتكشف النتائج الأولية عن مفارقة معقدة؛ إذ أصبحت الديناميات السياسية في القرن الإفريقي تعمل بصورة متزايدة ضمن ما يمكن وصفه بـ«السوق السياسية»، التي تتسم بسيادة العلاقات التبادلية والشخصنة في ممارسة السلطة، إلى جانب تهميش المؤسسات وعمليات بناء الدولة. وفي الوقت ذاته، تستغل القوى الإقليمية والدولية المتنافسة الهشاشة البنوية لهذه الدول من أجل ترسيخ موطئ قدم استراتيجي لها، خاصة في ظل التحولات التي يشهدها الاقتصاد العالمي والانتقال العالمي في مجال الطاقة، الأمر الذي شجع على تطوير آليات تدخل أكثر تكيفاً وتعقيداً، من بينها الاستثمارات في البنى التحتية.

وتشير خلاصات هذه الدراسة إلى أن التنافس الجيوسياسي في القرن الإفريقي تجاوز الاعتبارات الأمنية التقليدية ليأخذ طابعاً اقتصادياً عميقاً. كما يظل الإرث الاستعماري متجذراً في البنى الهيكلية لهذه الدول، التي عمل العديد منها تاريخياً بوصفها مناطق عازلة أو ساحات تنافس ونفوذ للقوى الخارجية أكثر من كونها كيانات سياسية مكتملة السيادة والتماسك. ونتيجة لذلك، دفعت الهشاشة المزمنة للمؤسسات وضعف قدرات بناء الدولة النخب الحاكمة إلى الاعتماد على الفاعلين الخارجيين كوسيلة للحفاظ على بقائها السياسي وإطالته، في حين تسهم هذه التبعية تدريجياً في دفع تلك الدول نحو الهاوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القرن الإفريقي؛ التدخلات الأجنبية؛ السوق السياسية؛ بناء الدولة؛ البنية التحتية؛ هشاشة الدولة.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The African continent has recently acquired growing significance in both theoretical and practical spheres. On the academic level, an increasing number of researchers have directed their attention toward Africa as a region of strategic and geopolitical importance. In practice, although political and economic ties inherited from former colonial powers have persisted, external involvement in Africa has expanded considerably with the rise of new regional and international powers, alongside influential private actors possessing substantial financial capital. Within the Horn of Africa in particular, this expanding foreign presence has contributed to continuous cycles of conflict and instability.

The states of the Horn of Africa have struggled both before and after independence. The legacy of colonial rule continues to manifest itself through military coups, civil wars, intra-state conflicts, and authoritarian political systems, all of which have resulted in severe humanitarian crises and widespread human suffering. This reality did not emerge in isolation; rather, external actors have continuously manipulated the region's internal dynamics by exploiting one of the most sensitive components of state identity in the Horn: ethnicity. Ethnic-based divisions and structural conflicts have evolved into multidimensional struggles shaped by both regional and international influences.

Moreover, the geographical proximity of the Horn of Africa to the Middle East has increased its strategic relevance, transforming the region into an accessible arena for the projection of political, economic, and security agendas by external powers. Consequently, the states of the Horn have become highly vulnerable to the influence and repercussions of foreign policy strategies pursued by competing actors.

At the same time, the ongoing global energy transition and the emergence of future-oriented economic strategies have encouraged external powers to adopt more adaptive mechanisms of intervention. Among the most prominent of these mechanisms is infrastructure investment within the Horn states, whose geostrategic position and control over some of the world's busiest maritime routes, particularly the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, make them central to global trade and international economic connectivity. Although such projects are often presented as instruments for economic development and regional integration, they frequently reproduce older patterns of external intervention and dependency.

Despite the developmental discourse surrounding foreign involvement, these interventions often undermine the sovereignty of the Horn states. It is therefore misleading to exclusively emphasize their positive outcomes or to predict sustainable prospects for development amid persistent regional instability and structural fragility. Nevertheless, attributing the crisis solely to external intervention would also provide an incomplete explanation. Many of the region's internal challenges originate from within the states themselves. In attempting to manage ethnic influence and maintain political control, ruling elites have frequently deepened socio-political divisions, thereby generating destructive cycles of instability across political, economic, and social spheres.

Given the ongoing debate between those who emphasize the beneficial impact of hosting

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external actors and those who stress the severe repercussions of foreign intervention, it becomes necessary to examine the motives, mechanisms, and consequences of such interventions in order to better assess the situation and formulate more balanced perspectives.

The importance of this study lies not in predicting the inevitable collapse of the fragile states of the Horn of Africa, but rather in seeking possible pathways toward stability and identifying solutions that may contribute to addressing the region's enduring crises. Accordingly, this research endeavors to systematically explore the following research question :

How do the motives and mechanisms of foreign interventions in the Horn of Africa (2020-2025) interact with domestic political structures to produce different patterns of fragility and dependency, despite the similar geostrategic position of the recipient states ?

In order to clarify the research question, some subsidiary questions had to be asked :

- What are the qualitative transformations in the motives of intervention from a security approach to geoeconomic approach (2020-2025)
- How do intervention mechanisms (military, economic, diplomatic) differ between global actors and regional actors ?
- Why have similar structural conditions (geographical location and state fragility) produced different outcomes in Somalia(fragmentation), Djibouti (rentier adaptation), Eritrea (isolation), and Ethiopia (resistance-containment) ?
- To what extent do local elites act as « rational brokers » in reproducing external intervention dynamics ?
- What are the possible scenarios for the restructuring of the regional order in the Horn of Africa after 2025 ?

Hypothesis :

In pursuence of verifying the research question , as well as the subsidiary questions, we choose the following hyothesis :

As foreign interventions shift from security-driven to geoeconomic motives, local elites increasingly transform it from external coercive pressure tools into a resource for reproducing their authority, thereby deepening institutional fragility rather than addressing it.

As for the subsidiary questions, we choose the following hypotheses :

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- The period (2020- 2025) witnessed a rise in geoeconomic intervention based on ports, infrastructure, and debt, with foreign direct investment in infrastructure growing by 30%, exceeding the growth of military expenditure.
- The multiplication of foreign actors within a single state reduces its ability to construct a coherent foreign policy, which explains the Djiboutian paradox of rentier prosperity and institutional paralysis.
- Ruling elites in the Horn of Africa are embedded in networks of patronage and rent-seeking, in line with Alex de Waal's « political marketplace » logic, which transforms for foreign intervention into a structural pillar of authoritarian governance.
- Although structural conditions such as geographical location, fragility, and external intervention are similar, states in the Horn of Africa generate divergent responses due to variations in their internal elite configurations.

Research Delimitation :

Time : 2020-2025

Place : The Horn of Africa.

Limitations of the Study :

The study encountered several challenges related to historical terminology, particularly in dealing with complex concepts concerning the evolution of foreign intervention since the eighteenth century.

The analysis of interventions, motives, and mechanisms is highly complex, as cases are deeply interconnected and cannot be clearly separated in a linear or unidimensional manner, given the simultaneous interaction of multiple actors within the same contexts.

Furthermore, owing to the broad and multifaceted nature of the subject, the study does not address internal domestic repercussions in recipient states such as armed movements, internal instability, or foreign policy dynamics ,but instead focuses on outlining the general trajectory of the Horn of Africa and the evolving patterns of external intervention in the region.

Significance of the study :

This study is of great importance as it seeks to highlight the underlying motives behind the intensification of foreign interventions in the Horn of Africa, examining these motives represents a crucial step toward explaining the substantial external presence in the region. Secondly , identifying the mechanisms of intervention that vary according to both interests and strategic conditions created by the region's privileged geostrategic location .Finally , the examination of both current and future repercussions of these interventions is no less important ,as the current reality seems to create an increasing overlapp between ideal norms (peace-building , humanitarian aims) and strategic interests , for the comprehension of the conflicts dynamics shaped within the region . Addressing these interconnected dimensions provides a

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genuine understanding of the complexities in the African Horn , Furtherly contributing to identify the most appropriate mechanisms that align with long-term stability in the region and restore credibility by holding accountable of such external illegal practices .

Goals :

Among the objectives of this humble research is to gain a more assertive and more profound perspective on this controversial subject . In addition, the study aims to examine the motives , mechanisms and repercussions of foreign interventions in the Horn of Africa that say a lot about their nature as for their intense and expanding involvement in the region .In light of the changing international and regional dynamics , identifying new patterns and proposing insights that bring us one step closer to find effective and sustainable approaches to peace and stability in the region remains the ultimate goal of this research.

Research methods :

In pursuance of surrounding all the aspects about this subject , it was necessary to use some methods :

- The first one is « **case study method** » which is essential , since the time line of the study is adjusted (2020-2025) , it allows for an in-depth examination of the selected cases within the horn of africa individually and collectively .
- The second one , is « **comparative method** » which is vital in the process of analyzing the differences and similarities in the strategies of different external actors , thereby providing a more refined interpretation of intervention patterns .

Research Approaches :

For the sake of accomplishing a methodological work , using some theories relevant to our study was crucial .

- The analytical approach , imposed itself inhrently while describing and identifying assertively foreign interventions patterns and critically highlighting the behind motives that led to the systmatic complex dynamic .
- Realist , legal and moral approaches had to be used in order to reconsider the legal status of interventions and the different contexts in which they occur . the moral and realist approaches explain the gap between theory and practice of interventions , under the inefficiency of international law .

Previous studies :

In order to get a better understanding of the subject , a profound look at the precedent literatures had to be taken . Among several studies , I firmly believe that using the political market place is an excellent approach to study the Horn of Africa that is critically explained by Alex de Waal in his book « ***the real politics of the Horn of Africa : Money , War and the business of power*** ».

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This work remains highly influential in studying foreign interventions and provides the most pertinent empirical context for the current study .

- **Pádraig Carmody's *The New Scramble for Africa*** examines the growing economic competition in Africa and the increasing role of infrastructure investment and emerging powers in shaping the continent's political economy. The work provides valuable insights into the geo-economic dimensions of foreign involvement; however, it does not specifically address the Horn of Africa or explain the divergent responses of states sharing similar structural conditions. This gap justifies further research on the interaction between external interventions and domestic political structures in the region.
- In ***Africa's World War*, Gérard Prunier** offers a comprehensive analysis of regional conflicts and the internationalization of crises in the Horn of Africa. Although the book remains an essential reference for understanding the region's security dynamics, it pays limited attention to the recent shift toward geo-economic forms of intervention, particularly infrastructure investment and economic competition. Consequently, the changing nature of foreign intervention in the period 2020–2025 remains insufficiently explored.
- In ***The Horn of Africa since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects*, Jan Záhorský and Aleksi Ylönen** analyzes the region's recent political and security developments. However, the book pays limited attention to the geo-economic transformation of foreign intervention and its differentiated effects on the states of the Horn of Africa.

Chapter One: Foreign Interventions in the Horn of Africa : conceptual and theoretical framework

Chapter One: Foreign Interventions in the Horn of Africa : conceptual and theoretical framework

Section one : The Horn of Africa and the Concept of political Market place

1.1.1. INTRODUCTION TO INTERVENTION SINCE THE 18 CENTURY

Recent academic debates , that study intervention, tend to dig deeply into the behind reasons that push states to intervene , every research balances between the logic of realism and idealism , thus all they conclude with is a no-end result between interests and ethical concerns .

In the pre-UN charter era there was no established state practice of invoking a legal right of humanitarian intervention to justify the use of force , Although ,some academic commentators wrote in support of the concept , interventions by great powers in the nineteenth century Ottoman empire particularly for the protection of Christian and Jewish populations have often been claimed by jurists to be instances of humanitarian intervention . However , even in those cases where armed force was actually used , as in the naval battle of Navarino in 1827 in support of the Greek rebellion or in the French occupation of Lebanon and Syria in 1860-1861 , legal justifications advanced by intervening states ,when articulated , typically referred to treaty obligations on the Ottoman Empire , its consent to intervention , or interests such as to the protection of trade , the prevention of piracy . Similarly , the United States' Intervention in Cuba in 1898 during the Spanish –American war, described as humanitarian , was officially justified on the grounds of protecting US citizens and commercial interests, safeguarding property , and exercising self-defense , with only a perfunctory appeal to « the larger dictates of humanity » , in president McKinley's war message .Collectively , these examples illustrate that in the nineteenth century , interventions framed in humanitarian terms were largely incidental , with legitimacy derived from power , strategic calculation , and treaty-based obligations rather than a recognized legal right to intervene for humanitarian purposes . ¹

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a shift towards the grading of powers based on power capabilities , the grading of powers led to the formal recognition of « great powers ». great powers possessed special rights (for example , over intervention) and responsibilities(such as a duty to maintain international order) they also agreed to recognise sovereignty between each other . It was only with such mutual recognition , and a concomitant hardening of notions of inside and outside , that intervention as a discrete social practice could emerge . the recognition of sovereignty acted as a brake on territorial transgressions . in turn , intervention became a specific right afforded to the great powers by the great powers . ²

¹ Vaughan Lowe and Antonios Tzanakopoulos, "Humanitarian Intervention," in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, ed. Rüdiger Wolfrum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Accessed March 24, 2026.

[https://opil.ouplaw.com/oxlaw/entryview/viewoxlawoxchap/10.1093\\$002flaw:epil\\$002f9780199231690\\$002flaw-9780199231690-e306;jsessionid=BDF86E63DEC5668C9F4CF659C557D607](https://opil.ouplaw.com/oxlaw/entryview/viewoxlawoxchap/10.1093$002flaw:epil$002f9780199231690$002flaw-9780199231690-e306;jsessionid=BDF86E63DEC5668C9F4CF659C557D607)

² Leslie George and Tom Luca, "The Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," *Review of International Studies* 39 (2013): 1235, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24564311>.

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Back then, interventions didn't need a humanitarian coverage as a pretext to legitimize such actions of using force , not even supported theoretically , the main reasons were ; trade , piracy and the execution of agreements and pacts . the dominance of great powers provided an atmosphere in which the strong need for legal or moral justification(formal pretext for legality) is Absent . Instead , pragmatic need and state interests were the main factors that influenced involvement . Enforcing treaties and diplomatic agreements , preventing piracy , and safeguarding business interests were the main driving forces . The framework of classical international law , which gave priority to state sovereignty while allowing the use of force under comparatively expansive and adaptable principles , was mirrored in these practices . It is not entirely correct to assume that humanitarian ideas were absent or unsupported theoretically , they did exist but were secondary , inconsistent, and often selective .

Rethinking Intervention :

Intervention is a modern social practice , primarily belongs to the post Cold War world, few associate it with the « long nineteenth century » and the advent of modernity ,a configuration of industrialisation, rational state building ,and « ideologies of progress » that bifurcated the world into core and peripheral polities, and constructed an international order in this image .

If we follow Chris Reus Smit 's understanding of intervention, intervention will be associated to the development of rights over religious conscience , since he argues that intervention is a practice that involves the reconfiguring of identities , institutions and practices of one political unity by another .Therefore , intervention is not limited to an international order constituted by sovereignty , but it is premised on a broader conception of individual rights and mutual recognition¹. Also, the first interventions against foreign « tyranny » were sparked by confessional sympathy with ideas of liberty . these efforts served as the model for subsequent ones that expanded the concept of human rights beyond its link with religious (especially Christian) conscience .²

To sum up this part, if we see intervention with today's lenses , they may seem humanitarian , but they didn't get this privileged issue back then, the prohibition of these acts comes concomitant with the right justification ,instruments and laws that work for the greater powers that impose these laws but also find their way out to maintain their interests .

1.1.2.Modernity and intervention :

While interventionary practices can be identified in earlier epochs , we contend that modernity fundamentally transformed the concept and execution of intervention in three significant ways : it distinguished intervention from warfare for both policymakers and within public discourse : it positioned intervention as a mechanism for both the containment and the advancement of revolutionary ideologies and by raising questions regarding the legitimacy of intervention's timing and location , modernity facilitated the emergence of normative debates surrounding intervention.We can say that modernity brought a shift to intervention on both levels :

¹ Leslie George and Tom Luca, "The Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," *Review of International Studies* 39 (2013): 1233-1253, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24564311>.

² George and Luca, "The Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," 1235.

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intervention as a concept; intervention as a practice .Before the nineteenth century , there was no understanding of intervention; rather, debates about intervention were swallowed within broader discussions about war , particularly the just war tradition ¹.

Far more important to the emergence of intervention as a social practice was The conflict between nationalism and transnational solidarities like liberalism and socialism, the caging of capacities in rational bureaucratic states that accompanied these polities' expansion into imperial territories, and the globalisation of market relations were far more significant factors in the development of intervention as a social practice. The nineteenth century is largely responsible for these processes. Acute power disparities between polities developed throughout this time, along with a profound strengthening of relationships between them. As a result, a core-periphery international order was established, wherein governments in the core generally acknowledged sovereign territoriality, while those in the periphery accepted interventionary measures as commonplace. Therefore, through the mutual recognition of sovereignty , intervention became a regulating force between increasingly intrusive transnational social forces and increasingly tight political limits . In summury , modernity is primarily responsible for interference . intervention does not , however , have a single tone when it is associated with modernity . intervention has , on the other hand , been used in two seemingly disparate ways : as a tool for « order transformation » and as a strategy for « order mainteance »²

Intervention was linked to a family of tactics in the nineteenth century , such as sanctions and blockades , which were in charge of forcing « other » societies to change . intervention was a way to change « backward » areas , whether that backwardness was viewed as an uncivilised culture , an illegitimate polity , or a failing economy . interventions in former colonies during and after the Cold War provide examples of how some of these legacies endure .

Only after the Second World war, intervention became a common tactic between sovereign states , when decolonisation and the creation of a fully global sovereign order took place . It is preferable to view it as an inter-imperial behaviour or as one that was parcticed inside imperial territories in earlier versions . ³

If order transformation in the periphery is one component , a second component is order maintenance in the core . as noted above , core states tended to respect non-intervention within the Family of nations , however, there were exceptions to this norm . for example during the nineteenth century , a range of insurgent ideologies , from nationalism to republicanism , destabilised absolutist states . intervention was a tool through which absolutist regimes sought to forestall these challenges; the best known of this tendency is the concert of Europe .

To conclude, with the imposing context , it is right to see interventions as both tools of order maintainance and order transformation at the same time .

After the second world war and the extension of the sovereign state system, the possibilities of intervention witnessed a wide expansion, as the Third world became deeply immersed in

¹ George and Luca, "The Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," 1236 .

²Leslie George and Tom Luca, "The Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," *Review of International Studies* 39 (2013): 1233-1253, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24564311>.

³ George and Luca, "The Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," 1237.

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superpower competition , by establishing links of inequity , the giver of military and economic aid could take advantage of them by either providing or withholding aid , significantly impacting local political events . at the same time , local elites frequently requested outside assistance to carry out economic projects and combat domestic competitors . In light of this, the Cold War in the Third World might be described as a conflict between two « regimes of global intervention »¹ .

Conceptual framework :

Knowing what intervention is requires combining ideas from existing literature on this subject and characteristics of the cases chosen for this study , as they change in form and over time .

According to the American historian and former adviser to President Kennedy, **Arthur Schlesinger** : « intervention is the interference of a country in the affairs of another country for the purpose of compelling it to do or forbear certain acts » .²

His identification of intervention did not come out of the blue , but through a context in which he was commenting (criticizing) **Eisenhower's** decisive personal role in converting the CIA from an intelligence agency into an instrument for American intervention around the world , in his book *The Bitter Heritage* .

We can add that, Foreign intervention refers to « the use of discretionary power of a government in one society to address perceived problems in foreign societies . In addressing these problems , foreign interventions aim to construct a preferable state of affairs in these societies from a standpoint of those intervening . This may or may not align with what those in the foreign society view as a preferred state of affairs ».³

1.1.3. Typologies of state fragility :

Fragile state :

The concept of failed states was originally defined by Gerald Helman and Steven Ratner, who were 'concerned' that 'ungovernable' states, in other words states increasingly incapable of maintaining their place in the 'international community' itself, a misapplied and ambiguous term⁴.

A fragile state is a state significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its sub-systems . It is a state that particularly vulnerable to internal and external shocks and domestic and

¹ George and Luca, "The Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," 1240.

² Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Intervention," *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, accessed January 28, 2026, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intervention>.

³ Christopher J. Coyne, *The Law and Economics of Foreign Intervention and Rule Reform* (George Mason University, 2007), accessed February , 2026, https://masonlec.org/site/rte_uploads/files/Coyne%20-%20L%20E%20of%20Foreign%20Intervention..pdf.

⁴ Alejandro Sotelo Valencia, *Sub-Imperialism Revisited: Dependency Theory in the Thought of Ruy Mauro Marini*, trans. J. Lagando (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 63.

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international conflicts. In a fragile state, institutional arrangements embody and perhaps preserve the conditions of a crisis :in political terms , institutions may entrench exclusionary coalitions in power (in ethnic,religious, or perhaps regional terms), or extreme factionalism or significantly fragmented security organisations .

In fragile states statutory institutional arrangements are vulnerable to challenges by rival institutional systems be they derived from traditional authorities, devised by communities under conditions of stress that see little of the state (in terms of security, development or welfare), or be they derived from warlords or other non-state brokers. The opposite of a fragile state is a stable state; one where dominant or statutory institutional arrangements

appear able to withstand internal and external shocks and contestation remains within the boundaries of reigning institutional arrangements.¹

Crisis state:

A crisis state is a state under acute stress, where reigning institutions face serious contestation and are potentially unable to manage conflict and shocks, (there is a danger of state collapse).

This doesn't mean that every state facing a crisis would inevitably collapse which makes of it an unabsolute condition; since a state can come over a crisis and recover or get swallowed by a crisis or even collapse. such a process could lead as we have always argued to the formation of new states, to war and chaos, or the consolidation of the ancient regime.

Crisis can exist within th the subsystems of the state in form of a health crisis, an economic crisis, a public order crisis, a constitutional crisis and these subsystems crisis can be extremely protracted that it gives rise to the generalized condition of a crisis state.

The opposite of a crisis state is « resilient state » , where institutions are generally able to cope with conflicts, to manage sub-state crises , to respond to contestation, when the state sits between fragility and stability .²

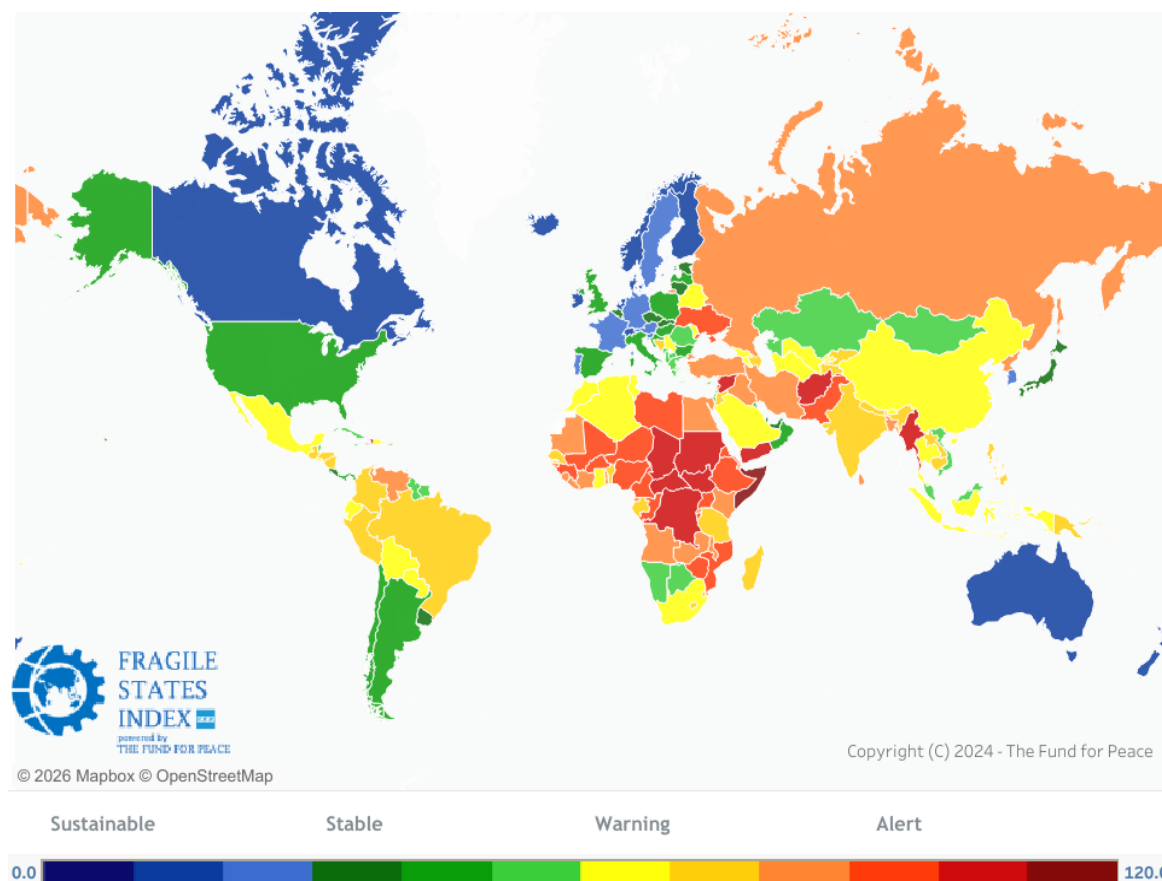
This table below summarizes the typologies as for the degrees of state fragility in the global sphere, but we focus on the Horn of Africa, where the dark areas shows the agravity of the situation. Also, the classification draws on the Fragile States Index Heat Map, assesses levels of fragility across states based on social, economic, and political indicators, highlighting the Horn of Africa as a region charvterized by persistent structural vulnerabilities and uneven governance capacity.

¹Crisis States Research Centre, *Meeting the Challenges of Crisis States* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2010), accessed February , 2026, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csrc-background-papers/Meeting-the-Challenges-of-Crisis-States.pdf>.

² Crisis States Research Centre, *Meeting the Challenges of Crisis States*.

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Figure 1. Fragile States Index Heat Map



Source : The Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index (FSI): Heat Map*, Fragile States Index.¹

State Failure and State Resilience in the Horn of Africa

As mentioned previously, we define a failed state as a condition of state collapse, e.g., a state that can no longer perform its basic security, and development functions and that has no effective control over its territory and borders. A failed state is one that can no longer reproduce the conditions for its own existence. This term is used in very contradictory ways in the policy community (for instance, there is a tendency to label a « poorly performing » state as « failed » -

¹ The Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index (FSI): Heat Map*, accessed January 30, 2026, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/analytics/fsi-heat-map/>.

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a tendency we reject). The opposite of a failed state is an enduring state and the absolute dividing line between these two conditions is difficult to ascertain at the margins. Even in a failed state, some elements of the state; such as local state organisations, might continue to exist.¹

1.1.4.Intervention Patterns

The classic classification of intervention typologies will be critically absent in this research, a good starting point for this are the list of intervention instruments that have been used in the past as put together by Duyesteyn (2009). These instruments are military intervention, political intervention and negotiations, economic sanctions, humanitarian aid, and the international tribunals such as the International Criminal Court. These various instruments are meant to resolve war and reduce its effects. As interventions are possible in both interstate and intrastate conflicts, we must also indicate that the intervening parties are the ones who are not involved in the conflict before. Thus, these parties won't seek to resolve the war but to win it². For instance, the establishment of the transitional government in Somalia by the help of Kenya and Ethiopia was a political intervention; but also economic sanctions were listed as an instrument but as a punitive action since they were imposed on Eritrea and Ethiopia before the peace agreement of 2000; so this economic intervention didn't really help end the war.

Humanitarian and Military intervention :

Humanitarian intervention' also has a narrower meaning as an autonomous justification for the use of armed force in another State distinct from other legal justifications. Humanitarian intervention in this narrower sense can be defined as the use of force to protect people in another State from gross and systematic human rights violations committed against them, or more generally to avert a humanitarian catastrophe, when the target State is unwilling or unable to act. This is still a broad definition, which could be applied to almost any instance of use of military force that has been claimed to have a humanitarian objective or to have been based on humanitarian considerations. The term is not of art, however: it does not appear in any international treaties; and it cannot be said that its boundaries are yet clearly delineated.³

Humanitarian intervention

Forcible and Non-forcible intervention :

¹ Crisis States Research Centre, *Meeting the Challenges of Crisis States*.

² Tom Van den Berk, **Realists' Paradise: Crises, Conflicts, and Interventions in the Horn of Africa** (master's thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2009), 9, <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/5537/Van%20den%20Berk.pdf>.

³ Vaughan Lowe and Antonios Tzanakopoulos, "Humanitarian Intervention," in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, ed. Rüdiger Wolfrum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), accessed March, 2026, <https://opil.ouplaw.com/oxlaw/entryview/viewoxlawoxchap/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e306>.

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Forcible and non-forcible "**humanitarian**" action can be distinguished at the onset. "Humanitarian intervention" may include non-coercive measures like giving food, medication, and other necessities. Since, however, intervention in its classical incarnation is generally considered to involve the use of force, these non-forcible actions are better described as '**humanitarian assistance**' (Humanitarian Assistance in Cases of Emergency; Intervention, Prohibition of). Therefore, a threat or use of military action against another state that is driven by humanitarian concerns can be broadly characterised as humanitarian intervention. This wide meaning is not technical and does not suggest that the forced conduct has a clear legal basis. A humanitarian component or motivation may be present in many legal justifications for the use of force, such as Security Council authorisation, self-defence, the protection of citizens abroad (which is related to self-defence arguments), and armed action upon invitation or with the target State's consent (Intervention by Invitation).¹

Military Intervention : definition and examples

Interventions have changed in form over time and place . thus , highlighting the pattern of intervention uncover to what extent the practice of intervention has changed since 1990 and not only military intervention ,fostering it by mentioning many historical examples , as for identifying principles that have regulated intervention , and a slight comparison between the practice of intervention before and after the cold war , as by the end of era, structural shifts have occurred in perception and acts , and most importantly , the shift was broadly .

- **Pattern of imperialism** : in order to gain an edge, advance its goals , and expand its influence both within the target state and on the global stage , a strong state will militarily intervene in another state .Hegemonic intervention ; which happens when a hegemonic power intervenes inside its sphere of influence to prevent a political development that is not advantageous to its interests , is a well known example of this pattern.
- **Colonial intervention** : National interests of powerful colonialist states are coercively imposed upon weak (newly independent) states. The Opium Wars against China and the 'gunboat diplomacy' employed against Latin American republics in the nineteenth century are examples of this pattern, at the same time, the evolution of the self-determination pattern meant the gradual but unequivocal termination of the colonialist pattern.
- **Balance of power**: the balance of power between sovereign states governed relations between European governments for centuries, and in reality, this resulted in non-intervention. war and intervention, however , have occasionally been employed as instruments to restore that equilibrium and stop a multipolar system from becoming hegemonic , controlled by a single player , for instance , in the early eighteenth-century

¹ Vaughan Lowe and Antonios Tzanakopoulos, "Humanitarian Intervention," in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, last updated

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War of the Spanish Succession , the strength of the claims made by the various ¹heirs to the throne appeared to be the rationale for foreign intervention , however , the true goal was to keep Bourbon France from growing too strong .

- **Ideological intervention:** on ideological grounds, an intervening state aims to alter the target state's political structure, for instance, The Holy Alliance supported monarchical regimes in the face of democratic upheavals in Europe between 1815 and 1830 , while several US interventions in the 1980s were intended to preserve democracy
- **Self determination :** in addition to supporting one of the groups asserting the right to national self-determination , military participation in civil wars may be motivated by imperialism or ideology , in a similar vein , Another reason for foreign intervention could be to support those fighting colonial occupation .
- **Self defense :** when a neighbouring state's armed incursions go unchecked by its government, armed force is utilised in response , in theory , the goal of this kind of intervention is to stop the attacks rather than to topple the target state's leadership . This pattern was followed by Israel's intervention in northern Iraq in the 1980's and Turkey's more recent intervention .
- **Cold war pattern of intervention :** for both imperialist and ideological reasons , the two superpowers acted in their respective spheres of influence or in contested areas between 1945 and 1990 , this leaked during the decolonisation process , a novel pattern of intervention could be establishedDue to the systemic bipolar environment. The Soviet Union's operations in Hungary in 1965 and Afghanistan in 1979 , as well as the US engagement in the Vietnam War in 1965²
- **Humanitarian intervention :** Armed force is used by one state or a coalition of states to lessen human suffering on another state's territory . There are two types of situations that can be distinguished :
 - ✓ Protection of foreign nationals, such as the French intervention in Kinshasa , Zaire , in 1991 , or the Israeli intervention in Entebbe ,Uganda , in 1976 .
 - ✓ Protection of other states or even minority populations in the event of humanitarian disasters , including those caused by their own governments . one instance that fits this description is Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq in 1991 . As well be covered in more detail later , NATO's 1999 operation in Kosovo also falls under this category .
- **Collective intervention :** in order to preserve global peace and security , the international community as a whole chooses to militarily intervene in a state . this pattern differs from the preceding right in two key ways , regardless of whether intervention is actually carried out by one or more states or by an international organization , the United Nations Security Council , acting on behalf of the international community , is the authorising actor . The over achieving stated goal is to preserve or restore international peace and security . Therefore , only when the society of nations has been unified in a global organization with general competencies has this kind of

¹ Martin Ortega, *Military Intervention and the European Union* (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2001), 5.

²Ortega, *Military Intervention and the European Union*,5.

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military intervention been feasible . In the 1990s, the UN Security Council approved the use of force in Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, and East Timor .

- **Punitive Action** : certain states target another state with targeted armed attacks in order to punish the target state for past transgressions . This could include the US missile assaults against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998 or the US airstrike on Libya in 1986 .¹

The quantitative and qualitative changes in this field brought about by the end of the Cold War must be emphasised. There were very few instances of intervention outside of the Cold War pattern between 1945 and 1990. Nowadays, there is an animated academic debate about the role that ideology, on the one hand, and power politics, on the other, played in the Cold War .²

It's worth mentioning, that both components can be regarded as equally relevant for the purposes of this investigation. The US and the USSR employed a variety of justifications for superpower involvement, combining strategic motivations with ideological justifications. In 1947, President Truman developed his containment strategy, which led the US to battle communism everywhere, not just in Greece and Turkey.

The Brezhnev Doctrine was developed in the 1960s to support interventions on the basis that communist regimes' political decisions were irreversible. During the 1980's, Reagan's ideology upheld the US willingness to aid rebels seeking to topple radical or communist governments that threatened US interests. In fact, it was evident that the United States and its allies had a moral advantage over the communist bloc: the tyranny of communism in its implementation was incomparable to democracy.³

As a matter of fact , Some military interventions during the Cold War were a response to the need for territorial defence. The absence of effective control of neighbouring territory by a government, or a situation in which civil war threatened to spill over, led to some military interventions that could be included in the self-defence pattern⁴. Indeed, during the Cold War, self-defence was the most respectable justification for the use of force, and intervening states used and misused this idea repeatedly to justify their acts .

Lastly, it is possible to view some Cold War-era interventions as forerunners of humanitarian interventions, which may lead to the emergence of a new pattern. Although there may have been more distant precursors prior to 1945, they were deprived of meaning by the colonialist setting. There are more pertinent examples from the 1970s, including several international rescue missions. The absence of widespread condemnation was a significant sign of these precedents' acceptability in the eyes of international society, even though they were not seen as indicative of a shift in the legalistic principle of non-intervention that was only to occur after the end of the Cold War.⁵

¹ Ortega, *Military Intervention and the European Union*, 5.

² Ortega, *Military Intervention and the European Union*, 8.

³ Martin Ortega, *Military Intervention and the European Union* (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2001), 5.

⁴ Ortega, *Military Intervention and the European Union*, 12.

⁵ Ortega, *Military Intervention and the European Union*, 13.

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Interventions classification Through the used power and tools

Foreign interventions have various classifications, types and functions ,and it is way easier to understand in the context of Joseph Nye who made a distinction between soft and hard power in his book « the means to success in world politics » , he opposed hard power to soft power that is way difficult since its repercussions are depending on the acceptance of the target audience moreover it can take a long time to reach the desired outcomes . soft power refers to the use of persuasion to achieve the desired ends ; while hard power refers to the use of force or coercion .¹ Examples of soft power include the dissemination of certain information , or cultural products ,as well as monetary aid . Examples of hard power include military occupation and the removal of government regimes through force² . but we cant radically think wether an intervention is soft or hard since it is matter of a **relative degree** and we highlight that not every foriegn intervention is coercive in nature, for instance many countries welcome foreign aid the associated advice of developpment experts which is clearly less coercive as compared to say military occupation³. This may open a window for mentioning coersive diplomacy that may have thin lines with intervention through financial aid ,Coercive diplomacy is a foreign policy approach that uses diplomatic leverage including threats of force, sanctions, or political isolation to compel or deter another state's actions. Unlike conventional military coercion, it prioritizes diplomatic channels to achieve objectives, reserving armed conflict as a last resort , compelling another states action make of these sharing the same end⁴ . Accordingly there is a strategic relevance between foreign intervention and coercive diplomacy but they may not match reaching an endpoint or a pick conflict when foreing intervention takes form of a full-scale military force unlike corecive diplomacy . many policy makers see intervention as a relatively controversial « end of the line » for instance in which other tools of coersive diplomacy have been tried and have failed .⁵

Over the relationship between intervention and other tools of coercive reordering , from sanctions to war . intervention , therefore , embraces a range of thorny normative ,analytical and substantive concerns .⁶

¹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), P.

²Christopher J. Coyne, "The Law and Economics of Foreign Intervention and Rule Reform" (working paper, George Mason University, 2007), 5.

³Christopher J. Coyne, "The Law and Economics of Foreign Intervention and Rule Reform" (working paper, George Mason University, 2007), 5.

⁴Diplomacy.edu, "Coercive Diplomacy," accessed February, 2026, <https://www.diplomacy.edu/topics/coercive-diplomacy/>.

⁵ Leslie George and Tom Luca, "The Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," *Review of International Studies* 39 (2013): 1233-1253, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24564311>.

⁶ George and Luca, "Past, Present, and Future of Intervention," 1235.

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1.2. Section 2 : The Horn of Africa and the Political Marketplace

1.2.1. The political market place

The Horn of Africa, has long been shaped by overlapping histories of colonial intervention , state fragility , armed conflicts and external geopolitical competition , it is within this regional and historical setting that Alex de Waal develops the concept of the political market place ; an approach that will help us better understand why the horn states are witnessing such a cruel reality of external interventions. Primarily he argues that the conduct of the Horn politics perates less through institutional governance and more through transactional bargaining, where loyalty is effectively bought and sold among competing elites , this last statement will take its right while adresssing the paractical part of the study.

The political market place is a contemporary system of governance in which politics is conducted as the exchange of political services or loyalty payment or license . The Horn of Africa is an advanced and militarized political marketplace , characterized by pervasive rent-seeking and monetized patronage , with violence routinely used as a tool for extracting rent . it is integrated in regional and global circuits of political finance .¹

For de Waal , the structutal products of the political marketplace and its constantly shifting networks of patronage and elite competition are well presented in the term « turbulences », that is never an accidental phenomena that the Horn states witness .

Turbulence is a term taken from fluid dynamics that refers to the way in which a system is unpredictable and chaotic from one moment to the next , lacking discernible pattern , but still maintains a recognizable structure over a longer period of time . turbulences can be visualized as the currents , swirls and eddies of a lastflowing stream , which produces moments of calm and tranquillity , before plunging into another vortex .²

The adaptation of political markets to systemic turbulence expresses well the dilemma of modernity in Africa through the parallel proliferation of governmental institutions that date over forty years and the lack of popular trust in the same institutions that have an intrusive effect in people's life ..

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) are one of the leading global initiatives for measuring governance. First published in 1999, they provide annual composite indicators summarizing six dimensions of governance: Voice and Accountability, Political Stability, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption.³ governance symptoms that we may encounter anywhere but never in the Horn .

The world bank's 2011 World development Report found that progress on key state-buildings indicators has not only sustained , but has even been more rapid in recent history than

¹Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War, and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 30.

² De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*, 30.

³ World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators," accessed April 2, 2026, <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>.

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previously.¹ However, it remains impossible to measure people's trust in institutions but the perception of the very opposite is widespread .

Alex du Waal added a very crucial part that we will be explaining in the next chapters , he suggests that the enigma is explained because the political market has emerged as an alternative form of governance . A generation ago , Africans saw the context between modernization and customary , patrimonial forms of governance . Even though perversions of the latter were common , people were confident that these were deviations on the path of progress . Today ,they implicitly understand that political markets are becoming dominant while state-building fades .²

We also add that **The concept of political marketplace** operates at two levels :as a general feature of political life (everywhere) and as the central component of politics (in advanced political markets)³. Alex du waal , added a perspective on the thriveness of these political markets ; in this part ; he doesnt deny the fact that every political system has a partial political market place where we find political gatekeeping affairs , interpersonal bargaining, transactions and allegiances ,coercion and threat even the apparatus of institutions that reflect a political life is maintained . However , it is true that these transactions are labelled as corruption but political markets can emerge behind the same facade of an institutionalized state , and in times of crisis ,strong systems even authoritarian governments metamorphose into an advanced political market rather than pushing forward towards a democracy transition .

Market places system scan be found in different locations , the condition of their installation according to DU WAAL ;

- Individuals with political , military and business interests hold the political finance
- Control over violence tools and instruments scattered or even disputed over
- Institutional rules and procedures are unable to solve political disputes
- These countries and location is integrated in the global economic and political order as subordinators

Alex du waal , doesn't agree with all the classifications given to these countries , such as fragile , weak and beside their pejorative meaning , he refuses even the noun state . however , he regards the situation as countries in conflict or where wartime political business models and network continue to prosper in post-war regime .⁴

¹ De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*, 30..

² De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*, 30.

³ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War, and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 30.

⁴ De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*, 30.

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The main characteristic of an advanced political market place is being flexible, dynamic and contemporary form of governance , not ruins nor a transitional system that will lead to Weberian state . we can also add that political market place is a production of recent history due to political and economic globalization , deregulation and monetization .

To sum up , in governance systems where political marketplace is dominant , the conduct of political life will take the feature of trading and exchange business and like markets, are regulated by the law of supply and demand , the case of allegiances are prices .real politics is the bargaining and coercion that constitutes these transactions .¹

Political Marketplace in the Horn of Africa :

Here comes the study of Charles Tilly , who in his article exposed crucial political and social ideas of his , titled « war making and state making as organised crime » . Charles Tilly after he studied the recent history of Europe ,he found that the construction of a modern state was far from the Utopian and ethical notion of the Social Contract that was the philosophical core of the modern state but as same as organized crime patterns , Recent states have risen throughout an organised use of power and violence , in the pick of this process , comes the organised monopoly of coercion .

Wars , protests , collecting resources including taxes as pillars of state's construction ;have great resemblance with protection rackets, that is practical in organised crime sphere in illegal ways , while state is reinforced by legitimacy and laws .

As a result of the interaction of these four activities , All of the interlinked following are found in organised crime patterns

- War Making
- State making
- Protection
- Extraction

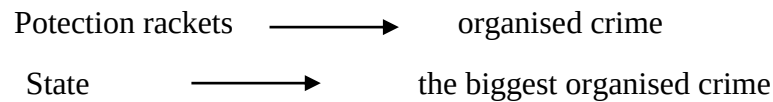
We mentioned previously , How the politics of the horn is conducted under the logic of trade and business , every study confirms the same patterns of conduct .

If protection rackets represent organised crime at its smoothest , then war risking and state making – quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy qualify as our largest examples of organised crime . without branding all generals and statesmen as murderers or thieves . At least for the European experience of the past few centuries , a portrait of war makers and state makers . coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs bears a far greater resemblance to the facts than do its chief alternatives : the idea of a social contract , the idea of an open market in which operators of armies and states offer services to willing consumers , the

¹ De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*, 30.

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idea of a society whose shared norms and expectations call forth a certain kind of government.¹
As per the following relationship :



Charles Tilly included in his study only the European experience and even when he thinks that the third world doesn't resemble the Europe in the 16th and 17th century, therefore a comparison in this case is sterile, he doesn't deny the global sphere of the phenomenon. Yet a thoughtful exploration of the European Experience shows well how coercive exploitation played a large role in the foundation of the European states.

Organized means of violence have a place in the changing forms of states and governments, under the cover of « Protection » as the ultimate aim. With the one tone « protection » calls up the images of the shelter against danger provided by a powerful friend, a large insurance policy, or a sturdy roof. With the other, it evokes the rackets in which a local strong man forces merchants to pay tribute in order to avoid damage – damage the strong man himself threatens to deliver.² The image this word brings depends on the assessment of both reality and the eternality of the threat. Moreover, someone who supplies reliable, low-priced shielding from both local racketeers and from outside marauders makes the best offer³, talking about the state. We also must consider the definition of a racketeer as someone who creates threat and then charges it for its reduction. Governments' provision of protection, by this standard, often qualifies as racketeering. To the extent that the threat against which a given government protects its citizens are imaginary or are consequences of its own activities, the government has organized a protection racket. Since governments themselves commonly simulate, stimulate, or even fabricate threats of external war and since the repressive and extractive activities of governments often constitute the largest current threats to the livelihoods of their own citizens, many governments operate in essentially the same ways as racketeers. There is, of course, a difference: Racketeers, by the conventional definition, operate without the sanction of governments.⁴ And concerning the authority cause, going back to the realism thoughts of Hobbes and Machiavelli, according to politicians, governments have the tendency to monopolize violence in both of its narrow and broad sense, and this is how they stand out and impose their being of any other organisation, whether force is considered lawful and justified or illegitimate does not change the basic reality that governments tend to monopolize violence. The uncertain elastic line between legitimate and illegitimate violence appeared in the upper reaches of power⁵.

¹Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 170..

² Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 170.

³ Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 170.

⁴ Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 170.

⁵ Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 170.

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The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate users of violence became clear only very slowly in the process during which the states armed forces became relatively unified and permanent .

Historically Proven , the Tudors had the exception Triumph and the first Monarchs to be monopolizing violence and their demilitarization of the great lords entailed four campaigns.

In France , Louis worked under Richelieu's advice and destroyed structures of the rebel lords , protestants , Catholics , on the other hand , Richelieu worked to maintain private armies and by the late 1620's he announced the doctrine of « the royal monopoly of force » . and this is how, by the next two centuries , monarchs controlled permanent , professional military force that rivaled those of their neighbors and far exceeded any other organised and force within their own territories . the state's monopoly of a large scale violence was turning from theory to practice through most of Europe .¹

The Economic historian **Fredric Lane** views that governments are in the business of selling protection and impose this fact on people , this act of production violence and curbing it favored the monopoly of violence . furthermore , this producing of violence is by purely economic profit, illustrating through paying tributes .

Lane ideas suffocate inside the neoclassical box . and breathe easily outside it . nevertheless, inside or outside , they properly draw the economic analysis of governments back to the chief activities that real governments have carried on historically : war , repression , protection , adjudication .

More recently , Richard Bean has applied a similar logic to the rise of European national states between 1400 and 1600 . he appeals to economies of scale in the production of effective force , counteracted by diseconomies of scale in command and control . He then claims that the improvement of artillery in the fifteenth century (canons made small medieval forts much more vulnerable to an organised force) shifted the curve of economies and diseconomies to make larger armies , standing armies , and centralized governments advantageous to their masters .Hence According to bean , military innovation promoted the creation of large , expensive , well-armed national states .

How can this be relatable to the horn of Africa . this was to prove the politics are conducted in trade logic not only in the horn but in europe ...² War makes state , Banditry , piracy , gangled rivalrily policing and war making all belong to the same continuum .

Using the political market place is what we consider the perfect approach to study the Horn dynamics, as it claims a crucial part of the hypotheses of our study, since it sheds the light about the real players of the game, who are not mainly states but local leaders. Those leaders are long considered as victims of power competition but this approach sees them as strategic actors with

¹ Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 170.

² Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 175.

see Frederic C. Lane on the link between trade, power, and external intervention.

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a significant role and responsibility, we mention that they can shift partnerships while advantageous, using the external support to strengthen their authority and extract political and economic benefits to the point when external aid becomes an average state revenue in the Horn of Africa.

1.3. Section 3: Legal framework of intervention

Sovereignty constitutes a cornerstone of the modern international order, providing the legal foundation upon which states exercise authority domestically and interact within the international system, closely associated with the principles of political independence and territorial integrity, sovereignty remains a fundamental norm protected under the framework of the United Nations Charter.

However, the emergence of humanitarian intervention has generated significant legal and normative controversy, as the pursuit of humanitarian objectives may require challenging or limiting sovereign authority. In the same context, intervention has become one of the most contested areas of international law, positioned between the prohibition of the use of force and the protection of human rights. The expansion of interventionist practices demonstrated that concepts such as political independence and territorial integrity did not always function solely as barriers to intervention, but were at times reinterpreted to accommodate humanitarian action.

The tension was reflected in the Corfu Channel Case¹, where the International Court of Justice rejected unilateral intervention within the territory of another state, emphasizing the primacy of sovereignty and non-intervention in international law, nevertheless, the case exposed clearly the enduring ambiguity surrounding the legal limits of humanitarian intervention.

All questions center on ‘ **the right to intervene** ’ first, and the legitimacy of intervention second. Another question is imposed, which is: does anyone have to involve himself in someone else's conflict? The answer is divided to be covering crucial points: a legal one; international law is the answer.

Article 2(4) is the cornerstone of the legality source, Since interventions are restricted to situations where there is prior authorization by UNSC.

The concept of state sovereignty and the necessity of permission and consent serves as the essential foundations of the legal system controlling intervention in international law. Every State has the "inherent and lawful right," as a manifestation of its sovereignty, to ask other States or groups of States for aid, as stated by the United Nations Security Council in its 1976 resolution denouncing South Africa's aggression against Angola. This statement represents a well-established exemption to the UN Charter's general ban on the use of force under Article 2(4), which states that foreign military presence may be made legal if it is supported by the

¹ **Corfu Channel case** : (United Kingdom v. Albania), Judgment of 9 April 1949, International Court of Justice Reports 1949, p. 4. The Court rejected the alleged right of intervention in the internal affairs of another state, considering it incompatible with the foundations of international law and state sovereignty.

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territorial state's legitimate assent¹. In support of this stance, the United Nations General Assembly's 1981 Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States restates the corresponding duty of states to abstain from any kind of military, political, or economic intervention in another state's territory without that state's consent. When taken as a whole, these documents create a logical normative framework where permission serves as the primary legal standard that separates legal help from illegal interference. This also poses difficult legal issues in practice, especially with relation to the legitimacy and authenticity of consent. The clarity of consent as a legal foundation is compromised by issues including the identification of the legitimate authority qualified to request outside aid, the effect of civil war on governmental legitimacy, and the potential for coercion or outside pressure. The boundaries of consent-based intervention have also been discussed in recent international legal discussions, particularly when such interventions might go against other norms like the principle of non-intervention, the ban on the use of force, and new ideas like the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). As a result, although while permission is still a fundamental component of the legal framework governing intervention, its application and interpretation are always changing in a contentious and ever-changing legal environment.

As mentioned, The legality of humanitarian intervention under international law continues to be a matter of significant debate. notwithstanding extensive doctrinal and scholarly engagement, a uniform consensus has been reached as to its permissibility. Against this backdrop, the UN Charter serves as the cornerstone of the legal regime regulating the use of force.

This Article prohibits states from intervening militarily in the territory of other states. This prohibition includes direct military attacks, bombing, deployment of armed forces, and even threatening with using force. However, economic banning and indirect aid are not included in the prohibition section with one clear exception however chased by ambiguous sense as Orwell mentioned about the Orwellian construction (Narrow sense), the exception is conditioned only if: -the rule is provided by the charter

- Individual or collective self-defense

Here it's worth mentioning that intervention by invitation is not an exception for the prohibition on the use of force as the prohibition specifically covers the use of force without consent. By virtue of consent, the use of force by an invited military is still not at odds with the host state's territorial integrity, and is not, therefore, an infringement of Article 2 (4).²

¹ The legality of intervention by invitation Coman Kenny and Sean Butler, "The Legality of 'Intervention by Invitation' in Situations of R2P Violations," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 51 (2019): 135–177, accessed April 2, 2026, <https://nyujilp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NYI103.pdf>.

² The legality of intervention by invitation Coman Kenny and Sean Butler, "The Legality of 'Intervention by Invitation' in Situations of R2P Violations," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 51 (2019): 135–177, accessed April 2, 2026, <https://nyujilp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NYI103.pdf>.

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General Assembly resolution 2131 of 1965 declared that « **no state shall organize ,assist , forment , finance , incite or tolerate subversive , terrorist or armed activities directed towards in the violent overthrow of the regime of another state , or interfere in civil strife in another state** »¹

The danish institute of International Affairs DUPI refers to humanitarian intervention in their report on the subject , while the international commission on intervention and state sovereignty ICISS prefers to approach the matter as the responsibility to protect .²

Responsability to protect :

During the second half of the 20th century , the development within human rights law shows a clear tendency towards a greater international responsibility .

Within the wide range of intervention's implications , types and forms , we can link humanitarian interventions specifically , with the evolution of the basis of R2P , R2P as a concept is imposed in which the failure of a state to protect its population from the commission of core international crimes , specifically genocide , crimes against humanity , war crimes ,and ethnic cleansing – results in a potential circumscribing of its sovereignty to the point where a UN Security Council-authorized military intervention is permitted ³.

This notion also provides that sovereignty may be qualified populations to the extent that the state no longer enjoys freedom in its internal affairs .the most serious potential consequence is military intervention . Unless a question of coercion arises , the introduction of foreign troops does not damage the recipient state's sovereignty .

R2P concept is which the failure of a state to protect its population from the comission of core international crimes specifically genocide , crimes against humanity ⁴. this notion also provides that sovereignty may be qualified as a result of the comission of certain crimes against its populations to the extent that the state no longer enjoys total freedom in its internal affaires . the most serious potential consequence is military intervention by the international community

If we come to study the legality of foreign intervention based on its typology ,starting by humanitarian intervention , after discussing the patterns , by the end of the nineteenth century , the right of humanitarian intervention was recognized by a majority of legal writers ⁵. If the very clear classification of interventions, practically as for theoritically is ; Military intervention and humanitarian intervention , I would like to highlight that every intervention is military , since humanitarian intervention however legal and permitted , mainly advocated through the

¹Kenny and Butler, "Legality of 'Intervention by Invitation,'" 135.

² Anna Bergh, *The Legal Status of Humanitarian Intervention* (master's thesis, Lund University, 2008), accessed April 2, 2026, <https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=1319977&fileId=1319978>.

³ Coman Kenny and Sean Butler, "The Legality of 'Intervention by Invitation' in Situations of R2P Violations," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 51 (2019): 135–177, accessed March , 2026, <https://nyujilp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NYI103.pdf>.

⁴ Kenny and Butler, "Legality of 'Intervention by Invitation,'" 1.

⁵ Bergh, *The Legal Status of Humanitarian Intervention*. [Lund University Research Portal PDF](#)

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use of force illustrated in armement , disarmemnt , military bases , sending armies ...ect . Especially that often the military intervention justified as humanitarian intervention were undertaken for reasons of self-intrest .

The state practice relating to humanitarian intervention is therefore not easily examined since the humanitarian reasons were simply subsidiary .¹ and humanitarian intervention have been carried out for reasons of self interest . two principle sources confirm the existence of the doctrine of intervention by invitation ; UN resolutions and jurisprudence of the international court of Justice ICJ . these sources best viewed on a continuum of time and understood in the context of developments precipitated by the cold war . First , resolution passed by UN organs indicate a noticeable shift , from reluctance to acknowledge the legality of intervention to explicitly doing so .²

A new dynamism emerged in previously frozen international relations with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1989. The so-called idealistic school of international law and politics, which seeks world government with the United Nations' monopoly on violence, has surpassed the so-called realist school, which prioritises state sovereignty as the strongest guarantee of international peace. Resolutions 687 and 688 from 5.4.1991 on North Iraq and 794 from 3.12.1992 on Somalia are two examples of UN Security Council actions that are thought to go beyond the non-interference norm . Since the veto has been used less frequently in the Security Council than it was during the Cold War, the UN has generally been able to address internal conflicts in a way that it was not able to do before to 1989 . The Security Council declared in a recent resolution (1296/2000) that the denial of humanitarian aid to civilian populations impacted by war and the targeting of civilians in armed conflict are threats to global peace and security and may therefore serve as triggers for the Security Action Council. As factors that expanded interventions

The protection of non-combatants in battle is governed by international humanitarian law, which must be included as a third consideration. Because the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ICRC) has a position that is more like to that of an official organization than an NGO in terms of its rights to be active in areas of conflict, its activity warrants special attention.

In conclusion, the UN Charter severely restricts any conflict involvement carried out by states or international governmental bodies without the desire of all or one of the parties involved . The UN Security Council's judgements can only be enforced when there is a threat to global

¹Bergh, *Legal Status of Humanitarian Intervention*.

²Coman Kenny and Sean Butler, "The Legality of 'Intervention by Invitation' in Situations of R2P Violations," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 51 (2019): 135–177, accessed March , 2026, <https://nyujilp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NYI103.pdf>.

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peace and security, albeit this norm has recently been subject to considerable interpretation. This clause applies to both military and non-armed intervention forces.¹

Any intervention that is purportedly "humanitarian" is shadowed by history. During the pre-Charter era, there were strong links between the colonialist endeavour and any kind of forced intervention with a (proclaimed) humanitarian goal. For instance, Cuba became a US protectorate as a result of US involvement in 1898 (Protectorates and Protected States). Humanitarian concerns were, if they existed at all, mixed with many other less admirable factors in every incident of forced intervention throughout this time, and they were never openly or solely relied upon as adequate legal grounds in and of themselves.

Section 4: Theoretical background:

STRUCTURAL REALISM :

This study contends that the pattern and persistence of intervention in the horn of Africa are systematically determined by the structural constraints of the international system, as theorized by structural realism, particularly in relation to great power rivalry and geostrategic positioning, while **classical realism** serves a subsidiary role in capturing leadership-Level contingencies that shape the form ; timing and execution of such interventions .

According to structural realism, a state's material capabilities are its primary source of power. Nuclear weapons and armoured divisions are examples of physical military assets that greatly influence the balance of power. but governments also have latent power, or the socio-economic assets that support military might. a state's wealth and population size are the foundation of latent power because they supply the resources. financial, technological, and human are needed to establish and maintain armed forces. According to this viewpoint, governments may gain power not just by going to war but also by growing their population and economic potential, as demonstrated by China's recent ascent.

The approach of neo realism is called the systematic approach, realists and neo-realists agree on military capability as a source of power, the thin line between them is their disagreement on the source of struggle, while realists see it due to the psy-drivers, neo-realists believe it's the structure of the international system that provokes the war

Power is the currency of international affairs, according to realists. great powers are the major players in their narrative, carefully consider their perspective economic and military might. its important not only to have substantial amount of power, but also to make sure that no other state can alter the balance of power. ²

¹ *Legal Aspects to Conflict Interventions*, Irénée, November 2007, accessed April 2, 2026, https://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-analyse-661_en.html.

² Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 100.

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For structural realists called neo-realists , human nature has little to do with why states want power , Instead it is the structure or architecture of the international system , that forces states to pursue power . in a system where there is no high authority that sits above the great power , and where there is guarantee , that will not attack another , it takes eminently good sense for each to be powerful enough , to protect itself in the event it is attacked . in essence, great powers are trapped in an iron cage where they have little choice but to compete with each other for power if they hope to survive .

Offensive realists understand that threatened states usually balance against dangerous foes, but they maintain that balancing is often inefficient especially when it comes to forming balancing coalitions , and that this inefficiency provides opportunities for a clever aggressor to take advantage of its adversaries. Furthermore, threatened states sometimes opt for **buck-passing** rather than joining balancing coalitions , in other words , they attempt to get other states to assume the burden of checking a powerful opponent while they remain on the sidelines . this kind of behaviour , which is commonplace among great powers , also creates opportunities for aggression .as illustrated in 2011-2012 crisis in **Somalia** , rather than deploying their own forces , regional actors choose to rely entirely on the African Union Mission in Somalia AMISOM , with the contributions of Kenya and Ethiopia to limit the rise of AL' Shabab militant group . they were sufficient with providing logistic support , funding and training , and completely avoiding to assume operational risks in the battlefield . This represents well a classical buck-passing behaviour , consistent with offensive realist assumption that threat or management is often uneven and creates a fertile ground for opportunistic interventions .

This dynamic can be observed in the Horn of Africa, where responses to instability in Somalia have frequently been fragmented. For instance, although multiple actors, including the United States, Ethiopia, and the African Union, have intervened, their efforts have often lacked cohesion, allowing groups such as Al-Shabaab to persist. Moreover, elements of buck-passing are evident, as some states have relied on regional powers like Ethiopia or African Union missions to bear the primary burden of intervention. These patterns illustrate how inefficient balancing and burden-shifting behavior create opportunities for prolonged conflict and external intervention, consistent with the expectations of offensive realism.

While offensive realists acknowledge that sometimes conquest doesn't pay , they also point out that sometimes it does , conquerors can exploit a vanquished state's economy for gain , even in the information age , Peter Liberman argues that information technologies have an Orwellian dimension which facilitates repression in important ways .¹this dynamic is clearly visible in the horn of africa , since surveillance tools serve at monitoring populations and well -managing conflicts zones . also it operates in two aspects ; the first as a key enabling factor to project power by regional actors , that we detect an Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia in 2006 against the rise of the Islamic courts union . that was seen as a serious security threat . to reshape the balance of power , military option was not preferred at the first place unlike Ethiopia's capacity to gather and make use of intelligence . the control over surveillance mechanisms and gathering information include cross-border intelligence networks , telecommunications monitoring , as

¹ Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 100.

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for cooperation with external partners such as the United States, (this cooperation can be served as an instance of buck-passing). This increased the ability to identify targets, anticipate threats and minimize operational uncertainty, that reduced technically the costs and the risk associated with external intervention that, and facilitated internal repression. Making intervention strategically a smart choice keeping it operationally rational. Thus, the case demonstrates that when backed by technical tools of control, interventions and coercion may produce real strategic advantages even in the modern information era.

Similarly, external powers such as the United States rely on drone surveillance and data-driven targeting from bases in Djibouti to project power across the region. These technologies enable sustained intervention without full occupation, while also contributing to the militarization and instability of the region. This supports the offensive realist claim that technological advantages can make coercion and intervention more effective and, at times, more attractive.

The second aspect, similarly, advanced surveillance technologies enabled sustained external interventions in strategically significant regions. As a paradigmatic instance of this across the horn, Djibouti hosting a number of various military bases from which the United States conduct from a wide range of operation across the horn of Africa most notably at Camp Lemonnier; U.S operations for conducting the region include drone strikes, aerial surveillance and signals intelligence.

Camp Lemonnier provides the perfect case for remote intervention: as the largest and permanent U.S military base, established in 2002, after 9/11 attacks, this base has represented a central hub for the inception of American operation across the horn, the Red Sea and part of Middle East. We can give many operations launched from this base across multiple interconnected theaters in Somalia against al-Shabaab militant group. Beyond the African horn Camp Lemonnier supported operations in Yemen, where United States has succeeded to conduct airstrikes and intelligence mission against militant groups such as AL-Qaeda, as a supporting factor, the geographical proximity enables rapid efficient deployment. In addition; the base has its proper role securing maritime routes in the Red Sea particularly around the vital straits of Bab al Mandab. Shipping routes are well-monitored, piracy is discouraged and regional concerns are addressed by surveillance systems and naval cooperation initiatives. This naval aspect helps highlighting Camp Lemonnier's wider geopolitical importance by enabling the United States for its predator role across the horn, aiming to project power across adjacent regions, but somehow presented as a safeguard of critical global trade routes.

Taken collectively, these multi-theater operations demonstrate that surveillance-driven capabilities constitute a decisive instrument for flexible and sustained power projection, fully consistent with the premises of Offensive Realism. By harnessing advanced technologies—ranging from unmanned aerial systems to signals intelligence—the United States is able to exert influence concurrently across Somalia, Yemen, and the Red Sea, substantially lowering the operational costs of intervention while simultaneously expanding its strategic reach. This operational model exemplifies what Peter Liberman identifies as the “Orwellian” dimension of contemporary power: persistent surveillance enables precise control and coercive capacity over

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target populations and adversaries without the necessity of formal territorial occupation, thereby amplifying the effectiveness of power projection in complex, multi-regional environments.

Fully aligning with Offensive realism , and while taken collectively , such multi-theater operations demonstrate that surveillance-driven capabilities constitute a tool for sustained power rejection . from unmanned aerial systems to signals intelligence , usa is expanding its influence across somalia, yemen and the red sea , it is attractive that this strategic reach doesn't require high costs without the necessity of formal territorial occupation . Consequently of this new pattern of power projection , the nature of coercion in international politics is changing due to surveillance technologies , which enables its owners to monitor , punish , and control from a distance . armed organisations in the horn of africa are forced to operate under continual pressure due to aerial surveillance and the possibility of targeted strikes .

This was structural realism vision to capabilities over military assets for power projection , and once these surveillance mechanisms are introduced , they take to repressive way to be used , what brings Orwell's concern since if there is something Africa states are known for , it would be definitely : the limited privacy laws , weak institutional oversight regional consequences that add heavy burden the region . this holes sustain long term external interventions , encourages expanded militarization of the region as for dependency on foreign security actors that control without full occupation .

The governments have employed « small state diplomacy » to maintain their survival mode in the complex hostile region . small states are in severe need of a new strategic approach , perfectly illustrated in **Djibouti 's new pattern of foreign policy** that is based on hosting external military facilities in order to secure economic investment and forge alliances , increasing the nation visibility as declared by President Ismail Omar Guelleh , who has been in power for 25 years , and who depends on these foreign bases for his regime's survival .

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Figure 2. Table List of Countries with a military base in Djibouti

Country	Annual fee paid to Djibouti (USD)	Number of military personnel stationed	Detail description of the military base
France	40,000,000	1,450	Set up in 1883 (located in Heron district and Camp Lemonnier). Number of people deployed :4,300 in 1978,decreased to 2,400 in the 2000s and decreased to the current level of 1,450, which is the minimum stipulated in the 2011 treaty
US	63,000,000	4,000	Set up in 2002.Annual payments doubled in 2015 (and plan of IBUSD upgrade).
Japan	3,500,000	180	Set up in 2011 and added information gathering activities in the middle east in 2019 .
China	20,000,000	1,000	Set up in 2017.
Italy	2,500,000	80	Set up in oct 2013 and fully operational from March 2014 .
Germany	(NA)	30-80	Operations Enduring Freedom (EU) (2001-).Operation Atlanta (EU)(Camp Lemonnier).
Spain	(NA)	50	Operation Atlanta (EU) (2005-) (Camp Lemmonier).
Saudi Arabia	(145,000,000 !)		(Forthcoming).
Total	129,000,000		

Source : nytimes.com, tv5monde.com, sankei.com, and slate.fr

Note: table made by the author from the media sources mentioned above¹

A crucial pillar of structural realism revolves around the logic of alliances and coalitions in order to create a balance of threat. In this context, we highlight a fact in international dynamics when alliances are most commonly viewed as a response to threats, yet there is sharp

¹ Kanaku Masuda, “Competition of Foreign Military Bases and the Survival Strategies of Djibouti,” *JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development*, no. 8 (2023): 9.

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disagreement as to what that response will be. When entering an alliance, states may either balance (ally in opposition to the principal source of danger) or bandwagon (ally with the state that poses the major threat)¹.

States joining alliances in order to avoid hegemony by stronger powers is the core of traditional balance of power theory. However, in order to claim our hypotheses, always in the Djiboutian case, the logic and the fruit of coalitions both fall in the hands of local elites .

Stephan Walt claim that states join alliances to protect themselves from states or coalitions whose superior resources could pose a threat. States will choose to balance for two main reasons. First, states risk their own survival if they fail to curb a potential hegemon before it becomes too strong. To ally with the dominant power means placing one's trust in its continued benevolence. The safer strategy is to join with those who cannot readily dominate their allies, in order to avoid being dominated by those who can.² Where survival is the primary objective, Djibouti's policy in hosting foreign military bases becomes easy to understand , we strongly think that transforming policy does not only serve as an armor from dominant global powers but from hegemon regional powers. As the Horn is conflicted and its intra states relations are rivals , the intentions become blurry and interpreted as threatening at the first place , here comes the enabling factors of balancing alliances , that is in fact balancing threats ; we mention the aggregate power, geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, aggressive intentions.

Djibouti presents an interesting case because the primary actor is not only the state but also the ruling elites , which has transformed the country's crucial location into a political and economic asset . the treated alliances are not settled in a state-level security arrangements , but we can confirm that Djiboutian elites have internalized the logic of structural realism and transformed external balancing not as just a foreign policy but as a strategy of regime survival. Every move in the external environment is viewed as a threat to the point where the balances are against threat, dependence and literally against any single patron.

Realism :

Realism is the oldest and most resilient theory in International Relations , It explains why states launched interventions , Morgenthau replies best at this fact , he assumed this game of international politics was just like domestic politics, a struggle for power ,this struggle could manifest itself in three different patterns : « keep power , to increase power , or to demonstrate power ». in doing so ,armed strength as a threat or potentially is the most important material factor making for the political power of a nation .what the above means is that all states seek the same , power , and that to achieve that they need to strengthen their military capability .³

¹Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 3–43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2538540>.

² Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,"⁴ .

³ Tom Van den Berk, *'Realists' Paradise: Crises, Conflicts, and Interventions in the Horn of Africa* '(master's thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2009), 9, <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/5537/Van%20den%20Berk.pdf>.

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We will be discussing realism from its inception as an academic field onward . Hegemonic rivalry theories that explain how countries behave in global politics ,have always been open to a variety of sources of hegemonic power , and what to be said about realism as a core theory in world politics and international relations is that the realist considerations were accompanied by the debate between particular and universal dimensions of politics since inception . contemporary realism refers to a long and rich thinking about politics and international processes. It goes back to Thucydides,Hobbes or Machiavelli and points to a specific and timeless ‘wisdom’ .

The **first** assumption of realism is that the nation-state (usually abbreviated to ‘state’) is the principal actor in international relations. Other actors exist, such as individuals and organisations, but their power is limited. **Second**, the state is a unitary actor. National interests, especially in times of war, lead the state to speak and act with one voice. **Third**, decision-makers are rational actors in the sense that rational decision-making leads to the pursuit of the national interest. Here, taking actions that would make your state weak or vulnerable would not be rational. Realism suggests that all leaders, no matter what their political persuasion, recognise this as they attempt to manage their state’s affairs in order to survive in a competitive environment. Finally, states live in a context of anarchy– that is, in the absence of anyone being in charge internationally. The often-used analogy of there being ‘**no one to call**’ in an international emergency helps to underline this point. Within our own states we typically have police forces, militaries, courts and so on. In an emergency, there is an expectation that these institutions will ‘do something’ in response. Internationally, there is no clear expectation of anyone or anything ‘doing something’ as there is no established hierarchy. Therefore, states can ultimately only rely on themselves¹.

The latter revolves around the domination of power and interests in a state’s foreign policy and the primacy of power politics over naive and idealistic moral or legal considerations ². Realism does reveal some timeless conclusions about the nature of politics , but the works of particular authors reflect the social and historical context of their times as well . that is why critical nuances have accompanied Realism as well , in the same vein , Waltz claimed that "**to criticize a theory for its omission is odd, because theories are mostly omission** " .

The emphasis on power and interest does not automatically mean war and violence , the system of the nineteenth century European Powers , despite its logic of power and interests contributed to moderation and restraint in International relations as Marcc Trachtenberg notes ; more

¹ Sandrina Antunes and Isabel Camisã, “Introducing Realism in International Relations Theory,” *E-International Relations*, February 27, 2018, accessed March , 2026, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/27/introducing-realism-in-international-relations-theory/>.

² Jacek Wieclawski, *Understanding Realism in Contemporary International Relations: Beyond the Structural Realist Perspective* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017), 21.

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problems appeared when they forget about their interests and allowed « **emotion and ideology** » to dictate their policies .¹

Talking about conflicts across the horn , Morgenthau identified a category of political conflicts ,as opposed to those considered to be purely legal .In contrast to the legal disputes that international law is still able to solve , the political conflicts reflect the fundamental difference of interests among states and in practice are not a subject of any legal settlement . they reflect the state's principal aims , the confrontation of which may potentially destabilize the whole legal order .as a general source of waging conflicts in politics , Morgenthau argued that it is rooted in human nature (The lust for power).

The Horn of Africa is widely regarded as the most conflict-affected sub-region in Africa and has entered a period marked not only by potential transformational change but also by heightened interregional activity. Propelled by economic interests and geopolitical considerations, the Gulf Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, in particular) as well as Turkey and Egypt have become increasingly prominent external actors in the Horn of Africa and the surrounding maritime space.²

Morgenthau indicated that international law tends to ignore the dynamics of social relations, including the inequalities of power among states on the international scene ³.As he identified a category of political conflicts , as opposed to that considered to be purely legal ,In contrast to the legal disputes that international law is still able to solve, the political conflicts reflect the fundamental difference of interests among states and in practice are not a subject of any legal settlement . the reflect the state's principal aims , the confrontation of which may potentially destabilize the entire legal order ⁴.

SUB-IMPERIALISM :

In the last five decades , Capitalism has been characterised by the internalization of the social relation of capital, more commonly known as globalization . This has been a result of ever-increasing centralization and concentration of capital and socialization of production during capitalism's highest stage –imperialism. in the last 30 years , financial globalization and neoliberalism have emerged as its dominant forms . Social breakdown is everywhere. Both these forms have been in crisis now for more than a decade .⁵

¹ Wiclawski, *Understanding Realism in Contemporary International Relations*, 22.

² John Calabrese, "The Bab el-Mandeb Strait: Regional and Great Power Rivalries on the Shores of the Red Sea," Middle East Institute, January 29, 2020, [Access article](#).

³ Stuart,Brock and Edwin Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 22.

⁴ Stuart, Brock and Edwin Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 22.

⁵Alejandro Sotelo Valencia, *Sub-Imperialism Revisited: Dependency Theory in the Thought of Ruy Mauro Marini*, trans. J. Lagando (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 43.

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Rather than heralding a new post imperialist or post capitalist paradigm , what actually happened during the thirty glorious years was that the world capitalist system became more heterogeneous and imperialism expanded in a way that was consistent with the general interests of capital .

As **Atilio Boron** remarks ; it is evident that a phenomenon such as today's imperialism – its structure ,its logic, its consequences and its contradictions cannot be adequately understood from a close reading of classic texts by Hilferding, Lenin, Bukharin and Rosa Luxemburg . this is not because they were wrong ,as the right loves to claim but because capitalism is a changing and dynamic system that as Marx and Engels wrote in the communist manifesto « constantly revolutionaries itself » . today's imperialism is different from the one that existed 30 years ago , it has changed into its opposite , as neoliberals mystification suggests , giving rise to a global economy in which we are all interdependent .¹

The new features of imperialism

From embryonic beginnings , certain features have developed to the extent that they now characterise neo-imperialism as a contemporary socio-economic, political ,technological , cultural and military structure .furthermore , neo-imperialism is not exclusive to the united states , rather ,it represents the globalised capitalism system and is associated with a certain historical era .

As Boron calls it : *..an essential and inherent feature of contemporary capitalism* . what happened with neoliberal globalization was that imperialism expanded its presence far and wide across the planet ,and his actions became more oppressive and predatory than ever .²

The new features to be considered are :

- The rule of fictitious capital states that his type of capital only generates profits for its affluent owners rather than wealth , productive jobs , or worker income . It is the most frequent reason for the slow growth rates characteristic of the current , semi-stagnant neoliberal stage of capitalism .
- The rule of fictitious Capital : this is capital that does not create wealth, productive jobs, or an income for workers; only profits for its wealthy owners. It is the most common cause of the low growth rates typical of capitalism's current, semi-stagnant neoliberal phase.
- North American imperialism remains a greater military power than the European imperialisms (Germany, Italy, uk, France, Spain) and Japan,⁷ and directs its attacks against nations and peoples in underdeveloped and dependent parts of the world. A current example of this is Venezuela, which the Obama administration has accused of being a 'danger' to us national security
- Under classic imperialism capital exports were more important than commodity exports, but today the picture is far more complex. Within the contradictory centre-periphery-dependency relationship, dependent countries not only continue to export the products of mining and along with labour power (i.e. remittances), but also export manufactured

¹ Sotelo Valencia, *Sub-Imperialism Revisited*, 43.

² Sotelo Valencia, *Sub-Imperialism Revisited*, 43.

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goods (mostly produced by foreign companies) and huge quantities of both material wealth (oil, iron, gas, livestock, water, and forest, marine and agricultural resources), and monetary and financial resources to the global centres of economic and political imperialist power, feeding the latter's ongoing expansion.

- the IT revolution: the widespread use of computers, the Internet and social networks have speeded up the circulation and valorisation of global capital, leading to wave upon wave of mergers and acquisitions of companies, assets, workforces, means of production and consumption. This has the effect of concentrating and centralizing capital even further into the hands of a few multibillionaire capitalists.
- After WW2 the world was formally divided up between the leading imperialist powers. But now, and since 11 September 2001 especially, the US bourgeoisie and imperialism have pursued their geostrategic interests by imposing dependent neo-colonialism through military action and the annexation of countries and territories (Afghanistan, Iraq). Along with the US invasion of Iraq (1990) and Hurricane Katrina (2005), the 11 September attack turned out to be another example of what Naomi Klein termed disaster capitalism: a huge opportunity for capital to generate business and expand into new markets on the back of all manner of natural calamities and human tragedies .

For Eric Pernet The attack on the US on Tuesday 11 September 2001, directed at the World Trade Center in New York (destroying the Twin Towers) and the Pentagon in Washington had unimaginable worldwide repercussions. Globally, it seemed to usher in a period of structural transformations and changes in the logic and discourse of geopolitics .¹

According to Adrian Sotelo ; « **failed states** » discourse have risen, and expanded as a valid justification for intervening representing a renewed imperial domination after the fall of the USSR and the Twin Towers attack .² as this provoked the urge to come up with a pretext for imperialist hegemony , and this is how 'failed states ' become the new axis of evil after it took form of communism ideology during the cold war era .

From a critical point of view , Imperialism is focal in understanding the structure of International Relations . Historically , Imperialism was linked to direct colonialist practices , however it had changed both in form and meaning and (use) , with the changes brought to global structure since 1970's and especially by the end of the bipolar world order and with the rise of a new era marked by a transformation in the hierarchy of power within the international system and the emergence of a new configuration of international and regional actors .So all of the occurred changes have produced new patterns of dominance, that doesn't look like its precedents but it maintained the core of imperialism :**1) structural dependency ,2) power asymmetry , 3) Centralization of decision-making .**

In this context, and after The American Moment , it represented (the era) a clear dominance softened by globalisation terms , so it allowed rise to regional imperialism

¹Alejandro Sotelo Valencia, *Sub-Imperialism Revisited: Dependency Theory in the Thought of Ruy Mauro Marini*, trans. J. Lagando (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 43.

² Sotelo Valencia, *Sub-Imperialism Revisited*, 43.

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as a key concept to unlock , the emerging dynamics and under the broadly ruling system ,rising powers expand the influence in a very limited geographical sphere .

The crucial part in this transition , is mainly the fact that the logic of dominance is no longer denied but reformed ,¹by new tools that are softly covered but also more complex in structure (dominance and interferences) . as mentioned ,the emergence of a new regional actor requires a brand new perspective on imperialism that doesn't rely on the occupation or direct colonisation but include all means that project dependency theory , economy , media ,culture and political security structure .

Apart from that ,Sub-imperialism / regional imperialism can't be better understood as a product of an adaptation process with the geopolitical dynamics but as a repercussion of the crisis witnessed of the global imperialism fragmentation , where the imperial center is no longer able to improve the direct dominance , so thus these emerging global powers don't act unilaterally with expansion roles , limited in space but impose itself as an anti-imperialist power , so the function of the center is widespread as regional tasks that follow the same pathway but with a different coverage ,surface or form .

« Imperialism constitutes an inherent structural requirement of capitalism , rather than a contingent political choice »This perspective will tie the links between the geographical expansion and the economic , political military control . and the behind reasons after expansion , the urge to expand is deprived out of accumulations, not ethnic and cultural as historically shown , all due to the capitalist system that is made unequal and produce **center and peripheries**.

The zone of influence knew different distribution after the cold war where regional powers compete to impose their own way to dominate , not globally , but across it regional space , in a way that serves the ideological , security and economic interests . This hegemony operates through both hard and soft instruments : support local groups, media influence ,the dissemination of religious nationalist discourse , development assistance loans , the reshaping of political elites in neighbouring states. Such a strategy is based on « the management of dependency » that doesn't cost political confrontation on high costs so sub-imperialism doesn't consist a rupture with its classical pot , but an extension in the context of new international conditions,sub-imperialism corresponds to the limited geopolitical ambitions of some states and the difficulties of imposing universal hegemony of resistance.

The definition of sub-imperialism :

A geographically limited form of geopolitical hegemony exercised by a rising capitalist state within a sphere of influence ,aimed at reproducing relations of dependency through a set of combined instruments including economic influence , indirect intervention and symbolic control , without engaging in a global imperial project .

The features of sub-imperialism

Aiming to the same goals of the classical imperialism but with different means

¹Kamran Sattar, "Intervention and Its Contemporary Relevance," *Middle East and Mediterranean Virtual Platform (MEVP)*, ECMES Academy, accessed March 27, 2026, <https://mevp.ecmes.academy/sattar/5664/>.

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The central feature of this pattern of imperialism is confined to the **rising state's sphere of influence** , namely the geographical zone linked to it through historical , religious , national or strategic relations , such ties are not employed to foster solidarity or integration instead , they are rearticulated with an expansionist project aimed at producing a space subject to political , economic and cultural domination .

How the economy is implicated ?

The economy plays a crucial role in perpetuating this dependency , regional imperial powers often employ instruments such as conditional loans , control over supply chains , infrastructure development and regulations of markets and currency . these mechanisms create an unequal interdependence in which the subordinate state lacks true control over the conditions of development on the paths of sovereignty and instead depends as outside assistance in critical areas.

1.4.3. Political Clientelism Theory :

The peculiar politics of the Horn of Africa derive from the region's exceptional pattern of state formation that's why we are adding clientelism.

Political clientelism, wherein elected officials use discretionary power to limit access to government benefits to recipients voting or expressing political support for their own party. It causes politicians to favor short-term recurring private transfer programs such as public employment, loans and subsidies at the expense of public goods or private benefits of a long-run nature such as education or health services. In contrast to elite capture, clientelism is often populist and progressive, as elected officials are incentivized to deliver benefits to poorer and more vulnerable socio-economic groups whose votes are 'cheaper to buy'. Theoretical models of clientelism explain mechanisms by which clientelistic exchanges are enforced despite votes cast in secret ballots, as well as resulting implications for targeting of benefit.

Semi-authoritarian regimes tend to resort to a selective use of military power and patronage to establish their relationships with the masses. Because of the democratic tendencies of such regimes, they relate to the people using methods that are not outright coercive, but which are dictated by patronage. Patronage here refers to the asymmetric relationship between regimes and political parties in power, described as patrons, and group and individual political actors described as clients. Political patrons and clients get involved in an explicit or implicit quid pro quo exchange of goods and services for political support. Clientelism and patronage thus emerge, both ideologically and practically, as two complementary terms.

On the wider African scene too, as Thomson observes, "clientelism has permeated African societies from top to bottom. It is not just a case of presidential monarchs exchanging patronage for support among their immediate lieutenants within the heart of the state. There is a whole chain of patron-client networks that spread out from this point" . In neighboring Rwanda, for example, state patronage is one of the major post-conflict social exclusion problems. "In the circumstances in which the political arena has been dominated by the RPF, the Tutsi have had greater chances to be the beneficiaries of state service provision, including opportunities for

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education and employment in the sector, because of their patronage network with political leaders

Elsewhere in the Horn of Africa, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) transformed Ethiopia from a centralized state to a new structure as a multicultural federation based on ethno-national representation. There have been setbacks to genuine multi-party democracy since the 1994 ratification of the federal constitution. Nevertheless the country has taken giant steps from the images of chronic famine that defined it in the 1980s to some enviable developmental achievements. Failures in Ethiopia's ethnic federalism regarding the process of institutionalization and in the solving of some ethnic problems may be because, as Kymlicka argues, it "has not always been the outcome of peaceful democratic mobilization, but rather has been imposed from above and / or captured by local elites who do not present the interests of the wider group." . This therefore underlines the relevance of the current inquiry into grassroots perceptions on the road Uganda should take moving forward.

All in all, a federal solution has been sought in many places in Sub-Saharan Africa with the aim of achieving ethnic autonomy and equality while maintaining the unity of the state. Since the patron, in the clientelist system provides selective access to goods and opportunities, there is the inherent danger of breeding economic, and ultimately social horizontal inequalities. In Africa, where politics often revolves around ethnic cleavages, the patron/client system has more than often tended to result in ethnic tensions, political instability, and even civil wars¹.

¹ Vick Lukwago Ssali, "Patronage, Clientelism and Economic Insecurity in Uganda," *Pambazuka News*, January 8, 2016, accessed April 2, 2026, <https://www.pambazuka.org/index.php/patronage-clientelism-and-economic-insecurity-uganda>

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As stated , this chapter will focus on intervention that were conducted in the horn of Africa in 2020-2025 .

2.1.Section 1 : Quantitative Overview of Foreign Interventions Across the Horn

The Horn of Africa :

The US military's combined Joint Task Force –Horn of Africa combined joint Operations Area states the Horn consists of Sudan , Ethiopia ,Eritrea , Djibouti ,Somalia, Kenya and Seychells . Others state that the horn also includes Uganda and Tanzania . The Encyclopedia Britannica, however, states that the horn consists only of Ethiopia , Eritrea , Djibouti ,and Somalia¹. Since the interventions that they will be discussed and also where they are intensely present, all took place in the countries mentioned in the definition of the Encyclopedia Britannica .

2.1.1.Geopolitical Significance of the Horn of Africa :

Overview of the Horn :

The Horn of Africa is widely regarded as the most conflict-affected sub-region in Africa. Also, It is distinct because it is of a great geopolitical as geo-strategic value to extra-continental powers . As the region links Europe and Asia , and Europe through the Red Sea , the Suez Canal and the mediterranean Sea . The issue is that the states of the Horn of Africa are very distinct and similar , they do have positive prospects to advance their interests in a realigning world , but there is other factors that shape the behaviour of these entities so their reality ,that are mainly « the geopolitical dislocations ».²

The region knew geopolitical dislocations recently as a result of both natural crises that include pandemics such as COVID-19 , climate change , floods and droughts ..ect, manmade crises include de-bordering entities like : international terrorism , the internet , the giant media ..as for the financial institutions that are bigger and powerful than many countries .

These two factors combined , make it difficult for countries to respond competently to these shifts , since as some made it to leading , others become dependents and followers , all depends to the level of incapacity and preparation on the three levels (individual , organizational and systemic / enabling environment level) , that will study largely in further parts .

What further aggravates the already problematic situation , is that the region's shifts are mainly man made. What doesn't deny the long term effect of the natural shifts mentioned . However ,the determination of whether a country lead depends on the quality of leadership that requires severely a well-thought-out « **grand strategy**» . In this grand strategy the players must be well informed about the current global situation and power dynamics where they can foresee potential events no matter how blurry and hazy so they can prepare for likely negative outcomes . The strategies focus on protecting and advancing their individual and collective

¹Tom Van den Berk, **Realists' Paradise: Crises, Conflicts, and Interventions in the Horn of Africa** (master's thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2009), 9, <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/5537/Van%20den%20Berk.pdf>.

² Aschale Abie Dubale, "The Geopolitics of the Horn of Africa: Navigating Regional Conflicts and Global Interests," *International and Public Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2024): 27–31, <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ipa.20240802.12>.

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regional interests as a preemptive measure, undermining competitors, and ultimately ensuring their emergence as beneficiaries. The missing genuine leadership is the first thing to notice about the states across the Horn. As mentioned, not all countries and regions are able to prepare well in part because they do not have visionary leaders who have the capacity to know the dangers, seize arising opportunities, and install confidence in the countries or the region. In turn, that capacity depends on the economy, technological advancement, political stability, socio-moral capital, an intellectual aptitude that thrives on common sense, and the ability to scheme in advancing perceived national and regional interests¹. We understand from the following is the leadership knot refers to both deep structural internal factors as for inevitable external factors.

Always with the regions crisis and traps and survival attempts, the Horn of Africa suffers multiple conflicts within each and across the various member states, it also hosts the African Union at Addis Ababa and IGAD at Djibouti, as a matter of a hopeful fact, this was supposed to foster regional peace and economic growth but the region enjoys none of them because of interrelated factors, demonstrated in the following we will be emphasizing in selectively and widely:

1. **Internal rivalries envies**: disconnect competitors, internal frictions, the questioned loyalty that disappears because of its ambiguity and mis-identification (multiple parties)
2. **Incontrollable entities that de-border states**: such as terrorism, global institutions and technology that have no respect to the African states so the HoA is in a mercy of these organs of post-modern colonialism that seek more resources and the power that exceed small countries combined.
3. **Extra-dependency**: The region is over dependent on extra continental powers for many things which tend to incapacitate it. The precedent creates a hole where in many instances states end up begging of aid from external powers or even for development partners that enjoy well the situation by putting heavy conditions with the given aid.

Recently, the Horn of Africa is not facing isolated crises, but it's experiencing a **systemic overlapping geopolitical breakdown**, where climate change, war and global politics are all feeding into each other. The precedent interconnection is shown clearly when conflicts and crises as drought and famine reinforce each other and lead to displacement that leads to more instability and the vicious cycle persists.

¹ The Horn Bulletin, "The Horn of Africa in 2023: A Geopolitical Analysis" Horn of Africa Bulletin, "Transitions in the Horn: Between Optimism and Caution," vol. 30, no. 4 (November–December 2018) (Nairobi: Life & Peace Institute, 2018).

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Geopolitical importance :

It is evident that ,geopolitical factors and the geostrategic location of the Horn of Africa should be considered as one of the leading factors that have made both super and middle powers interested in the Horn region¹.

As it is marked by its historical complexity , the Horn of Africa is one of the most regions that enjoys geopolitical significance , but remains unstable , as the conflicts are compounded by external interventions with global dimension . Geographically ,The Horn sits at the crossroads of critical global trade routes , linking the Middle East to Sub-Saharan Africa . It is home to some of the world's most volatile and long standing conflicts (civil wars , border disputes..) . such a very positive prospect didnt last longer to turn into a curse , since the region's conflicts have not only contributed to instability but have also drawn in global powers fist , each with its own strategic interests , furtherly complicating every efforts to establish lasting peace and security .For instance , the rivalry between the gulf states notably Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has influenced political alliances particularly through military bases and economic investments in countries like Eritrea and Somalia . As we will be seeing the implicated major powers in the same region with the very similiar aims .

Starting with the Red Sea region that is a vital waterway that connects the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, and has become a strategic hub for global trade and energy transportation due to its proximity to major shipping lanes and oil reserves , what increased the external involvement ².

This region is crucial for international trade, maritime security, anti-piracy operations, beyond, establishing connections that span the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean. Such a unique historical interconnectedness has drawn external powers, making the region a battleground for foreign interests ,well illustrated in the poor governance, coupled with regional destabilization and counterterrorism activities, and access to the extensive oil reserves of the Middle East and Arab Gulf states . We also mention the peace treaty between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the fragile stabilization of Somalia, the tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, to the ongoing transition in Sudan's current civil war , also the renewed Saudi interest in developing its western coast ,all the mentionned fact and factors have contributed to the region's complex geopolitical dynamics³.

Due to the strategic significance of the Red Sea and the rivalry for influence over the states that border it and depend on it for trade and transit, the Horn of Africa is now an essential component as it is the link between **the security systems** of the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific, and the Mediterranean . The Red Sea geopolitical map is beginning to include strategic regions of the western coast and the Horn of Africa, and Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, and Eritrea have changed into battlegrounds for a fresh scramble in the Horn of Africa . As a number of military forces compete for influence, the Horn is now connected to several Strings of Pearls, which are

¹ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *"The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects"* (London: Routledge, 2025).

² Surafel Getahun Ashine, "The New Global Superpower Geo-Strategic Rivalry in the Red Sea and Its Implications for Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 9 (2024): 100834, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100834>.

³ Ashine, "The New Global Superpower Geo-Strategic Rivalry in the Red Sea",5.

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networks of military bases and dual-use ports. We will be explaining in what context these facts emerged as for their implications.

2.1.2. The shift from Geopolitics to Geoeconomics

A key driver of the engagement in the Horn by regional powers mainly :Turkey, Qatar, Iran, UAE and Saudi Arabia has, however, been regional and international geoeconomic and geopolitical competition with each other. This has promoted division and fragmentation in the region. For example : the initial contest between Iran and the Arab states has today been supplanted by a division in the GCC, meanwhile Turkey has emerged as a regional security actor to rival the Gulf states in the Horn¹.

The distinction between geo-economics and geopolitics is often attributed to Edward Luttwak, an American strategist and military consultant, and Pascal Lorot, a French economist and political scientist. Luttwak was among the first post-Cold War contributors to propose that future geopolitical competition would extend into the economic sphere. While geo-economics and geopolitics are intertwined, they are not identical. Geopolitics involves interactions among nation-states as indivisible sovereign units exercising political power. On the other hand, geo-economics operates under neo-classical economics “logic of commerce”² that ostensibly separates market dynamics from political power .

As an analytic perspective, geo-economics usually starts from the premise of the relative decline of military concerns and the rise of economic concerns in relations between states. It emphasizes how states primarily compete with each other for economic power. By merging geopolitics and economics, the geo-economics perspective highlights how, in the current international system, economic rather than military leverage is more consequential in the pursuit of national interests. The imperatives of geo-economics are clearly discernible in the foreign policies of regional powers ,but a quick reading to the dynamic of the region show that there is no decline of military concerns not even partial , since those are accompanying the economic concerns that are introduces in the big entery picture , for protection for rooting and securing .

In the same context of the Red Sea, geo-economic and geostrategic rivalries are inevitable among superpowers. Gulf States such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey are asserting themselves in the Horn of Africa as never before . They are seeking to expand their spheres of influence through commercial ports and military outposts on Africa’s Red Sea coast while Great powers like China, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States have stationed themselves at **the fulcrum** of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden . India and Saudi Arabia have also signaled interest in establishing bases in Djibouti, while Russia has flirted with its own strategic presence in the Horn. China’s growing presence in Djibouti has brought new attention to Beijing’s economic investments in the Red Sea region. Chinese loans, construction contracts, and infrastructure investments in the Horn of Africa and the wider Red Sea region far exceed those of the United States. These developments are challenging old

¹ Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

² Surafel Getahun Ashine, “The New Global Superpower Geo-Strategic Rivalry in the Red Sea and Its Implications for Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa,” *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 9 (2024): 100834, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100834>

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assumptions and erasing old boundaries , creating a brand new power asymmetries and reshaping the traditional dynamic into a new one that cant be better .

The Red Sea which is surrounded by six African and four Middle Eastern countries and is sandwiched between two continents, is the conduit for about 10% of global trade , we count from it , 40% of trade between Asia and Europe. The majority of international trade about 80% of it is moved by sea. The Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait of Bab al-Mandab are three maritime chokepoints that determine which countries in the region have access to this crucial economic route, adding to the region's high sensitivity to chokepoints. These chokepoints are of great interest to many international actors . Thus ,free and unrestricted access, as well as freedom of movement, is crucial for South-east Asian economies, including those of China, Japan, South Korea, India, and the European Union (EU) .

The Red Sea's advantageous location close to a number of major energy sources explains the area's current wealth and predicts further economic growth. Along with the seaborne trade that now traverses the route each year, China's new maritime Silk Road, Africa's expanding middle class, and oil discoveries in the Horn have all been hot topics in the region and beyond . ¹

In conclusion, the Red Sea's geopolitical and geo-economic rivalry has significant implications for peace and security in Africa. The emerging competition among Middle Eastern powers and the global superpower rivalry in the Horn of Africa is intensive in its engagement, multi-dimensional and complex in nature, often unpredictable in its futurity and far-reaching in its implications for the peace, security and international relations of the region.

It can be argued that the new superpower competition for ports and military bases in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa is a manifestation of the changing geopolitical landscape. This competition is well driven by the strategic importance of the region, which serves as a critical passage for global trade and military operations as we briefly mentioned . This has led to what some refer to as a **“new scramble for Africa,”** characterised by the proliferation of seaports and military facilities .

2.1.3.The Bab el-Mandeb strait: Geopolitical considerations of the strategic chokepoint :

Guaranteeing the security and stability of maritime routes with obligatory transit point is crucial for the global economy and it is against this scenario where the Bab el-Mandeb strait comes into play, geographical accident which separates the African and Asian continents through the Red Sea. Bordering Yemen and Djibouti, this chokepoint is considered one of the world most instable and dangerous waterways because of the threats that challenge the regular transit to the world market, particularly in the energy sector. At present, it encompasses hot spots in the Arabian Peninsula due to the Yemen conflict and in its same coastline due to piracy and smuggling activities, together with political instability from the neighbouring governments.

¹ Surafel Getahun Ashine, *“The New Global Superpower Geo-Strategic Rivalry in the Red Sea and Its Implications for Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa,”* Social Sciences & Humanities Open 9 (2024): 100834, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100834>

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Moreover, its own geography has also doomed the strait to host competing interests and has become the battleground of countries that are not ceasing in the pulse of power in the region. Consequently, the escalation of tension between U.S. and Iran, competition of the former with China to fight for the hegemony in Africa or the proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia for the regional hegemony in the Middle East are some of the reasons why the strait is witnessing its own fate.

Why it is important ?



Figure 3. Daily transit volumes of crude oil and petroleum liquids through the principal maritime oil corridors. Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration. Based on 2016 data

The ‘choke-point’ of the straits of Bab al Mandab, took on a more global significance with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and then the increasing exploitation of Gulf oil¹.

The strait of Bab el-Mandeb enjoys a privileged position, not because it receives more or less volume of oil maritime transit, but because it constitutes the Southern gateway to the Suez Canal to reach European and North American’s oil markets and the northern entrance to the Indian Ocean to reach African or Asian markets. However, while it is commonly agreed that it is a crucial gateway for maritime trade routes, it is also deemed to constitute one of the most dangerous and unstable straits in the world, as its neighbours face several threats and regional challenges. There are several direct sources of instability surrounding the strait of Bab el-Mandeb, some of them coming from its closest neighbouring countries. The conflict of Yemen since 2015 and the presence of terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in Yemen (especially at the beginning of the century) increases exponentially the risk of this region’s disruption and the instability of the strait. The attacks on Saudi vessels in 2015 by Houthi rebels, their threat to block the strait or the assault to Emirati shipments in 2016 are some of the multiple examples that have recently compromised the security of the strait’s regular navigation of shipments. This has tremendous effects on global market and is frequently compared to the “Tanker Wars” between Iran and Iraq in the last century. Likewise, piracy in the neighbouring Somalia in the Horn of Africa also constitutes a direct source of instability in the region and the conflict in Yemen has given the breeding grounds for its perpetuation. The endemic corruption and political instability of the African neighbouring country of Djibouti does not help either, which

¹ University for Business and Technology (UBT), “Maritime Briefings,” *UBT International Conference*, vol. 3, no. 2, UBT Knowledge Center Conference Proceedings (Pristina: UBT Knowledge Center, n.d.), accessed May 29, 2026, <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4386&context=conference>.

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by reasons of size (around 950.000 inhabitants) and domestic limitations is offered as an entrance for exploitation and profitability. Other destabilising potential within the Bab el-Mandeb strait is the struggle for power influence in the Southwest region of the peninsula by Iran. The current bilateral tension between Washington and Tehran is leading to power-demonstration manoeuvres by Iran in the strait's zone, vital ally of the Houthis in its proxy war in Yemen against Saudi Arabia. Attacks to shipments in the Red Sea have led several times to halt the transport and to block the access of oil supply through the Suez Canal or the Sumed pipeline. This not only brings about the increase of global oil or natural gas' prices, but also impacts on the durability and costs of the vessels to reach European or American coasts.

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait serves as a vital maritime channel connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe, with a significant portion of global trade passing through its waters each year. According to World Bank data, approximately 30% of oil and 40% of dry goods are transported via the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, making the Bab el-Mandeb Strait a crucial route for these shipments.¹

The Horn of Africa is geopolitically important due to its strategic location along vital global shipping routes, its role in international security and military competition, ongoing regional instability, and its growing significance in global trade and power politics.

2.2.1. An emerging new geopolitical confluence in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf : natural resources

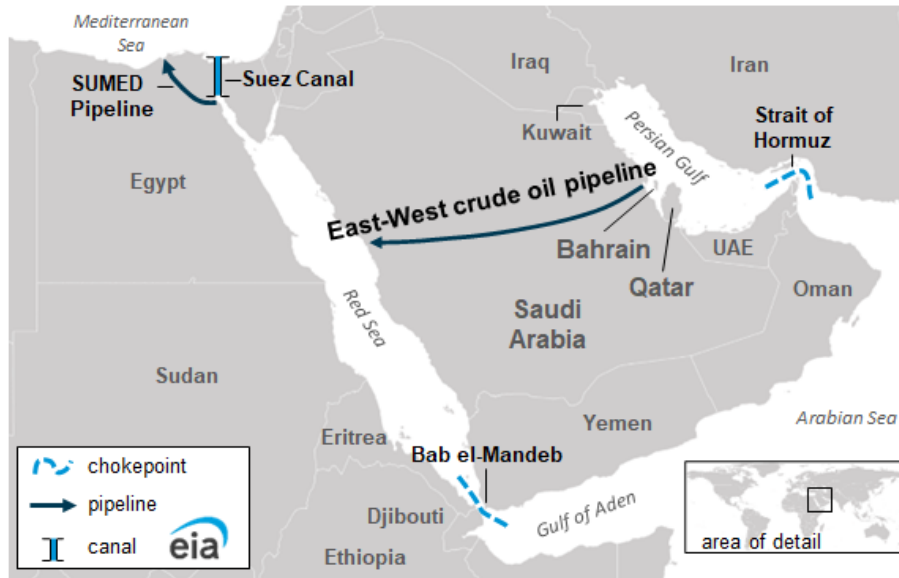
The security situation in this sub-region is highly complex due to several socio-economic, political and geo-political factors which range from extreme poverty to maritime insecurity. The sub-region is also rich in natural resources including potash and diamonds, and a significant portion of the world's crude oil passes through the Aden-Suez Canal route, making the Horn of Africa one of the world's most critical regions in terms of security. International relations between the countries in the Horn of Africa have been significantly influenced by the international and regional power relations over the last two decades. At the end of the 20th century the newly established State of Eritrea and Ethiopia, whose government was led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), attempted to promote stability in the region. However, the war that broke out between these two countries (1998-2000) and the expansion of terrorist groups and piracy in the region brought about new security threats which made the sub-region volatile and susceptible to the influence of international and regional powers².

¹ "The Geopolitical Importance of Bab el-Mandeb Strait: A Strategic Gateway to Global Trade," MEPEI (Middle East Political and Economic Institute), February 28, 2024, <https://mepei.com/the-geopolitical-importance-of-bab-el-mandeb-strait-a-strategic-gateway-to-global-trade/>.

² "The Geopolitical Dynamics in the Horn of Africa and Mechanisms for Collaboration," *The Southern Hub* (NSD-S HUB), NATO Strategic Direction South, 2019, <https://thesouthernhub.org/topics/security-conflict/geopolitical-dynamics-in-the-horn-of-africa-and-mechanisms-for-collaboration-between-nato-and-igad-countries>.

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1. Strategic location ; huge portion of global trade and oil shipments passes through this corridor .
2. Global trade and energy routes .
3. Military and strategic presence ; even though state fragility welcome external powers , why these countries are chosen of the many fragile states.
4. Glod diamond geopolitical capital.



Data source :U.S. Energy Information Administration

We take from the precedent , that shows that there is no alternative to the bab el mandeb sincet is very rich not only in the energy resources which are considered the lifeline for Europe, the US and the world, but it is also full of geopolitical, religious and ethnic conflicts. This is in addition to the consequences of the greed and influence of major global and regional forces which look for a foothold and to ensure doctrinal or political or economic influence in this region.

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2.2.2. Infrastructure and connectivity as a driver and a mechanism of intervention :

« With a shift of energy comes a shift of power »

As argued by Daniel Yergin , in his book *The new map* ; transformations in energy systems are intrinsically linked to shifts in geopolitical power so its mechanisms , suggesting that the ongoing energy transition will reshape global influence and strategic relations as for geopolitical structures that are being altered by the same energy revolution . In this setting , the Horn of Africa becomes especially significant geopolitically , since regional and global power seek foothold in the region , the dynamism is not about its security anymore but brutally economic . as its crucial position in global trade flows explained previously , we can only understand the giant infrastructure investments through considering is a part of renewable energy systems implementations , and through a pathway that guarantees access to the African continent's resources , particularly energy sources .

What is infrastructure ?

The definition of infrastructure is undergoing an expansion that adapts with population growth , economic development and technological advances , keeping its core as a backbone of the economy prosperity . Infrastructure is traditionally understood as the physical foundation of economic development encompassing transport networks, energy systems and communication technologies, it underpins prosperity, resilience and quality of life. This last is a critical turning point that structurally transforms how societies think about the systems that sustain them. While infrastructure continues to include conventional assets such as roads and bridges, it increasingly extends to fiber-optic networks , electric vehicle charging corridors , renewable energy systems, and advanced digital infrastructure . Addressing these evolving demands requires a fundamental shift in approach whereby governments, investors and operators must move beyond sectoral silos and adopt integrated , cross-sector strategies to sustain economic growth and social well-being ¹.

In the Horn of Africa, infrastructure development has become a key tool of geopolitical leverage , beyond its simply technical role , in order to safeguard long-term economic interests, support changing shipping patterns associated with the global energy transition , and allow external actors to project power and influence across one of the most important maritime regions in the world substantial investments have been made in ports , corridors and logistics networks as we will be discovering furtherly , unwrapping visibly infrastructure heavy-projects led by regional and global powers , highlighting the narrative used to advance competing economic and geopolitical models , for instance Dubai model and Shekou model , portrayed by UAE and China .

Building on critical approaches, as mentioned previously, infrastructure can no longer be understood as merely technical systems supporting economic activity , even in its traditional

¹ "What Is Infrastructure?" McKinsey & Company, September 17, 2025, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-infrastructure>

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form as the next decade will be a defining one for global infrastructure , and those who act decisively today will shape the future of connectivity , economic growth and societal well-being for generations to come¹.as shown in the deadly life of logistics , logistics infrastructures are deeply embedded in relations of power, linking capital accumulation with practices of security and militarization. What appears to be neutral and technical systems of circulation are in fact political formations that structure global flows while simultaneously enabling control, coercion, and geopolitical influence.

Overall , infrastructure is defined as the basic physical systems of a business, region, or nation and often involves the production of public goods or production processes. Examples of infrastructure include transportation systems, communication networks, sewage, water, and school systems². Investments in infrastructure tend to be costly and capital-intensive , but vital to a region's economic development and prosperity . Projects related to infrastructure improvements may be funded publicly , privately or through public-private partnerships³ , and this is the exact case of investements in the Horn that we will be highlighting when dentufying their mechanisms .

Sometimes, private companies choose to invest in a country's infrastructure development as part of a broader business expansion strategy. For example, an energy company may build pipelines and railways in a country where it wants to refine petroleum, and this investment can benefit both the company and the country.⁴ For instance observed from out space of study, private companies make infrastructure investments as part of larger business plans, a logistics company may finance and build port and transportation infrastructure to support its worldwide operations while also improving regional connectivity and economic opportunities for host territories and neighbouring states, as demonstrated by DP World's development of the Port of Berbera.

Drawing on insights from Geopolitics and Geo-economics, Infrastructure investements know two forms of practice , hard and soft infrastructure .Many African cities experience an infrastructure boom, where maritime and land corridors are established, enlarged, and modernized to enable containerized cargo transhipment across the continent. Infrastructure development promises to better integrate Africa into international trade networks, but also became a source of geopolitical competition involving established and rising powers seeking to expand their foothold in Africa that is an already fractious environment, where rivalries emerge and evolve .

Infrastructural investments in the African continent are often interpreted as a repetition of the continent's history of colonisation reproducing colonial practices while serving the interests of global capital . Scholars also examine how newly rising powers, including China, Brazil, India, and Gulf countries, forge South-South connections beyond routes established in the

¹ "What Is Infrastructure?" *McKinsey & Company*, September 17, 2025, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-infrastructure>

² "Infrastructure," *Investopedia*, accessed April 27, 2026, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/infrastructure.asp>

³ "Infrastructure," *Investopedia*.

⁴ "Infrastructure," *Investopedia* .

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interest of ‘the West’ . These infrastructural investments remain embedded in modernist notions of development while depicting an ‘**endpoint**’ promising to break with modernity’s deep entanglement in colonialism. Many rising powers, therefore, draw inspiration from cities outside Europe, such as Dubai and Shekou. As examples of very late and rapid, but successful modernization , these cities promote an ‘**authoritative image**’ of becoming a global city without following the European historical trajectory of industrialisation and post-industrial transformation. Developing different trajectories, these cities are marking endpoints of their own. Infrastructures are, therefore, more than just technical objects. They are embedded in and productive of narratives, defined as spoken or written accounts that connect events into a story about the world and how people experience it. Due to the centrality of movement and the peculiar ontology of infrastructure, as ‘matter that enable the movement of other matter’ , these physical installations make promises of the future and raise expectations , that clear the intense presence of external actors in the Horn states that seek a way out into the light , that even the long term price is totally ignored in front of the gravity of the situation .

This process relies on multiple narratives to thrive , We show how global port operators and logistics companies actively use infrastructures to promote models of development that emulate success stories of other cities. Nevertheless, African actors also , aspire to improve their economic and political standing in the global hierarchies of states and cities and build their own visions of infra-structural success, following the need to distinguish their ports from those of their competitors. These visions, therefore, tend to oscillate between emulating successful developments elsewhere and highlighting distinct histories. Additionally traced the longing to an elsewhere and the desire to belong to places beyond their home ports through architecture in Swahili port cities.

Port cities in the Horn of Africa are often depicted as the main gateways to the African continent. Their strategic importance is derived , to the point where ports in Djibouti and Somaliland are transformed into ‘formative sites of state renewal’¹.

In sum , from their geographic position opposite to the Middle East and along one of the globally most frequented commercial sea routes: the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea linking the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean. This sea route carries over 30 % of today’s global cargo. Over the past two decades, established and ascending political powers competed over access to ports along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, including the UAE, China, Russia, UK, USA, France, Turkey, and Qatar. These powers invested heavily in infrastructures, mainly ports, but also airports, roads, transport corridors, and railway lines. Such foreign investments are usually interpreted either as a repetition of colonial experiences of resource appropriation and foreign domination or as a promise to cure economic underperformance, allowing African states to catch up.² The international community, multilateral organisations and bilateral donors stand ready to partner with African countries on their path towards sustainable growth and work with them to develop and implement solutions to attain that goal.³ their counterparts in the Global

¹ May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, “*Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland*,” Cities, Elsevier, 2024.

² May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, “*Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland*,” Cities, Elsevier, 2024.

³ International Renewable Energy Agency, *Study on Renewable Energy Transition in Africa* (Abu Dhabi: International Renewable Energy Agency, 2021).

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South discuss other endpoints, a break with experiences of colonisation linked to the hope of diminishing asymmetries in a global system dominated by the West.¹

2 .2.3.The Global Energy Transition and Competition

Renewable energy transition

The global energy transition is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a nuanced understanding of both renewable and non- renewable energy sources , however it is inevitable and well thought ; we can mention the EU 2060 plan. The first thing to highlight about Renewable energy is that it can't be neutral , its redistrictd power energy transition and global restructuring. This helps better describing the Horn of Africa and what regional power seek for to change the statu-quo in order to create new systems to gain leverage , by Invisible and seemingly technical financial infrastructures that have become the sites of high geopolitics. Infrastructures are not passive sites to be used in the service of preexisting hegemonic power but can themselves route, block, challenge, or rework power in particular ways. Just as INSTEX reflects attempts to reshape global financial infrastructure and reduce dependence on hegemonic systems², infrastructure projects in the Horn of Africa represent efforts by external powers to create new forms of interdependence and influence. In both cases, control over infrastructure enables actors to reconfigure power relations. We have argued that infrastructures comprise sedimented power relations and that infrastructures have to be acknowledged for their agentic capacity to shape, block, route, and challenge hegemonic power. Within infrastructures, hegemonies are enfolded as “stubborn power relations”.

The concept of renewables influencing energy security is a relatively recent development, previously overshadowed by climate considerations as the primary driver of their deployment. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015 was a watershed moment that positioned the decarbonisation of the global energy system by 2050 at the centre of climate action. Renewable energy, already emerging as increasingly competitive with fossil fuels, became synonymous with the preservation of the Earth's climate. In parallel, the membership of the nascent International Renewable Energy Agency grew rapidly. Established only four years before the Paris conference, IRENA's mandate to promote the widespread adoption of all sources of renewable energy captured the attention of developed and developing countries alike . In 2023, the outcome of COP28 firmly positioned renewable technologies, along with efficiency, as essential to decarbonisation through 2030. The implications of the growing role of renewables in energy security are substantial, especially considering that renewable power capacity needs to grow to 11 terawatts by 2030 to stay on a climate-safe pathway. The traditional approach to energy security, which, as noted, hinges on the availability and affordability of fuel supplies, has several key limitations in the age of renewables.³

¹ May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, “Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland,” Cities, Elsevier, 2024.

² León Felipe Téllez Contreras, “Infrastructural Politics: A Conceptual Mapping and Critical Review,” *Urban Studies* 62, no. 1 (2024): 31–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980241246206>.

³ International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), *Geopolitics of the Energy Transition: Energy Security* (Abu Dhabi: International Renewable Energy Agency, 2024), <https://www.irena.org/Publications/2024/Apr/Geopolitics-of-the-energy-transition-Energy-security>.

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In today's interconnected world, accounts of geopolitical change must grapple with the broad and multidimensional nature of global threats and vulnerabilities. The concept of "human security" is often used to describe the root causes of geopolitical instability. Looking beyond military threats to state security, this concept expands the security agenda to include non-traditional threats such as climate change, poverty and disease, which can undermine peace and stability within and between countries. The United Nations General Assembly in 2012 has endorsed this principle, which informs the United Nations' work in areas ranging from peacebuilding to humanitarian assistance and sustainable development. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect the multidimensional nature of human security, depending on how it is.

In the Horn of Africa, the renewable energy transition and infrastructure investments are tightly connected through a shared goal: positioning countries as competitive, investment-friendly nodes in regional and global systems. However, generally these two subjects are studied in separate ways, through the next points, will be highlighting the interlinked relationship between them:

In the first place, the new infrastructure required to support the development of renewable energy, such as transmission lines (trunk lines, new connections), sub-stations, access roads, and the development of smart grids with energy storage systems and facilities¹, is more of a necessity since energy is the backbone of infrastructure-led growth; since large infrastructure projects need reliable and affordable electricity, that's exactly where renewables come in, for instance: countries like Ethiopia have invested heavily in hydropower GERD to supply energy for industrialization and export, what support logistics corridor linking inland production zones to ports in Djibouti. Also, energy relations are likely to be regionalised, thereby transforming the geopolitical map. Renewables can be deployed in every country, with renewable electricity exported to neighbouring countries via transmission cables. For instance, hydrogen may well end up being traded in a market that is more diverse and regionalised than oil and gas markets.² With regard to the energy transition, ports, harbors and terminals are likely to be developed or upgraded/expanded mainly in connection with exporting green hydrogen and ammonia. The International Finance Corporation's Environmental, Health, and Safety Guidelines for Ports, Harbors, and Terminals provide a useful reference source with general and industry specific examples of good international industry practice.³

Secondly, renewables can be infrastructure projects themselves, sitting solar farms, wind parks and transmission lines are major infrastructure investments. Projects like the recent Assela Wind Farm near Addis Ababa in Ethiopia or solar initiatives in Somalia are often

¹International association for impact assessment, *improving decision-making for the energy transition: guidance for using strategic environmental assessment*, chap. 13, "infrastructure associated with renewable energy development, and supply chains," comp. Barry dalal-clayton and miles scott-brown (july 2024).

² International renewable energy agency (irena), *geopolitics of the energy transition: energy security* (abu dhabi: international renewable energy agency, 2024), <https://www.irena.org/publications/2024/apr/geopolitics-of-the-energy-transition-energy-security>.

³ Barry Dalal-Clayton and Miles Scott-Brown, *Improving Decision-Making for the Energy Transition: Guidance for Using Strategic Environmental Assessment* (International Association for Impact Assessment, October 2024), <https://training.iaia.org/guidance-for-using-strategic-environmental-assessment-sea/>.

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financed by international investors, development banks or public-private partnership, thus the energy transition is not separate but it makes part of the infrastructure boom.

Thirdly, energy infrastructure is also cross-border for. For instance, Ethiopia exports electricity to Djibouti linking national grids. These energy corridors often develop alongside transport corridors, reinforcing a broader infrastructure network.

The links can also take form of shared challenges for example: both large dams or wind farms can displace communities, exports will be more prioritized over local ones; and certainly, these projects deepen dependence on external financing.

Infrastructure Opportunities For The Horn Of Africa In The Shipping Sector

Energy is the key to development in Africa and the foundation for industrialisation. Like in Europe and other parts of the world, the expansion of renewables goes beyond the provision of reliable energy and climate protection. Economic development as a whole will benefit and new jobs and opportunities for entire industries will emerge. Reliable, sustainable energy is at the same time indispensable for ensuring that people are provided with important basic services such as health care and safe drinking water.

The Horn of Africa has considerable potential to expand its shipping sector thanks to its strategic location near key maritime routes such as the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Suez Canal. This creates major opportunities for investment in maritime and logistics infrastructure, but at the same time, this advantageous location attracts unequal deals of implementing projects, no matter how the surface looks beneficially supported. As previously mentioned, many African countries are upgrading existing ports or building new ones to increase capacity and attract global trade. For instance, investments in Djibouti and Kenya aim to strengthen their roles as regional transit hubs. Developing free zones and industrial parks near ports allows countries to move beyond simple transit when goods can be stored, processed, and re-exported, creating an added economic value.

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2.3.Section 3: The Mechanisms of Foreign Regional Interventions.

2.3.1. Global and Regional powers (middle eastern powers) between perils and promises : interventions mechanisms.

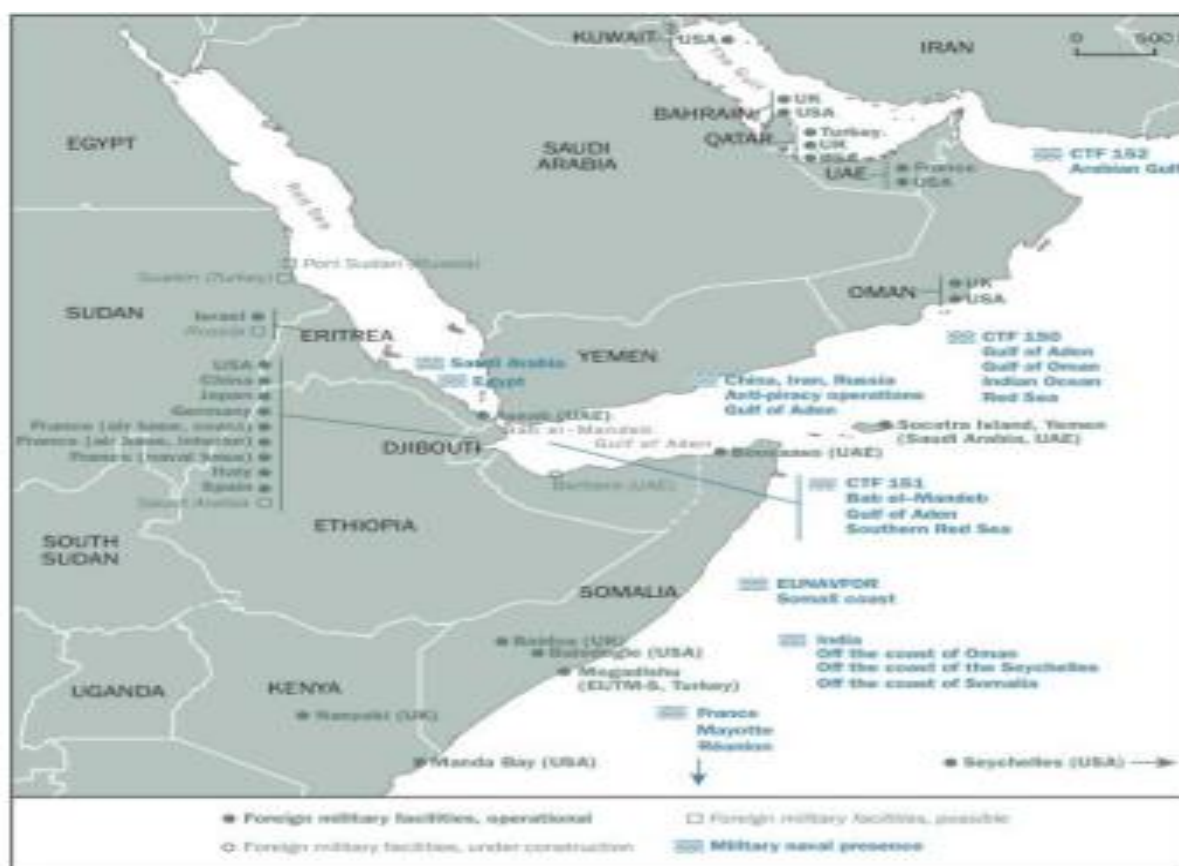


Figure 4. Permanent military bases surrounding Bab el-Mandeb.

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

As we touch the core of our study ,we choose mapping foreign interventions in the horn of africa during 2020-2025 , since not only the external competitive presence of both regional and gloabl powers has intensified , but also their mechanisms , which combine traditional colonial patterns means and modern ways to guarentee long term foothold that align with the inevitable global power transition. We can't miss out that even the strategic importance of the region has grown , as its surrounded by one of the global strategic strait of Bad al-Mandab that is the world's busiest maritime trade corridor.

In the exact context, The Gulf states did not miss any key chance in the region they consider a **western flank**, and they moved quickly to position themselves to capitalize on the expected boom , in the real estate , infrastructure , and construction sectors , and to exploit the Horn's potential as a breadbasket for food production and also agriculture .

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What helped such a transforming geopolitical step to be taken, is the region's vulnerability and insecurity that have made it a focal point for regional and international challenges, necessitating external military presence and financial aid to achieve peace and security. Despite these challenges, the Gulf States have entrenched themselves in the region's political, economic, and security landscapes¹.

What is evident is that, as a global power, USA won't leave the vacuum for the emerging China and Russia, we will highlight the implications of global powers equally, that keep on their classical ways of intersected engagement since the late 1970's when the Horn was a cold arena of opportunistic alliances and counter alliances as well as states sponsored subversive activities.

The actors involved in the HoA region include: Countries such as China, France, Italy, Japan, the USA, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, India, and Russia are all involved in this competition. Each country has its own interests and strategies. For instance, China has long recognized the importance of Africa's vast, underdeveloped natural resources. After two decades of investment and the clever use of debt, China's influence now spans the entire continent.²

Emphasizingly, in further parts, we will see how global and regional powers get themselves involved in the states of the Horn, following a maturely studied strategies, balancing effective mechanisms that the fragility of the governments would pleasurely absorb and welcome, the same strategies get along in shape and vision of each states even presented by the same actor.

However it is necessary to evoke the military engagement (through military bases) as its the most rooted mechanism of intervention shared by every implicated power, and even with the evolution with maritime doctrine and the development of big industry firms and the global energy transition explained previously, military installations remains in the big picture principally or to provide accompanied protection to economic projects. It is always worth underscoring, alliances and coalitions are flowing to the surface in new geopolitical and geoeconomic pot, notably to secure trade interests at the first place. As military presence need a valid reason to exist, under this roof, many mechanisms will be manifested, and they are however considered as intervention mechanism. As the figure below illustrates, the intense military engagement of various actors in Djibouti, an open territory for foreign presence in various forms and spheres.

¹ Awol Ali Mohammed, "The Perils and Promises of Gulf States' Engagement in the Horn of Africa," *Ethiopian Journal of Governance and Development (EJGD)* 3, no. 2 (2024): 1–19.

² Surafel Getahun Ashine, "The New Global Superpower Geo-Strategic Rivalry in the Red Sea and Its Implications for Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 9 (2024): 100834, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100834>

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2.3.1. The emergence of regional powers :

As a response of a series of shifts in the Middle East notably they switched the attention to the Horn of Africa who witnessed , since 2020 a noticeable intensification of external engagement , as it was renewed on the top of agendas of global and emerging powers , the engagement takes form of investemets ,the heavy bugdets and the emerging rivalry is driven by the strategic location of a great significance as mentioned previously. In the same context , the intersection of interests pulled both global and emerging regional powers , their nested aims deffer in tools and mechanisms, traditional global power such as USA and China are still faithful to the old way of projecting power , in a simpler way Military tools, economic aid , fostered by diplomatic channels. Regional powers such as Turkey , Qatar , UAE , Saudi Arabia adapt with the new international pace as they are asserting themselves as influential stakeholders .As we discuss the motives and the mechanisms separated and related , we come to structure an understanding , that these interventions aren't just shaped by economic and security as for political interests in their traditional pot , moreover ; by the region's internal fragilities , that presents a magnet for foreign involvement. As a matter of fact these fragilities widen the horizons of external engagement that preporderance the erosion of sovereignty in meduim terms. Consequently, the Horn of Africa has emerged as a key arena where regional rivalries intersect with global ambitions, and face a duality of both promising opportunities and clear risks of fragementaion and dependency.

The Growing Presence of Regional and International Actors in the Horn

The great game, as it has been called, has been playing out in the region, layering new rivalries and ideological quarrels , onto preexisting post colonial conflicts that have yet to be resolved . Historically , the red sea has drawn the attention of international powers , due to its crucial role in global trade as confirmed.

It's worth mentioning that regional powers began to emerge only after 2010. before 2009 , only USA and France had military bases in the Horn , Italy was the next to follow up setting a base in Djibouti to deal with worsened piracy problems over the 2000's. Even Japan , self defense force leased a 12 hectares in Djibouti ,next to the american base Camp limmonnier , that is expanding into a base as the first overseas base of an Asian state since WW2 and shows the **embroynic features** of rising rivalries . Involoving actors consider the Horn of Africa a secondary security belt due to its geographical proximity, regional security concerns, political interests, shared cultural values, and historical ties that feed the external ambitions, Consequently, Gulf States have adopted practical trade and investment policies in the region to further their political and economic agendas while addressing their security concerns¹.

Various enabling factors and motives have aggravated the involvemnet situation, that we ought to address while The Horn of Africa remains a strategic focal point in various international

¹ Awol Ali Mohammed, "The Perils and Promises of Gulf States' Engagement in the Horn of Africa," Ethiopian Journal of Governance and Development (EJGD) 3, no. 2 (2024): 1–19

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conflicts, including religious clashes, neocolonialism, West-China rivalry, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Iranian-Saudi GCC dispute. The region's lack of democratic governance, social justice, press freedom, and law and order perpetuates political vulnerability. Societal challenges such as poverty, disease, narcotics, and piracy exacerbate these issues. The economy faces obstacles like a shortage of raw materials, lack of expertise, inefficiency, and rising corruption¹. Failed governments, security challenges, religious radicalisation, resource competition and food shortage are enabling factors for spurred Gulf State's presence and challenges that they have to face to reach the investment opportunities that are still seen across various sectors. All of the mentioned factors foster the structural fragility of the horn states, after seeing their distribution while mapping intervention, we will abstract futuristic scenarios and repercussions based on them.

Starting with the emerging regional powers, With the reduction or withdrawal of US presence from the Middle East, new economic opportunities and security risks rose in the Red Sea region, the decision makers saw this uncovered situation as an opportunity and states like Saudi and UAE hurried to intensify their relations with the HoA nations, despite being underdeveloped and densely populated, however the economic potential of these countries impose a reality that serves Gulf states that express its willingness in return to provide a much needed financial and infrastructure investments. During this win-win process, dynamic multi-leveled constraints aggravated the reality of the Horn states structurally and along the same process, resulting a rivalry has emerged, carrying a complex instability repercussions.

The reason Gulf actors become increasingly involved implicated because they perceived themselves as neutral mediators and have the full capability of offering economic initiatives in order to succeed in peace deals and strengthen their diplomatic ties in the pursuit of their interests. The key entry attempts took form of **security initiatives** in Africa, the Gulf states contributed to anti-piracy efforts around Somalia and have increased their military presence through overseas bases aiming to create before protecting economic interests and enhance force projection capabilities. Particularly, the prominent role was taken by the UAE in global operations. Broadly, several regional powers have renewed their foreign policy focus on the Horn due to perceived security threats, viewing the region as their strategic « **back flank** ».

If we are to map external intervention in the Horn of Africa, a quick historical review must be taken, particularly given the longstanding ties between the Gulf states and the region. Among these actors, Saudi Arabia has played a pivotal role as a regional balancer, maintaining enduring political, economic, and religious connections with countries across the Horn. These ties can be traced back to the era of King Faisal, whose foreign policy laid the foundations for Saudi engagement in the region, Notably, he established the Saudi Fund for Development, which provided financial assistance to several countries, including Somalia and Eritrea. During the Cold War, Saudi Arabia had a broader strategy of countering pro-Soviet influence in the Horn, however, by the end of the CW, Riyadh's interest declined, only to re-emerge prominently after 2015.

¹ Mohammed, "The Perils and Promises of Gulf States' Engagement in the Horn of Africa," 1–19.

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This renewed engagement that will prepare the floor to many actors and agents, can be explained by the following primary factors :

- First ,Riyadh has sought new arenas in which to counter Iranian influence , viewing the Horn as a critical geopolitical space in this rivalry .
- Second , in the context of the Yemen war , Saudi Arabia has aimed to secure strategic depth by cultivating alliances along the Red Sea corridor .
- Third, under King Salman’s leadership, Saudi Arabia has pursued ambitions of becoming a major global economic power within the G20, while also asserting a leadership role in the Muslim world .

Weber identifies the three waves of Gulf States intervention in the Horn of Africa :

The first wave , following the decline in oil prices in 2014, the Gulf States began diversifying their economies. “They revised their food security strategies and invested in agribusinesses and food production in the Horn of Africa.” The UAE’s DP World invested heavily in ports along the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, managing most ports from Kismayo to Djibouti. Ethiopia, heavily reliant on agricultural investments from the UAE, India, Saudi Arabia, and European countries, faces constraints due to operations across the Red Sea. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has further strained Ethiopia’s relations with Egypt, as Ethiopia accuses Egypt of interfering in its domestic affairs and collaborating with Eritrea and South Sudan. The interdependence of security and economic concerns is evident in the presence of Saudi and UAE naval outposts in Eritrea and Djibouti, along with significant agricultural investments by Gulf nations in the Horn of Africa. However, the region lacks collective security or common economic frameworks to address these disruptions .

The second wave began with various African nations joining the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis in Yemen”. Sudan and Eritrea provided troops and naval bases, gaining political normalization and foreign exchange. This involvement helped Saudi Arabia combat in Yemen, relying on Horn of Africa allies. Sudan and Eritrea, in exchange, receive foreign currency and military bases, enhancing their domestic power and regional reputation. Particularly active in the coalition, Sudan has seen significant troop deployments and casualties in Yemen .

The third wave resulted from the conflict among GCC members (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar), forcing the HoA countries to choose sides and further destabilizing the region. The Gulf States have acted as external sponsors, leveraging their economic, security, and diplomatic influence to gain international support. They have promised aid, investment, enhanced security cooperation, and improved migrant rights, encouraging African states to support them diplomatically. These efforts have led some African states to downgrade ties with Iran, containing its influence in the Horn of Africa .¹

¹ Awol Ali Mohammed, “The Perils and Promises of Gulf States’ Engagement in the Horn of Africa,” Ethiopian Journal of Governance and Development (EJGD) 3, no. 2 (2024): 1–19.

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2.3.2.Regional powers motives and mechanisms

The origins of violent instability in the Horn thus rely primarily in the region's unique experience during the colonial era, notably the demarcation of borders, and the poor management of political transitions to self-rule¹.

As outlined earlier in this study, a new political realignment in Africa has been prompted by security considerations and commercial interests aggravated by global warming ; It is worth mentioning that regional powers began to emerge only after 2010 . Suddenly and due to a dynamic shifts, the traditional regional power brokers (Western countries, the UN and the African Union) were absent. ²

The Gulf states' initial engagement in the Horn of Africa was driven by worries about potential Iranian influence, especially the likelihood of Tehran securing a foothold in the Red Sea. Their interest is increasing, and it is well driven by various international entities with different agendas responding to longstanding regional instability exacerbated by failed states.³

However , this launched wave of investment in ports , bases and infrastructure in the region . as we will be exploring and evoking each context , target interests, means and mechanisms . The security competition in the horn is also unfolding against the back drop of China expansion into Africa , and two ongoing democratic experiments as in Ethiopia and Sudan.

As the Horn of Africa's economy revived, Sudan and Somalia became minor players in an arena dominated by the Gulf States. Gulf politics are lineage-patrimonial, with family and wealth taking precedence. Gulf monarchs engage in the Horn of Africa's political marketplace as financiers and patrons, reinforcing commercialized patronage networks. This involvement differs from private and charitable funding, which follow similar patterns but serve distinct purposes.

Since the early 2000s, Saudi Arabia and its GCC allies' primary security focus in the Horn of Africa has been countering Iranian influence. Iran sought access to Eritrean and Sudanese ports for naval deployment, often sending ships to the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Suez Canal and Iranian naval activities aimed to outflank the U.S. and its Gulf allies.

GCC agreements reduced ties with Iran , however Iran has maintained a naval presence in the gulf of Aden , under a counter piracy missions since 2014 . Iran and the Gulf states have engaged in proxy conflicts in the region, focusing on Yemen. Besides strengthening security ties with the Horn, GCC governments aimed to expand business links. Food security, labour migration, and economic diversification drive GCC investments in African markets.

Since 2011, the Arab Spring's political upheavals have deepened Middle East divisions, with Turkey and Qatar on one side and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt on the other. Disagreements over Iran intensified these divides , and the rise of Muslim Brotherhood-aligned

¹ Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

² International Crisis Group, "United Arab Emirates in the Horn of Africa," *International Crisis Group*, accessed May 4, 2026, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/brf/middle-east-north-africa/united-arab-emirates/b065-united-arab-emirates-horn-africa>

³ Ali Mohammed, *"Perils and Promises of Gulf States' Engagement in the Horn of Africa.*

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regimes and Iran's growing influence prompted a renewed focus on the Horn of Africa for Saudi Arabia and the UAE, spurring interventionist policies .¹

Geopolitical considerations and not only potential economic gains, have propelled Gulf Arab engagement in the Horn of Africa . Over the past decade ; the Gulf states have come to regard the region « **as an integral part of their core security perimeter** ». The initial stimulus was an upsurge in piracy and maritime crime

Gulf Arab concerns were also about the possible spillover of the Arab Spring uprisings, the rise of ISIS, Iran's heightened activity in the region, and the conflict in Yemen as well as the perceived vacillation of U.S. policy and decline of American primacy elevated further the strategic importance of the Horn. In response, the Gulf states have adopted foreign policies that are markedly more independent and assertive than in the past, that have a wider geographic ambit, and that seek to shape rather than merely react to events. In sum, two overlapping rivalries have driven and defined this proactive engagement: competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran and a contest pitting Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt against Qatar and Turkey. These rivalries have manifested in a series of interlinked proxy conflicts waged across the Middle East. They have also rippled through the Horn of Africa, as the dueling protagonists vie with each other for ports, military bases, and political allies. Political and military actors in the Horn have seized on these rivalries to advance their own goals² .

Mapping regional power interventions and the mechanisms:

This step is the core of our research will know a methodological order , according to the heavy presence of every actor , also it will answer the question who is doing what where and how .

¹ Ali Mohammed, “*Perils and Promises of Gulf States’ Engagement in the Horn of Africa* .

² John Calabrese, “*The Bab el-Mandeb Strait: Regional and Great Power Rivalries on the Shores of the Red Sea*,” Middle East Institute, January 29, 2020,

[Access article](#)

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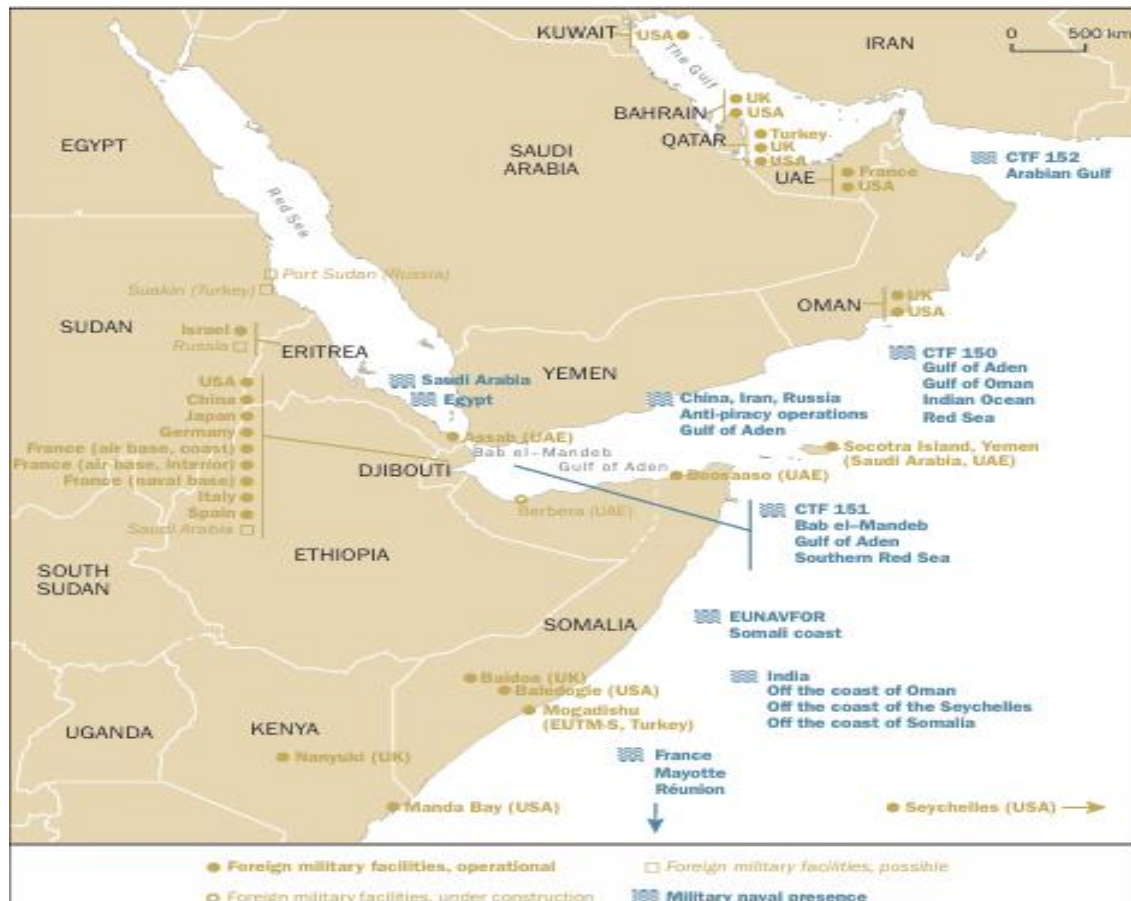


Figure 5. Distribution of foreign military forces in the Horn of Africa region CTF = Combined task force Credit: Ahlenius, H., Nordpil, 2018¹.

The start of new powerbrokers in ports and infrastructure : the motives force the mechanisms in today's context of deepening globalization and integration in the world economic system, all countries have become part of a “**global village**.” This integration of world economies has proven to be a powerful means for countries to promote economic growth, development, and poverty reduction. However, globalization is not just an economic phenomenon but also a political, cultural, military and environmental one. Yet, globalization has produced winners and losers, and their uneven distribution has started to raise concerns. In this globalized world, landlocked states have their challenges. Indeed, 38 states on different continents are landlocked states, with no sea access. This means they do not possess a coastline, lack direct access to marine resources, and suffer generally because their export trade cannot be competitive in world markets, thus needing trade corridors. Therefore, developing transportation corridors has been observed to be among the most important factors in ensuring regional development and integration. This integration and promotion of corridors among regional states is not only a step

¹ Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

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toward the fulfillment of development mandates but also a reinforcement of the priority focus on peace and stability¹.

In the past few years, the penetration of the Gulf States to the Horn of Africa through the establishment of military bases and the development of ports has increased. This political move has also coincided with the changing political dynamics of the region which has had a domino-effect on regional power relations.

We can extract that , The Gulf States' involvement in the Horn of Africa, driven by economic diversification, security interests, and geopolitical rivalries, has significantly influenced the region's dynamics. Their growing presence, investments, and diplomatic engagements underscore their strategic interests and the complex interplay of internal and external factors shaping the Horn of Africa's stability.

The rising number of countries with security engagements in the Horn is promoting a militarization of the region. The build-up of military forces consists of various dimensions. On land, the Horn is becoming the site for a significant number of military bases, facilities and logistics hubs. These support military activities in the Horn countries, and in continental Africa and adjacent areas (the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf and the western Indian Ocean). At sea, they also support the substantial naval forces that operate in the Horn's maritime domain (the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden), and that transit to deploy to the Indo-Pacific region and other naval theatres.²

Infrastructure and Strategic Investments

The UAE, KSA, Qatar as fellow Gulf monarchies along with Turkey as the tangible peace of puzzle in the region , are investing in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa for the long haul as its strategic significance is growing, under the current void the region is witnessing out of the complex instability. The recent witnessed changes served the sake of these regional actors , whos attitude became **“fill space, before others do”** , also the basis for such engagements are provided by the successful diplomacy³, presented by them especially with Eritrea-Ethiopia the lead states of the Horn , here the willingness to advance stability and security was proven , and a key entry was opened for intervening parties through a well thought strategy that align with both the agendas of the Horn states and the long-term interests of stakeholders .

Moving mainly to the mechanisms through which external influence is exercised , with particular emphasis on infrastructure investment as shown earlier as a strategic tool of power projection, arguing that such investments constitute a form of neo-colonial hegemony . besides external actors capitalize on their financial capacities to reach prominent presence , strengthened by military bases installations, and refined by diplomaticalliances. This influence is

¹ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

² Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

³ International Crisis Group, “United Arab Emirates in the Horn of Africa,” *International Crisis Group*, accessed May 4, 2026, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/brf/middle-east-north-africa/united-arab-emirates/b065-united-arab-emirates-horn-africa>

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consolidated by financial dominance, historical entanglements and geographical proximity and essential development partners. These actors present themselves as development partners, in this context, recipients governments are often incentivized to prioritize short-term gains over long-term of sustainability. Such dynamic facilitates the entrenchment of asymmetric dependencies, as infrastructure financing arrangements may embed structural constraints that extend beyond the economic sphere into political and strategic domains. Thus, such investments are framed for growth and modernization, they may in practice, reproduce patterns of external control and limit autonomous development trajectories. So by the end of this part of mapping regional and global interventions in the Horn states, we may be objectively closer to foresee which scenario is intentionally likely to happen, between the perils and the opportunities.

Ideally starting by UAE that has become the largest broader of new business in the Horn, a fact fostered by its history as trading coast that informs its contemporary economic outreach. A chance occurrence has fed the strategic ambitions of UAE which is the selection of Abiy Ahmed the Ethiopian prime minister since 2018, as a new strategic partner in the Horn who will open later space to exploit the strategic opportunities even among constraints; as to foster Abudabi with Bab Al Mandab neighbours as Somalia.

Since UAE is entering a post oil era, Various strategies are counted in the game, The Horn of Africa is instrumental for the UAE's economic, geopolitical, and security ambitions while the red sea corridor is a strategic priority. As part of its Vision 2031, which aims to continue the UAE's reduction of reliance on oil by diversifying the economy, the UAE has sought to expand into new sectors such as logistics, trade, agriculture, and infrastructure as its model of economic diversification is built around its role as a logistics hub and regional headquarters. The economies in the Horn enable the UAE to reach new markets and transform into a global trading hub¹. Relying on DP world, One of the Dubai-Based logistics giant that expands its arms in the natural theatre for trade and logistical ambitions to deal not only in economic projects but outreach elite networks to advance pursued interests.

In Somaliland-Berbera Port :

The Port of Berbera in the Republic of Somaliland has been one of the most crucial seaports in the Horn of Africa and a lucrative source of revenue for the Government of Somaliland. Therefore, any modernization of the port is expected to have a positive effect on the coffers of the state and the region's infrastructural development. To realize this, the Government of Somaliland stated in its National Development Plan II (2017–2021) that the investment made by Dubai Ports (DP) World would soon make the Port of Berbera handle more containers per year. This will contribute to the growth of Somaliland's economy significantly. That is to say that, although DP World secured a 30-year concession with an automatic ten-year extension for the management and development of a multi-purpose port project at Berbera, other companies, such as Bolloré Logistics, a transport and logistics business unit of the French Bolloré Transport and Logistics, have expressed its interest in further developing the port.²

The logic behind the investment of Berbera by the Government of Somaliland is to exploit its strategic position near the oil route, the Bab el Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden, and to benefit from the Ethiopian market. Therefore, Berbera and the Corridor will boost logistics services in

¹ Gulf Research Center, "Commentary," accessed May 4, 2026, <https://www.grc.net/single-commentary/265>.

² Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

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the country, creating not only business opportunities but also many jobs. This will be the engine for a deeper change leading to a more diversified economy in the region. Furthermore, the development of a free zone, industrial zones, and business parks at the key crossroads along the Corridor, close to the port and the Berbera airport, is also crucial. This economic zone would offer an enhanced business environment for emerging Somaliland processing industries, for example, livestock, hides and skins, fish, gums, and resins¹.

Smaller ports along the Somali side of the Gulf served for centuries as a main trading hub for the export of livestock from pastoralist networks that criss-cross the Horn of Africa, Worth underscoring , Gulf states see the Somalian coastline as their western security flank .The port of Berbera is located on the southern shores of the Gulf of Aden. Although the postcolonial Somali state concentrated its modernisation efforts on the southern part of the country, both Cold War superpowers invested heavily in the civil and military development of Berbera's port, Since It is a port that has considerable importance in trade and security and, also, as the place at which much international aid is received as humanitarian focal role. Reliable statistics on African ports, in particular, are difficult to obtain, although it is estimated that African ports overall have less than 1 per cent of global trade, with Middle Eastern ports representing approximately 5 per cent² . The Soviet Union in the 1960s and the USA in the 1980s, attesting to Somalia's shifting Cold War alliances. Berbera port remained a central hub for the export of livestock, which provided a large part of Somalia's revenues. With the rise of political tensions in the 1980s, the port's activities steadily declined and it eventually stopped operating at the start of the civil war in 1988. Following the collapse of Somalia's state apparatus, Somaliland declared its independence in May 1991 and embarked on a parallel process of peace and state building. Berbera port was reopened, but international trade continued to be affected by elite competition, clanbased tensions, violence, and rampant banditry³. The latest discussed above functions as critical enablers of large scale investments initiatives, While also revealing in the internal political and economic incentives that shape the selection of stakeholders positioned to derive benefits from port operations, as it will be demonstrated in the following analysis. Especially when UAE has put 450 M dollars to develop it ,the strategic situation should be understood as an extension of two middle eastern power struggles .

Notably, state-backed entities like DP World and Abu Dhabi Ports have spearheaded major developments, including the 442 million USD Berbera Port in Somaliland. This joint venture positions Berbera as a vital gateway for landlocked Ethiopia, which currently depends on Djibouti for over 95% of its imports⁴. Dubai-based DP World describes itself as **a leading enabler of global trade and an integral part of the supply chain**. We operate multiple yet

¹ Záhorkík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

² International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH), *Annual Report 2017–2018* (Tokyo: IAPH, 2018), [International Association of Ports and Harbors \[IAPH\], 2018](https://www.iaph.org/publications/annual-report-2017-2018)

³ May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, "Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland," *Cities* 159 (April 2025): 105781, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.105781>.

⁴ Gulf Research Center, "Commentary," accessed May 4, 2026, <https://www.grc.net/single-commentary/265>.

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related business from marine and internal terminals, maritime services, logistics and ancillary services to technology-driven trade solutions. The company is active in more than 40 countries with 78 marine and inland terminals in operation and 36,000 employees worldwide with 103 nationalities. Its core business activity is container handling and 70 million TEU (20-foot equivalent units) were managed in 2017, with expected market demand anticipated to see this rise to 100 million TEU by 2020¹.

Interviewee officials claim that, Gulf Actors are able to und agreements more quickly that western donors, especially DP World investments were classified as the largest that Somaliland has ever received , and Somaliland was identified as the first ***‘unrecognized country in the world that has ever received such a crucial and long-term investment’*** by another country .²

According to another interviewee involved in negotiations with international port operators, officials from the UAE and Somaliland held informal negotiations about port modernisations for several years, but formal negotiations started in 2016. The UAE then got its ***‘final push’***, when Djibouti unilaterally ended the cooperation with DP World. In 2017, Somaliland signed a 30- year concession agreement with DP World to manage, expand, and modernize the port. The details of the deal were surrounded by secrecy. In a country that gains its legitimacy from balancing clan interests and cooperating with powerful business tycoons, the government’s neglect of clan-based power arrangements in Berbera and the lack of consultation with local power holders attest to the centralisation of governmental power in Hargeisa and to an increasingly authoritarian ruling style. This process alignes with experiences of other countries where big infrastructure development initiated processes of ***‘upscaling’***. The outward focus of networked integration, the required negotiations with international investors, and the necessary planning skills for big-scale infrastructure disadvantaged local elites and empowered central state actors³. This would open space for the inclusion of additional stakeholders selected by clan authorities, Meanwhile perpetuating a pattern of intervention in which actors effectively participate in choosing the very adequate agent who may serve their interests , this issue what will help fractions and vulenarability to thrive as we will be proving in the study cases.

The UAE’s presence in the region has, however, a much longer standing, and one of its points of interest was the Doraleh deep-water port, which was supposed to operate for 30 years by the Dubai Ports World (DP World) company. In 2018, Djibouti President Guelleh, understanding how vital the “port business” is for Djibouti, decided to unilaterally expel DP World, with Ethiopia and China at its back. Since then, the UAE has actively built strategic partnerships with ports in the region, primarily Berbera⁴.

the Berbera Special Economic Free Zone, modeled on the Jebel Ali Free Zone of Dubai, is likely to attract new businesses and foreign investments. This zone is strategically located along

¹ Michael W. Wilson, “Ports, Power, and Proxy Wars: GCC Engagement in the Horn of Africa,” Gulf Research Center, June 10, 2025, <https://www.grc.net/single-commentary/265>.

² May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, “Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland,” *Cities* 159 (April 2025): 105781, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.105781>

³ May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, “Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland,” *Cities* 159 (April 2025): 105781, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.105781>

⁴ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

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the Corridor and in close proximity to the airport and the port. Establishing such a zone will attract a considerable number of customers from the Somali region in Ethiopia and other Somali regions in the Horn of Africa.¹

The Berbera Corridor, a 249-km asphalt-concrete surface road connecting Berbera to the town of Wajale (a commercial town located on the Ethiopia-Somaliland border), funded by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, was expected to be completed in 2023. The second phase of the port expansion followed soon after the inauguration of the first phase in June 2021. In parallel with the second phase of the port expansion, the construction of the free zone was also completed and officially started operating in March 2023. Additionally, the establishment of dry ports around the Ethiopia-Somaliland border is another major component of the Berbera Port project. According to one of the DP World Board Members, mobile free zones to regulate and facilitate ongoing trading activities between the two countries are planned to be established on both sides of the border in Wajale. On top of that, Ethiopia and Somaliland engage in trade, transit, and other relevant negotiations expected to be completed before the end of 2023. Furthermore, and very importantly, DP World and Ethiopia signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2021 aimed to invest up to USD 1 billion in the development of supply chain infrastructure along the corridor, particularly inside Ethiopia.²

In Djibouti :

Searching for distinctiveness in models from elsewhere Djibouti's strategic importance lies in its geographic position at the Bab al-Mandab Strait. Since decolonization, this 'desolate' piece of land, which attempted to escape its colonial dependence on France, evolved into the main gateway to Ethiopia. The authoritarian regime of Ismael Omar Guelleh, in office since 1999, had ambitions to rescue Djibouti from its developmental quagmire. Thus, The regime relied on the country's maritime infrastructure adjacent to vital global waterways and tied its political survival to ongoing transformations of Djibouti city into a logistical hub and an entry to African markets. Consequently, evoking UAE in Somalia is followed up with Djibouti since UAE can't be present in Somaliland without being fully present in Djibouti. Especially through its arm DP World's whose first contracts abroad was in Djibouti, where it began to develop Doraleh port in 2006.

A rivalry shift occurred, while DP World has been managing Djibouti's Doraleh Port from 2006 to 2018, the UAE lost this asset when the Djiboutian government nationalized the port and handed control to a Chinese operator, this reflected the region's intense geopolitical competition³, that its enlarging to several actors involved.

Djibouti's ports are key to its geo-strategic importance in military and economic terms. They are a conduit for Ethiopian trade and a platform for the transshipment of goods. This involves the decanting of transoceanic container and bulk cargo from larger vessels to be redistributed to East Africa and Arabian ports. The volume of trade has grown significantly as demand and port facilities have expanded. In 2009 the ports handled 11 million tonnes of goods, double the volume of just five years earlier, Such developments immediately necessitated a major

¹Záhořík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa since 2018*.

² Záhořík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa since 2018*.

³ Gulf Research Center, "Commentary," accessed May 4, 2026, <https://www.grc.net/single-commentary/265>

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expansion and upgrade of port facilities and handling infrastructure, triggering plans for the expansion of conventional cargo and container capacity .

These factors cemented an ambitious strategic partnership between the Dubai ports conglomerate and Djibouti, and led to the construction of **the Horizon Oil Terminal at Doraleh** in 2004 / 05. Owned by Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC), The terminal handles all fuel imports for Djibouti itself, as well as most of Ethiopia's oil and gas imports. Here comes the interdependency with Ethiopia , Ethiopia remains the leading client for all of Djibouti's port facilities, and its dependency on Doraleh generates frequent tussles over costs and taxation. In mid-2012 a serious crisis developed owing to administrative and regulatory changes in Ethiopia. This resulted in gridlock in the container terminal and considerable costs for djibouti DP as a reliant modal in infrastructure projects. Furthermore, Ethiopia has entertained recognizing Somaliland in exchange for access to the DP World-developed Berbera Port. Landlocked Ethiopia's strategic effort to reduce its reliance on Djibouti's port for imports and exports by seeking to refurbish, develop, and utilize other regional ports such as Port Sudan (Sudan), Berbera (Somaliland), and Lamu (Kenya). Therefore, Ethiopia aims to minimize its dependence on a single foreign port which it regards as a potential threat to its national security.¹

As the UAE was a driving force behind these negotiations, It demonstrates how its economic investments have granted it leverage in the region to advance its strategic objectives. By increasing its footprint across key countries and territories such as Eritrea, Sudan, and Somalilan, The UAE aims to assert itself in the region and counter the influence of rivals, including Qatar, Turkey, Iran, and China.

we would foster the our past argument that claim the intense UAE presence in the Horn of Africa by the following , we also note that through this high-coasted presence , UAE sheds the lights to expand all over the East of Africa :

Title : United Arab Emirates Invesements in East Africa

Figure 6. "Mapping Gulf State Actors' Expanding Engagements in East Africa,"²

¹ Jan Záhorkík and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

² Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Mapping Gulf State Actors' Expanding Engagements in East Africa," July 8, 2025, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/gulf-state-actors-east-africa/>.

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Total UAE Investments in East Africa	
Burundi	\$6.3 million
Djibouti	\$685 million
Eritrea	\$189.5 million
Ethiopia	\$2.3 billion
Kenya	\$828.5 million
Rwanda	\$78.8 million
Somalia	\$612.9 million
Somaliland	\$539 million
South Sudan	\$13.0 billion
Sudan	\$21.9 billion
Tanzania	\$736.8 million
Uganda	\$6.6 billion
Total	\$47.4 billion

UAE Investments by Sector	
Sector	Value
Infrastructure	\$5.9 billion
Energy	\$19.3 billion
Mining	\$2.7 billion
Port Development	\$7.3 billion
Agriculture	\$11.9 billion

Source : Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Mapping Gulf State Actors’ Expanding Engagements in East Africa,”¹

TURKEY

An emerging regional power, Cannot exist without its closet ally in this case, there is Turkey, one of the earliest investors in Somalia, Since the famine in 2011, In order to have greater access to the Red Sea Middle Eastern and Asian states have spent billions of dollars acquiring ports and land to build military bases. Turkey’s engagement has been remarkable, not only in terms of its diplomatic initiatives but also due to its significant humanitarian aid like we will be tracking.

To complicate matters even more, Turkey has signed an agreement with Djibouti in 2024 to boost military collaboration. Turkey has been active for years in Somalia as one of the few countries that retained its diplomatic mission in Mogadishu and with Turkish Airlines operating regular flights to Somalia. The current military agreement is a follow-up to previous collaboration based on the delivery of Bayraktar drones to Djibouti or the construction of Ambouli Dam and the largest mosque (Abdulhamid II Mosque) in Djibouti. For instance, Apart from the military agreement, both sides have agreed on developing mutual relations in 15 fields, including agriculture, fisheries, and tourism².

Turkish government invested millions of dollars in Somalia and used this humanitarian posture as political leverage³. We add that, Turkey’s involvement in Somalia is characterized by a

¹ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Mapping Gulf State Actors’ Expanding Engagements in East Africa,” July 8, 2025, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/gulf-state-actors-east-africa/>.

²Jan Záhorkík and Aleksí Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023),122.

³Záhorkík ,Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*,268.

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diverse range of activities, The governments agencies and companies as key actors building low cost infrastructure projects in a number of Africa, states (roads, irrigation systems, including hospitals and roads, as well as the implementation of training programs for Somali security personnel and even renovated the Somali parliament building. Thus, Turkey's economic involvement goes beyond traditional investments. The Turkish government's dedication to infrastructure development, exemplified also by the renovation of **Mogadishu's** Aden Adde International Airport¹, and the construction of roads, is part of a comprehensive economic plan aimed at promoting peace and progress in the country. The ports of Mogadishu has been administered by Turkey since 2014.

This work was carried out by TIKA (the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) which is building hospitals, and helping to find water wells. It is at the forefront of Turkey's endeavours to win the hearts and minds of African people².

Regarding the regional presence in the Horn of Africa and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, Analysts confirmed that Turkey has a presence in Somalia has its own further dimensions as It wants to expand to Suakin in Sudan. He also referred to the presence of both Egyptian and Saudi naval military fleets in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait.

That is to say that Turkey has at least three major policy objectives toward Somalia. The first is to challenge the traditional donors, predominantly the Western countries, which had a long, intimate relationship with Somalia in terms of donations even before the state collapse. The second is to be physically present in Somalia by establishing its first-ever military base overseas in Mogadishu and building the largest Turkish embassy overseas. Finally, from an economic front, Turkish companies manage the port and the airport of Mogadishu and are also involved in other sectors, such as construction³.

QATAR

Doha has also sought to develop its regional economic ties by building infrastructure and logistics. In 2017, Qatar's Public Works Authority(Ashghal) signed a \$165 million agreement with Somalia's government for infrastructure and construction. In 2021, it expressed interest in developing the **Hoby Port** in Somalia near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Although the port was awarded to Turkish-based **Metag Holding** (a Turkish construction and engineering group mainly active in large scale infrastructure projects), Qatar's pursuit of the project underscores its ambition to establish a foothold in the region and counter the UAE's lead in port operations across Africa. As the Turkey's role in the port aligns with the broader Qatar-Turkey strategy to counterbalance UAE and Saudi influence . also Qatar investing 4 billion nearby to develop from a port and have joining from Sudan to Jeddah, As for the new sea port in HOBYO , the central region of Somalia.

¹Kamal Tasiu Abdullahi and Kalid Abdirahman, "Turkish Foreign Policies in the Horn of Africa: A Case Study of Ethiopia and Somalia (Perspectives from Political Economics)," paper presented at UBT International Conference 2023, University for Business and Technology, Kosovo, October 28–29, 2023, accessed via UBT Knowledge Center, <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4386&context=conference>.

² "Suakin Rises from the Dead," *New African Magazine*, April 1, 2018, <https://newafricanmagazine.com/21163/>.

³ Jan Záhorský and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

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2.3.3. The mechanisms of interventions in the Horn of Africa

Military bases

The countries of the Horn of Africa are experiencing far-reaching changes in their external security relations. The region is simultaneously experiencing an increase in the number of foreign security actors operating there, a build-up of external military forces on land and at sea and a broadening of the security agendas pursued by external actors to include local, regional and international issues.

Non-traditional security threats, such as counterterrorism, counter-piracy and local civil wars, initially provided the catalyst for external security actors to become involved in the Horn. Currently, however, a set of deep-seated and interrelated trade, commercial and security shifts external to the region are reshaping the engagement of foreign militaries. Security developments in the Horn are being integrated into geopolitical and geoeconomic agendas that stretch far beyond the immediate region. In this context, the foreign military presence in the Horn increasingly operates as part of much wider military network, across the Middle East and the Gulf, and the Indian and Pacific oceans¹.

UAE was building bases in somaliland /The UAE, in particular, 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.

Security considerations also play a central role in the UAE's strategy. Since the region's volatility is marked by civil conflict, violent extremism, piracy, and terrorism, which directly threaten the UAE's economic infrastructure. As a result, the UAE has established military bases in key locations such as **Eritrea and Somaliland**, with past efforts to open a base in **Djibouti**. These outposts serve dual purposes such as: protecting maritime trade from piracy and extremist threats, and supporting broader military objectives, including operations during the Yemen conflict. For example, **the Assab base in Eritrea** previously served as a launchpad for air and naval strikes against Houthi factions. More recently, the UAE deployed military radars in the semi-autonomous Puntland in Somalia to detect potential drone and missile attacks from Houthi rebels².

Saudi Arabia :

¹Neil Melvin, *Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2019).

² University for Business and Technology (UBT), *Maritime Briefings*, Vol. 3, no. 2, Knowledge Center Conference Proceedings (Pristina: UBT Knowledge Center, n.d.), <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4386&context=conference>.

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Gulf powers, notably Saudi Arabia, were engaged in the region to contain communism, although primarily through financial assistance and diplomacy rather than direct military means.¹

Saudi Arabia's main regional objective is confronting Iran, particularly the Houthis in Yemen. Conversely, the UAE has broader strategic goals, extending its geopolitical influence through military bases, commercial ports, and alliances along Yemen's coast including attempts to control Socotra Island in 2018. Investment patterns from the Middle East and Gulf significantly impact bilateral connections and strategic focus in the Horn, potentially setting the stage for competitive foreign and security ties. While the UAE is the largest foreign investor in Somaliland, Saudi Arabia has extended substantial loans to Ethiopia, Qatar and Turkey have focused on Sudan and Somalia. Saudi Arabia is now seeking to lead new multilateral security arrangements spanning both sides of the Red Sea.

Riyadh is building bases in Djibouti and Eritrea. Djibouti a close ally to Riyadh partner, severed ties with Tehran and authorized the construction of a Saudi military base and other foreign military facilities. King Salman signed 30years agreements with Afwerki to base GCC operations in Eritrea. In order to facilitate Gulf access to its ports for regional operations, including the war in Yemen.

No nation in the Horn of Africa can rival the financial and military strength of Saudi Arabia or the UAE. However, the patron-client relationships often obscure the critical role of African agencies. Regional governments have leveraged the Iran-Saudi rivalry to secure substantial aid without conditions. If the material resources were insufficient, regimes used their sovereign power to pit one sponsor against the other. Eritrea is a notable example, focusing its security strategy on countering the perceived Ethiopian threat before the rapprochement.

Financial partnerships and Elite capture:

Although security concerns provided the key impulse in the deployment of Gulf military forces to the Horn of Africa, this trend has been reinforced by the emergence of new commercial opportunities connected to the region. Most significantly, China's economic rise has dramatically increased the importance for global commerce of the East-West trade corridor that transits the Red Sea. The significance of this route has been further magnified by China's Belt and Road Initiative and the economic potential of the developing economies of the Horn.²

As opposing elite's deals with external stakeholders, is reflected on the outsider of the region and aggravated the vulnerability, more details will be exposed in the study cases part, however the new wave of Gulf engagement in the Horn of Africa is driven by political and security interests, leveraging the region's economic vulnerabilities through political finance and direct loyalty payments. Saudi and Emirati policies can influence cash flows to Eritrea, and Somalia,

¹ Neil Melvin, *Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2019),1-20.

² Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

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underscoring the intersection of political and economic interests. While Gulf-Horn political relations can be erratic, economic ties have **proven more stable** .

The security engagement of Middle Eastern and Gulf states in the Horn of Africa has undergone a steady evolution over the past decade. Initially, the Gulf states' security interests in the Horn were focused on frustrating Iranian ambitions in the region. Later, the Horn became important for hosting military facilities to enable operations in the Yemeni civil war. As Turkey increased its presence in the region and splits developed within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Horn became an important venue for proxy contests among Middle Eastern and Gulf powers¹.

UAE

The UAE supports long-term partnerships by building on its bilateral economic ties, notably through infrastructure and agriculture investments, as it has done in **Ethiopia**. For instance, the UAE-based EAP is furthering economic ties with Ethiopia by establishing a \$200 million wheat farm. Meanwhile, DP World partnered with Ethiopia to build a highway from Berbera, Somaliland, to the Ethiopian border, underscoring the breadth of their economic cooperation. Both endeavors raise the UAE's influence and satisfy its wider regional goals to secure trade and trading routes in the Horn of Africa.

As part of the partnership agreement, the United Arab Emirates concluded a 30-year lease agreement for military use of the mothballed deep-water port at Assab and the nearby hard-surface Assab airfield, with a 3,500-meter runway capable of landing large transport aircraft including the huge C-17 Globemaster transports flown by the Emirati air force. The Gulf states agreed to provide a financial aid package and undertook to modernize Asmara International Airport, build new infrastructure, and increase fuel supplies to Eritrea.²

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. As a part of this engagement, Turkey opened its largest overseas military base in Mogadishu on 30 September 2017, which is officially intended to provide training to the SNA.³

The creation of the Joint Economic Commission, together with subsequent bilateral agreements between Turkey and Ethiopia, demonstrates a committed effort to achieve extensive cooperation in economic sectors. Nihat Zeybekci's (the Turkish Minister of Economy) declaration of agreements across many industries suggests a comprehensive strategy for economic collaboration, embracing sectors that stretch from commerce to technology. The establishment of the "**Türkiye Help Center**" by the Ethiopian Minister of Economy is a concrete

¹Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region*.

² UAE Becomes Africa's Biggest Investor amid Rights Concerns," *The Guardian*, December 24, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/dec/24/uae-becomes-africa-biggest-investor-amid-rights-concerns>

³ Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

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demonstration of the dedication to assist and accelerate the growth of business operations, as expressed by Zeybekci in 2016. Ethiopia's significant role as a beneficiary of foreign direct investment (FDI) in East Africa and the wider continent is an important aspect of Turkey's involvement. In 2017, although there was a slight decrease of 3 percent in foreign direct investment (FDI) in East Africa, the region still managed to attract a significant \$7.6 billion in capital. With a remarkable \$3.6 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI), Ethiopia claimed nearly half of the total FDI in Africa. This achievement positioned Ethiopia as the second-largest beneficiary of FDI on the continent and secured its eighth place overall, and this form of intervention didn't knead a rupture until now.

SAUDI ARABIA :

Saudi Arabia has very friendly ties with the horn, In addition, Saudi it had a deal with the Government of Djibouti to establish a naval base there. The latter adds weight to the already existing bases in the region¹.

The Horn has held a low level of prominence on the political agenda of KSA, mostly linked to the dynamics of the Cold War. Iranian diplomatic activism and the alignment of several African countries (Eritrea, Sudan, Djibouti) has prompted Riyadh to increase its presence in the Horn since 2008 exploiting its two main leverages: oil and Islam. Consequently, the Saudi approach to the HOA has been based on economic and financial aid, and on religious proselytism often referred to '**quiet diplomacy**'. Specifically, a new impetus was given to a programme of public diplomacy launched in the 1970s and aimed at spreading Wahhabism through the opening of Quranic schools (madrasa) and training courses for imams.

Qatar

Food security concerns contribute to Qatar's presence in the Horn. Food price inflation from the 2008 financial crisis was an early warning of the Gulf states' susceptibility to volatile global supply chains. Therefore, it began investing in farmland across Sudan and Ethiopia to ensure reliable sources for agricultural products. In 2018, Hassad Food, a Qatar Investment Authority subsidiary, invested 500 million USD into Sudan's food sector by partnering with local Sudanese companies. This partnership addresses food security challenges while contributing to the domestic economy and providing job opportunities in Sudan. Ultimately, this presents a mutually beneficial arrangement, strengthening relations between the two countries

Berbera economic zone ;Ethiopia somaliland corridor study case , Strong financial state relations with djibouti

Diplomatic aid

UAE

The UAE aims to create micro-states in the Horn to further its strategic interests rather than supporting broad-based reforms and democratic development . Its involvement in the Yemen war is driven more by a desire to fragment Yemen and exploit Yemeni islands than by

¹ Jan Záhorský and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

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humanitarian concerns . Similarly, the UAE's primary strategy involves controlling new trade routes to bolster its long-term power.¹

Turkey

The implementation of the viewed systems (turkey help center) showcases a collaborative endeavor to simplify procedures and surmount possible obstacles in commercial and diplomatic interactions. Cultural diplomacy is an essential component of Turkey's policy in Ethiopia, as it promotes reciprocal comprehension and enhances interpersonal connections. Turkey actively fosters cultural exchanges in Ethiopia by organizing events that exhibit Turkish arts, music, and literature. Collaboration in the field of education is an additional aspect of cultural interaction.

The Turkish scholarship programs, university exchange agreements, and the creation of Turkish cultural institutions all assist in cultivating a more profound comprehension between the two nations. Turkey's focus on cultural exchange and educational collaboration is in line with its wider policy of employing soft power diplomacy to increase its influence by fostering common cultural experiences. Turkey's involvement with Ethiopia is not limited; it is integrated into wider geopolitical deliberations. This involvement in Ethiopia is strategically motivated by its ambition of extending influence in Africa, taking advantage of Ethiopia's crucial position in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia's significance is augmented by the marine trade routes of the Red Sea, establishing it as a pivotal participant in maintaining regional peace.

The Turkish participation in diplomatic endeavors, such as peacekeeping activities in the region, demonstrates the diverse character of its relationship with Ethiopia. Due to its stability and influence in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is a significant ally for Turkey in its endeavors to impose diplomatic influence and promote regional peace and stability.

Its worth adding, Turkey was offering humanitarian Aid and moreover was the first to offer this type of aid, with civil society organisation building schools and hospitals. in 2012, turkey re-established bilateral relations with somalia with presidential visits re-opening embassies².and since then Turkey had a growing prominent role in 2015 in the Saudi led coalition to contain the houthis rebels in yemen who were advancing southward to Bab Al Mandab (the red sea entrance) ; besides the gulf states were scrambling to put footstep in the horn of Africa that's a gate for a wider continent and its markets and populations through diplomatic ties fosteration .

We add a very recent diplomatic act of mediation where Turkey was the main character , On 1 January 2024, Ethiopia and Somaliland signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that would allow Ethiopia to develop a naval base along Somaliland's coast. Somaliland later claimed that the agreement also included recognition of Somaliland's independence, although Addis Ababa remained cautious. The announcement increased regional tensions. The following day, Somalia, which considers Somaliland to be part of Somali territory, described the agreement as an act of aggression. It then strengthened regional cooperation with Eritrea, among others, to put pressure on Addis Ababa.The MoU reshapes the region's geopolitical landscape, leaving Ethiopia regionally isolated while Somalia strengthens ties with Eritrea and

¹ Awol Ali Mohammed, "The Perils and Promises of Gulf States' Engagement in the Horn of Africa," Ethiopian Journal of Governance and Development (EJGD) 3, no. 2 (2024): 10.

² "Suakin Rises from the Dead," *New African Magazine*, April 1, 2018, <https://newafricanmagazine.com/21163/>

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Egypt. Turkish mediation between Ethiopia and Somalia led to a joint statement in December 2024, reducing tensions between the two countries and removing the prospect of an Ethiopian seaport in Somaliland.¹

Qatar

Qatar showing up to the scene, was initiated by its role as mediator during the darfur conflict in mid 2000's. In 2017 Qatar embargo, Djibouti; Eritrea; Ghana; Senegal; sided with Saudi-Emirati axis and downgraded diplomatic relations initiative targeting west Africa opening many embassies, after June 2017 Qatar began acquiring land in Sudan and Ethiopia to shore up its food security.

For Qatar, the Horn of Africa presents an opportunity to expand its diplomatic influence and assert itself on the global stage, especially in light of Saudi Arabia and the UAE's rising influence in the region. Similar to these states, Doha has equally leveraged economic investments, humanitarian diplomacy, and political alliances to realize its goals in the Horn.

In 2017, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt severed diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposed a land, sea, and air blockade following political disagreements. As Qatar became economically and diplomatically isolated, it formed new alliances with Turkey, aligning their political and economic interests across the Horn of Africa. Both countries supported movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, in Somalia, which put them at odds with the UAE and Saudi Arabia. At the onset of the blockade, Saudi Arabia and the UAE persuaded Djibouti and Eritrea to downgrade diplomatic ties with Qatar, while Qatar strengthened its ties with Somalia. As a result, the Horn of Africa became a proxy battleground where Gulf and regional powers competed for influence²

Humanitarian assistance has become another cornerstone of Qatar's foreign policy in the Horn of Africa. By providing aid, Doha has sought to build a positive image and forge strong bilateral ties. For instance, in 2021, Qatar pledged \$12 million to combat hunger and malnutrition in Somalia. Through the Qatar Red Crescent, it has funded numerous health, education, and economic empowerment projects, particularly in Somalia and Sudan. This form of soft power helps Qatar build trust with local populations and governments while reinforcing its geopolitical footprint. Another key instrument of Qatar's soft power is its role as a mediator. In late 2020, Somalia cut diplomatic ties with Kenya, accusing it of interfering in its internal affairs. Doha used its diplomatic influence to restore relations between the two countries within six months. In another instance, tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia soured when Somaliland agreed to lease a portion of its coastline to Ethiopia for commercial and military use. As Somalia does

¹ Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), Cedoca, *Eritrea: Mobilisation after the War in Tigray*, COI Focus (Brussels: CGRS, 19 September 2025), https://www.cgrs.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_eritrea_mobilisation_after_the_war_in_tigray_2025_0919.pdf

² Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), Cedoca, *Eritrea: Mobilisation after the War in Tigray*, COI Focus (Brussels: CGRS, 19 September 2025), https://www.cgrs.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_eritrea_mobilisation_after_the_war_in_tigray_2025_0919.pdf.

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not recognize Somaliland's independence, Addis Ababa viewed the agreement as an affront to its sovereignty.¹

While taking into consideration of peace-making efforts in the HoA, initially, Qatar took on the role of a mediator in various disputes within West Asia. Following this, Doha employed the instrument to enhance its impact in the region. The initial mediation effort by Qatar can be traced back to 1996, concerning the conflict among Yemen and Eritrea regarding the Hanish islands. Building on its early mediation experience in West Asia, Qatar expanded its peacekeeping operations to the Horn of Africa, taking a more direct and hands-on approach, as seen by its participation in the Eritrea-Djibouti peacekeeping mission. Moreover, Qatar's role in resolving the conflict in the HOA is linked to its endeavours to establish itself as a **global mediator**. Furthermore, participation in certain peace building initiatives has also secured backing for entities that share ideological alignment of Qatar with the Muslim Brotherhood, as observed in Somalia during the mid-2000s. Nevertheless, it has been criticized that the effectiveness of Qatar's mediation efforts has been limited by either the absence of immediate progress or the achievement of temporary resolutions. Efforts by the concerned party have not been able to fundamentally change the dynamics of the conflict in the areas where it has been involved. For instance, Mahmood argues that the peacekeeping mission undertaken by Qatar along the Eritrean Djiboutian border has been effective in maintaining peace, however, it has not yielded a sustainable solution. The sudden withdrawal of Qatar in 2017, following the alignment of Eritrea and Djibouti in opposition to Qatar amid the Gulf crisis, created a vacuum.

The Qatari efforts in mediation, along with the media coverage by the Al Jazeera network, enhanced Qatar's international standing, irrespective of the tangible results achieved. Doha improved mediation efforts via the contributions of its two humanitarian organizations: Qatar Charity and Qatar Red Crescent Society, effectively establishing a positive environment by gaining the trust of the involved parties ; al Jazeera effect.

The diplomatic influence may be limited but widely influential , if it does serve the target states it serves the mediators .

To sum up with regional counterparts , In today's context of deepening globalization and integration in the world economic system, all countries have become part of a "global village." This integration of world economies has proven to be a powerful means for countries to promote economic growth, development, and poverty reduction. However, globalization is not just an economic phenomenon but also a political, cultural, military, and environmental one. Yet, globalization has produced winners and losers, and their uneven distribution has started to raise concerns. In this globalized world, landlocked states have their challenges. Therefore, developing transportation corridors has been observed to be among the most important factors in ensuring regional development and integration. The integration and promotion of corridors

¹ Michael W. Wilson, "Ports, Power, and Proxy Wars: GCC Engagement in the Horn of Africa," Gulf Research Center, June 10, 2025, <https://www.grc.net/single-commentary/265>.

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among regional states is not only a step toward the fulfillment of development mandates but also a reinforcement of the priority focus on peace and stability ;The horn is more broadly likely to be the center of NEW AFRICA ORDER or an APPENDAGE OF THE GULF .

Table 1. Summary of Regional Actor Engagements

	Burundi	Djibouti	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Kenya	Rwanda	Somalia	Somaliland	S. Sudan	Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Total
United Arab Emirates													\$47.4 billion
Infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Energy	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mining	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Port	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	
Agriculture	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	
Security	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia													\$15.6 billion
Infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	
Energy	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	
Mining	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Port	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Agriculture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	
Security	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	
Turkey													\$6 billion
Infrastructure	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	
Energy	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Mining	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Port	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Agriculture	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	
Security	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	
Qatar													\$1.8 billion
Infrastructure	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	
Energy	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Mining	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	
Port	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Agriculture	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Security	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	
Kuwait													\$600 million
Infrastructure	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	
Energy	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Mining	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Port	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	
Agriculture	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	
Security	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	

 Ongoing engagement
  Pending/Suspended engagement
  No record of engagement

Source : Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2025).¹

1.4. Section 4: Switching to global powers :

We can go back to the global Cold War in the last century by which the world was divided into two poles, the Socialist one led by the Soviet Union and the Capitalist one led by the United States. This will help us know how the position of the Bab Al-Mandab Strait was in this era of human history and to briefly see the form of the polarization that dominated the world which split into two poles. Moreover, we would know who seized control over the strait during this important era of the struggles among the superpowers. This is relatively similar to our current era with one difference related to the multiplicity of competing powers and the emergence of new powers that did not exist during the Cold War. In a study published by the Arab Center for

¹ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Mapping Gulf State Actors’ Expanding Engagements in East Africa,” July 8, 2025, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/gulf-state-actors-east-africa/>.

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Studies and Researches on Jan 2020, Dr Jamal Abdulrahman Rustom said that since World War II, the US has engaged in a “**secret war**” in the south Suez area in the Red Sea against British control. The US was able to establish a base in Eritrea before the latter’s independence from Ethiopia. The base served as a strategic starting point for the Americans in the Red Sea area. Rustom added that “due to the importance of the Red Sea region for the US and to protect its interests and military activities, Washington reached an agreement in 1978 with Kenya and Somalia by which it enjoyed “facilities in the two states”.

The United States on the backdrop of the international competition over the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, US President Joe Biden said during the Security and Development Summit held in Jeddah on July 16th, 2022: “***We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran***” in reference to the US presence in the Middle East. As for international navigation in the region, Biden said: “***The United States will not allow foreign or regional powers to jeopardize freedom of navigation through the Middle East’s waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al Mandab***”. He added that “the free flow of commerce and resources through the Middle East is the lifeblood of a global economy. And when nations adhere to international rules, it works. So, my administration has made it a priority to protect those vital waterways”.

While decolonization of Africa marked the formal end of Europe’s dominant security role in the affairs of the Horn of Africa, the former colonial powers maintained important security relations in the region and even a military presence, notably the French forces in Djibouti and the British military in Kenya. However, from the 1950s it was increasingly the USA and then the Soviet Union that emerged as the preeminent external security actors in the Horn. During the cold war, a fierce rivalry with a focus on the Horn developed between the USA and the Soviet Union, making the region a flashpoint for international confrontation in the 1970s and 1980s. The USA and the Soviet Union became involved in the Horn for a mixture of ideological and realpolitik reasons, but also because countries in the region sought out their support. Indeed, it was most often the drive to militarize by regional states, in order to challenge contested borders, compete with neighbours and suppress unstable domestic politics, which pulled superpower competition into the region¹.

During the first decade of the 21st century the Horn of Africa’s security agenda began to evolve, as the issues of counterterrorism and combating piracy emerged as priorities for external security actors. Crucially, the USA renewed its direct security engagement in the region, together with its major allies, through bilateral and US-led multilateral frameworks. Subsequently, the Horn of Africa has become a key theatre for US counterterrorism operations, notably in Somalia (where recent years have seen a build-up of military forces), and a base for operations across Africa and the Middle East. The USA has also taken the lead in countering piracy and maritime crime in the Horn. The build-up of US forces has been supported by military deployments from allied states, as well as missions from other countries².

¹ Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

² Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

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The extension of US–Soviet superpower rivalry into the region through proxy relations then had a further devastating impact on regional conflicts. During the cold war, substantial amounts of weaponry, military advisers, assistance and training, and even foreign combat forces were funnelled into the region, driving a dramatic escalation in the scale of fighting and the casualties. As a result, the Horn became synonymous with warfare, notably the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977–78 over the disputed region of Ogaden. The chronic violent instability and ethnonationalism promoted during the conflicts of the era largely defined the immediate post cold war regional security agenda of interstate wars, border and resource disputes¹, and failed states.

A new era of military bases and actors in the Horn of Africa Although the Western countries have always been involved in the internal affairs of their respective former colonies from political, security, social, cultural, and economic fronts, China's emergence as an economic, political, and military power challenged the Western security and political interests in Africa. This political challenge was followed by China's political gesture and its arrival in the Horn of Africa to establish its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017. Djibouti previously hosted different military bases, including US and French bases, as well as Japanese and German ones².

2.4.1. The US presence:

The USA's security priorities in the Horn of Africa are currently shifting in response to the growing role of global and regional powers in the region, and in Africa more broadly, notably the rising security profile of China. In March 2018, the head of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), General Thomas D. Waldhauser, indicated that he expected more Chinese military bases to be established in Africa. In December 2018, the administration of US President Donald J. Trump announced a new strategy for Africa that focuses on great power competition with China and Russia, alongside advancing US economic interests and countering violent extremist organizations. However, while the USA remains committed to combating violent extremist organizations, it has signalled that it will reduce its military forces committed to counterterrorism in Africa³.

Camp Lemonnier has subsequently become the centrepiece of a network of US drone and surveillance bases stretching across Africa and has also served as a hub for aerial operations as far as the Gulf. In the pursuit of counterterrorism operations, following the creation of the CJTF-HOA, the USA established an extensive network of military installations in the Horn of Africa region, notably in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and The Seychells⁴. In recent years, the USA has significantly increased its military presence in Somalia in order to conduct drone strikes and special forces operations, and for the training of the Somali National Army (SNA), notably at its Baledogle base.

¹ Melvin, *Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa*.

² Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

³ Melvin, *Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa*.

⁴ Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

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AFRICOM and drones The United States' CJTF-HOA has been based in Djibouti since 2002. Originally conceived as part of the response to the 9/11 attacks, it became the US military's only permanent military facility on the African continent with the creation of AFRICOM in 2008. It is based at a former French military facility, Camp Lemonnier, where it shares runways with French forces and Djibouti's international airport, Ambouli. The United States pays a reported \$38 million annual rent to Djibouti for the facility. Over the last decade the US presence in Djibouti has progressively taken on a more complex and permanent character.

Figure 7. Camp Lemonnier



Source : Adapted from Haley Britzky, Priscilla Alvarez, and Natasha Bertrand, “Deported Migrant Detainees Are Being Held at a U.S. Naval Base in Djibouti amid Court Fight, Officials Say,” *CNN* ¹

The USA’s security priorities in the Horn of Africa are currently shifting in response to the growing role of global and regional powers in the region, and in Africa more broadly, notably the rising security profile of China

Speaking on 13 December at the launch of the new Africa policy, the US National Security Adviser, John Bolton, expressed concern about China’s growing role in Djibouti, which he noted could affect the ‘**balance of power**’ in the Horn, especially given the country’s position ‘astride major arteries of maritime trade between Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia’. Bolton also indicated that the USA would re-evaluate its support for UN peace operations and would ‘seek to streamline, reconfigure, or terminate missions that are unable to meet their own mandate or facilitate lasting peace’.¹⁶³ The 2019 AFRICOM posture statement echoed US

¹ Haley Britzky, Priscilla Alvarez, and Natasha Bertrand, “Deported Migrant Detainees Are Being Held at a U.S. Naval Base in Djibouti amid Court Fight, Officials Say,” *CNN*, May 22, 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/05/22/politics/deported-migrant-detainees-us-naval-base-djibouti>.

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concerns about China's economic and security approach to Africa, noting that 'China has most successfully employed this model in Djibouti, holding 80 percent of the Government of Djibouti's debt, where access through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, the Red Sea, and the Suez Canal remains a US strategic imperative'. In comments to the Senate Armed Services Committee on the posture statement, Waldhauser highlighted US concerns about ensuring strategic access to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait with the growing presence of China, Russia, the UAE and Saudi Arabia on the western shore of the Red Sea¹.

Therefore, today the Horn finds itself linked to various Strings of Pearls, consisting of networks of military bases and dual-use ports, as a wide variety of military powers seek to build the necessary military infrastructure and security relationships to project power into key parts of the Indian Ocean. For the USA, the significance of the Horn is also shifting from counterterrorism to a strategic location within the emerging Indo-Pacific security agenda.

As a global power, the US foreign policymaking toward the Horn of Africa, for example, combines a number of elements as the Horn of Africa region has been a source of concern for decades. Early interest of the US in the region goes back to the beginning of the second half of the 20th century following America's emergence as a global power and its interest in dominating the strategic gates of the world. Therefore, intervention from external actors in the internal affairs of the Horn of Africa has been deep and influential since independence in the 1960s².

Berbera is the most crucial and strategic asset of Somaliland, and it was one of the major sources of revenue during the Somalia military government. According to the New York Times, the Somali government has received US military aid since the early 1980s, and in return, Somalia allowed America to use Berbera Port. In an era where China wants a **"new world order"** and Russia invades Ukraine, the revival of Berbera's strategic significance is on the horizon. As part of these global contestations, by securing the strategic gates of the world, the US military has expressed its interest in using the Berbera Airport, either as a contingency plan or as a military base. In continuation of these discussions, the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) Commander paid an official visit to the Hargeisa and Berbera Airport in May 2022 and had discussions with the Government of Somaliland. The official visit of the AFRICOM Commander to Somaliland and the US Congress' endorsement of the Security Partnership Act Bill with Somaliland can be described as a return of America's strategic interest in the Horn of Africa. The Act underlines that engagement in the Horn and the Red Sea region should present an opportunity to strengthen security cooperation and partnership with Somaliland. Without a doubt, Somaliland occupies a pivotal geographic location in the Horn of Africa, and it is adjacent to strategic maritime routes in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Therefore, the country shares interests and assets that could contribute to the US military objectives and provide flexibility given the evolving security situation in the region³.

¹ Melvin, *Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa*.

² Jan Záhorkík and Aleksí Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

³ Záhorkík, Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*

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Infrastructure

2.4.2.China

It is important to note that although China's move to establish a military base in Djibouti was very significant in this post-Cold War era, Taiwan's strengthening relationship with Somaliland is of great importance to both regional and international affairs. In 2020, the governments of Taiwan and Somaliland formally established diplomatic relations and have since partnered in several sectors, including education, health, energy, and technology. This audacious diplomatic move has increased tensions with China by establishing ties with Taiwan. China's investments in many African countries, including Djibouti and Somalia, place Somaliland in a difficult situation. Holding strong to its diplomatic principles and the presence of a vocal Somaliland diaspora community in Western countries, in particular the US and the UK, Somaliland has established a brotherly friendship with Taiwan, a US ally¹.

The opening of the Chinese base in Djibouti took place at a time when piracy in the region had significantly declined, yet further work is underway to expand the base and to allow the docking of larger warships. In fact, the base increasingly appears to be a permanent military presence in the Horn at a key geostrategic point at the entrance to the Red Sea and in the close vicinity of the Middle East. Its establishment has taken place at the same time as China is seeking to advance its commercial interests in Djibouti's Doraleh Container Terminal, together with a number of other major infrastructure projects. Thus, China's engagement in Djibouti rests on a combination of commercial and military interests².

China's counter-piracy mission was initially viewed as a discrete military operation. The growing regional presence of the PLAN, notably the opening and expansion of the military base in Djibouti and Chinese involvement in the Doraleh commercial port, suggests a wider strategy by China today. This involves extending security capabilities and economic interests along key SLOCs in the Indo-Pacific region. The construction of the Djibouti military base is therefore part of a broader Chinese regional project to establish mixed commercial-military ports across the Indian Ocean region, the so-called String of Pearls.³

China and gulf states are expanding into the Nile valley building dams to generate electricity and irrigate industrial farms to produce crops for export to the middle east and China. Nevertheless, many local and regional challenges remain unresolved. Meanwhile, the Horn of Africa has fast become an arena in which Middle Eastern states are vying with each other to advance their commercial and geopolitical interests in the broader context of intensifying U.S.-China strategic rivalry. Indeed, China's activities in and around the Red Sea are coming under increased scrutiny. Whether and how these intra-Gulf and great power rivalries persist will go a long way to determining whether the Bab el-Mandeb becomes a gateway to stability and shared prosperity or to conflict and instability.⁴

¹ Záhofík ,Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

² Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

³ Melvin, *Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa*.

⁴ United States Central Intelligence Agency, *Horn of Africa* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2009).

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The infrastructures of the Berbera Port that are under construction could hardly make Berbera a viable competitor to Djibouti. However, from the Djibouti perspective, any improvement of Berbera's port facilities would challenge its port services and facilities. Thus, the decision to revoke DP World's presence in Djibouti and bring the Chinese as an alternative strained the relations and escalated the conflict between the Djibouti Government and the DP World¹.

Djibouti and Ethiopia are the primary focal points of Chinese engagement in the Horn. In both cases, Chinese economic activities are concentrated in four major sectors: roads, railways, energy, and communications. China has meshed its global maritime ambitions with Djibouti's agenda to transform itself into a commercial trade hub for the Horn of Africa region. China Merchants Port (CM Port) has played a key role in these efforts. As a joint-venture partner with the Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority in Port de Djibouti Société Anonyme, in which CM Port holds a 23.5 percent stake, It has developed Doraleh Multipurpose Port (DMP) and the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone. More recently, Djibouti and Ethiopia signed a deal to transport Ethiopian natural gas to an export terminal to be located in Damerjog on the Red Sea, building on a \$4 billion investment pledge by China's POLY-GCL Petroleum.

China, the Horn and the String of Pearls strategy :

Within this project, the Chinese-built port facilities in Pakistan, together with the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), provide a key link from western China to Djibouti and to other Chinese-controlled ports in the Indian Ocean, notably those in Sri Lanka. Several reports indicate that China is planning to develop Gwadar as a mixed military-commercial facility. The development of Gwadar is being undertaken within the context of a broadening Sino-Pakistan security partnership. This clearly involves the sale and leasing of advanced naval ships, submarines and fighter jets capable of projecting maritime power at key Gulf and Red Sea chokepoints, and access to the Beidou military satellite system(BDS).²

China's lending practices in the Horn, somewhat predictably, have drawn sharp criticism from American and European officials. Loan repayment issues have also prompted self-reflection by Chinese officials regarding the inadequacy of project planning and risk management. A Chinese diplomat told the Financial Times in June 2018 that China is “way overextended” in Ethiopia. State export credit insurer China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinosure) was forced to write off more than \$1 billion in losses on the Ethiopia-Djibouti rail link. China extended a \$1 billion loan to finance the building of transmission lines and China Gezhouba Group Company was contracted to accelerate work to complete construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), a project that has been complicated by the ongoing dispute between Ethiopia and Egypt over water share. In addition, there are serious questions about the profitability of some of the projects in which China has been involved. Since it began operation in January 2018, the Addis Ababa-Djibouti standard-gauge railway has had to contend with electricity shortages and lower-than-anticipated

¹ Jan Záhorský and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, often abbreviated as **BDS**, is China's global satellite navigation and positioning system, similar to the American GPS.

² Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

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freight volumes. The failure of the project to generate the expected revenue led to the renegotiation of billions of dollars in Chinese commercial loans and later to China's cancellation of all of Ethiopia's interest-free loans. China has faced this pushback not just in Djibouti and Ethiopia but elsewhere in East Africa, notably Tanzania and Kenya.

In the current period, China's commercial and military inroads into the Horn can be seen in the context of the country's expanding global power and influence, and U.S. efforts to counter it. Djibouti and Ethiopia are the primary focal points of Chinese engagement in the Horn. In both cases, Chinese economic activities are concentrated in four major sectors: roads, rail, energy, and communications. China has meshed its global maritime ambitions with Djibouti's agenda to transform itself into a commercial trade hub for the Horn of Africa region

In December 2022, A visit was conducted to the Red Sea Exhibition Centre (RSEC), which was inaugurated in June 2022 to show how the Shekou model is applied in Djibouti. The RSEC launched the vision for a '**New Djibouti**', with imageries illustrated in maps, graphs, photos, and short films displayed to promote the transition from a rural, nomadic past to an urban future, envisioning a hub sitting at the crossroads between different worlds. The visit to the RSEC concludes with the slogan: '***New Djibouti, prosperous future***'.¹ In the case of Ethiopia, as in that of Djibouti, China has aligned itself with the ambitions of the government in place, developing close ties with the self-styled "developmental regime" of Hailemariam Desalegn and now with the Abiy administration. During that time, Ethiopia has emerged as China's second-largest African borrower and a major Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) partner. Ethiopia has also become a valuable regional platform for China home to the \$200 million Chinese-funded African Union Conference Center and Office Complex, as well as to the representational offices of the Chinese Commerce Ministry and the China-Africa Development Fund, and the regional headquarters of Xinhua News Agency.

Chinese-backed infrastructure projects intended to boost regional connectivity, in accordance with the BRI, include the Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway and the Ethiopia-Djibouti Water Pipeline. The railway project, in particular, bears all the hallmarks of the BRI a large-scale cross-border Infrastructure projects financed through a concessional loan, undertaken by Chinese contractors, and aimed at linking potential production sites to a trade hub. Elsewhere in Ethiopia, Chinese firms have built and funded the \$475 million Addis Ababa Light Rapid Transit network, the \$86 million ring road, the country's first six-lane highway, and the Addis Ababa Bole International Airport terminal expansion. This past December, Ethiopia's first observatory satellite three-quarters of the cost of which was paid by China was launched from Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in Shanxi Province carried aboard a Long March 4B rocket.

However, it is important to mention that China's economic engagement in the Horn has not been all smooth sailing. In the scramble for port and cargo facilities, CM Port has been jockeying for advantage with DP World, with the two global port operators at the center of legal

¹ May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, "Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland," *Cities* 159 (2025): 105781, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.105781>.

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disputes over Doraleh Container Terminal and DMP. Regarding the former, Djibouti unilaterally terminated the contract with DP World, nationalized the container terminal, and transferred the concession to CM Port. After the termination of DP World's concession, CM Port began an expansion of the port facilities, which, when completed, will provide Chinese-flagged vessels with priority handling and lower docking fees. Regarding the latter, Djibouti granted the right to develop DMP to CM Port without first having offered the opportunity to DP World, which subsequently filed suit against China Merchants to enforce its legal claims. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether China's BRI projects in the Horn and elsewhere in East Africa will bolster its relations with the UAE and other Gulf actors or serve as an irritant.

Meanwhile, China's lending practices in the Horn, as elsewhere, have come under increasing scrutiny. Two-thirds of Djibouti's external debts are owed to China, prompting speculation that the government might expropriate or transfer foreign-owned properties to pay out the loans granted by the Export-Import Bank of China to Djibouti for infrastructure development. According to the IMF, although large-scale infrastructure investments and rapid expansion of trade and logistics activities have spurred strong growth, they have placed the country "in high risk of debt distress."

Finally, and importantly, the establishment in 2017 of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Support Base in Djibouti has sounded alarm bells in Washington. As some experts have written, the base reflects the "far seas protection" aspect of China's new naval doctrine. In anticipation of the completion of the facility, U.S. Ambassador to Djibouti Tom Kelly remarked that managing American and Chinese forces in close proximity "will be a challenge for all involved." Later, USAFRICOM's commander, Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, told Congress that Djibouti's increasing partnership with China "encroaches on and, at times, diminishes U.S. access and influence." Leading a delegation to Djibouti in February 2019, U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe commented, "We can't afford to deny China's encroachment in a vital port any longer." The establishment of the base, therefore, has fueled concerns about China's growing military power and its expanded global posture.¹

2.4.3. Russia :

Russia, together with China, is at the forefront of the new world order, which tends to challenge the hegemonic position of Washington in the global arena. Renewal of relations between Russia and the Horn of Africa can be seen in the arms sales that kept increasing since 2015. Already in 2014, around the time of Russia's occupation of Crimea, Moscow's request to open a military base in Djibouti was rejected, apparently after Washington's behest. This did not stop Russia from being active in the Horn of Africa, primarily in terms of security-related issues, although arms sales to Djibouti do not dominate the local market. However, Russian presence in Djibouti

¹ May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, "Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland," *Cities* 159 (2025): 105781, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.105781>.

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as well as the Horn of Africa has an increasing trajectory and is likely to play a more important role in the years to come¹.

Russia maintains a regular but non-permanent naval presence in the Horn of Africa. In 2008, it committed a frigate to counter-piracy operations in the region but chose to operate independently of the international counter piracy missions. Sudan has emerged as a key Russian ally in the Horn region and is at the centre of a web of commercial, security and geopolitical interests that extends into other African countries²

Unlike the other European military powers France and the UK, Russia is not planning to project substantial naval force into the Indian Ocean through the Red Sea. Nevertheless, it aims to ensure that it can move its military into the region as part of ambitions to enhance its presence in key Horn countries, and to monitor the build-up of military force underway more broadly in the Indian Ocean, which is seen as a region of emerging great power competition³.

Military bases

In his article entitled "Russia in the Red Sea: The Contradictions of War and Peace" on March 11st 2022, writer Mohammed Abdulkarim Ahmed said that Moscow sought to reach an agreement with the Djiboutian government to establish a military base which will be basically used by the Russian forces. The article indicated that the talks between 2012 and 2013 included negotiation about the area of land expected to be allocated to the base, as well as the size of the expected Russian investments in this country. The writer pointed out that the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis ended those negotiations, limiting the Russian presence to cooperation with the relevant authorities in combating piracy in the Red Sea. However, we believe that the Russian presence in the Horn of Africa will remain and spread in the region. In this regard, Dr. Jamal Rustom confirm by claiming that the matter of establishing bases and Arab outlets in the warm waters is a vital demand of the Russian foreign policy to serve and secure its interests and goals in different areas within the world. He added that Russia can't currently play the role previously played by the Soviet Union in the field of the international influence conflict. This is although Moscow seeks to restore the Soviet Union's areas of influence in the Arab and African countries such as Sudan, Palestine, and Yemen by establishing a system which protects its interests. He illustrated that Russia has ambitions towards the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa to serve its goals in East Europe and alleviate the severe sanctions imposed on it after its war with Ukraine.

¹ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023), 121.

² Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

³ Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* .

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Table 2. The Matrix Of Foreign Actors in the Horn of Africa (2020-2025)

Actor variable	USA	China	Russia	UAE	Saudi Arabia	Turkey
The principal motive	Counterterrorism+ The Containment of China	Security the Maritim Silk Road	Securing a maritime foothold+ Arms Sales	Controlling the Ports + The containment of the Muslim Brotherhood	Securing the Red Sea + Balancing Iran	Islamic Soft Power+ An expanding Economy
The Ideological frame	Liberal Democracy– Neo-Liberalism	Win-Win cooperation +Non-Interference	Multi-Polar Comepetition	Gulf Neoliberal Pragamtism	Moderate Wahhabism + Vision 2030	Neo-Ottomanism + The Muslim Brotherhoof
The principal military base	Camp Lemmonier (Djibouti)	Doraleh Base (Djibouti)	Attempts in PortSudan	Assab (Eritrea) + Berbera (Somaliland)	Hanish near the strait	TURKSOM (Moagadishu)
Estimated Investment	1,4 Billion per year (Military Spending)	20 billion Dollars Cumulative loans	Limited (500 Million Dollars)- Arms Sales	11 Billion Dollars – Ports+ Investements	3 Million Dollars – Aid + Investements	2,5 Million Dollars – Trade + Aid
Operational Mechanisms	Militarization + Air Strikes	Infrastructure + Loans	Arms- African corps- Wagner	DP World ports	Aid + Investments	Bases Establishment – Schools
Principal Target State	Somalia + Djibouti	Djibouti + Ethiopia	Eritrea	Somalia Somaliland Eritrea	Eritrea + Djibouti	Somalia Ethiopia
Interaction with Local Elites	Conditional Security Partnership	Conditional Pragmatic Partnership	Value-Free Partnership	Direct Trade Partnership	Religious and financial Partnership	Grassroots and Govermental Partnership

Source : Made by The Researcher

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There is a serie of variables that operates as enabling drivers as well, shaping the evolving geopolitical landscape of the Horn of Africa. While the influence of external and regional actors is widely acknowledged, we highlight that the previously identified actors and motivations remain the most decisive in structuring regional dynamics. Nevertheless, it is essential to account for additional actors and intersecting agendas that continue to shape the strategic environment of the Horn. In particular, three unresolved and evolving issues, illustrated in the following:

- The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam GERD
- The Tigray Conflict
- The Question of Somaliland

As these continue to significantly reshape regional power balances and patterns of external intervention. The influence extends to firstly, the GERD dispute illustrates how hydropolitics has become a central driver of regional alignment and external engagement, particularly involving Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, with Gulf actors and international mediators increasingly drawn into negotiations due to the Dam's strategic implications for Nile water Security¹.

Similarly, the Tigray conflict demonstrated how internal Ethiopian fragmentation can rapidly internationalize, attracting involvement from regional powers such as Eritrea and external stakeholders concerned with Red Sea security and regional stability, thereby reshaping military and diplomatic alignments in the Horn.²

Finally, the Somaliland question continues to influence the neighbouring dynamics through competing recognition strategies and port access competition, particularly involving Gulf states and Ethiopia, where de facto statehood becomes a tool of strategic bargaining in maritime and trade politics³.

All in one, these three cases demonstrate that regional order in the Horn of Africa is not only shaped by state-to-state relations but also by overlapping security, resource, and recognition dilemmas that invite external intervention and intensify geopolitical competition.

¹ Ana Elisa Cascão and Alan Nicol, "GERD: New Norms of Cooperation in the Nile Basin?" *Water International* 41, no. 4 (2016): 550–573, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2016.1180763>.

² Tobias Hagmann, "Beyond the Tigray War: Ethiopia's Fragmenting Federal Order," *The Conversation*, November 21, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/ethiopias-civil-war-five-reasons-why-history-wont-repeat-itself-172158>.

³ International Crisis Group, *Somaliland: The Strains of Success*, Africa Briefing No. 113 (Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 5 October 2015).

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2.4.4. The perils and the opportunities of foreign presence in the Horn of Africa :

The Opportunities :

It would be misguided to view all aspects of Chinese engagement in the Horn in zero-sum terms through an adversarial lens, or to see Chinese economic and/or security interaction with the countries of the region as uniquely or exclusively negative. Far from boldly challenging American supremacy in the Horn, China is capitalizing on the sporadic interest and narrow security focus of U.S. policy in the region, as well as on African frustration and fatigue with traditional Western donors and partners. Djibouti turned to China for investment after being unable to secure it from the U.S. and other Western sources.

In Ethiopia, China responded to overtures from a partner determined to build a robust relationship aimed at driving its industrial development strategy. To be sure, aspects of China's engagement in the Horn such as some of its lending practices and the upgrading of the PLA Support Base warrant concern, vigilance, and imaginative policy responses. The "U.S. Strategy for Africa" signed into law by President Donald Trump in December 2018 would seem to be a promising step in the right direction, in that it aims to advance trade and commercial ties with key African states, prioritizes foreign assistance, and seeks to maintain the U.S. as the preferred security partner in Africa. However, for this strategy to be shaped and applied in the Horn of Africa in a manner that boosts the prospects for peace, stability, and development requires more than just bold proclamations. What is needed is concrete action, a generous allocation of resources, a renewed emphasis on multilateral cooperation, a firm commitment to help temper rather than turn a blind eye to or further inflame intra-Gulf rivalries, and a willingness to explore opportunities to work together with China.¹

Geopolitical contestations and port infrastructure competition among regional and international actors are a new phenomenon, particularly the latter, which is crucial to our understanding in the dawn of deepening globalization and the advance of science and technology. The development of the Berbera Corridor is one of the most debatable agendas in local and regional forums. Berbera development encompasses a wide variety of development packages that are expected to change the situations involving the livelihoods of the Somaliland people and affect all states and people in the region. This infrastructural development is intertwined with geopolitics, trade, and cultural exchange. It provides opportunities for states, businesses, and communities and helps improve people's lives in the region. Furthermore, it offers political and economic opportunities to countries investing in infrastructures, as some may reshape their national interests in strategic regions, such as the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere in the world².

¹ Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

² Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

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The contemporary modernisation of African port infrastructures in the context of the global logistic revolution changes the way in which urban futures are envisaged, realigning past, present and future in novel ways that align to the logistic language of connections, networks, nodes and mobilities. However, whilst end points often imply a loss of certainty, as outlined in the introduction to this special issue, we found that infrastructure developments are rather fostering dreams of a better future and are accompanied by optimism and the hope that the deep ontological insecurity that structures the everyday of many urban residents in the Horn of Africa, are eventually coming to an end.¹

Preserving the peace and stability of the Horn is extremely important. Therefore, perhaps instead of establishing military bases, the regional states and the foreign countries should tackle other factors, such as the youth bulge unemployment and poverty alleviation, which could jeopardize regional stability in the long term².

There have been a series of substantial improvements in Ethiopia-Somaliland relations, and economic and impartial trade relations could lead the two countries and their respective peoples to a more inclusive development based on the mutual interests of the two states and societies. However, negotiations should mainly focus on the long-term benefits for the two countries. Indeed, the two countries are enthusiastic to collaborate in different areas and on the economic and security fronts, which could make the Horn a peaceful, stable, and prosperous region³.

The perils :

The peace agreement in neighboring Ethiopia, which brought an end to the war in Tigray, resulted in increased activity in the Djibouti port. The economic outlook looks promising, although Djibouti's dependence on rents from military bases and the existence of an important international port makes it rather vulnerable to the unpredictability of international development, for example, regarding the war in Ukraine and the war in Tigray. According to the International Monetary Fund delegation that visited Djibouti in early 2023, Djibouti must respond to these trends by opening space for more inclusive and job-rich growth⁴.

The arrival of the Chinese in the Horn of Africa is not only a threat to America's interests in Africa but also increases the political and security vulnerability of the regional states by bringing hostile and contending powers.⁵

"Although the Red Sea is still one of the World's least ecologically damaged bodies of water, the number and scale of threats to its environment are growing, and current data on its status remain scarce" (UN Office for Project Services). Like other marine ecosystems that have extensive coral reefs, the Red Sea marine environment is fragile. Vessel traffic through the Suez

¹ May Darwich and Jutta Bakonyi, "Port Infrastructures and the Making of Historical Time in the Horn of Africa: Narratives of Urban Modernity in Djibouti and Somaliland," *Cities* 159 (2025): 105781, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.105781>.

² Jan Záhorký and Aleksí Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

³ Záhorký, Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

⁴ Záhorký, Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

⁵ Záhorký, Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

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Canal and from oil terminals along the Red Sea coast pose a serious threat to the marine environment, living resources, and tourism.¹

In addition to these bases, the Emirates have been behind the rapprochement of Ethiopia-Eritrea's longstanding border conflict.² This kind of practice will root out illegal trade between the two countries, which hampers the economies of the two countries. Translating these initiatives into action will serve as a bridge that would expand state revenues on one hand and income generation for the unemployed youth, on the other hand, to escape the tragic situation of unemployment in a country excluded from the international community.

¹ Chris Carleton and Clive Schofield, *Developments in the Technical Determination of Maritime Space: Charts, Datums, Baselines, Maritime Zones and Limits*, Maritime Briefings, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Durham: International Boundaries Research Unit, University of Durham, 2001), 18.

² Záhorkík ,Ylönen,*The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, the Horn of Africa can be understood as a site of structural contradiction, particularly when examined through its geopolitical significance in the context of accelerating global transformations, including the global energy transition and the increasing strategic value of global chokepoints. Despite this positioning, the region captures only a limited share of the benefits generated by these global dynamics.

Internally and historically, regional fragility has contributed to persistent instability, characterised by recurrent turbulences, the predominance of political marketplace dynamics, and enduring challenges of state-building that must overflow to the surface. These conditions have, in turn, created fertile ground for external involvement and intervention.

Interventions in the Horn have taken changes in forms, yet they consistently reflect broader shifts in global power relations and strategic interests. While often justified through development or stabilisation objectives, they tend to combine traditional instruments of hard power with large-scale infrastructure and investment projects that align more closely with the priorities of external actors than with long-term domestic sustainability.

Ultimately, it is misleading to conceptualise intervention in purely positive or developmental terms when it directly engages with the core principles of sovereignty. For the Horn of Africa, the central challenge lies in strengthening internal resilience, reinforcing state capacities, and critically reassessing the terms under which external engagement is accepted and governed, including mechanisms of accountability and restraint.

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Section one : Comparative case studies of the Horn of Africa

The second part of our research aims to size future prospects of the region , based on analyzing the structural particularities of every state in the HoA. A fine line, will explain how the gate was opened to the intense exogenous interventions in the region, then we move to the repercussions that clearly differ from one state to another.

The international centre stage has experienced substantial transformations in the last two decades, with significant consequences for the foreign policy of small states. Presently, small governments have a greater global reputation and prominence compared to the previous period in history.¹ While decolonization of Africa marked the formal end of Europe's dominant security role in the affairs of the Horn of Africa, the former colonial powers maintained important security relations in the region and even a military presence, notably the French forces in Djibouti and the British military in Kenya. However, from the 1950s it was increasingly the USA and then the Soviet Union that emerged as the pre-eminent external security actors in the Horn².

The Dichotomy of The Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa is a region that witnessed strife and conflict. The postcolonial history of the Horn is a tragic tale of endemic social conflict and political fragmentation. Being one of the most strategic geopolitical regions in the world, the states in the region and Africa, in general, have shown poor economic performance, which has led them to be among the least developed countries in recorded history. The root causes of the Horn's conflicts and fragility are multifaceted and lack any single explanation and logical point of analysis. However, when the political landscape and dynamics of the region are examined, It shows that the problems in the region have two major dichotomies : its diversity, ethnicity and religion, and the presence of both untapped and scarce natural resources. The region's problems also have a geopolitical dimension, such as its geographic significance and proximity to one of the most volatile regions in the world, the Middle East.³

The political dynamics of the Horn of Africa are interwoven with the history of the region. Somalia and Ethiopia have had an uneasy and confrontational relationship that emanates from Somalia's claim over the Somali region in Ethiopia. This led Somalia's military government to go to war against Ethiopia. The situation changed when the military governments of the two countries were ended by armed movements. As a result of that, the two communities interacted

¹ Macharia Munene, "The Horn of Africa in 2023: A Geopolitical Analysis," *Horn Bulletin*, Vol. VI, no. 1 (January–February 2023), Horn International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2023, <https://horninstitute.org/the-horn-of-africa-in-2023-a-geopolitical-analysis/>.

² Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region* (SIPRI Background Paper, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp1904.pdf>.

³ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

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after 1991, when many Somali citizens settled in various parts of Ethiopia as refugees. However, the anti-Ethiopia sentiment remains in the hearts of the Somali citizens, including Somaliland people. This is true when we observe and analyze the reaction of the Somaliland citizens following the announcement of Ethiopia's 19% stake in Berbera Port. Many Somaliland citizens viewed this move as Ethiopia exerting its geostrategic dominance over Somaliland. However, the Somaliland Government later announced that Ethiopia had lost 19% of its stake in the Port over a failure to fulfill the conditions required to complete the ownership deal¹.

Tribalism also remains the most important influence on daily life in the Horn of Africa. It is impossible to accurately consider the impact of tribalism or other societal and political frameworks in Djibouti without considering its three neighboring countries in the HoA. While each country can claim a unique perspective and reflection of their own national character, the intrinsically shared and overlapping tribal culture and history of all four countries shapes the actions and interactions within each. Though modern-day governmental systems in each country attempt to rise above ancient tribal affiliations, feuds, and pecking orders, those who hold power at the highest echelons of government within each country from prime ministers and presidents to parliamentarians to military leaders each country is impacted and influenced by their individual tribal histories and affiliations. It is the very lens through which they view life and one another².

What is called the concept of BIFURCATED STATE is the most relatable key descriptive term , since the colonial state was in every instance a historical formation . Yet its structure everywhere came to share certain fundamental features. thus the organization and re-organizatuion of the colonial state was a response to central dilemma : **the native question**. A question that imposes itself; how can a tiny and foreign minority rule over an indigenous majority? There two braod answers : direct and indirect rule³. Highlighting that a chaos is invitable during this process and its dynamics.

¹ Záhorkík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

² Shaul M. Gabbay, "Impact of Tribal Influence on Djibouti Society," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 8, no. 3 (July–September 2020): 11, <https://www.researchpublish.com/upload/book/paperpdf-1593694419.pdf>.

³ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

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DJIBOUTI

The gate of the Horn : The political economy of Djibouti in a shifting regional context

« A country limited in size and resources, with a heavy foreign presence by hosting several international bases » is the typical phrase that is said about Djibouti, however its critical geopolitical and geoeconomic significance, it remains one of the most understudied countries in the region. Through this study case, We aim to collect genuine prospects that reflect the future of the country and the region in overall ; and to extract the repercussions of the external presence in various dimensions given of the unique nature of the state, as for the state's distinctive structural, historical and the political economy of the port nation. Equally important, we will be tackling the state-building process, that is interrupted by intra conflict, ethnicities and the conduct of the political market place that we expanded in previously, and we seek to find a way to overcome the situation. As Djibouti is one stone ahead of a political transition, the dynamics of the past and present are likely to affect this transitional phase in a post-IOG Djibouti.

The golden chance Djibouti is witnessing in 2026, The central figure of modern day Djibouti, the president Ismail Omar Guelleh (also known as IOG) is barred from standing in the upcoming 2026 elections due to the age limit of 75 years for presidential candidates. Since 1999, politics have been dominated by IOG, who won a fifth term in April 2021, without meaningful opposition to the presidency, While a constitutional amendment removed term limits already in 2010. Since the 2021 polls, IOG has repeatedly stated that he won't seek another term. Thus, Djibouti will inevitably transition into a post-IOG area. After more than 25 years of rule by the People's Rally for Progress (Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progrès, RPP) under IOG's leadership, the country's political path is shrouded in uncertainty¹, new actors may seize their chance to emerge. Noting that Djibouti domestic affairs are deeply and entirely affected by international and regional changes the region is witnessing, the same could be said of its foreign policy, which could either undergo significant change or continue along its existing trajectory.

What fosters the expected transition , is Djibouti's 2030 vision that plans for a transition toward a less port-dependent economic model². As its facing an inability and a failure in meeting the growing demands of a rapidly urbanizing population, critical challenges are faced in providing energy needs despite the geothermal resources. However a visible change remains behind expectations but very expected.

¹ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

² Republic of Djibouti, *Vision Djibouti 2035: A Desired Future* (Djibouti City: Republic of Djibouti, 2014), 1-118p, [Djibouti 2035 PDF](#)

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The main factors that can induce changes at the policy level as for the desired shift are :

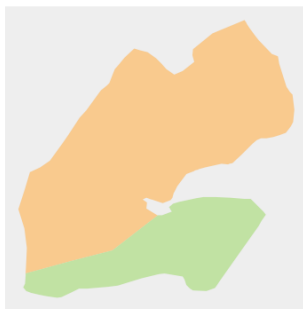
- The state-society relations .
- Djibouti's economic model .

As for Large-scale investments in thermal energy could potentially turn the tide and transform Djibouti, thus far merely a small port nation, into something else¹. Furthermore factors like governance structure and policy making are the determining factors that conclude if such potential can be reached.

History, people and ethnicity :

Djibouti, A former French colony, gained independence on June 27, 1977. Djibouti's recent history shows a tangible interconnectivity between local and global affairs.² Equally interesting has been Djibouti's internal political development centered around the clash between the two ethnic groups, the Afars and the Somali Issa clan. Moreover, Djibouti became a member of the Arab League only two months after gaining its independence which clearly approved its status as a connecting point between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.³

Figure 8 . *Map of Ethnic groups in Djibouti During 1978-2021.*



Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Afar	15 884	Regional & urban
Issaas (Somali)	5549	Regional & urban

Source : ETH Zürich, International Conflict Research (ICR), Djibouti (GROWup Atlas).⁴

Djibouti is a tribal society populated with 60 percent Somali Issa clan and percent Afar clan. Historically, besides the Afars and Issas, the Yemeni Arabs have formed the third largest group in Djibouti⁵. Other tribes, such as the Gadabuursi, have numbers too small to represent in percentages, as they make less than 1% each. These percentages reflect numerical divisions; they do not, however, reflect the ancient histories and world views that are the substrate beneath

¹ Záhořík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

² Záhořík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*, 119.

³ Záhořík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*, 119.

⁴ ETH Zürich, International Conflict Research (ICR), *Djibouti* (GROWup Atlas), accessed May 30, 2026, <https://growup.ethz.ch/atlas/pdf/Djibouti.pdf>.

⁵ Záhořík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*, 119.

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each clan that contributes to many of Djibouti's modern day rivalries. They also do not reflect fair percentages of available resources. For instance, the Gadabuursi are not given free education, nor are they allowed to join the military¹, the latter constituting a significant avenue for socioeconomic advancement and long-term career opportunities .

Somali Issa The Somali are a sub-tribe of the larger Dir clan which stretches across huge swaths of eastern Africa, including Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. Since The Somali-speaking Issas have been migrating from northern Somalia to what is now Djibouti due to the construction of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway, which was officially inaugurated in 1917². Like the majority of other African tribes, the Somali are split among several African countries. They have a long history as nomadic cattle herders, yet today three-quarters Djibouti's Somali Issa clan live in the urbanized center of the country's capital city, also named Djibouti. When the country first gained independence, the Somali Issa fought hard to join their country with Somalia, which would award them an overwhelming majority. Despite the fact they failed to accomplish this mission, they still retained the majority population of Djibouti, and have consistently held positions of powers in all areas of government and military.

As stated, The Issa branch of the tribe represents the largest ethnic group in Djibouti, we mention that Their violent past has colored their present behavior, as Somali Issa have been characterized as being *“constantly involved in blood feuds with other tribes and peoples.”* This certainly holds true in Djibouti, where Somali historian I.M. Lewis once referred to the situation as *an almost constant state of enmity between the « Ise » and the « Afar »*.³

The Afar tribespeople are pastoralists whose homeland has been split repeatedly by founders of modern nation states, and whose leaders divided the Afar population unequally between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti. Today, approximately 1.8 million Afar live in Ethiopia; 335,000 live in Djibouti, and based on unconfirmed estimates, 105,000, in Eritrea. In the three countries where they remain today, the Afar hold the greatest power in Djibouti⁴. as Afar have traditionally been marginalized by a Somali Issa led government that has allotted them minimal access to positions of power and have at times limited the most basic services. Afars are highly concentrated in the north of the country and have been politically and military at odds with the Somali-Issa led government at different times, notably so when Afars initiated a civil war that lasted from 1991 to 1994. The Afar are tough and able warriors, and their warrior skills expanded as a result of their many years of fighting with colonial powers, chief among them Italians in Ethiopia, through whom the Issa clan gained access to weapons, military training, and trade. This gave them incredible power to compete with Somali Issa tribes after Djibouti gained independence, as the Afar were ready to step up and rule the country. Though the Afar

¹Shaul M. Gabbay, “Impact of Tribal Influence on Djibouti Society,” *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 8, no. 3 (July–September 2020): 11, <https://www.researchpublish.com/upload/book/paperpdf-1593694419.pdf>.

I. M. Lewis (1925–2020) is a British anthropologist and historian specializing in the Horn of Africa.

² Jan Záhorský and Aleksí Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

³ Shaul M. Gabbay, “Impact of Tribal Influence on Djibouti Society,” *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 8, no. 3 (July–September 2020): 11, <https://www.researchpublish.com/upload/book/paperpdf-1593694419.pdf>.

⁴ Gabbay, “Impact of Tribal Influence on Djibouti Society,” 11.

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failed to take political power and have not held high political positions, they hold far greater sway than other, less represented tribes¹.

A multiethnic and multilingual country where the two major ethnic groups, Issa and Afar, compete over access to resources and power, adding a different layer of complexity to governance relations. Reflecting the official policy of denying the existence of interethnic issues, more nuanced data on the ethnolinguistic composition of the Djiboutian population is hard to come by. In precolonial times, Djibouti was inhabited by various Afar clans in the north and Issa-Somali clans in the south. Significantly, the Second General Census of 2009 contained a question on ethno-cultural affiliation, but the results were never made public. Contrary to Ethiopia, where ethnicity serves as the basis for the organization of the federation, Djibouti is a unitary state.²

We primarily conclude that, Power asymmetries between the two clans can be detected from embryonic formation of Djibouti. before that, a series of referendums marked the political maelstrom that reflected the outdated opposition between the two communities. the 1958 and 1967 referendums favored continued association with France, largely due to Afar and European support, while most Somalis declared their loyalty to Somalia's union. Resulted of the 1967 vote, French Somaliland was renamed *the territory of the Afars and Issas* institutionalizing the territory's ethnic and political divide. French colonial rulers preferred the Afars, the postindependence era brought a significant change, with the Somali Issas forming a government with Hassan Gouled Aptidon as the first President of Djibouti. President Aptidon was the leader of the *Ligue Populaire Africaine pour l'Indépendance*, while the Secretary-General of the party, Ahmad Dini, an Afar, was named Prime Minister. However, it was the President who kept most of the powers in his hands, restricting the country to a one-party political system and ruling the state through presidential decrees due to the absence of a formal constitution³. Since then, the seeds of a political market place were planted and the power switch was far from any reliance on constitutional institutions but brutally transactions business.

Djibouti's political landscape new several changes even after , In early 1992, the government decided to permit multiple party politics and agreed to the registration of four political parties: FRUD, National Democratic Party (PND), Democratic Renewal Party (PRD), and People's Rally for Progress (RPP)⁴. This system functions through a combination of brutal repression, skilled manipulation, and co-option of selected non-Issa-Mamasen Gadabourisi, Afar, and Arab politicians into the regime to satisfy their socioeconomic interests and prevent the emergence of a unified opposition. Challenges to the rule of Djibouti's presidents have been scarce after the decline of the FRUD insurgency.⁵ Such a spiral of violence helps widening the division lines inherited from the colonial legacy, between the two clans . Moving to today's political economy of Djibouti, that is largely the result of the struggle for independence . With the growth

¹ Gabbay, "Impact of Tribal Influence on Djibouti Society," 11.

² Jan Záhorkík and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023), 119.

³ Záhorkík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*, 119.

⁴ Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, *Djibouti Country Handbook* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, January 19, 2014), <https://info.publicintelligence.net/MCIA-DjiboutiHandbook.pdf>.

⁵ Essien Ukpe, *Relics of Colonialism: An Introduction to African Politics* (Lagos, Nigeria: Robertminder International Limited, 2024), 16.

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of Djibouti-Ville, competition for employment in the harbor and administration intensified and became ethnically charged, leading to growing tensions since 1949 between different Somali clans, as well as among Somali, Afar, Yemini, and Omani groups¹, as they vied for employment in the harbor, administration, and trade, after they had very limited interactions in rural areas and small towns. Maybe little is known about the interethnic relationships in Djibouti , but what is confirmed is that economic opportunities flow ethnc issues to the surface .

In 1981, President Hassan Gouled Aptidon transformed Djibouti into a one-party state by declaring his party, the Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progrès (RPP) (People's Rally for Progress), as the sole legal political entity. A civil war erupted in 1991 between the government and the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), mainly composed of Afar rebels. The conflict concluded with a peace agreement in December 1994, leading to FRUD members joining the government, and the FRUD supporting the RPP in the 1999 presidential elections. Aptidon resigned in 1999 after serving five terms, was succeeded by his nephew, Ismail Omar Guelleh. Under President Guelleh's leadership, a final peace accord was signed in May 2001, officially ending the decade-long civil war with the FRUD. Guelleh won re-election in 2005 with the support of a multi-party coalition, including the FRUD, amid opposition boycott. Political power sharing between a Somali president and an Afar prime minister was established, although Issa Somalis predominated in government and the ruling party. This imbalance, coupled with a lack of non-governmental employment opportunities, fueled ongoing political tension between Issa Somalis and Afars².

With the changing global political landscape and the move toward multipolarity, French dominance is not so evident anymore and Djibouti has become a magnet for foreign military and shipping companies³.

Another scene to watch the social division in the economic landscape, Djibouti's economic growth, while improving, remains hampered by its "heavily personalized, patronage-based policy that reflects the countries social divisions. A small, highly educated ,and equally highly paid ,elite class of civil servants made up largely of Somali Issa tribespeople rules the country⁴. The government of Djibouti established a sovereign political system that existed in a very fragile neighborhood of war-torn Ethiopia, Somalia, and in the neighbor hood of the Arab Peninsula. These actors in one way or another kept influencing Djibouti's role in the region up to this day, espeavillay the yemeni minority presented a solid ground for The marketplace.⁵

¹ Ukpe, *Relics of Colonialism*, 16.

²Essien Ukpe, *Relics of Colonialism: An Introduction to African Politics* (Lagos, Nigeria: Robertminder International Limited, 2024), 16.

³ Jan Záhořík and Aleksí Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

⁴ Shaul M. Gabbay, "Impact of Tribal Influence on Djibouti Society," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 8, no. 3 (July–September 2020): 1-7, <https://www.researchpublish.com/upload/book/paperpdf-1593694419.pdf>.

⁵ Záhořík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

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Repercussions :

Repeated rumors about the health of the President since 2021 were potentially the first indication of the beginning of a transition period characterized by power struggles among competing factions within the ruling elite. Thus far, IOG has been a guarantee for stability; together with the geo-strategic position, Djibouti will undoubtedly continue to serve as a central host nation of foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea. However, interethnic and interclan rivalries and conflicts permeate the whole political and socioeconomic life in Djibouti. They are not openly and officially addressed under the political dominance of the Issa elite, who are the beneficiaries of the unitary presidential autocracy controlling Djibouti since its independence from France in 1977. This is one central issue that could actually affect the stability of Djibouti in the medium term. Historically, Djibouti was politically dominated by the Afar, who have been sidelined for the past 50-odd years. With the inevitable withdrawal of IOG from the political scene and an unclear succession strategy for the ruling UMP coalition, political realities could change once more. There seems to be little hope that these conflicts and rivalries will find a positive resolution in the foreseeable future.¹

With the changing global political landscape and the move toward multipolarity, French dominance is not so evident anymore and Djibouti has become a magnet for foreign military and shipping companies². This plan goes well in line with the construction of ports and terminals, now six in total : the historic Port of Djibouti, Tadjourah, Doraleh Multipurpose Port, Ghou bet, Damerjog, and the Société de Gestion du Terminal à conteneurs de Doraleh. In the words of the World Bank : ***“Djibouti’s economy is driven by a state-of-the-art port complex, among the most sophisticated in the world.”***

Djibouti is also the seat of the IGAD, the regional organization joining together states from the broader Horn of Africa. IGAD’s Vision 2050 had the ambition of turning the Horn of Africa into an “upper middle-income economy and an industrialized region to serve as a continental beacon of regional peace, stability, and security by 2050.” Particularly, the issues of peace and security will be difficult to manage, given the fact that many ongoing wars or latent conflicts can be seen within the IGAD member states. In this case, however, Djibouti can play the role of a “peacemaker” due to its “smallness” as well as its diplomatic potential, and its history of relative stability compared to other IGAD member states.³

As In the last 20 years, Djibouti has increased its potential and role in the international arena, “Vision Djibouti 2035” is an ambitious project hailed by multilateral donors; however, the regional environment in which Djibouti operates and exists is far from stable, as attested by the waves of migrants going through Djibouti, the conflict-ridden neighbors, and the regional rivalries between the major states⁴. The best way to face may lead us to think of Djibouti in more or less a similar way as Qatar and the UAE, with their long-term strategy of “overcoming smallness.” Djibouti, with a negligible territory and population size, has focused on constructing

¹ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

² Záhorký and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

³ Záhorký and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*, 124.

⁴ Záhorký and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*, 125.

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not only a “rentier state” living off rents from the ports and military bases but also on acting as an important business hub through its strategic position in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea area, full of competing rivals such as the UAE, Somaliland, and Saudi Arabia. Of course, Djibouti is not comparable to Qatar and the UAE in terms of economic performance, GDP per capita, or standard of living, but its trajectory from a sandy outpost used for French military purposes to a thriving business hub gaining significance in international trade is remarkable¹. Through this duality, it can benefit from the current reality , if it Invested the rent in state building process .that much its ambition become a place comparable to Dubai on African soil, which can be realized with proper sustain ability planning, inclusive policies, and the diversification of resources.

Repercussions of external presence :

Djibouti’s political economy is predominantly rent-based, drawing heavily on revenues generated through the hosting of foreign military bases and sustained inflows of external financial assistance, A model that has increasignly raised concerns regarding debt-trap diplomacy and structural dependency turmoil. However, this legacy has been profitable generation more than 125 million Dollars annually in lease revenue. It has also positioned djibouti at the center of global security networks. Yet, the costs are evident : dependency on external actor risks limiting economic diversification, And the persistence of foreign entitlements recalls colonial-style aarrangements. Djibouti benefits from strategic rents , but its sovereignty and long-term rsilience remain tethered to the shifting priorities of great powers.²

It’s worth mentioning that foreign military presence has improved Djibouti’s infrstructure and revenues, by both international and regional who implement giant investments and economic projects we mapped previously. Such initiatives have imposed environmental and social costs especially in threatening fragile Red Sea ecosystems. These challenges risk creating a militarized enclave economy, where state revenues grow but local communities bear the burden. The upside is that base related investments in ports roads and power grids can serve dual civilian and military purposes. Yet without robust regulation and redistribution , the imbalance will persist. Djibouti has successfully monetized its geography, but unless environmental safeguards and social investements are built into future agreements , militarization could erode legitimacy and deepen inequality .³

A very crucial impact is ver negelcted if not untalked about, which is the understanding of humanistic impact of foreign military bases on the citizenry of the host country requires a smooth shift from national to human security. The presence of over five military installations in a small country located in avolatil geo-strategic region is a pressing isse to discuss. foreign military presence on host soil breeds tension among citizens of the occupied country , as well

¹ Záhořík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*, 125.

² Mashariki Research Center, *Future Trajectories of Great Power Competition in Djibouti: A Case Study of Military Bases and Maritime Strategy* (Mashariki Research Center, 2023), <https://masharikirpc.org/future-trajectories-of-great-power-competition-in-djibouti-a-case-study-of-military-bases-and-maritime-strategy/>

³ Mashariki Research Center, *Future Trajectories of Great Power Competition in Djibouti*.

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as the observers around the world¹. We add, the proximity of these camps is inevitably going to raise tension in the small country , the kind of tensions that have no limit to the impact it will have on the citizenry.

Furthermore, a possible outcome of the establishment of a Chinese military base in Djibouti is that it can be translated that Djibouti stands with China on international political matters making Djibouti a target country by countries that are not in friendly relations with China or better put anti-Chinese countries. When Cuba sided with the defunct USSR and allowed it to establish a missile base, it automatically became a concern for the United States. There is no doubt that Djibouti has not been able to effectively generate revenue from its citizens for the smooth running of its affairs. It has had a heavy reliance on external sources to generate revenue in exchange for territory for rent seems to be a favorable trade. In this context , the government of Djibouti should make efforts to ensure the protection of the life and security of its citizens when entering into agreements with other countries for the establishment of bases within its territory.²

The existence of foreign bases certainly supports the ruling regime; however, the degree to which the strategy benefits citizens depends on the distance of the person from the ruler and other aspects, which requires closer investigation. Although the majority of citizens may not wish any rebels to disrupt their daily life, since the ability to pose a threat to the government, the “threat capabilities” are directly related to the bargaining power of the group/ big power imbalance with these opposition groups may have longer term repercussions, such as another civil war.

The militaries stationed in Djibouti have no obligation to explain their operations to the Djibouti government. Some of the US missions include drone strikes in the Middle East as well as the Horn of Africa region. Since Djibouti hosts foreign troops, it could be argued that they are partially responsible for the military action of these troops. Therefore, the country risks being a target of retaliation. Indeed, the explosion in Djibouti city in 2014 was carried out by al-Shabab, who claimed dissatisfaction at the French providing training to the Djibouti army to fight in Somalia. Similarly, during the presidential election of 2021, Al-Shabab expressed discontent towards the regime under president Guelleh, which it claimed had turned Djibouti into "a military base from where every war against the Muslims in East Africa is planned and executed".When considering the risk of retaliation, the interests of policymakers and citizens are aligned. If the Djiboutian government is seen as being responsible for the actions of foreign troops, the Djiboutian citizens can also be targeted.

The presence of foreign militaries has had a positive impact in terms of security and national stability. However, the number of countries stationed in Djibouti has increased since 2011, and since the establishment of the Chinese base in 2017, the US-China rivalry has caused several disputes. In addition, depending on the type of operation implemented from those bases, there

¹ Kester C. Onor, “Human Security Implications of Foreign Military Bases in Djibouti,” *JPPUMA: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan dan Sosial Politik UMA* 11, no. 2 (2023): 16, <https://doi.org/10.31289/jppuma.v11i2.10715>.

² Kester C. Onor, “Human Security Implications of Foreign Military Bases in Djibouti,” *JPPUMA: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan dan Sosial Politik UMA* 11, no. 2 (2023): 16, <https://doi.org/10.31289/jppuma.v11i2.10715>.

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is a risk of retaliation against Djibouti itself. Therefore, close attention must be paid to determine whether hosting foreign bases will negatively affect future security or not.

That hosting military bases has great economic significance for the current administration. Revenues derived from leasing military bases accounted for 18% of the government's total revenue in 2020. In addition, donations, such as grant assistance, are closely related to the stationing of foreign military bases, and the amount of donations account for 10 to 20% of the Djiboutian government's revenue and donations. China's investment mostly takes the form of private-based loans rather than grants ; however, the investments provide the infrastructure that Djibouti has long wanted. The scale and speed of Chinese investment is overwhelming other investors. However, the amount of debt from China (including private companies) has accumulated rapidly, which presents significant burdens on the future repayments

The Djiboutian economy could achieve steady growth. The country's GDP was 1.4 billion USD in 2012, and more than doubled to 3.4 billion USD in 2020. One cannot attribute all this growth to the foreign military bases but, as mentioned above, they do have a positive effect on the peace and stability of the country and attract large donations and loans. Therefore, hosting the bases has contributed significantly to economic development.¹

¹ Kanako Masuda, *Competition of Foreign Military Bases and the Survival Strategies of Djibouti*, Knowledge Report No. 8 (Tokyo: JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.18884/0002000094>.

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ERITREA : A MUSEUM OF MODERNISM AND MILITIRAZATION

In the 1930s, Asmara was Africa's most modern city, and today the physical fabric of Eritrea's capital city is still the most modernist. When the Dergue was overthrown in 1991 and the city was opened up to foreign visitors, architectural historians were astonished and delighted to find one of the world's finest concentrations of modernist buildings in the world. Urban Eritreans are hugely proud of their city. Among those who treasured its fine boulevards and architectural delights was President Isaias Afewerki. An irony of Eritreans' adoration of Asmara is that the city was built by Mussolini's Fascists for Italian settlers, and Eritreans were not part of it¹.

A concise historical examination of Eritrea's trajectory from struggling for liberation to the post-independence era, we highlight the central role played by Isias Afwerki in shaping the country's political path through the enduring influence of his authoritarian governance and state-building strategies. The independence war did not begin initially in Asmara, not with its industrial workers and educated bourgeoisie. However, It began in the low-lands where the common cause was made by both radical students and the discontented leaders of Muslim communities. The Eritrean Liberation Front (**ELF**) was their vehicle after its foundation in Cairo in 1960, organizationally modelled on the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale. In 1970 , The Eritreans People's Liberation Front (**EPLF**) was set up by more radical elements in the ELF , among them **Isias Afwerki**. The oppositon of the two fronts shows that The EPLF was a rigorously vanguardist organization, drawing upon the Marxist-Leninism so prominent in those years, and became later the sole effective military opposition a decade later².

Whoever wrote about Eritrea wonderd and even debated whether The EPLF was ideological, nationalist or pragmatic. Simply answering, it was all of the above. Most importantly the description is unnecessecary as long as the political culture was based on sacrifice, nationalism, modernism and military values (that will shape the garrison state later) . Such a combination is what enabled the front to survive during times Alex du waal decribed *even the stones was burning*³ . As a matter of a sad fact that resume the situation at its micro-level, according to Michael Mahrt , the protracted war was « the happening things » , and every battle of mass killings wasnt counted among the liberation struggle but the outdated living conditions of their area⁴. The above was the historical accounts of banditary , rebellion and conflict in Eritrea and Ethiopa , that had the largest effect in turning modern Eritrea to a spiral political market place. A very brief Eritrean trajectory glimpse way give the appropriate arguments in directing the country to the military path.

Militarized developmetal state and state-building :

¹ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

² de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa* .

³ de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa* .

⁴ de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*.

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As cleared above, the EPLF took the rule of Eritrean after their military victory, and they inspired to build a whole modern nation. the means they intended to use were mass mobilization and vanguard state capitalism , with self-reliance added ¹. Its project was not far from a state-building model of european in the 19's century. Later on, Eritrea knew a turning point .

Three pillars, the EPLF sought for to embedded the nation. The first one is launching a nationl service in the army, in order to inculcate the values of sacrifice and national pride into the wider population, The same values that helped achieving victory against all odds. Also it was also a mean of mobilizing labour for infrstructural projects that young Eritreans was ready for. Second, capitalism but with party and state in a dominant position, as their economy was almsot non-exsitent and government finances relied on aid and remittances from the dynamic diaspora and the red sea trading cooperation, this can be seen as the primarily intervention attempts especially that they finance dits weaponry. Thirdly we mention the establishment of Hidri Trust as a corporate umbrella for the red sea trading cooperation which maintained secret off-shore accounts, also it was purged shortly afterwards on the pretext of weeding out corruption. It was in this nexus between party, commerce and finance that the first shadows were cast over the nature of the Eritrean state².

Isias afwerki and the shadowy economy :

Not once since its creation has the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) published a budget: in its first few years this may have been understandable in light of the need to build all institutions from scratch, but its opacity thickened rather than lightened over the following year. Eritreans have speculated over the reason, and one likely factor is that formalizing the institutions of government would have demanded some transparency in financial affairs. Eritreans have seen neither budget nor constitution since then though in 2014 Isaias announced plans for a new constitution.

Focusing on the shadowy economy is not highlighting the political market place affairs and transactions only , but to help understand its further dimensions as it contributed to the first tensions with Ethiopia For six and a half years from 1991, the two countries shared the same currency, but Eritrea set an exchange rate that allowed it to attract a disproportionate amount of the foreign currency flowing to the two, The fact that Eritrean businesspeople had a prominent role in the Ethiopian economy, especially in Addis Ababa, generated both economic imbalances and political sus- pitions. When Eritrea introduced its own currency, the nakfa, in 1997, Ethiopia simultaneously carried out a surprise and short-notice change in its banknotes, leaving the Eritrean central bank with millions of Ethiopian birr that were suddenly worthless.³

It is worth underscoring that, Eritrea's regional policy was militaristic under Isaias's rule who confronted Sudan in 1994 and Djibouti and Yemen in 1996, In October that year, Eritrean generals joined in the planning of the Rwanda-led operation to remove Mobutu Sese Seko, and dispatched commandos and politi-cal advisors to the Congolese rebels. Following that rapid

¹ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

² de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*.

³ de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*.

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victory, Isaias is reputed to have said that his army could march all the way to South Africa. He considered himself the natural leader of the region.

Isaias miscalculated many of his choices, Whatever errors he made in the first seven years after liberation were as nothing compared to the blunder of the war with Ethiopia and its aftermath. After its encroachments in Badme in May 1998, The Ethiopian army went on to overrun the EDF on several fronts. It was a personal humiliation for Isaias, who was on the point of abandoning Asmara and repeating the EPLF's 1978 « strategic withdrawal » to the mountains of Sahel." For reasons that have never been fully clear, Meles ordered his commanders to halt, and Isaias survived.¹

To maintain himself in power, after he waged war and lost it which brought poisonous rancour into politics, however not necessarily regime change, Isias Afwerki adopted a political business strategy that successfully met his aspirations in maintaining his defenses against Ethiopia. Paralell to the shadowy economy strategy, the conduct of politics was opaque too, the adopted model was meant to tightly controlling political Business, extracting political finance from illicit activities (mostly transitional) and using that money only for the army, not even including patronage. We can say that the political market place in Eritera was operating under a garrison state.

Apart from turning Eritrea into a garrison state, an enabling factor was Isaias' growing fear of Ethiopia. This process was accompanied with obligatory national service, a national education system that serves the surveillance of young people to ensure their entry into the arm.

The interventions found ground when a huge attention was directed to find efficient ways of obtaining money particularly hard currency, furthermore a total centralized control over how it was spent and by who, mainly the PFDJ. The regime's reliance on external financial networks as for the opaque economic system established intertwined foreign interventions in Eritrea through infrastructure project, ports investments, and military base agreements along the strategically important Red Sea corridor. The illicit activities committed by PFDJ members include money-laundering and arms trafficking, and obtaining payouts from foreign patrons that was worth hundreds of millions dollars. Short an economic penetration that shapes the country's geopolitical orientation. We can miss that those illicit activities was financed by othe countries.

We can miss that those illicit activities was financed by other countries. However, a political market analysis would require us to ask whether this is the right way round : it is equally plausible that serving as a regional insurgent generated illicit rents that kept Isaias's political and security budgets solvent. The US Embassy in Asmara identified the 'regional sugar daddies' as Libya, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and 'various wealthy individuals', adding that 'the GSE has purportedly been offered financial pledges from the above-listed donors tied to anti-Ethiopian activity in Somalia and within Ethiopia proper'. These investigations show money coming in and insurgents coming out, but reveal little about

¹ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

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how they are connected internally within Eritrea, and do not explain the rationale for this political-business management strategy¹.

Dan Connell has described Isaias's strategy as beginning with the premise: 'drawn from long experience of manipulation and betrayal, that if you trust no one, you can ally with anyone. There are no bad allies, only ineffective ones.

The seeds of a rentier political market place :

Isaias's model is an extreme and fascinating experiment in the separation of money from political business. However, this experiment began to break down and the strategy had to change. Eritrea was moving towards a more conventional rentier political marketplace system. The marketization of Isaias's strategy began when he started allowing generals to exploit illicit commercial opportunities in return for their loyalty². The passage demonstrates how Eritrea gradually shifted from a revolutionary ideological state toward a rent based political system in which loyalty was secured through economic patronage and access to illicit markets. This evolution highlights the growing importance of informal economic networks in sustaining authoritarian rule under Isaias Afwerki.

The new geostrategic context has also given Isaias new opportunities- Eritrea's strategic location on the Red Sea was previously the basis for Ethiopia's alignment with the US, and then an inducement for Soviet backing. Saudi Arabia's decision to develop a Red Sea fleet, Egypt's dispute with Ethiopia over the Nile waters, and Russia's new assertiveness, have led all three of those countries to take an interest in Eritrea. Above all, the civil war in Yemen and the Saudi-led intervention have suddenly boosted the rental value of Eritrea's location. In the first months of 2015, Isaias restored diplomatic relations with Yemen suspended since the two countries fought a brief war over the Hanish Islands in 1995 and also received a delegation from the Houthis. Isaias certainly relished the prospects of new leverage and funds. These elements change Isaias's business model. Instead of a near cashless political system and parallel illicit financing of the army, Eritrea is becoming something closer to a conventional rentier system. Army commanders are not only amassing personal fortunes but are also developing business interests. The country's big new source of revenue is conspicuously visible. Mines themselves could become the focus for extortion rackets, and claims on mineral rents could stimulate rent-seeking rebellions. Whether Eritrea becomes a tightly regulated marketplace with a dominant political-business manager, an oligarchic system run by a cartel of generals and party fund managers, or a deregulated and violent political marketplace, depends on the decisions of Isaias and the emerging political entrepreneurs.³

Repercussions of foreign intervention

As we emphasised in the nature of Eritrea, the outcomes of foreign presence may differ from other states of the Horn, especially that the power is centralized in one hand of Afwerki and has

¹ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

² de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa* .

³ de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa* .

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no succession plan, Eritrea is personally owned political business corporation which risk disintegrating when its founder owner dies or is removed . Eritrea's future is likely to be a political market place too. young eritreans want to run away, few are engaged in political debates , most just want life .also , the values , the norms , memories ,dreams and debates that sustain a sense of Eritrean identity may be drowned in the turbulent waters of the political market .This may come in flash flood , in the form of a political implosion , or could be the creeping flood of the pervasive corruption and marketization of political life , under the same ruler who was adopted a political business model suitable to new circumstances .

President Isaias' move to open ties with Ethiopia diverges from his previous policies, which has caused Eritreans to speculate about his sudden change of character. However, these recent developments might be better understood in light of both internal and external pressures for change. Incentives and closed-door negotiations certainly were offered to his regime from the Gulf state and perhaps, the powerful European countries that are increasingly tiring of receiving Eritrean refugees. Domestically, Isaias' repressive regime was becoming unsustainable. Even well-to-do Eritreans face daily electricity outages, often lack access to running water, and have low wages and limited choice of goods.¹

After Eritrean efforts to prove in particular to the United States that it also was a viable and trustworthy ally in the war against terror had failed, Eritrea turned to different powers in the Middle East to retain significance as an important geopolitical actor. Using its strategic location along the Red Sea, Eritrea accommodated military presence and intelligence operations from diverse and competing actors including Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel as a way to meet its economic survival and security needs while retaining the largest possible amount of agency.

Political instability

Due to its strategic location, Eritrea became an important geopolitical actor for foreign powers, their tied implications through military facilities strengthened the regime's security apparatus and provided a huge support to the government of Afwerki.

However, in a conflicted neighborhood and militarized nature of Eritrean state ; foreign intervention through military bases, infrastructure projects do nothing but intensifying tensions with Eritrea with its neighbors particularly Ethiopia and Somalia, since regional alliances often increased often distrust and militarization. furthermore , foreign interventions and shifting alliances repeatedly damaged peace efforts between Eritrea and Ethiopia.²

Rather than promoting long-term stability, foreign involvement frequently embedded Eritrea more deeply within the conflict dynamics of the Horn of Africa. Infrastructure and military cooperation serve as tools of geopolitical competition, their duality can never be read in its positive side of securing and stabilizing. As the matter of intervention in the Horn is not about security anymore but become brutally economic, advancing strategic interests by international

¹ *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, "Transitions in the Horn: Between Optimism and Caution," vol. 30, no. 4 (November–December 2018) (Nairobi: Life & Peace Institute, 2018).

² Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

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and regional actors will be above any consideration of regional peace or political reconciliation, that will result no need for external help by coercion or cooperation.

Militarization of the region

The investment projects rent all feed the military sector that represent a black hole as rents do not serve economic development, nor financing the weaponry does not curb tensions but increases them domestically and regionally, Especially when rival powers support opposing sides. The evidence is illustrated when Ethiopia has accused Eritrea of preparing for renewed confrontation, raising fears that the fragile post 2018 detente is approaching a dangerous breaking point . Their relationship has deteriorated since early 2025, largely due to Ethiopia bid to regain access to the sea, and notably the Assab port in Eritrea. Leaders have sharpened their rhetoric. Prime minister Abiy Ahmed recently warned that if Ethiopia fails to address its lack of maritime access , the results would be ambiguous , and urged international mediation. Reports highlight border mobilizations and troop movements, with commentators warning this spiral of rhetoric could lead to a broader confrontation , even if neither side currently seeks full-scale war.¹

Regional cooperation

Surprisingly, regional cooperations chances can't be fully illuminated, and the prospect of foreign intervention in Eritrea remain mixed. International engagement may promote peace, relative economic growth, regional cooperation. While the first regional escalation scenario is always imposed if not managed carefully. a genuine foreign diplomatic involvement could encourage peace agreements between the Horn states.

To sum up, **Potential change is fully conditioned with the withdrawal of Afwerki regime.** Eritrea remains highly centralized and securitized state whose external posture is closely tied to regime survival to regime survival. As it seeks to position themselves as indispensable partners to regional and global actors , such as US , China , Turkey , UAE and gulf states .

Ethiopia ; is state-building still possible ?

The Ethiopian configuration

Ethiopia represents a distinct and strategically significant case within the horn due to its comparatively stronger demographic, military, political and economic capacities relative to neighboring Horn states. Unlike fragile states in the Horn, Ethiopia maintained a centralized state structure that allowed it to exercise considerable regional influence. Until, Ethiopia was contaminated by the political market place chronic disease and witnesses a lethal civil war, known in the Tigray War, that brought down all the unification attempts. Since then Ethiopia is stuck

¹ "Publication246," *Strategy International*, February 19, 2026, accessed in 14 May 2026, <https://strategyinternational.org/2026/02/19/publication246/>.

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in domestic political turmoil, aggravated by a deeply conflicted and fractious external and regional environment.

As mentioned, If there is a governmental system that should qualifies as a state (under any definition) in sub-Saharan Africa, it is Ethiopia. It has both the history and ambition to rank as a state. The Ethiopian state, however, tends to diminish on close approach. For every assertion about the continuity, legitimacy and order of Ethiopian governance, there is a counter-claim. Yet the forces of the political marketplace are present: they are most visible in the peripheries and in Ethiopian policy towards its neighbours, but also immanent within elite politics too.¹

Ethiopia under Meles Zenawi :

A prominet figure , his leadership market turning point in Ethiopia , he sought for building stronger insitutions , reinforced military capacity and he pursued strantegic economic ambition , that exapanded his role at the regional level where his reforms reshaped the geopolitical arena of the horn . Meles had many admirers among development economists, most notably Joseph Stiglitz, chief economist at the World Bank. Meles's theory of the democratic developmental state drew from the experiences of Asian countries (most particularly South Korea and Taiwan), and applied the lessons to the very different circumstances of Ethiopia landlocked, ethnically diverse, lacking the US security umbrella and the preferential market access that was associated with being an American ally at the height of the Cold War.

As Meles Zenawi developed a well-elaborated theory for how Ethiopia should escape from its predicament. Meles argued that the rentier-predatory nature of the early post- colonial African state, compounded by external shocks, led in the 1980s to life-threatening crisis. The international response to this was neo-liberal economic reform. According to Meles, these reforms may have slowed the pace of economic deterioration but they did not address the fundamental issue, which was not the bloated size of the African state but its rentierist nature : *you can not change a rent- seeking political economy by reducing the size and role of the state.* In escaping one dead end, neo-liberal reform led African economies into a different dead end².

Meles Zenawi also argued that the actual presence of the imperial state scarcely reached beyond towns and army garrisons : *for the majority of Ethiopians, the state was non-existent.*

It all started when the emperor sat at the hub of a patronage system, in which he circulated members of the elite in and out of favour, and dispensed rewards (material and symbolic) and licensed the use of force through the feudal and armed settler systems and plunder of the lowland peripheries. All of this can also be seen as an apparatus for renting loyalties, keeping the system as inexpensive as possible.

Between theory and practice, Meles concluded that while custom and fear were two useful instruments of rule, they would only be effective if the main instrument were to be the delivery of real benefits to the people, with sufficient consistency and impact that thought patterns and expectations were to change. In short, governing Ethiopia demanded a project of making a

¹ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

² Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

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different mode of governance hegemonic, in the sense (following Antonio Gramsci) of being thoroughly internalized. Hence one of the challenges of his government was for people to experience real state institutions, rather than merely the idea of being governed.¹

While taking far from governance and taking one step closer into the political market place. The biggest Ethiopian flaw is the elite who had lost touch and had become a self-serving elite. Democracy was not just a choice, Meles said, but a necessity: while historic Asian developmental states had been authoritarian, such authoritarianism was no longer feasible in an interconnected world and, in Africa's ethnically diverse societies, democratic legitimacy was a *sine qua non*. Inclusivity and decentralization were vital components of democracy, Meles argued, and Ethiopia's federal Constitution reflected this. Meles's democratic developmentalism was more a personal than a collective exercise, and the outcome was intellectually rigorous but organizationally dysfunctional.

The risk of democratic politics becoming riddled with patronage and rent-seeking will be there

After condemning the liberal formula in poor countries as « trickle-up democracy » and feared a « no-choice democracy » in which factions contested for which one could best loot the state. The question follows : what kind of democracy is necessary and possible under these circumstances? Or, as Meles put it, how can the developmental state clean up the mess of patronage and rent-seeking in the initial stages of its establishment by anything other than undemocratic means ?

Development is a political process first and economic and social process later, however what could answer primarily the questions above , the mess of patronage was faced by an international mess of patronage , where international and regional parts get involved , in other words foreign interventions.

The Tigray War and its aftermath

The Tigray War is a turning point that brought to the surface and more clearly the hidden divisions under the Ethiopian people republic democratic front EPRDF in 1991. It is perhaps worth pointing out that the Tigray war is unlike the vast majority of conflicts across Africa. Most of the continent's wars are skirmishes or attacks by small rebel forces, often against civilians, with few major battles. By contrast, the Tigray war involved hundreds of thousands of troops, some well-trained, others poorly armed militias, fighting across complex, often mountainous terrain.²

The Ethiopia's effort to build a state through launching an economic development and followed by an ethnic federalist system was a great step, to curb separatist movements and ethnic-based crisis for providing a larger space for autonomous rule for its ethnic groups. However the outcome was effectively limited and temporary, and the division got deeper especially that it was accompanied by political authoritarianism and political suppression, led to the explosion of a political crisis by the Orum in 2015 that had weakened the system of EPRDF. It is also worth

¹ de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa* .

² *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, vol. 30, no. 3 (July–August 2018), 30.

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mentioning that its explosion proved the dysfunctional of EPRDF especially that the big part who took control under EPRDF were tigrayan leaders driven from TPLF .

Following the rise of Abiy Ahmed in 2018, who brought reconciliation promises and peace with Eritrea (a far-fetched dream for both countries) since this what can reach a certain balance in the region . The path was redirected and misled when he entered an opposition with EPLF and led Ethiopia into another lethal spiral marked as the Tigray war .

Going back to recent roots of the tigrayan war, As the Constitution of 1995 was created in an attempt to address the complexities of a multi-ethnic society by allowing Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups some element of cultural, economic, and linguistic autonomy. It also sought to rectify Ethiopia's historical imbalances with regard to political power. However, the Constitution has had unintended consequences that overshadowed the original constitutional promise. The shortcomings within the Constitution of 1995, for instance, played a key role in shaping contemporary conflict dynamics by institutionalising ethnic politics .¹ The federal system of Ethiopia lacked inclusivity and consultations in its approach to governance that had begun to bring tensions between the federal government and some ethnic groups such as the Oromo. Because the Oromo ethnic group hoped that their political marginalisation in Ethiopian politics, which had been dominated by Tigrayan elites, had finally come to an end, and they launched a protest in 2015 since the ruling coalition characterized with power asymmetries. Several developments did not bring an end to their protest, instead it brought a certain de-escalation in other words ***The calm before the storm***, which is the rise of Abiy Ahmed and the cancellation of the Addis Ababa Master Plan 2016, when the Oromo feared it could lead to a land dispossession.

These waves of long-standing political tensions, driven by one side dominance that created both political centrality and resentment, from the other ethnic and political groups, that the post 2018 reforms proved. When Abiy Ahmed wanted to dissolve EPRDF and replace it with the Prosperity Party hanging on political and economic reforms, this clashed with the Tigrayan people who rejected this brutally.

Following the continuity of the events, In November 2020, conflict broke out between the federal government and groups categorised as rebels. These rebel groups are mainly drawn from and affiliated with the TPLF as mentioned. In the beginning, the conflict was presented as a swift security operation response by the federal government. However, it ultimately developed into a protracted conflict involving the Ethiopian military forces and the Eritrean military forces who support the Ethiopian forces. The immediate cause of the escalation of political tensions into military warfare was an outcome of a preemptive attack on Ethiopian military bases by the TPLF in Tigray. The TPLF cited that the attack was anticipatory self-defence against the military build-up by the Ethiopian Defence Forces that was reportedly going on around the Tigray region. At one point in time, significant gains by the TPLF saw it establishing complete military control in Tigray before launching attacks on other regions. In response, the federal government declared a state of emergency and embarked on a programme of conscription of

¹ Israel Nyaburi Nyadera and Census Osedo, "Civil War between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front: A Challenge to Implement the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine," *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 11, no. 1 (2023): 17–22.

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youths and retired military personnel loyal to the federal government. The purpose was to counter the incursion by Tigrayan forces towards the capital as for to contain the conflict.

Immediate causes of conflict :

While there are varying immediate causes that triggered the violent conflict in Ethiopia. *First*, the unilateral political decisions and reforms initiated by Abiy were not broadly welcomed across the political divide as previously cited. It was in particular not welcomed among the Tigrayans who evaluated such actions as exclusive and an attempt by the prime minister to centralise power. It is imperative to recognise that the TPLF was established as a political party with a Marxist–Leninism ideological orientation (one that strongly despises political centralisation in favour of political decentralisation). Through the disbandment of the EPRDF as a coalition and the merger of its constitutive regional political parties into the Prosperity Party resulted a sign of defiance, the TPLF regional government in Tigray held its own elections in 2020 against the directives and guidelines of the federal government. It thereby influenced the Ethiopian parliament to take a historic vote that culminated in the decision to cut ties between the federal government and leaders from the Tigray region.

Second, the crisis within the EPRDF also had an impact on the outbreak of the conflict. The EPRDF coalition had been on the periphery of power in Ethiopia until 1991 when it formed a government. The TPLF was a key player in the coalition and dominated governance in Ethiopia for over three decades. Members from the TPLF were in control of critical government institutions such as the defence and security apparatus, public administration, and the economic spheres. However, such dominance began to face opposition from the Amhara and Oromo parties which also formed part of the EPRDF coalition. Intense rivalry from within the coalition as well as mounting public protests led to the collapse of the EPRDF in 2018. In addition, members of the TPLF began raising concerns over what they considered as deliberate efforts to reduce their influence and level of autonomy in their region. With Abiy reluctant to enter into a powersharing agreement with the TPLF, and growing grievances among the TPLF members, conflict between the government and the TPLF became inevitable.¹

Third, the political and constitutional crisis that emerged due to the delayed elections cannot be ignored in trying to understand the causes of the Ethiopian civil war. We observe that the government's decision to postpone the elections citing challenges that had been brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic was instrumental in leading to the violent conflict. The political trends at the time had significantly reduced trust among different actors in Ethiopia at the time. Far worse, was the decision by the TPLF to conduct elections in its region. Also, the declaration by the government that such elections were illegal provided the justification to declare war on the TPLF.

As an attempt to contain the situation ,The decision by the government to declare its operation a war against terrorists worsened the situation. This happened because it not only justified the

¹ Israel Nyaburi Nyadera and Census Osedo, “Civil War between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front: A Challenge to Implement the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine,” *Africa’s Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 11, no. 1 (2023): 17–22.

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use of excessive' force in TPLF-held regions but it also excluded international actors. The reason is that wars on terrorism can be considered as a domestic issue. The hardline and reaction of the TPLF also did very little to save the situation. These combined with other factors contributed to the disaster witnessed during the crisis. The factors included the power struggle between the dominant political parties in Ethiopia ; the systematic removal of Tigrayans from government positions; historical land grievances and; the position of Eritrea especially to the extent that it harboured desires to take revenge against the historical actions of the TPLF regime.¹

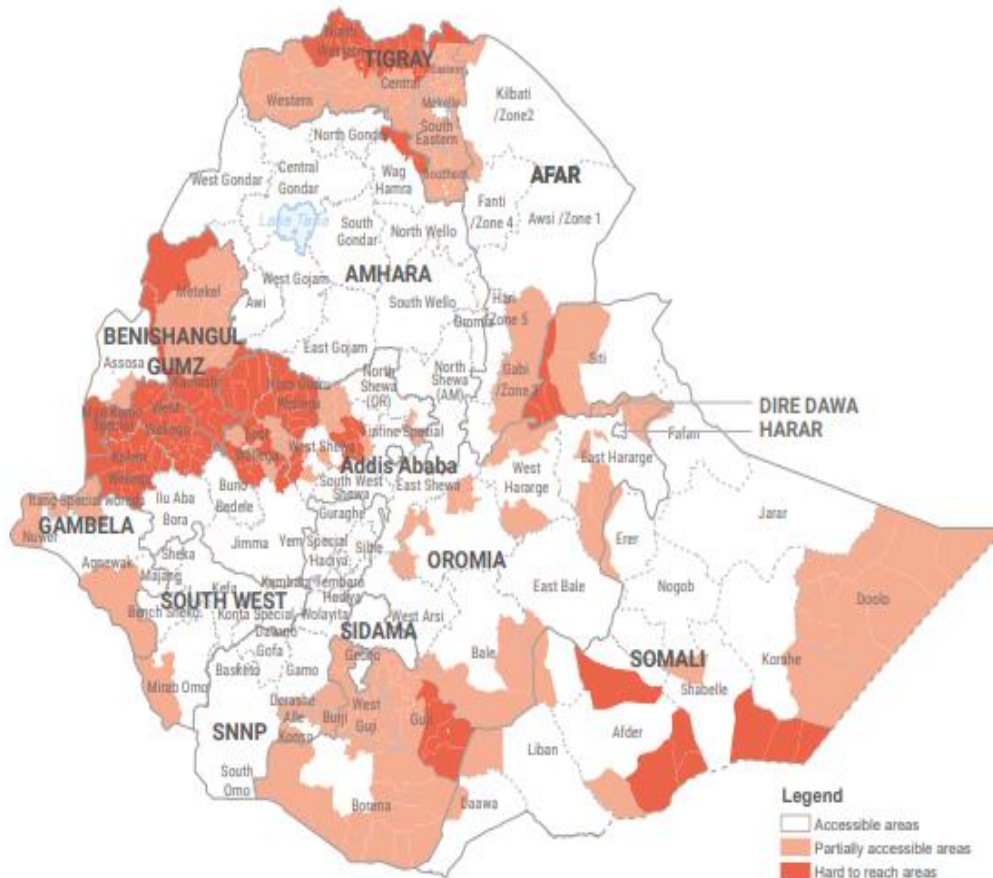
Going back to foreign interventions who could never miss such a chance to exist, the previous efforts significantly transformed the battleground in favour of the federal government who managed to push the TPLF forces back to the mountains of Tigray. However, as is with all cases of wars and violent conflicts, these clashes had far-reaching impacts. The Ethiopian civil war has left many people dead, and many others exposed to starvation, while properties and land have also been lost in the process. This war is one of the worst the country has experienced in decades. The federal government has been accused of playing a significant role in the number of civilian casualties who starved to death. This was because they as the government prevented the delivery of humanitarian aid. However, the mass atrocities committed were the exact reason behind bringing the card of Ethical considerations that impact the implementation of R2P. This is especially the case when states consider stopping violations of human rights, even if it means adopting coercive measures. However, the use of coercive measures to stop violations of human rights does not guarantee that civilians will not be victims of such interventions. Furthermore, nationalists tend to dispute the assumption that governments have an ethical obligation to protect the human rights of people in other countries.²

¹ Israel Nyaburi Nyadera and Census Osedo, "Civil War between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front: A Challenge to Implement the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine," *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 11, no. 1 (2023): 17–22.

² Israel Nyaburi Nyadera and Census Osedo, "Civil War between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front: A Challenge to Implement the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine," *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 11, no. 1 (2023): 17–22.

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9 Map showing areas which humanitarian aid can access , partly access and hard to reach



Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022

As cleared above during the tigray conflict, humanitarian access became extremely restricted due to active hostilities, damaged infrastructure, and administrative blockades, Aid organizations repeatedly reported that delivering relief supplies was severely hindered because roads, communications systems and essential services were disrupted or destroyed. Reports from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA documented that access routes were frequently restricted with less than 10 percent of required aid trucks reaching affected population at certain points of the conflict¹. Those presented as humanitarian actors exploited from the ongoing damage and adapted their method of intervention translated in the military presence as enlarged in earlier parts.

¹ Tigray Aid Situation Worsening by the Day, Warn UN Humanitarians,” [United Nations Peacekeeping](#), September 2, 2021, accessed May 14, 2026.

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However, R2P has great potential. It can be used as a yardstick to measure the commission or omission of mass atrocities. However, it can also be improved to become an effective tool for protecting civilians, especially in the wake of the « return of wars ».¹

Repercussions :

« The horn of africa is already destabilized by the ongoing war in Sudan , unresolved tensions , and fragile ceasefire arrangements in Tigray , coupled with internal vulnerabilities in Ethiopia, marked by ethnic polarisation, economic stress, food insecurity , and deteriorating displacement . »²

We can conclude that, beyond unresolved colonial era boundary issues, the Horn is shaped by competing security doctrines, rivalries for influence. Coming to Ethiopia prospect, we mention that Maritime access remains an existential matter or a lifebuoy in the most populous landlocked country in Africa. Its dependence on Djibouti or port access is expensive and strategically limiting. The access via Assab or other ports in Eritrea remains a core economic and geopolitical ambition in Addis ababa. For Eritrea, conceding such access equates to loss of strategic leverage and sovereignty on its Red Sea ports. This fundamental asymmetry makes compromise difficult .³ that's why the first scenario might favour the continuity of hostility between Eritrea and Ethiopia , smoothly the hostility of the region .

In such an environment, a deteriorating in Eritrea-Ethiopia relations would not remain confined , but it could activate proxy dynamics, strain regional mediation mechanisms, and further weaken an already fragile regional security architecture. a renewed confrontation could disrupt trade flows , elevate insurance and transit costs , and draw in external security actors, transforming a local dispute into a theater with global and economic and strategic repercussions.

Ethiopia faces centrifugal pressures stemming from ethnic fragmentation and contested authority structures. it is doomed by the following : *narrow interests overriding strategic wisdom*. Despite Ethiopia's troubles, it is still the leading candidate for establishing a developmental, institutionalized state in the Horn of Africa. The difficulties it is encountering and the uncertainty of its prospects are testament to the strength of the countervailing forces of the political marketplace.⁴

The most epic prospect is due to The history of Ethiopia and the aftermath of the Tigray war clear that the infrastructure projects we presented as interventions, mainly through economy ambitions, when planted in such an epic sphere of Ethiopia, this risk dividing the state into three

¹ Israel Nyaburi Nyadera and Census Osedo, "Civil War between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front: A Challenge to Implement the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine," *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 11, no. 1 (2023): 17–22.

² "Publication246," *Strategy International*, February 19, 2026, accessed in 14 may 2026, <https://strategyinternational.org/2026/02/19/publication246/>

³ "Publication246," *Strategy International*.

⁴ "Publication246," *Strategy International*.

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territories. What can be benefited from the economic development through modern ways interventions doesn't not fully add a thing under such a mis-compatibility.

Others claim that peace is expected in one case, which is through enhancing the Ethiopian Eritrean relations and forging ties. I believe they should seek a form of political affiliation, a confederation or commonwealth that would bind them together while preserving the freedom and equality of the two communities. A common political life would steadfastly safeguard the abiding interests of Ethiopia and Eritrea is available¹. Also it's crucial to know that it is unlikely that peace will be permanent if there is a continuing exodus of refugees from either country..

There is no doubt that Ethiopia deserves the bulk of the credit for initiating the accord with Eritrea. But there is a danger that the process may be hijacked by other actors harbouring latent and complex geo-strategic intentions. How Ethiopia in particular balances these asymmetric interests and ensures its overall national interests will remain a challenge.

Influential African states, alongside outside powers with interests in the Horn of Africa, should engage in quiet diplomacy to deter the onset of conflict. Concerned states should initiate efforts to address each side's grievances, including Ethiopia's desire for reliable sea access and Eritrea's fears of an attack on its sovereignty.

The risk of a new war involving Ethiopia, its neighbour Eritrea and its northernmost Tigray region remains palpable just three years after the last round of deadly conflict.²

The Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement has every possibility to succeed if it is carefully handled and all angles are properly covered. Foremost on the agenda should be the imperative to anchor the whole exercise on principles guiding inter-state relations whereby mutual benefits as well as regional peace and security are guaranteed. Effective demilitarization of the common boundary, withdrawal of military personnel and equipment, demarcation of the border, agreement on port utilization, immigration, dual citizenship, residence permit, consular affairs, currency, taxation (direct, excise and transit taxes), debt payment, money transfer, and nature and level of investment by respective citizens in the other, are just a few of the issues among the long list of urgent priorities, which remain unresolved.³

¹ *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, "Transitions in the Horn: Between Optimism and Caution," vol. 30, no. 4 (November–December 2018) (Nairobi: Life & Peace Institute, 2018).

² Jakob Dehner, "Eritrea and the West: The Narrative of Victimhood," *HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies*, April 28, 2025, <https://horninstitute.org/eritrea-and-the-west-the-narrative-of-victimhood/>.

³ Israel Nyaburi Nyadera and Census Osedo, "Civil War between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front: A Challenge to Implement the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine," *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 11, no. 1 (2023): 17–22.

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Somaliland

In the last decades, the Horn of Africa has once again become a geopolitical playground for different local and foreign actors which significantly shaped the political and state-building processes in the region. Perhaps, the most affected country in this context is Somalia, which – after the collapse of the central government in 1991 had become the playground of selfish local actors and the infiltration of foreign powers and interests. One side of the coin is that governments and organizations from the Middle East across the Western hemisphere to the neighboring states all tried to pursue their own agendas in Somalia, using Somalis as proxy actors to reach their aim. The other side of the coin is that Somali actors were and are also ready to utilize foreign influence to gain support for their own local agendas, which, in many cases, aims not to stabilize the country but to extend and prolong the power of subnational players¹. This, giving a state in the Horn of Africa, Somalia went through her destiny of civil war as well. Alex Du Waal describes Somalia as a contemporary definition of an apocalypse where things fell apart but some other things surely worked. In the light of turning Somali into a perfect political market place.

The Somali nation and state

The Somali state was at its zenith in the immediate aftermath of the 1969 coup, when Siyad's new revolutionary government mobilized Somali society in pursuit of nationalist and modernizing ideals. The idea of Somalia transcended clan and was associated with the unification of the Somali people, divided five ways by colonial conquest and post-colonial borders². Abruptly, in 1991 Somalia has been famous for its state failure, but it could equally be lauded for its economic success. On both income and human development indicators, Somalia has done better since 1991 than before. Since the economy was based on foreign wages (remittances from the global Somali workforce), trade and services (especially the telecom sector). Rents from aid and military assistance sustain a class of military-political entrepreneurs, but those rents are neither centralized nor large enough to dominate the political marketplace.³

Similarly to its neighbours and enforced by their support, the influences crystallized well after 2018, when the Ethiopian and Eritrean welcomed the initiative of President Maxaamed Cabdullaahi Maxaamed Farmaajo, that aimed launch a strong centralization campaign in Somalia as for breaking the power of local politicians and clans to distance himself and Somalia from the clan federalist model which endangered the further state-building⁴. This was a common point marked in the agendas of the three states. Resulting very different outcomes as seen with Tigray War in Ethiopia.

In Somalia, the resilience of powerful clans (such as the Mudulood) that supported the FMSs to strengthen their opposition against Farmaajo, relied on the support of other countries as well

¹ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023), 76.

² Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

³ de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*.

⁴ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).
federal member states (FMSs)

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, we count from them the UAE , Kenya , Taiwan. Some events were simplified as the struggle between the bad dictatorial president and the good democratic opposition, both-sided arguments were lacking an understanding of the deeper dynamics of Somali politics. We highlight that these dynamics are determined by two crucial notions : a more centralized model aiming to forge together a Somali national identity which can tame clannism, and increasing FMS and clan autonomy, backed by foreign actors which are seeking their own interests.

In the light of interior and exterior actors, Somali politics were transformed from democracy across dictatorship to clan federalism, in a way that allow the intense pursuit of interests by foreign stakeholders. Equally important, even Somalis use those foreign proxies to pursue their agend. Regarding having very limited tools to influence the domestic politics of their partners, Somalia beace a border zone for foreign powers.

Somalia state-building

Like every fated state in the Horn, Somalia is a nation with deep clan roots and very limited if not deformed experiences with central government, and the state building proved to be a bumpy road because of a structural component in somali's identity , keeping the reality controversial .

Its worth underscoring that , initially , Somali state-building was launched by a very narrow elite group that was highly influenced by foreign actors and models (showing the first seeds of interventions) , however , without the Abyssinian expansion and the European colonization, Somalis would have never decided to establish a Westphalian style Somali state, which was alien from their traditional political and social organization, the clan alliance (jilib), the customary law (xeer), ¹and their practice of life.they had they own way of living .

Moreover, looking at Somali nationalism, it was mainly a cultural and not a political one : even the great “national” heroes of Somali history, such as Axmed Ibraahim al-Qaasi and Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan, followed mainly partial clan agendas, while clan competition played at least an important role in the “freedom war” of resistance against the British and Ethiopian invasions (1900–1920). Therefore, the intention of the Somali elites to establish a central government stemmed not from their own heritage, but from the recognition that the acceptance of this imported model could ensure their survival in a rapidly changing environment. It demonstrates that foreign influence is decisive not only in current Somali politics but also in the 1950s and 1960s during the birth and origin of the independent Somali state. Therefore, it is not accidental that the role of external actors and models has remained important for the next 60 years too.

Clannism integration in Somalia

Scholars and analysts held diverse perspectives and understandings regarding the influence of Somalia's prominent clans , reflecting a range of interpretations about their role across the country's political , social , and economic spheres .we mention , the post modern theories that tend to consider clans as just a temporary construction , which is an entirely misled and limited argumentation , especially that archival sources from colonial period prove that clan

¹ Záhořík , Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

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identity played a significant role at that time¹ , in other words , the giving interpretation can never be maintained . what is undeniable , whether we consider the clan as a natural phenomenon (primordialism) or a political construction (instrumentalism constructivism), it is a historical fact that , since the formation of the first modern political movement in Somalia , clan relations and networks have fundamentally determined its structures and memberships ².consequently , we cant argue differently , taht clan as teh core identity and one of the basic organizing forces of political life and struggle in Somalia it was a decide factor taht jeopardized the intention to build up a strong central government . Answering this qeustion doest not proove only the crucial role and the heavy societal and political weight of clans , but its answers that failure of state-building process , beacause without dealing with clans , its is very hard to imagine a stable political process in the country .

One last thing, what can be said about ethiopia and somali, regarding their ethnic and clans composition , the repercussions of this inevitable composition werent alike , we can primarily understand taht the somali clans arent just multipe but they hold relative power , unlike the ethnic based groups in ethiopia that tigray is dominantly the most powerful. We direct attention to other unique characteristics of Somali and Ethiopian politics , namely, *the existence of the third frontier*. the outbreak of the Tigray conflict in 2020 showed that the most devastating frontier, which can destroy the country, lies between the political and ethnic groups of the center. This is also true for Somali politics: the events in Mogadishu have been mainly shaped by the great clan families, the Daarood and the Hawiye (Mudulood), and their struggle for power has determined the recent history of Somalia³. The influence of these big clans is visible even in al-Shabaab, which at the beginning had leaned on mainly minority clans, but later came under the rule of the Hawiye and the Daarood. Still now, following the political struggle in Somalia, these two clans are the main (and sometimes violent) competitors for Somalian leadership⁴

Therefore, it is not accidental that, since the establishment of their sovereign state, Somalis have tried very different types of leadership and political systems. In their attempt, they tried to either get rid of clannism or integrate it into the political system.

History and turning points events

The sixty years of independence started with “Africa’s first democrats.” In 1967, after seven years of leadership, power shifted to a new leadership by a peaceful election. In the age of coups, it was the only positive example of a democratic transition in Africa. Nevertheless, the political process was not without contradictions and challenges. Somali politics was determined by the balance of power between great clans, with the neglect of smaller ones. Political competition emerged between the Hawiye and the Daarood, utilizing Isaaq/Dir support. Thanks to competing ideas and persons, the equilibrium collapsed in the late sixties, and the army took

¹ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023)

² Záhorký, Ylönen, , *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

³ Lidwein Kapateijns ,*Clan Cleansing in Somalia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 11.

⁴ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023)

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power under the authoritarian leadership of Siad Barre in 1969. By this move, Somalia joined the League of African Nations led by military dictators.¹

Going with flow, a dictatorship was built when Barre moved further and implemented a socialist model in Somalia in 1970. Although some analysts consider the dictator's decision on the introduction of scientific socialism as an ideological one, it seemed more a practical geopolitical choice in the Cold War context and a useful tool to legitimate his personal power. In the 1970s, the main foreign policy goal of Somalia was to strengthen its position against its arch-enemy, Ethiopia. And while Addis Ababa enjoyed strong American support, it seemed obvious that Somalia turned toward the Soviet Union. The General trusted neither democracy nor clannism, so the new model also served as a useful tool to maintain his power in Mogadishu². Such event shaped the path of Somalia toward a political authoritarianism, as for shaping and sharpening the tensions in the regional environment of Somalia, if the aftermath of the events shows something, it would be clearly, the earlier steps of the foreign international presence, with a competitive destructive short and long term impact.

Showed even clearer in 1977, Barre launched a military offensive against Ethiopia to seize Ogaadeen but suffered a humiliating defeat. The tragedy of the military setback in Ogaadeen was that it fueled clannism and jeopardized the nationalist agenda. In the beginning, Barre tried to build up a strong, centralized state and made efforts to tame clans. He launched a campaign to weaken old structures of the society and form a more egalitarian, modern, and united nation of course, not despite his personal interests³. For now we have the triple nexus of personal pursuits, clans interests relative to their survival, and the thirsty competitive external presence.

A new era of clannism was witnessed after democracy, socialism was the next attempt to establish a unified Somali nation and state: not by parties, but by the party. Nevertheless, this endeavor was buried in the sands of Ogaadeen, and Barre returned to the old dynamics of Somali politics to stay in power. The 1980s brought a new area of clannism, which was supported by external actors, mainly Ethiopia. Addis Ababa provided shelter and assistance for clan movements which challenged the power of Siad Barre, and this significantly contributed to the collapse of the Somali state in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Somaliland was formed by the Somali National Movement, which could organize its military wing in Ethiopia. Therefore, we can state that Addis Ababa played a decisive role in the first big disintegration of the Somali state, which, until now, was also the most successful with the de facto secession of Somaliland⁴.

Somali state-building in the post bipolar and interventions

A continuous civil war, clan cleansing and famine, were the results of clannism dominating the political landscape, after that clan militias expelled Siad Barre from the country in 1991, International interventions by the United States and the United Nations (UN) could only mitigate the problem: they stopped starvation but could not forge together Somali factions. The country fell into anarchy and became a failed state. The increasing attention toward Somalia in

¹ Záhořík, Ylönen, , *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

² Záhořík, Ylönen, , *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

³ Záhořík, Ylönen, , *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

⁴ Jan Záhořík and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023)

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the 2000s brought new competition between foreign countries in the Horn of Africa. While Ethiopia, and to a lesser extent, Kenya, kept their eyes on their unstable neighbor, other actors, such as Arab and Muslim nations (Turkey), also arrived in the Horn of Africa with their own agendas. For different geopolitical, economic, and ideological reasons, they made significant attempts to transform Somalia from an African to an Arab “borderland.”¹

It is important to emphasize that even before the TFG agenda Somali politicians were ready to create facts on the ground and strengthen local entities. As mentioned, Somaliland’s Isaaq/Dir majority already declared its independence in 1991. In 1998, with the leadership of Yuusuf, Puntland also established an autonomous entity and started to develop its administration. Similarly to Somaliland, Puntland was also based on clan affiliation,² they had also the deep understanding and realization of clannism in the pursuit of every dimensional interests .

Somalia’s current crisis began in the 1980s. The overthrow of Mohamed Siyad Barre did not change its main challenge, which is not to establish a state but to regulate a violent political marketplace. This can be done, but not with the kinds of measures adopted by African and international actors. The crisis of the 1980s arose from an attempt to create a rentier political marketplace in a middle-income political economy, in which the population and local businesses enjoyed autonomy from that rentier system. The current experiment in vertically integrated international governance may be sustained for longer, especially if it regulates external flows of political finance and generates confidence that there is no alternative power structure.³

To tackle earlier forms of interventions in Somali who became various and thirstier, we highlight the readily available model for how political entrepreneurs can prosper in this kind of market can be seen in the recent history of piracy and anti-piracy in Somalia. Maritime piracy was, for a brief but spectacular period, a huge source of income has to be managed and centralized, thus a parallel emergence of the political market place occurred.

A marketplace analysis would suggest that the financial incentives for pirates to cooperate with anti-piracy efforts would be just as important. In short, *when counter-piracy becomes more profitable than piracy, armed entrepreneurs will change their business plans*. The counter-piracy business also provided opportunities for political-security entrepreneurs to pursue other agendas. A fine example is the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF), which was set up in 2010. According to the UNMG, its actual function was as an elite force, answerable to the Puntland president and outside the Puntland Constitution, for internal security operations. It was funded by private individuals from the United Arab Emirates and rented the services of South African mercenaries under Saracen International, under the overall direction of Erik Prince, formerly head of Blackwater USA. Shortly afterwards Saracen International was taken over by, or rebranded as, Sterling Corporate Services (SCS). The PMPF/SCS base became the biggest and best-equipped military establishment in Somalia outside AMISOM headquarters. The UNMG noted that « Although described as a counter-piracy initiative, the PMPF, for-

¹ Záhořík, Ylönen, , *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

² Záhořík, Ylönen, , *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

³ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

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merly known as “Puntland Marine Force”, has yet to be deployed as part of a comprehensive strategy to fight piracy in Puntland in cooperation with international partners », and pirate groups remain active in Puntland, where they appear to face no serious threat from the Puntland administration.¹

By the election of Farmaajo , the political landscape had shifted significantly in the Horn of Africa .especially when ethiopia has been experiencing a deep crisis since 2015 , this uncovered the limits and cha challenges of ethnic federalism .

Farmaajo, who mastered the art of Somali nationalist psyche delivered a speech loaded with strong messages lashing out against foreign interference into Somalia’s affairs. He also expressed such a strong Somali irredentist opinion that spread like bushfire across the Somali populace².

The main political goal of Farmaajo was to reduce the power of the FMSs, which were ready to obstruct any steps that could strengthen the position of the FGS. Clan federation had reached its limits in the country, as demonstrated not only in the electoral process in 2016–2017 but also in the coming years. Perhaps, the best example of this was the so-called Qatar crisis after 2017. During his reign, Farmaajo got strong support from Qatar and Turkey. Therefore, the FGS emphasized its neutrality, whereas Hirshabelle, Galmudug, and Puntland states criticized the position of Mogadishu and pledged their support for the Saudi coalition against Doha ³. Creating a very complex rivarlies , that will know ressembles in literally every move and policy.

We have to mention another important factor that influenced the pursuit of Farmaajo and many Somalis for a more centralized state, namely al-Shabaab. The rise of Islamist movements in Somalia, first the Supreme Council of Islamist Courts and later al-Shabaab, led to a strong centralized (shadow) government system, which challenged not only the federal government but also local power structures, such as clans and elders. Despite its brutal nature, nowadays, many Somalis still praise the accountability and predictability of the administration of al-Shabaab. For instance, businessmen applaud only having to pay at one checkpoint in the whole area under the control of the Jihadists, as opposed to places under the rule of the FGS, since all fragmented authorities cities, FMSs, and the FGS collect taxes in different checkpoints.

With Hassan Sheikh Mohamud’s return to power in May 2022 for his second term, he adopted a conciliatory domestic approach and a stable, pragmatic foreign policy with diverse partnerships. This contrasted with Farmaajo’s coercive domestic style and narrower foreign policy. In recent elections, regional powers like **Qatar, Türkiye, and the UAE** have played significant roles in influencing Somalia’s domestic politics, sometimes sidelining older external actors with longer engagement histories.⁴

¹Jan Záhorkík and Aleksí Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

² Ali Sheikh Ahmed Abdi , “*President Farmaajo’s Election: A Brief Hiatus or Hype in Ethi opia’s Regional Hegemonic Ambition*,” *AARMS* 18, no. 2 (2019): 5–16, 7.

³ Záhorkík and Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

⁴ Jan Záhorkík and Aleksí Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023)

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Somaliland economic and political transformation

Somaliland recently celebrated 33 years since it declared independence from Somalia and has undergone over three decades of state-building. However, while gaining international recognition has been Hargeisa's foreign policy priority for more than three decades, it has eluded Somaliland thus far, despite the fulfilling of the 1945 Montevideo Convention, respecting colonial borders, creating over twenty liaison offices in UN member states across five continents, and engaging in both diplomatic and economic relations¹.

Territorially, Somaliland is divided into six regions, Northwest, Awdal, Sahil, Togdheer, Sanaag, and Sool, which are subdivided into 30 districts. The largest city and capital of Somaliland is Hargeisa. Borama, Berbera, Burao, Erigavo, and Las-Anod are Somaliland's major cities. Somaliland's principal port is the strategic port of Berbera, which is located along one of the busiest shipping routes in Africa, along the Gulf of Aden, and near the entrance to the Bab al-Mandeb Strait². The significance of this port, through the giant infrastructure project can further bring the recognition Somaliland desires.

Geopolitics–ports politics nexus The case of Port of Berbera, Somaliland

Somalia's external relations have been shaped by a combination of domestic political realities and foreign actors and forces, as prominent internal actors in Somalia have often reached out to foreign partners for support in their domestic struggles. In recent years, political competition in Somalia has been significantly affected by external powers. Local leaders and groups have sought to take advantage of foreign involvement in their wrangling for power and prestige. These dynamics have led to political turbulence and instability.³

Meanwhile, al-Shabaab attacks persisted in Mogadishu, which caused continuous insecurity. Corruption of public officials remained rampant, and in 2014, an embezzlement scandal implicating President Hassan Sheikh came to light. Although there were indications of the use of the central bank for financing officials' private affairs, any serious investigation was thwarted. Another financial scandal was the systematic disappearance of part of Mogadishu port revenues. In 2014, the Albayrak Group, whose owners have close ties to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, took over the management of the port. However, the Albayrak Group has also been accused of using the port as a gateway for operating a corrupt system, including bribery, in which high-level Somali officials have been implicated.⁴ Embodying a true political market place with external support.

In the past few years, the penetration of the Gulf States to the Horn of Africa through the establishment of military bases and the development of ports has increased. This political move

¹ Záhorkík, Ylönen, , *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

² Záhorkík, Ylönen, , *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

³ Aleksí Ylönen, "External Relations and Local Agency in the Horn of Africa," *Current History* 122, no. 844 (2023): 185–190; Aleksí Ylönen, "A Scramble of External Powers and Local Agency in the Horn of Africa," *CIDOB Notes Internacionais* 280, https://www.cidob.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/280_ALEKSI%20YLO%CC%88NEN_ANG.pdf.

⁴ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

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has also coincided with the changing political dynamics of the region which has had a domino effect on regional power relations.

The Port of Berbera in the Republic of Somaliland has been one of the most crucial seaports in the Horn of Africa and a lucrative source of revenue for the Government of Somaliland. Therefore, any modernization of the port is expected to have a positive effect on the coffers of the state and the region's infrastructural development. To realize this, the Government of Somaliland stated in its National Development Plan II (2017–2021) that the investment made by Dubai Ports (DP) World would soon make the Port of Berbera handle more containers per year. This will contribute to the growth of Somaliland's economy significantly.¹

Somaliland's diplomatic and economic engagement with other states

Somaliland's economic development and The lack of recognition has not prevented Somaliland from developing economically over the last 30 years. The private sector spearheaded Somaliland's journey to post-conflict economic recovery, as the government lacked the financial resources to carry out essential governance functions in the earlier years. The country has transformed over three decades during the state and democracy-building process. The Somaliland Government's national budget is now sustained through a detailed tax revenue system, and the private sector has expanded beyond the three pillars of telecommunications, livestock, and remittances to include trade, manufacturing, energy, and other emerging industries, including technology, and the service industry². This exactly what foreign powers and economic giants has to offer, as economic growth helps sustain peace in the same way that peace can lead to economic development.

Somaliland has exhibited the capacity to enter into relations with other states. Since independence, and despite its absence of recognition, has entered into informal and formal relationships with several other states. This includes the development of Berbera Port and Berbera Airport, with the UAE and DP World, and an information technology collaboration agreement with Taiwan in 2021. Somaliland also has established offices in the US, Canada, UK, Sweden, France, Norway, Belgium (Brussels), Ethiopia, Djibouti, Ghana, Kenya, South Sudan, South Africa, and Yemen, and people have traveled with the Somaliland passport to South Africa, Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Uganda, UK, Sweden, and the US. International cooperation "has covered various issues, including security, trade, immigration and development assistance." Prominent examples are agreements with Ethiopia establishing a consulate in Hargeisa. It has also signed an agree ment with UAE State-owned port operator DP World to develop and manage the port. Furthermore, Somaliland's foreign relations are conducted independently of any other state actor. Though Somalia does not recognize Somaliland's independence, Somaliland alone can exercise international relations on behalf of its territory and does so in practice.

¹ Jan Záhorkík and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

² Záhorkík ,Ylönen,, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

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We would like to highlight a controversial fact about the Somali case , Somalia is a reminder that state-building is more able to enjoy success when local partners are willing but not able to govern.since when the problem is the lack of political will ,political elites seek to perpetuate a context of weak institutions for their own benefit and view state building as a project to attract funds but not a goal to achieve ..external institution-building will only find success on the margins..

Repercussions:

Controversial prospects can be predicted on the Somali case, undeniably, there is what to collect from the heavy foreign presence of international and regional powers , but these powers can't exist alone and absurdly ,like we have seen, they bring their political agendas ,economic interests and their thirsty predator logic , implementing in a deeply fractious society and state .

- We conclude that, The whole process Somalia went through by several focal local and regional events was not about the next election as presented but about making Farmaajo, and his idea of a more centralized federal government, politically dead. I strongly believe that the statebuilding process is prolongedly postponed under the even prolonged external hands put on heavy pillars of a state, in other words, efforts to develop immunity in Somalia face significant limitations, with instances of suboptimal or non-responsive immune reactions to administered vaccines .
- Continued regional tension are very predictable , furtherly causing political , economic and diplomatic ruptures , possibly endpoints that won't just cause instability and unrest but may lead to war . especially the growing presence of UAE that work in an clear way mostly mysterious , for instance , we mention the confiscation of 9.6 million USD at the Mogadishu International Airport from an Emirates plane en route to Puntland was used by the FGS as a basis for the accusation. Abu Dhabi argued that the amount covered the salaries of the Puntland Maritime Police Forces. The investment of UAE-based Dubai Port World in separatist Somaliland's Berbera port, sidelining Mogadishu, or the Turkish struggle with the Emirates-controlled Mogadishu's air and sea port divided the Somali political arena and stoked even armed clashes . ¹every included part went rise or fall alone , resulting a series of upvailing facts and crashed interests.
- Another stone step in state building way , which is a realization in Mogadishu, Washington, and Beijing that the threat posed by al-Shabaab and other militant organizations in Somalia remains a real challenge to state- building and stability and a threat to regional security. President Hassan Sheikh has, for instance, consistently addressed the threat posed by al-Shabaab in his campaign and made counterterrorism a top priority of his presidency. Although the return of US troops, continued Turkish support, and Eritrea's training of Somali recruits signal a consolidation in the security sector, it must be accompanied by reconstruction and development efforts and

¹ Jan Záhorský and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023)

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institutional and technical support to strengthen the federal system. It would be in Washington's interest also to facilitate progress toward democratization, universal suffrage, political inclusion, and rights and civil liberties, although this might be less palatable for Somalia's major illiberal partners in the Middle East as well as China.

- Regard all the domestic chaos and the political marketplace in and outputs , reaching economic development is not very far , and although the shifts occurred , Somalia always knew how to keep its diplomatic ties relatively stable comparing the unrest around , During Farmaajo's presidency, Somalia's external relations narrowed due to Somalia's unpredictable, antagonistic, and inconsistent foreign policy, which focused on a few key external partners. In its near-abroad relations under Farmaajo's administration, Somalia maintained a warm relationship with Türkiye, Qatar, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, while alienating the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Djibouti, and Kenya. Somalia's relationship with the US in security and humanitarian affairs remained strong, while the UK and the EU also played a role as significant donors. China's interest in Somalia and its territorial integrity intensified in the late Farmaajo period, but the change of leadership in Mogadishu generated promises for an increased engagement. However, the agreement of Dhuusamareeb was a huge political victory for Farmajo and an important step toward the unity of Somalia, ceasing at least temporarily the continuous hostility between the ASWJ and the government. At this stage, the President visited regional capitals to find a common agenda. Even the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), Michael Keating, praised the government for "financial reform, job creation, inclusive politics, conflict resolution and reform of the security sector," though he also mentioned political turbulences and some "heavy-handed" politics by the government¹. Not to say that this unrest is all for maintaining economic and financial interest from several multi-leveled actors and stakeholders .
- Any reader or the researcher can easily conclude to a fragmentation scenario concerning the Somali case , it is still a big question whether the division will serve the fate of Somalia in the long term, what I find ironic about divisions in the vulnerable states , is that they can't be regarded as absolutely divisions but fragmentations that cause a total loss of control and an endless chaos and political spiral , that have lethal effects locally , regionally and internationally , it's crucial to mention that experiences of the last decades demonstrate that fragmentation has provided an excellent opportunity for short-sighted political agendas and foreign actors to utilize it for their own interests, and broad coalitions have tried to cover the common looting of Somalia's properties. But it's also crucial to have a glimpse of hope that it will be a different story now, and Somali federalism will become a real platform for self-governance and meaningful cooperation between Mogadishu and the FMSs a "mediated state." Nevertheless, the behavior of

¹ Jan Záhorký and Aleksi Ylönen, eds., *The Horn of Africa Since 2018: Continuities, Transformations, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2023).

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some member states during the latest election process has made us cautious about the future of clan federalism in Somalia.¹

And, in this context, the main enemy was Ethiopia. Therefore, it was not accidental that Farmaajo waited three months to travel to Addis Ababa in May 2017, having visited five countries beforehand. It would be unfair to blame exclusively external actors for all the woes of Somalia. The fragmentation of Somali politics along clan lines and FMSs meant too much temptation for foreign actors to utilize it for their own agenda. Therefore, the solution could not come from outside : Somali political elites had to act to change the situation. It was one of the main reasons why the Farmaajo administration wanted a unified, strong central government in Mogadishu.

The case may differ in the case of Somaliland, since the Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU offers significant benefits to both parties. Ethiopia gains vital sea access and a naval presence in Somaliland, potentially establishing Berbera as a major import-export route and competitor to Djibouti. Following Ethiopia's lead, Somaliland anticipates international recognition from other countries, attracting foreign investment and development assistance. Looking ahead, the Berbera Corridor has the potential to become a strategic alternative route, reducing Ethiopia's dependence on Djibouti. This development could stimulate economic growth in cities and rural areas along the corridor and connected territories.

The positive outcomes to Somaliland include the quest of legitimacy, Despite decades of state-building and fulfilling the legal criteria for international recognition, Somaliland remains unrecognized by the global community. However, despite its successes in peacebuilding and the recent signing of the MoU with Ethiopia, the conflict in Las Anod can potentially undermine Somaliland's quest for legitimacy.

The logic behind the investment of Berbera by the Government of Somaliland is to exploit its strategic position near the oil route, the Bab el Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden, and to benefit from the Ethiopian market. Therefore, Berbera and the Corridor will boost logistics services in the country, creating not only business opportunities but also many jobs. This will be the engine for a deeper change leading to a more diversified economy in the region. Furthermore, the development of a free zone, industrial zones, and business parks at the key crossroads along the Corridor, close to the port and the Berbera airport, is also crucial. This economic zone would offer an enhanced business environment for emerging Somaliland processing industries, for example, livestock, hides and skins, fish, gums, and resins. The fact remains that interdependence and economic integration within the states in the Horn of Africa will reduce the tensions and mistrust between the people of the region and their governments. Berbera Port development will therefore contribute to the security and stability of the region and the economic integration of the Horn communities by providing services to the people of the region and their governments. On the other hand, this development will reduce Ethiopia's concerns

¹ Záhorkík ,Ylönen, *The Horn of Africa Since 2018*.

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about depending on a single foreign port. It is obvious that any landlocked state has its challenges associated with this status. Therefore, Ethiopia is in a dire situation in need of multiple sea outlets to diversify its options. This has made Somaliland particularly its main seaport, Berbera Ethiopia's second choice after Djibouti¹

To sum up, competing military bases in the Horn of Africa are an indication of the revival of the Cold War paranoia and the international militarization of the region. This military maneuvering could impact the domestic affairs of the Horn states, while the conflict and competition between the states and also within the states is another critical issue that deserves underlining. The problems in the region have two major dichotomies : its diversity – ethnicity and religion as a center – and the presence of both untapped and scarce natural resources, such as water resources, in particular, transboundary waters. The region's problems also have a geopolitical dimension, such as its geographic significance and proximity to one of the most volatile regions in the world, the Middle East.

¹ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

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Section 2 : Future prospects of the Horn of Africa

An advanced political marketplace VS Regional cooperation : prospects and expectations

« In International relations , the only constant is continuous change »

Coming to the end of the reasearch , no matter how complex the region of the HoA is , shifting regional conetext is never impossible or too late , however domestic shifts reamin necessarily for the desired stability , namely the state-building point . In similiar situations , there is two path , when projected into the HoA , either the rivarly of competitive international and regional powers in the fractious Horn will permit a push toward a more perfect political market place or things might shift positively toward a regional effective cooperayion aiming for security and regional advancement through a brand new regional organization (RO).

Towards and advanced political market place :

Starting with the first path , The political marketplace is a materialist, instrumental framework that provides little space for ideals and norms. Its values are monetary. It is hierarchical and elitist: politics is the business of a relatively small number of individuals, almost all men, who have money and guns. The logic of political markets reduces people to commodities and interpersonal relations to bargaining over material reward, and it evens out local societal and cultural factors in favour of the common currencies of the dollar and the Kalashnikov. As the region was the locus of some extraordinary experiments in political ideology: revolutions, nationalism, Islamism, and public protest for honest government¹ ,The conduct of politics ought to operates through the political market model .

Overall, the current political marketplace era has been a period of economic growth during which human-development indicators have improved. In the Horn, there have been two motors for progress: Ethiopia's developmental project and Somali entrepreneurship. The latter two show that there can be prosperity within a political marketplace. If that economic growth is sustained, it is possible that it will generate productive sectors that in turn will create a new non-rentier political economy, perhaps regardless of how that growth was achieved in the first place.

The biggest problem facing a similiar shift is that probably the market becomes more perfect, the cost of loyalty rises and the political graveyard of the Horn is filled with politicians who failed to pay their way. So either , One option the cheap and old-fashioned one is followed , which serves repressing and centralizing control. The rulers of Eritrea and Ethiopia have been most successful in doing this, in their different ways..Nor, taking the money out of international politics or at least reducing it and making it more transparent. International policy reforms could make politics less conducive for rent-seekers and better structured to provide public goods,

¹ Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015) .

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¹These reforms should begin at the top: regulating political finance as it gets narrower but more effective .

Towards a regional cooperation : IGAD ,HoAC prospects

The second path leans to be the positive prospects , a regional cooperation between the horn states that have to be unified to maintain their survival , as a state like Somalia has been feeding on foreign aid to exist . Recent initiatives support this idea , In January 2020, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia proposed to form a new regional bloc, occasionally referred to as the Horn of Africa Cooperation (HoAC). There is of course a serie of factors enabling this significant initiative . However, the HoAC proposal bears the risk of further alienating partners in the region and undermining security efforts of other regional organisations, most importantly the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, and the Eastern Africa Stand by Force. Thus, the promises and pitfalls of this new bloc could shape the regional architecture and cause new political challenges in the region.

As the countries of the region seem bound together more by conflict and dissension than by any durable pursuit of common interests. With such persistently high levels of internal violence, the regional subsystem remains the very opposite of a security community. And as the result produces a regional system of insecurity in which the tradition of mutual interference makes constructive intergovernmental relationships difficult. Africa's emerging security architecture gives pride of place to sub-regional institutions to deal with conflict prevention and conflict management, including peace support operations. Eritrea has currently suspended its membership of IGAD because of its objections to IGAD's policy of support for Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia. IGAD is prevented from taking a lead to ameliorate the conflict in Somalia because the TFG is represented in its councils. This also inhibits IGAD from working on a solution to Somaliland's future relations with Somalia. A regional diplomat observed that, for the time being, the tense hostility between Ethiopia and Eritrea precludes the establishment of a wider regional security pact of any kind. It is worth remembering that before the Ethiopia–Eritrea conflict, the overt hostility of three IGAD members towards Sudan was equally effective in blocking progress towards regional level security arrangements.²

On 27 January 2020 the heads of state and government of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, President Isaias Afwerki, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, held their third trilateral meeting after the 2018 peace deal in Asmara, Eritrea. They agreed on a Joint Plan of Action, which focuses on consolidating peace, stability, and security as well as promoting economic and social development in the region . They also proposed to form a new regional bloc at the Horn of Africa occasionally referred to as the Horn of Africa Cooperation (HoAC).

¹ de Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*.

² Jason Mosley, *Ethiopia and its Neighbours: The Horn of Africa and Arab Gulf States* (London: Chatham House, June 2008), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/0608hornafrica.pdf>.

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The proposal was surprising to every casual observer of the regional politics in the HoA , we have seen the presidential visits , the accomplishments of each president , where Relations at the Horn are complex, complicated, and characterised by deeply ingrained rivalries between the countries in a conflict- ridden region , governments seek to gain legitimacy and reputation with domestic and international audiences .

It is worth mentioning, The proposed HoAC promises to address transnational and cooperation problems of the three countries and bring about gains especially in the area of peace and security. The establishment of a regional body dedicated to peace and security issues could be beneficial for the three states . Also , a new RO could bring about substantive gains in peace and security matters, not least by further normalising the relationship between them. It would help deal with negative externalities from domestic security threats emanating from the three countries, especially the transnational activities of al-Shabab and rebel groups. As a new outlet, the HoAC would also help to bring forward new regional norms and understandings of peace and security in line with understandings and preferences of the three leaders.

In terms of economic gains, closer cooperation bears the potential to support economies and trade. However, it does not become immediately apparent how HoAC would strengthen economic ties between the three states. A significant part of the trade in the region is still small scale, local, informal, partly illegal, and shows very limited complementarity between the three states. ¹

A third potential explanation relates to domestic politics. The creation of a new regional bloc could be an opportunity for state leaders to show their success on the regional stage. With national elections in Ethiopia and Somalia approaching, both Abiy Ahmed and Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo need to gain support to be re-elected . Especially in Ethiopia, the transition process resulted in requests for more democratisation and liberalisation , this engagement will give more credibility of their previous promises.

By contrast, Eritrean authoritarian ruler Isaias Afwerki reportedly pushed for the creation of the HoAC as an opportunity to gain regional reputation and side-line IGAD, which he has boycotted for several years due to IGAD's stance on basic principles of good governance .

At the level of supreme policy makers there is no reason they can refuse a new RO. The scholarly debates therefore increasingly focus on the complexity of regionalism around the globe. The establishment of HoAC would create an additional layer of complexity for regional politics in the form of overlapping regionalism and the potential for forum shopping, and risk further complicating diplomatic relationships in the HoA.

They usually push for the creation of a new institution when the existing ones are not open to reform or blocked by other states. Once established, HoAC would become a direct competitor of IGAD and create additional overlaps with the AU, EASF, COMESA, and potentially the EAC. IGAD's efforts in managing conflicts in Somalia and Sudan have been quite successful in recent years.

¹ Ingo Henneberg and Sören Stapel, "Cooperation and Conflict at the Horn of Africa: A New Regional Bloc Between Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia and Its Consequences for Eastern Africa," *Africa Spectrum* 55, no. 3 (2020): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002039720936689>.

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Djibouti is a direct neighbour of all three states – and a potential candidate to become an additional HoAC member. The three states uphold the possibility of Djibouti joining them: “They also expressed their appreciation for, and their readiness to cooperate with, their friends and partners, The three leaders agreed to closely consult with their Brothers, Heads of State, for the realization of the aspiration of their peoples for effective Horn of Africa”.

Significant progress towards regional peace and development the HoA , domestic changes in Ethiopia, peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and burgeoning cooperation attempts in the region all are promising. In addition, the revolution in Sudan and the peace agreement in South Sudan open up new prospects for the conflict-ridden greater HoA. The proposal to form a HoAC regional bloc between Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia could be another step in this direction. Their cooperation promises to bring about lasting peaceful relations among the states in the HoA.

Wz argue that , a regional cooperation between the three states is urgently needed also beyond the security realm. Moreover, such an institution could boost the prestige of all three state leaders and foster regional trade and infrastructure. Against that backdrop, it is important to remember that the three states are far from stable. Security risks could easily undermine soaring plans for cooperation. Especially in Somalia, the security situation is still highly fragile. The federal government relies on international forces to secure the country, fails to provide basic services, and is not well positioned to invest in larger economic and security projects. As the new regional bloc would create many problems, it is an optimistic domestic move and a signal to improve and update economic cooperation in the region within existing, complex regional frameworks.¹

Yet the potential disadvantages regarding funding, capacities, and overlap with other existing institutions are substantial. In fact, only a few agree that a new RO is necessary.

The last that could be said as key finding is that the Horn constitutes a Regional Security Complex in which the security problems of each country impacts on the security of all. We strongly suggest a systematic analysis since The different conflicts interlock with and feed into each other, determining regional foreign policy positions that exacerbate conflict. While this underscores the need for a regional approach to conflict, the mechanisms for achieving this remain extremely weak. At the institutional level, IGAD is regarded by the African Union as the appropriate forum for conflict management in the region. However IGAD’s capacity to play an effective role is deeply compromised by the multiple conflicts among its member states².

¹ Ingo Henneberg and Sören Stapel, “Cooperation and Conflict at the Horn of Africa: A New Regional Bloc Between Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia and Its Consequences for Eastern Africa,” *Africa Spectrum* 55, no. 3 (2020): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002039720936689>.

² Jason Mosley, *Ethiopia and its Neighbours: The Horn of Africa and Arab Gulf States* (London: Chatham House, June 2008), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/0608hornafrica.pdf>.

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Conclusion

Examining the case studies of the Horn of Africa, separately reveals, first and foremost ; the distinctive political and historical particularities of each state. Although the region as a whole was subjected to colonial domination that left behind comparable patterns of instability, institutional fragility, and socio-political fragmentation, the post-colonial struggle for power shaped the trajectories of these states in markedly different ways.

One of the principal commonalities among the states of the Horn lies in the enduring centrality of ethnically based groups, despite their varying denominations, degrees of influence, and relative political power. These groups have consistently remained fundamental components of both state structures and broader African socio-political identities. However, the narrowing of political and social space transformed ethnic diversity into a source of violent contestation, giving rise to protracted civil wars and recurring cycles of instability. Civilian populations have borne the heaviest burden of these conflicts, particularly in light of the mass atrocities committed throughout the region. Consequently, the Horn entered a new and highly destructive phase of turmoil characterized by brutal confrontations between central governments and armed ethnic movements, as states attempted to contain, marginalize, or neutralize their influence.

Furthermore, the persistence of conflict and instability has continuously served the interests of specific political and economic actors. In highly fragmented political environments, where material gain and short-term personal interests dominate public life, political markets emerged and flourished, such dynamics severely undermined prospects for sustainable state-building, rendering institutional consolidation increasingly difficult, if not possible. The instrumentalization of conflicts for political survival and economic accumulation ultimately created a vicious cycle in which instability itself became politically profitable.

What many ruling elites perceived as strategies for consolidating and maintaining power gradually evolved into an increasing dependence on external actors, in their pursuit of political survival, these actors welcomed extensive foreign involvement, often justified under the banners of economic development, security cooperation, or regional stabilization. Yet, while external powers offered immediate political or financial support, they simultaneously deepened structural dependency and expanded their own strategic influence within the region. In a medium and long term, such agreements risk accelerating state fragility and bringing the prospect of state collapse closer than anticipated.

Finally, from the very beginning, granting foreign actors broad opportunities to expand under the rhetoric of development and investment proved both utopian and misleading. If policymakers previously failed to seize opportunities for meaningful transformation at earlier historical turning points, they are now confronted with the far more difficult task of addressing the accumulated consequences of decades of political fragmentation and external dependency. Nevertheless, despite the complexity of the Horn's regional dynamics and the impact of shifting global developments, the prospects for peace cannot be entirely dismissed. Genuine transformation remains possible through the restoration of accountable governance mechanisms, the strengthening of state institutions, and the inclusion of all relevant actors within a credible state-building process. Under such conditions, even Andreas

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Eshete's vision of a confederation or commonwealth among these historically adversial states may no longer appear entirely unattainable.

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GENERAL CONCLUSION

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Foreign Intervention has been a recurrent phenomenon throughout history, exercised through political, military, economic, and diplomatic means. From piracy practices and the Monroe Doctrine to colonial expansion and, more recently, humanitarian interventions, external powers have consistently sought to legitimize their involvement in weaker regions under varying legal, political, or moral justifications. Although international law attempts to regulate intervention through principles embedded in the United Nations Charter, the concept itself remains highly contested. In practice, interventions are often shaped less by humanitarian objectives than by the strategic interests of powerful states. Consequently, the typologies of intervention whether political, military, economic, or diplomatic remain largely theoretical classifications, as many interventions simultaneously combine coercive and cooperative dimensions.

Within this global context, the Horn of Africa represents one of the most intervention-prone regions in the contemporary international system. The region's geopolitical significance has increased considerably due to its strategic position overlooking the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints connecting the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. This route constitutes a central artery of global trade, energy transportation, and commercial shipping, particularly for trade flows linking Asia, Europe, and North America. At a time when global trade faces mounting disruptions caused by the Russo-Ukrainian War, instability in the Middle East, and transformations in international economic relations associated with contemporary American foreign policy, the strategic importance of the Horn has become even more pronounced.

However, geography alone does not explain the intensity of foreign intervention in the region. The Horn of Africa has long been characterized by chronic instability, civil wars, fragile state institutions, ethnic fragmentation, and political unrest. Its proximity to the Middle East, one of the most conflict-ridden regions in the world further amplifies its strategic vulnerability. Foreign intervention in the Horn therefore operates not merely as a mechanism for development or stabilization, as often officially claimed, but also as an instrument for advancing geopolitical competition, securing strategic footholds, and preserving external influence. In many cases, intervention simultaneously generates both cooperation and instability, depending on the interests pursued by external actors.

The contemporary political landscape of the Horn reflects deep domestic structural weaknesses rooted in colonial legacies, artificial borders, uneven state formation, and ethnic divisions. These conditions have produced fragmented political systems vulnerable to external manipulation. In this regard, the study draws significantly on the contribution of Alex de Waal and his concept of the “**political marketplace**,” through which politics in the Horn operates via transactional bargaining, patronage networks, and the monetization of political loyalty. Ethnic diversity and political fragmentation create multiple competing actors who frequently align themselves with foreign powers in pursuit of personal, military, or factional gains, often at the expense of state sovereignty and long-term national stability.

More precisely, foreign intervention in the Horn of Africa is driven by interconnected strategic motives. These include geopolitical rivalry, maritime security, access to trade routes, energy security, military projection, and economic expansion. To sustain their influence, external actors rely on a broad range of mechanisms such as financial aid, military cooperation, diplomatic agreements, infrastructure investments, and the establishment of overseas military bases. The global transition toward renewable energy and shifting energy-security agendas have

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further intensified competition over strategic corridors and maritime routes. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait has consequently become indispensable to global container shipping and international supply chains, especially for China–Europe and transatlantic trade networks.

Both international and regional powers actively pursue competing agendas across the region. China has expanded its presence through infrastructure diplomacy, port investments, and the broader framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, seeking to consolidate its influence across Africa and secure maritime connectivity through what is often associated with the “String of Pearls” strategy. United States involvement remains heavily centered on military cooperation, counterterrorism operations, and the maintenance of strategic military bases, particularly in Djibouti. Russia, meanwhile, has increasingly relied on diplomatic engagement, security partnerships, logistical cooperation, and support for fragile regimes to expand its regional influence.

Regional powers from the Gulf have also intensified their engagement in the Horn through investments in ports, logistics, and infrastructure. Strategic ports such as Assab in Eritrea and the ports of Djibouti have become focal points of geopolitical competition due to their proximity to global maritime trade routes. While such investments may create opportunities for economic growth, employment, and infrastructure development, they also risk deepening dependency, reinforcing authoritarian governance, and intensifying regional rivalries.

The comparative trajectories of the states of the Horn further demonstrate how shared historical experiences can produce divergent political outcomes. Despite similar struggles against colonial domination and state-building challenges, each country evolved differently. Eritrea developed into a highly militarized state shaped by prolonged conflict and centralized authoritarian rule. Djibouti adopted a strategy centered on hosting multiple foreign military bases and positioning itself as a logistical hub. Somalia continues to struggle with fragmentation, weak governance, and persistent insecurity, while Ethiopia has faced recurrent ethnic tensions and devastating civil conflicts despite its historical image as a regional power.

Based on current developments, several future prospects can be identified. The first scenario points toward the continued militarization of the region, characterized by rising geopolitical tensions, proxy rivalries, regime fragility, armed conflict, and deeper fragmentation. Under such conditions, the Horn risks remaining trapped within a permanent political marketplace where instability itself becomes politically and economically profitable for both domestic and external actors.

Nevertheless, a cooperative scenario cannot be entirely excluded. Stability and regional cooperation may ultimately serve the interests of rival powers if prolonged instability begins to threaten trade routes, investment projects, and broader strategic objectives. However, achieving such a scenario would require substantial transformations in governance, state-society relations, regional diplomacy, and cooperation between the Horn states and neighboring Gulf countries. Sustainable peace cannot emerge solely through foreign-sponsored security arrangements; rather, it requires inclusive governance, institutional reform, economic integration, and the reduction of political exclusion and ethnic marginalization.

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Ultimately, the future of the Horn of Africa will depend on whether regional and international actors continue to pursue influence primarily through coercion and militarization, or whether they shift toward forms of cooperation capable of reducing cycles of violence and preventing mass atrocities. Restoring effective regional mechanisms, strengthening domestic institutions, and prioritizing internal reform remain crucial steps toward long-term stability. Genuine transformation must emerge gradually from within the societies of the region themselves. Indeed, political victories achieved at the expense of economic collapse may still be reversible, but economic gains accompanied by the destruction of political sovereignty and social cohesion can produce enduring and irreversible losses.

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