



Horn of Africa Conflicts:

Implications for
Regional and Egyptian
Security





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General Framework: Multiple Transformation Paths in the Horn of Africa

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The Horn of Africa is currently experiencing a period of significant transformation. These transformations encompass a multifaceted spectrum, impacting both the internal political landscapes of the region's countries and the intricate web of inter-state relations. Additionally, the external dimension is undergoing a metamorphosis,

marked by an influx of international actors vying for influence in the Horn of Africa and a shift in the nature of their competing interests within the region.

These transformations unfolding in the Horn of Africa are not unique occurrences in the region's long and complex history. The Horn

of Africa has consistently been one of the least stable regions on the African continent, and arguably the world. Throughout its history, it has experienced recurring cycles of transformation, which have rarely resulted in lasting or sustainable stability. A particularly significant period of transformation transpired in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which witnessed the independence of Somalia and Sudan, a surge in modernization efforts within Ethiopia, and the eruption of the Eritrean War of Independence. The late 1980s and early 1990s ushered in a second, more tumultuous cycle of transformation. This era saw the fracturing of the Somali state, the conclusion of the Ethiopian Civil War with the triumph of the Tigray People's Liberation Front and its allies, the independence of Eritrea, and significant political and social transformations within Sudan marked by the rise of the Salvation regime.

This leaves us with some big questions to answer. The first centers on the ongoing wave of transformation sweeping the Horn of Africa. At what pace is it unfolding? What is the degree of its intensity? What underlying forces are propelling it forward, and is it demonstrably achieving its intended outcomes? The second inquiry delves into historical context. How does this transformation compare to prior periods of significant change witnessed by the region? Are there discernible parallels, or is this a wholly novel phenomenon? The last question, and maybe the most important one, concerns the ultimate trajectory of the Horn of Africa following this period of upheaval. What will the region's character be once the current flux subsides? To effectively grapple with

these challenging questions, we must adopt a comprehensive perspective. This necessitates a flexible approach to defining the Horn of Africa itself. Depending on the specific issue at hand, the region might encompass the core four countries—Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti—or it might extend to include Sudan, South Sudan, and Kenya.

Although the Horn of Africa's current transformative landscape presents significant complexity, several key trends can be discerned. These encompass internal dynamics at the state and sub-state levels, regional trends related to cross-border interactions between the countries, and finally, the influence of major and middle international powers with a direct presence in the region. Here's a closer look at the key trends:

1. **Rethinking the Significance of Borders:** Traditionally, borders in the Horn of Africa have been viewed as a cornerstone of regional stability, offering a perceived sense of permanence compared to other political and social factors. However, this perception is being challenged. The region is experiencing a rise in separatist movements, as evidenced by the situations in Ethiopia, Somaliland, and Somalia, along with the growing calls for the creation of an Afar state encompassing territories in Eritrea, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. The issue goes beyond separatism. International border disputes, like the renewed conflict in Al-Fashaga between Sudan and Ethiopia or the long-standing Badme Triangle dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, have fueled regional instability

and even played a role in the recent Tigray conflict. Additionally, internal administrative borders have become new flashpoints for tension, as seen in the ongoing frictions between Puntland and Somaliland, or the Tigray and Amhara regions in Ethiopia.

2. **Disruption of Conventional Political Processes:**

The Horn of Africa presents a concerning trend: elections, intended as a cornerstone of democratic governance, have morphed into catalysts for crises. They now sow confusion and uncertainty about the future, rather than providing a stable system for transferring power. Somalia's struggles are a prime example. For over a year, from February 2021 to May 2022, the country found itself in a state of constitutional limbo due to a protracted electoral delay. The aspiration for direct elections ultimately proved unfeasible, necessitating a return to the previous clan-based quota system. Similarly, Ethiopia has witnessed the detrimental effects of delayed national elections. Repeated postponements fueled the eruption of conflict within the Tigray region. In September 2020, the regional government held unauthorized elections, prompting a forceful rejection from the federal authorities. This action reciprocated, as the regional government refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the federal elections that brought the Prosperity Party to power.

3. **Evolving Conflict Dynamics:** Conflicts have long been a common feature of

interactions in the Horn of Africa. However, what stands out in the current phase is the emerging shift in conflict patterns. Traditional conflicts have resurfaced, such as border disputes between Ethiopia and Sudan and resource conflicts between Somalia and Kenya. Simultaneously, the rapid evolution in conflict tools is visible, notably with the growing use of unconventional weapons like drones on the Somali and Ethiopian fronts. Additionally, there is a noticeable trend of internal disputes escalating into regional conflicts.

4. **The Rise of Non-State Armed Actors:**

The Horn of Africa is witnessing a significant shift in the composition of its armed actors. Traditional rebel and ethnic groups are fragmenting, while paramilitary forces are growing in number. This evolving landscape is further complicated by the recruitment of foreign fighters, including those associated with private military companies and mercenary groups. These new players capitalize on the region's thriving small arms trade and benefit from the weaknesses in national and international disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs. The failed 2018 Ethiopian government reconciliations with various armed groups serve as a stark example of vulnerabilities in DDR efforts.

5. **Transformations in Terrorism and Counterterrorism:**

Over time, terrorism in the Horn of Africa has become endemic, embedding itself within the

local social and economic structures in many areas of central and southern Somalia, northern Kenya, and eastern Ethiopia. Terrorist organizations have also developed resilience against counterterrorism efforts led by the United States, the African Union Mission in Somalia, and regional forces. Further complicating the situation, terrorist organizations in the region are forging stronger connections with indigenous groups in the Middle East, as well as with organizations active in neighboring regions, such as those in southern East Africa based in Mozambique, and those operating within the African Great Lakes region, including Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6. **The Horn of Africa's Shifting Religious Landscape:** The traditional religious landscape of the Horn of Africa was established early compared to other regions of sub-Saharan Africa, being among the first regions to embrace Orthodox Christianity and later Islam. Currently, this religious scene is under-

going multiple shifts. Religious violence, both in rhetoric and action, is becoming more frequent. New Protestant and Evangelical churches, especially Pentecostal ones, are gaining ground. Meanwhile, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is dealing with internal squabbles at both the national and regional levels. Some Islamic societies are exhibiting susceptibility to extremist ideologies espoused by groups like al-Qaeda and Daesh and attempts are underway to revive Sufism through armed groups, such as Somalia's Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a movement.

7. **Spread of Hybrid Political Systems:** The Horn of Africa is witnessing a resurgence of traditional and pre-colonial political structures. This is evident in the 4.5 formula for clan-based power-sharing in Somalia and Ethiopia's continued reliance on ethnic federalism. A similar pattern has emerged in Sudan following the uba Agreement for Peace in Sudan. This trend diminishes the role of political parties, the modern institutional vehicles



for political competition. The rise of hybrid political systems in the region opens the door for a reformulation of the notion of statehood and its relationship with social structures.

8. **The Growing Power of Civil Society:**

The landscape of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Horn of Africa is undergoing a significant transformation. This is driven by two key trends. Firstly, CSOs are filling the void left by weak governments, particularly in conflict zones like southern Somalia, northern Kenya, and Ethiopian border regions. Secondly, the decline in the effectiveness of political parties has created space for CSOs to play a more prominent role in political formation and recruitment. This has blurred the lines between humanitarian and political goals for both national and international CSOs. The rise of civil society in the Horn of Africa is fueled in part by its transformation into a direct conduit for diaspora communities. These communities, with their economic muscle and organizational savvy, hold a significant advantage when it comes to influencing internal dynamics within the region.

9. **Fluctuation of Economic and Development Indicators:**

The Horn of Africa's development path has seen a series of twists and turns. Countries in the region have rapidly shifted their ideological stances, leading to changes in their development models. While there has been a surge in infrastructure projects and foreign trade, many quali-



ty-of-life indicators continue to decline. Similarly, regional economic integration efforts are volatile, heavily reliant on external funding. This dependence perpetuates a sense of neo-colonialism, hindering sustainable progress.

10. **Impact of Climate Change and Environmental Degradation:**

The Horn of Africa stands as a grim example of climate change's devastating impact. Droughts, desertification, and biodiversity loss are widespread, pushing poverty rates ever higher. These environmental challenges are more than just ecological concerns; they're increasingly acting as catalysts for conflict in the region. As a result, environmental security has become a critical factor for ensuring future stability in the Horn of Africa.

11. **Disruptions in Intra-Regional Power Dynamics:**

The Horn of Africa has long lacked a dominant power since the turmoil in Ethiopia following Meles Zenawi's death in 2012. This vacuum has created an opportunity for Kenya to step up, leveraging its strong economic partnership with China and American confidence in its military and security capabilities. Sudan may also

enter the race for regional leadership, particularly in light of the normalization of its global relations following Omar al-Bashir's regime. This competition for regional dominance, combined with the ineffectiveness of IGAD in fostering regional integration on key issues, creates a volatile environment where competition among countries could escalate into conflict.

12. **Increasing Influence of International Competition on Regional Dynamics:**

The Horn of Africa has become a focal point for intense competition among international actors. A diverse range of players, encompassing both major powers and regional players, are vying for influence in the region. This has resulted in a fluid and dynamic landscape, characterized by rapidly evolving alliances between external actors and local parties. Numerous external parties have invested in local actors, exacerbating instability and giving rise to proxy warfare indicators. Consequently, there has been a gradual decline in the Horn of Africa countries' ability to benefit from their resources amidst intense international competition.

13. **Varied Perspectives on the Horn of Africa's Global Position:**

Despite the intense international competition, the Horn of Africa has yet to evolve into a significant hub for global interactions. Instead, the region finds itself increasingly entangled with the Middle East due to the growing influence of Gulf states, Turkey, Iran, and Israel. Furthermore, its

geographical position linking the Red Sea and Suez Canal to the Eastern Mediterranean makes it a secondary battleground for economic competition, specifically in the domains of energy and port development. Additionally, the region has become embroiled in strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region, serving as its western edge amidst fierce competition among Asian powers. However, these developments don't translate into a strengthened international position for Horn of Africa countries. While the region holds strategic value, its countries haven't established a unique role within this complex web of interactions. They haven't leveraged their location to become key players in any of these interconnected spheres.

Collectively, these trends provide a comprehensive framework for the transformations that are currently underway in the Horn of Africa, which have far-reaching implications for the region and its broader environment. This publication aims to shed light on some of the most significant transformations shaping the Horn of Africa by tracking their progress and potential outcomes through a multi-pronged approach. This approach will combine in-depth examinations of select cases with broader analyses of regional trends.

However, given the dynamic nature of interactions in the region, the specific trajectory and ultimate consequences of these transformations remain a subject of ongoing debate.



The Sudanese Crisis

- ◀ The Sudanese Crisis One Year On: Dynamics and Scenarios
- ◀ Treading Carefully: Regional Responses to Sudan's Crisis
- ◀ Challenges to the Role of Regional and International Organizations in Sudanese Conflict Resolution?



The Sudanese Crisis One Year On: Dynamics and Scenarios

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April 15, 2024, marked one year since the onset of the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). As the conflict progresses into its second year, the situation presents itself as increasingly intricate and multifaceted, with significant internal repercussions in Sudan across military, politi-

cal, economic, and humanitarian dimensions. Despite various settlement initiatives from the early months of the conflict, no tangible progress has been made. These dynamics directly affect Egyptian interests, calling for increased Egyptian efforts towards a lasting settlement in the second year of the conflict.

This analysis looks into the internal dynamics of the Sudan conflict, its ramifications for Egyptian interests, and the potential scenarios that may unfold.

Internal Dynamics of the Sudan Conflict

1. Political Dynamics

▪ **Persistence of Sudan's Government**

Vacuum: Sudan has endured a protracted political impasse since the October 2021 dismissal of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's second government. The early months of 2024 witnessed the circulation of reports concerning a potential unilateral decision by Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, President of the Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC), to appoint Malik Agar as Prime Minister, in addition to forming the National Assembly consisting of entities and figures who back the SAF. This prospect has ignited concerns about the potential imposition of a new, non-consensual transitional pathway, potentially encompassing the creation of a legislative body. While al-Burhan may see the formation of a permanent government, as opposed to a caretaker one, as a method to restore stability, such a move, implemented without broad-based agreement, is likely to be met with substantial domestic and international opposition.

▪ **Civil Forces Reclaiming an Active Political Role:**

In July 2023, Cairo hosted a crucial meeting aimed at mending the fractured Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC). The goal was to rebuild a unified civilian front. During the meeting, the FFC

pledged to be open to all civil forces and to reunite ranks once more. This effort continued in October with another meeting in Addis Ababa, this time with Abdalla Hamdok's participation to form a broad civil alliance—the Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces, Taqaddum (CCDF). To strengthen the negotiating position of the civil forces, the FFC preparatory meeting approved a ten-point document titled Foundations and Principles for Ending the War and Re-establishing the Sudanese State. This document outlined plans for specialised workshops on key issues, including security and military reform, transitional justice, the rebuilding of national institutional bodies, drafting a permanent constitution, reconstruction, and state and local governance. Since February 2024, these workshops have been underway in Nairobi and Kampala. The CCDF then convened in the Ethiopian capital to finalize preparations for its inaugural conference.

▪ **Deepening Divisions in Darfur's Armed**

Factions: Darfur's armed factions are fracturing further. Larger groups loyal to the SAF have formed civilian self-defense units, while smaller ones aligned with the RSF have mirrored them. This suggests a new fault line within Darfur, potentially pitting armed factions against each other. The RSF isn't immune to these divisions. It recently reached agreements with the Revolutionary Awakening Council (RAC), led by Musa Hilal, to prevent a complete split among Arab factions in Darfur that could benefit armed factions aligned with African tribes, such as the Fur and Zaghawa, who have recently inched closer to the military.

While agreements between the RSF and the RAC seemed positive overall, the RSF's decision to let Musa Hilal keep his militia camps in Darfur seems like a concession. It weakens the position of RSF Commander Hemedti and his field commanders, reshaping the balance of power in Darfur and causing Hemedti's influence over the region, even in his own backyard, to wane. Hilal's late-April declaration of support for the military puts them in a tighter bind.

2. Military Dynamics

▪ **Renewed Military Escalation in Khartoum, al-Jazirah, and North Darfur:**

In April 2024, Sudan plunged back into violence after a brief period of pacification. Fighting erupted again north of Khartoum, near the al-Jili Oil refinery, alongside a significant military buildup around al-Fashir, the capital of North Darfur. Violence has spread to Kordofan and the villages of al-Jazirah state. This widespread escalation portends a rapid deterioration in humanitarian conditions, already at a critical juncture amid the international community's sluggish response to aid delivery, exacerbated by the intransigence of the warring parties.

The RSF's intention to launch an attack on al-Fashir poses a significant risk of escalating conflict with the SAF and the allied Darfur factions. This is especially concerning given the extensive military preparations by the two parties in al-Fashir, the only major city in Darfur not under RSF control. Although the SAF has announced a campaign to retake al-Jazirah State and its capital, Wad Madani, the success of this effort is highly uncertain. The RSF continues to perpetrate violence in

al-Jazirah's villages and is expanding into neighboring states, particularly Gedaref. In central Sudan, the RSF and their local armed allies still possess considerable military strength, suggesting that any potential attack could result in a significant losses.

▪ **SAF's Expansion in Mobilizing Civilian Fighters:**

The SAF's decision to arm and deploy civilians they mobilized in government-controlled cities presents a significant risk of escalation in Sudan. This mobilization, coupled with declared plans to use those fighters in a counterattack on RSF-held areas, constitutes a dangerous development. It creates a potential justification for pre-emptive strikes by the RSF, akin to the December attack on Wad Madani and al-Jazirah state. Furthermore, anxieties regarding the potential militarization of the SAF's civilian mobilization program are heightened in eastern Sudan. The appointment of Nazir Mohamed al-Amin Turk as head of the Supreme Council of Popular Resistance is particularly concerning. Turk has a documented history of exacerbating tensions in Port Sudan and its surrounding areas between 2020 and 2021 by facilitating the closure of Sudan's main port and all access roads in support of his Beja tribe against the Beni-Amer tribe. This latest development is likely to exacerbate existing divisions within eastern Sudan, potentially creating fertile ground for internal conflict that could be exploited by the RSF.

▪ **Enhanced Coordination between SAF and Darfur Armed Factions:**

There's been a noticeable shift in alliances between the SAF and Darfur armed factions,

particularly those based in al-Fashir, the capital of North Darfur. The Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) led by Minni Minnawi has significantly increased its cooperation with the SAF, deploying over a thousand fighters to support them on various fronts. Meanwhile, the arrangements the RSF had with some Darfur rebel defectors seem to be falling apart. A large number of fighters from the el-Hadi Idris faction of the SLM have rejoined the SAF. This is a major setback for the RSF, which has made little headway in capturing al-Fashir. These developments, combined with the recent military advances by the SAF in Omdurman, suggest an impending wider offensive in Darfur. The attack is likely to begin in al-Fashir and then spread to other

major cities like el-Daein, Nyala, Zalingei, and al-Junaynah.

- **SAF's Leveraging International Contradictions:** The SAF is capitalizing on global contradictions, especially those involving the United States, which has recently appointed a new envoy to Sudan who is still acclimating to the role. On the other hand, Sudan's full diplomatic relations with Iran have been restored, which was evident through the appointment of Iran's new ambassador in Khartoum and the dispatch of the Sudanese ambassador to Tehran, following reports of Iran supplying drones to the SAF. This development coincides with a new factor: several Russian naval vessels, including a cruiser and a frigate, have entered the Red Sea through the



Bab al-Mandab Strait. This move comes amid heightened security tensions in one of the world's most crucial waterways due to Houthi attacks on commercial vessels and warships. Russia's renewed involvement rekindles debate over its ability to establish a naval base north of Port Sudan, based on a 2020 agreement reviewed in March 2023, just days before the conflict in Sudan erupted. These actions are likely to prompt the United States to take more decisive actions to ensure a swift return to stability in Sudan, thereby preventing competitors like Russia, Iran, and, to a lesser extent, China, from capitalizing on the volatile situation to secure significant strategic advantages.

3. Economic and Humanitarian Dynamics

▪ **Decline in the Sudanese Economy:**

Sudan's economic situation has taken a sharp downturn. State revenues have plummeted by 80% between 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. Whether due to conflict or disruptions in supply chains, this revenue decline has triggered a domino effect. Gross domestic product has shrunk, leading to soaring inflation as the exchange rate and banking sector have collapsed. The unemployment rate, previously hovering between 18.5% and 28.3% from 2018 to 2022, has exceeded 46% in early 2024.

Significant Decline in Major Exports: Sudan's major exports, particularly gold and oil, have taken a hit. This comes on top of a deteriorating agricultural sector. Two consecutive failed harvests across the country have been a major blow, especially considering that a third of Sudan's population lives in rural areas.

The situation is so dire that the Humanitarian Practice Network has warned of potentially catastrophic food insecurity in South and West Darfur, as well as Khartoum State. These areas could reach IPC/CH Phase 5 classifications, signifying the most severe level of food insecurity.

▪ **Drop in Agricultural and Grain Production:**

Sudan's grain production has been slashed by 40% due to ongoing fighting between warring parties. The lack of security in agricultural areas has been particularly disruptive, leading to a sharp rise in food prices. Essential staples like wheat and other grains now cost three times what they did in January 2023.

▪ **Devastating Effect of RSF Looting on Sudan's Economy:**

The RSF's systematic looting of government and commercial banks, along with public and private savings, inflicted a devastating blow on Sudan's economy. Estimates suggest stolen assets approach a staggering \$1 trillion. The private sector in all war-affected states suffered immense losses, including property and savings. This looting spree, accompanied by theft and destruction, ravaged over 15 central markets across Khartoum State's three cities. Essential food commodities, raw materials, goods, electrical tools, commercial agencies, telecommunication companies, and even massive industrial facilities were not spared. The looting in Khartoum State alone resulted in the devastation of 575 factories, and the state's entire strategic gold reserve, estimated at tens of tons, was stolen. This widespread destruction and theft, coupled

with the ongoing conflict, will likely lead to a complete collapse of state revenues. Previous estimates place the total value of assets destroyed by the Sudanese war between \$500 and \$700 billion. The war has also caused a total collapse in public finance revenues, further escalating the economic losses.

- **Destruction of Infrastructure:** The war has inflicted a brutal toll on Sudan's infrastructure. The RSF's direct attacks on health facilities have been catastrophic, causing 70% of its infrastructure to crumble. Ongoing fighting in some areas has rendered much of what remains unusable. The destruction extends far beyond healthcare: roads, bridges, communication networks, water, electricity, energy grids, educational buildings, public facilities, and entire production sectors have all suffered heavy losses. Civilian homes and property haven't been spared either, and the war has unleashed a wave of environmental pollution that will take years to remediate.

Consequences of the Sudan Conflict for Egyptian Interests

Sudan serves as a crucial partner for Egypt across several key spheres that are pivotal to Egyptian interests, including the Nile Basin, Red Sea, and coastal and desert regions. This interconnectedness makes internal security and stability in Sudan essential for safeguarding Egyptian interests related to Nile water rights, maritime navigation in the Red Sea leading to the Suez Canal, and the security of Egypt's southern borders.

While the 2019 fall of the Salvation regime was anticipated to usher in a new era of Egyptian-Sudanese relations beyond their historically volatile pattern, the eruption of internal conflict between the SAF and RSF in April 2023 plunged Sudan into a desperate situation that swiftly overshadowed Egyptian interests.

1. Consequences at the Security Level

- The conflict in Sudan has escalated into a renewed state of civil war in Egypt's southern neighborhood, surpassing previous domestic conflicts such as those in Darfur and the south prior to secession. This escalation follows a comprehensive war between two heavily armed military forces, namely the SAF and the RSF.
- The ongoing clash between the SAF and RSF threatens Sudan's unity and territorial integrity. The specter of secession looms large in several regions—west, south, and east. The root cause lies in the fragmented military landscape, a legacy of the ousted Salvation regime's rule with its emphasis on military pluralism. This fragmentation ultimately led to the current conflict between the unified SAF under the General Command and the RSF.
- One year into the conflict, its potential to ripple outward becomes increasingly clear. Sudan's proximity to volatile regions like southern Libya plays a role. Furthermore, the conflicts in Darfur and Chad exhibit a substantial degree of overlapping, where a fragile transitional government in Chad struggles for stability. Surrounding crisis zones, including Ethiopia and South

Sudan, have also been affected by the regional instability stemming from the Sudanese conflict.

- The prolonged conflict in Sudan casts a long shadow on Red Sea security. This vital international shipping lane has already faced a significant challenge since November 2023 due to repeated Houthi attacks from Yemeni territory targeting commercial and military vessels, particularly around the Bab al-Mandab Strait. While eastern Sudan, notably Port Sudan, has remained relatively secure and even assumed de facto capital status following damage to Khartoum from ongoing battles, the conflict expanded in December 2023 to central and eastern Sudan after the RSF seized control of al-Jazirah state. This expansion directly threatens eastern Sudanese regions, compounding internal tensions between the Beja and Beni-Amer tribes since 2020, further complicating the Red Sea situation.

2. Consequences at the Political Level

- Sudan's ongoing conflict is a major obstacle to forming a unified government that represents all Sudanese parties and effectively serves the nation domestically and internationally. The lack of such a consensus government since October 2021 significantly destabilized the situation, eventually leading to the outbreak of war a year and a half later.
- The conflict also hampers Egypt's effective cooperation with Sudan regarding Nile water management. The expanding hostilities threaten the safety of key Sudanese Nile River installations, some of which are

already at risk of damage. This could have disastrous consequences for the safety of the High Dam. Furthermore, the conflict hinders Egyptian-Sudanese coordination on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations. Ethiopia's unilateral approach to dam construction and operation has stalled progress, despite successful Egyptian-Sudanese efforts in 2017 to escalate pressure on Ethiopia through the Security Council.

- The ongoing Sudan conflict opens the door for various international and regional actors to intervene in Sudan with settlement initiatives. These include initiatives by Middle Eastern countries, specifically Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as attempts by Sudan's African neighbor through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to guide the situation towards a resolution that is in line with their respective interests. These competing visions disrupt the progress achieved by Egypt's Sudan Neighboring States (SNS) mechanism, which involved collaboration with Libya, Chad, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea and aimed for parallel progress on both political and humanitarian fronts.

3. Consequences at the Economic and Humanitarian Levels

- From an economic perspective, the protracted conflict in Sudan negatively impacts the potential opportunities for Egypt. Sudan was a key export market for Egypt and a major source of agricultural imports. Additionally, the status of over \$2 billion in Egyptian investments across various

Sudanese industrial and service sectors is uncertain due to the ongoing fighting.

- The humanitarian crisis, especially the influx of Sudanese refugees into Egypt, adds another dangerous layer to the situation. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that by March 2024, Egypt had hosted the largest number of Sudanese refugees among neighboring countries, with roughly 270,000 refugees. In addition, Egypt offers residency to around five million Sudanese citizens.
- Furthermore, obstacles to regional mechanisms delivering vital humanitarian and relief aid to conflict-affected areas in Sudan could lead to a significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation. This raises the spectre of a limited, targeted international or regional military intervention to secure the passage of aid. Such action would effectively internationalize the Sudanese conflict, increasing the number of foreign powers present in Sudan, which would

pose significant challenges to Egypt's national security.

Crisis Resolution Scenarios

- **Scenario 1:** Reaching a Successful Settlement Since the conflict erupted, multiple paths to resolution have emerged. These include the Saudi US-backed Jeddah talks, the African Union-supported IGAD initiative, and the Cairo-launched SNS mechanism. More recently, less publicized paths have surfaced, such as the Manama talks in early 2024 and the UN-sponsored humanitarian negotiations in Geneva.

The first scenario posits that a potential merger of these initiatives could lead to a comprehensive settlement. Hope arose in January 2024 with the unprecedented meeting in Manama between Lieutenant General Shams al-Din Kabbashi, SAF deputy commander-in-chief, and Abdelrahim Dagalo, RSF deputy commander. This highest-level encounter since the conflict began signaled a potential willingness for a negotiated set-



tlement between the two key forces. Despite limited details on the Manama talks, the general trend suggests openness to discussing political arrangements beyond just military issues. This could pave the way for a shared vision of a post-conflict Sudan, potentially driven by exhaustion on both sides.

Adding to the positive signs, April 2024 saw the revival of the previously stalled Jeddah talks between the SAF and RSF. This renewed engagement marks a shift in US involvement under the new Sudan envoy. Notably, the announcement came not from official Saudi or American channels but from the CCDF, led by former Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok. The CCDF's involvement in the announcement of the talks suggests its expanding role with international and regional backing and perhaps even a minimal level of acceptance by both sides of the conflict. This could indicate the CCDF's potential future inclusion in the negotiations, at least as an observer, and its relevance in post-conflict Sudanese politics.

The anticipated resumption of the Jeddah talks with direct US support presents a fresh opportunity for resolving the conflict. It would be beneficial for Egypt to reiterate its support for the Jeddah platform, as it did upon its initial launch in May 2023. This would not only intensify pressure on the warring parties but also counter any regional power play that could jeopardize the talks.

▪ **Scenario 2:** Humanitarian-Oriented Pacification with Global Support

The UN's flurry of activity in Sudan past February, aimed at jumpstarting humanitarian aid, highlighted a chance for a novel approach

to the crisis. This approach would combine military and political solutions with immediate humanitarian relief. While the Geneva talks on facilitating aid delivery ultimately failed, they offered a positive starting point, either through dedicating a separate negotiation track specifically for humanitarian issues or establishing direct UN sponsorship that wouldn't be swayed by the political agendas of regional mediators or international powers.

Growing European concern about the unrest in the southern Red Sea, a direct security threat to their interests, led major European countries to prioritize Sudan. France and Italy, in particular, approached the crisis from a humanitarian perspective. In April, France announced a conference to address the situation in Sudan, and the Italian prime minister utilized the issue to push for stronger controls on illegal immigration, consistent with her orientations. This novel European involvement offered a potential path forward, given the preoccupation of the United States with other internal and external priorities. In light of the faltering regional and Middle Eastern mediations, Egypt can capitalize on its close ties with Italy, France, and other major European powers to facilitate the relaunch of a more comprehensive initiative to resolve the conflict in Sudan.

The Paris Conference, convened on April 15, 2024, with the objective of mobilizing humanitarian assistance for Sudan, conveyed a resolute message from the global community. Significantly, neither party to the conflict was invited, reflecting a shift in global approach compared to the first year. The conference's importance was further ampli-



fied by its joint French-German organization, the United States' significant participation with a \$100 million emergency aid package, and a broad international consensus. This international focus on aid puts pressure on Sudan's warring parties. Humanitarian relief is no longer just a regional concern; it has been elevated to a global scale.

▪ **Scenario 3:** International Field Intervention with Humanitarian Relief as Entry Point

Since the start of 2024, the international community's focus has shifted towards the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. This was highlighted by the UN Secretary-General's condemnation of both sides of the conflict for acts that could constitute war crimes. The United States also ramped up accusations against both parties for obstructing human-

itarian aid. This escalating rhetoric suggests a strategic shift by international actors. They might be reconsidering the idea of a limited international intervention to open humanitarian corridors to affected areas, which could mark a significant turning point as the conflict enters its second year.

International pressure on both warring parties continues. The US State Department officially blamed both parties for the worsening humanitarian situation, making aid delivery a source of pressure and a potential trigger for further international intervention.

As the military and political situation in Sudan grows more complex, international actors are exploring alternative ways to get aid into the country. The World Food Program's success in delivering aid to Darfur villages through



for international military intervention focused on delivering aid. Intervention could involve forces from neighboring African countries.

While it's difficult to favor any scenario at this stage, the failure to reach a quick, consensual solution raises the possibility of bypassing the first scenario and moving directly to the third—international intervention with humanitarian aid as a gateway, potentially leading to a foreign military presence on Sudanese soil.

Overall, as the Sudan conflict enters its second year, the pressure on Egyptian interests in the wider region intensifies. Egypt needs to redouble its efforts to end the conflict and achieve a settlement that spares Sudan from collapse, disintegration, and a foreign military presence.

cooperation with local armed factions, bypassing the SAF and RSF, serves as a model that could be replicated elsewhere if the conflict persists.

The international community's focus on condemning the SAF and RSF for obstructing aid opens the door to a limited Security Council-mandated military intervention. This wouldn't aim to impose peace or halt hostilities, but rather to forcibly secure safe passage for humanitarian aid. If such intervention occurs, the situation in Sudan will be completely reshaped. Support for this approach could come from Sudanese political parties outside the conflict. Former Prime Minister Hamdok, in a statement to a German newspaper in late April 2024, echoed proposals previously presented by IGAD in 2023, calling



Treading Carefully: Regional Responses to Sudan's Crisis

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The Sudanese crisis has reached a critical juncture due to the lack of a military resolution, worsening humanitarian conditions, deteriorating economic conditions, a volatile security landscape, and the intensification of tribal tensions within the armed conflict. This situation has had severe repercussions for Sudan's immediate regional neighbors. These factors, in turn,

have significant security and humanitarian implications for Sudan's neighbors. This analysis examines the multifaceted responses of these regional actors to the Sudanese crisis.

Egypt's Active Engagement

Egypt has emerged as a leading player, actively pursuing a ceasefire and addressing



the dire humanitarian situation in Sudan. Its efforts have encompassed offering mediation between the warring parties, coordinating efforts with South Sudan and Chad, and engaging with international actors like the United Nations, world leaders, the African Union, regional organization, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Egypt has steadfastly emphasised its support for the Sudanese people and the vital role of Sudan's stability in its own national security.

Furthermore, Egypt has facilitated the safe entry of Sudanese refugees through designated land crossings, providing a safe haven within its borders. Egyptian Red Crescent has been active on the Egyptian-Sudanese border, while hospitals in Aswan, on the

southern border with Sudan, have been prepared, and preventive medicine teams have been increased in border areas. Additionally, a humanitarian corridor has been established between Aswan and Wadi Halfa in coordination with the World Food Programme, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Nations agencies, development organizations, and humanitarian partners to meet the needs of those affected by the conflict.

Chad's Cautious Neutrality

Sudan's western neighbour, Chad, faces the immediate threat of the conflict spilling over its porous border. This would entail multiplying humanitarian crises, escalating refugee flows, worsening security, and the cessation of cross-border trade, making Sudan's predicament a significant concern for Chad. Consequently, N'Djamena has adopted a cautious approach to secure its border and contain potential repercussions, deploying additional security forces and closing the border with Sudan. It is also cautiously coordinating with Egypt and supporting regional efforts to achieve a ceasefire.

The military council in N'Djamena is trying to maintain a balanced approach by inviting both conflict parties to dialogue. However, any potential seizure of power by an irregular force like the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which includes several Arab groups on the Chadian-Sudanese border and former Chadian rebels, is seen as an existential threat to Chad's ruling elite, who belong to the Zaghawa and have controlled power for over thirty years.

South Sudan's Pacification Efforts

South Sudan is one of the regional parties most negatively affected by the Sudanese conflict, as its economy relies on oil refineries in Port Sudan. The threat of militias on both sides of the common border jeopardizes the oil industry. If these refineries halt operations, South Sudan's economy, heavily dependent on oil revenues, will face a multifaceted crisis, pushing it to seek alternative supply routes.

South Sudan President Salva Kiir has offered to mediate, leveraging his country's experience in hosting Sudanese peace negotiations that led to the Juba Agreement and the shared history and mutual respect among the parties involved. South Sudan took a central role in tackling the crisis. It coordinated diplomatic efforts in Sudan, welcomed returnees with open arms, and provided refuge for displaced Sudanese by establishing settlements and granting access to local resources. Despite intensive negotiations to quell the violence, progress unfortunately remained elusive.

Ethiopia's Calculated Moves

The Sudanese war coincided with deteriorating relations between Sudan and Ethiopia, shaped by political and military developments within Ethiopia and a recent truce between al-Burhan and Abiy Ahmed aimed at containing their disagreements, which defined the Ethiopian position in dealing with the ongoing conflict, aiming to avoid further popular confrontations between the two countries, and any possibilities of imposing US sanctions.

Despite expressing interest in mediating the Sudanese conflict, Ethiopia's neutrality is seriously undermined by its actions. Senior officials, like Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen, have cultivated close ties with Hemedti of the RSF. Additionally, Ethiopia has previously sided with the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) against the SAF, even engaging in clashes with the SAF over disputed territory in the al-Fashaga area.

Despite numerous regional and international initiatives to resolve the Sudanese crisis, Ethiopia has maintained a strategically ambiguous position. While closely monitoring developments, it has remained largely silent and avoided taking a clear stance. It did, however, recently declare that it would host an IGAD quartet meeting (which consists of South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti) to discuss ending hostilities and bringing the two sides of the conflict closer together.

Eritrea's Shifting Positions

Eritrea has longstanding ties with the Beni Amer and Beja tribes of eastern Sudan, which rebelled against former President Omar al-Bashir. Concerns are growing that Eritrea might deploy forces to protect its tribal allies if violence reaches eastern Sudan. Initially silent on the current conflict, Eritrea has shifted course, now expressing support for the SAF, likely due to the evolving power dynamics within Sudan. Eritrea has also welcomed Sudanese refugees, opened border crossings, and softened its rhetoric against the United States and the West, emphasizing the need for coordinated efforts to resolve the crisis.



Contradiction of Libyan Positions

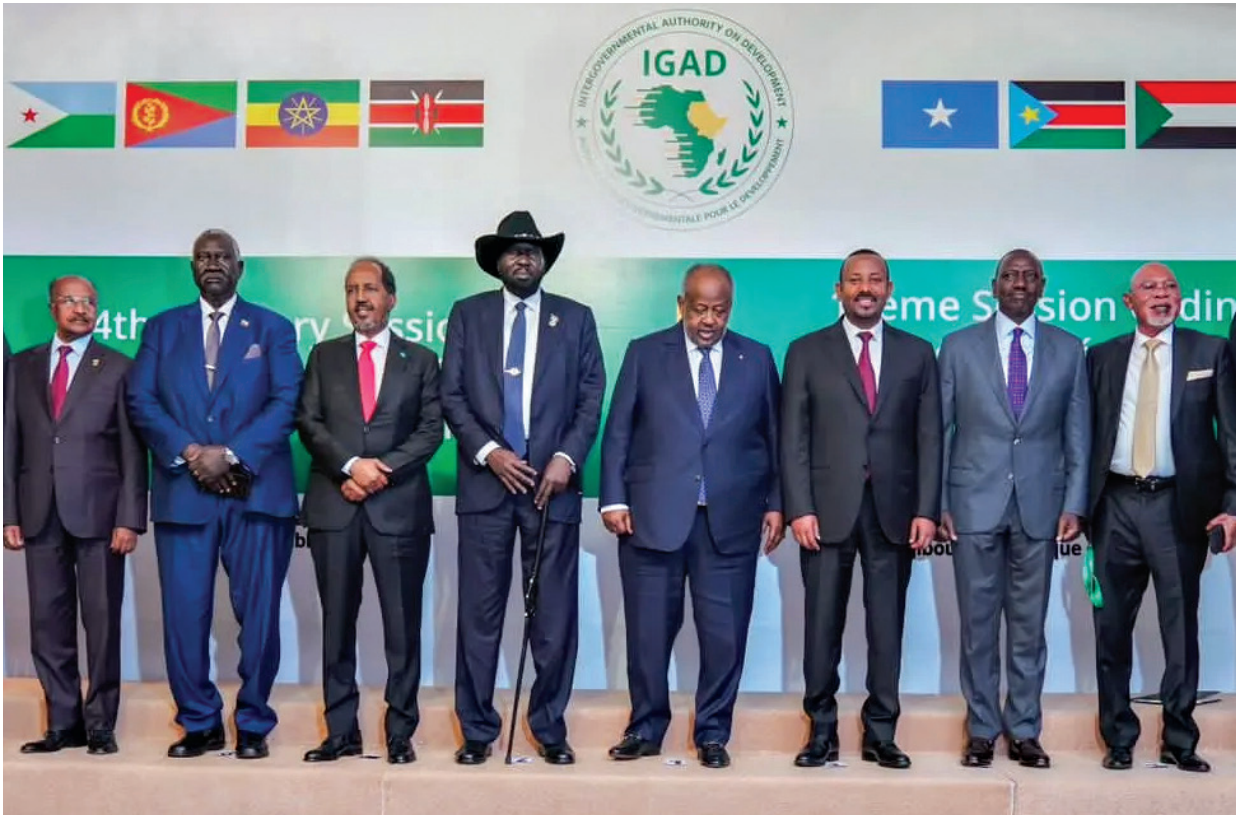
The power struggle between eastern and western factions in Libya, coupled with the complex web of alliances Libyan groups have with both sides of the Sudanese conflict, creates a deeply concerning situation. Fears of jeopardizing Libya's own fragile reconciliation process further complicate matters, especially considering the deteriorating security situation in the south. Libya's leadership has yet to take a clear stance on the Sudanese crisis. The Government of National Unity has limited itself to urging Libyan citizens in Sudan to exercise caution and establishing a committee to monitor their situation and prepare for potential evacuation.

General Khalifa Haftar, whose forces of the Libyan National Army controls vast swaths of eastern and southern Libya has remained silent on the issue. However, Abdel-Salam al-Bousaifi, head of the Military Organization and Administration Authority in southern Libya, called for closing the border with Sudan, deploying troops for security and border control, and utilizing reconnaissance aircraft at Kufra airport near the Sudanese border.

Controversy over Kenyan Mediation

The volatile security situation in Sudan poses a significant threat to Kenya and the entire East African region, particularly considering that regional security is a cornerstone of Kenya-Sudan relations. The IGAD offers a platform for Kenya to play a leading role in peace diplomacy and safeguard its national interests. However, Kenya's mediation efforts have hit a snag. Sudanese deputy chairperson of the Transitional Sovereignty Council Malik Agar publicly rejected the mediation plan proposed by Kenyan President William Ruto following the 14th IGAD summit. The Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Nairobi of lacking neutrality, favoring the RSF, offering them a safe haven, and even supplying them with weapons.

In short, the multifaceted crisis in Sudan necessitates a coordinated regional response. Collaborative efforts by Sudan's neighbours in providing humanitarian assistance, managing refugee flows, and pressuring for a ceasefire could significantly alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people. This is particularly critical given the complex internal dynamics in Sudan, the worsening humanitarian situation, the potential for prolonged conflict, and the growing anxieties of regional actors regarding security implications. A protracted conflict significantly increases the risk of foreign intervention, potentially replicating the destabilization witnessed in Libya.



Challenges to the Role of Regional and International Organizations in Sudanese Conflict Resolution

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In the immediate aftermath of the Sudanese conflict's outbreak in mid-April 2023, regional and international organizations voiced their opposition. Their initial outcry, marked by denunciations and calls for pacification and a return to political dialogue, has evolved into a more action-oriented approach by exploring ways and mechanisms

to achieve a ceasefire, paving the way for coordinated humanitarian initiatives. These efforts represent a crucial first step towards restoring a political track for resolving the crisis. In this context, we will examine the specific positions and actions taken by regional and international organizations in response to the unfolding Sudanese crisis.

Stances of Regional Organizations

Prior to the outbreak of the Sudanese crisis, regional organizations played a vital role in the country's transitional process. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU), and the United Nations Mission in Sudan formed a tripartite mechanism that supported the restoration of the transitional path after dissolution of the civilian-military partnership on October 25, 2021.

However, the situation dramatically changed with the eruption of conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In response, IGAD, building upon existing mediation efforts by South Sudan and Egypt, established a tripartite committee composed of the presidents of Kenya, Djibouti, and South Sudan. This committee aimed to facilitate a ceasefire and find a peaceful resolution. The 14th regular IGAD summit, held in Djibouti on June 12, 2023, marked a turning point in the mediation efforts. The Deputy Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, Malik Agar, participated in this summit, with the following being the key outcomes and results of this summit are:

- Including Ethiopia within an expanded IGAD mediation committee, forming a quartet committee with Kenya, Djibouti, and South Sudan, along with shifting the IGAD presidency from South Sudan to Kenya and IGAD working closely with the AU negotiations.

- The quartet will prioritize arranging a direct meeting between General Burhan and General Hemedti within ten days.
- Securing a commitment from both the SAF and RSF to open humanitarian corridors
- Launching a comprehensive political process within three weeks, led by IGAD

The AU Peace and Security Council has actively engaged with the Sudanese crisis, holding three discussions at the delegate level and one at the heads of state level. During a late May meeting, AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki presented the organization's vision for resolving the crisis. This vision emphasizes a comprehensive ceasefire, civilian protection, unimpeded humanitarian aid delivery, the resumption of a broad-based dialogue encompassing all Sudanese stakeholders, including civilians, and imperative of incorporating past peacebuilding experiences.

Furthermore, the AU participated via video conference in a meeting on April 19 that included the UN Secretary-General, the Arab League Secretary-General, the IGAD Executive Secretary, and other relevant organizations. This meeting focused on discussing mechanisms to solidify a truce and achieve a lasting ceasefire.

Stances of International Organizations

At the political level, the UN played a significant role in Sudan's transitional process before the outbreak of the crisis through the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). The UNITAMS

worked alongside regional organizations to support the political transition by proposing, leading, and supporting efforts to restore the partnership between civilian and military components.

In early 2022, UNITAMS initiated a dialogue between civilian and military components, later joined by regional organizations due to political forces' skepticism about its neutrality. This collaboration led to the formation of a tripartite mechanism, which, despite various obstacles, ultimately supported the Bar Association's initiative and promoted its proposed transitional constitution as a foundation for the framework agreement signed between the Transitional Sovereignty Council and the Forces of Freedom and Change in December 2022. Unfortunately, this agreement, which ultimately excluded the pro-democracy bloc, contributed to the deteriorating situation, which culminated in armed conflict between the SAF and RSF, due to the differences that the security and military reform workshop held in March brought to the surface.

Following the outbreak of conflict, UN envoy Volker Perthes continued to call for pacification and a ceasefire while monitoring events and briefing the UN on the situation. During an April 25 speech before the Security Council, Perthes noted that both conflict parties had ignored humanitarian truces and were responsible for deteriorating humanitarian conditions and infrastructure destruction.

Despite this, UNITAMS had limited impact, and on May 26, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudanese Sovereignty Council, requested the UN Secretary-General to replace Perthes, given his claims about the

success of the framework agreement, even though it was the cause of what transpired, according to al-Burhan.

The UN Secretary-General condemned the clashes, called for an immediate ceasefire, and communicated with regional leaders, including President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the Chairman of the AU Commission, as well as both conflict parties. He offered his good offices to help restore security and complete the political process.

In early June 2023, the UN Security Council held a session on Sudan, endorsing the AU's road map and urging the parties to ensure humanitarian aid delivery. The Council extended the UNITAMS mandate to support Sudan's transitional phase until December 3, 2023.

On the humanitarian front, UN agencies have led efforts to address the crisis in Sudan. They revised the Sudan Humanitarian Needs



and Response Plan, seeking approximately \$470.4 million to support refugees and host communities in Egypt, South Sudan, Chad, and Central Africa. This funding aims to assist over one million people.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths emphasized the need for strong donor and partner commitment to support response plans and expand humanitarian operations. Additionally, UN humanitarian agencies participated in the International Humanitarian Conference for Sudan, held in Geneva on June 19, 2023, to discuss financing mechanisms for humanitarian needs, led by Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Germany, with participation from the European Union.

Role Limitations and Obstacles to Effectiveness

The diplomatic efforts made by regional and international organizations to address the crisis in Sudan have not yet resulted in the establishment of an effective mechanism for achieving a ceasefire and stabilizing the situation on the ground. This lack of progress hinders efforts to prevent human suffering and create a conducive environment for a compatible political process. Lack of coordination is evident in all collective mechanisms, including regional and international ones, as well as within individual organizations. This was particularly noticeable in the IGAD mechanism, where regional and political considerations influenced the decision-making process. This led to concerns on the part of the Sudanese government about the decisions made at the summit, which

resulted in Kenya taking over as IGAD chair from South Sudan.

These recent efforts are in response to a previous failure, where the United Nations, the African Union, and IGAD were heavily involved in Sudan. Their work led to the completion of the Framework Agreement, which opened the door to a new chapter filled with crises. This has raised concerns about the future effectiveness of these organizations in managing the Sudanese crisis.

These efforts come with a heavy shadow of past failures. Despite a strong presence from the UN, African Union, and IGAD, their previous involvement in Sudan culminated in the Framework Agreement—a flawed foundation that ushered in a new era of crisis. This raises serious questions about the effectiveness of the role of these organizations in managing the Sudanese crisis.

The League of Arab States' response to the Sudanese crisis also fell flat, notwithstanding the fact that its emergency meeting in May 2023, spearheaded by Egypt, recommended forming a Saudi-Egyptian committee to engage with the warring parties. However, restricting the Jeddah talks to a US-Saudi mediation effort marginalized regional initiatives seeking coordinated and unified action, notwithstanding the conflicting visions for resolving the conflict among all parties involved.



2

The Ethiopian Crisis

- ◀ The Pretoria Agreement: Why Does Ethiopia's Peace Seem Precarious?
- ◀ Implications of the Pretoria Agreement for the Stability of Ethiopian Regions
- ◀ How Does the Fano Militia Exacerbate Ethiopia's Internal Crisis?



The Pretoria Agreement: Why Does Ethiopia's Peace Seem Precarious?

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One and a half years have gone by since the Ethiopian Federal Government (EFG) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in November 2022 in Pretoria, the capital of South Africa, which put an end to an armed conflict that had lasted for over two years. Notably, the Agreement,

which subsequently became known as the Pretoria Agreement, was not only signed by the parties involved in the conflict but also by mediator committees affiliated with the African Union, the United States, and the European Union as guarantors. The Pretoria Agreement contained clauses pertaining to the unimpeded flow of humanitarian supplies,

the restoration of basic services, and the establishment of law and order.

- **In this regard, this paper raises a fundamental question:** was the Pretoria Agreement effective in establishing stability in Ethiopia? To answer this question, we need to evaluate the degree of progress achieved in implementing the provisions of the Agreement.

Key Points of the Pretoria Agreement

The key components of the Pretoria Agreement can be summarized as follows:

- **Confidence-Building Measures between Warring Parties:** Under the Pretoria Agreement, the EFG and the TPLF sought to establish confidence by implementing a series of reciprocal measures. For its part, the EFG has consented to cease all military operations against TPLF fighters, promptly restore basic and necessary services and provide humanitarian access to the Tigray region, revoke the TPLF's classification as a terrorist group, abstain from using violence as a method of resolving political disputes, guarantee a sustainable resolution of the conflict, establish a framework for addressing conflict-related issues, and encourage reconciliation, the rehabilitation of social ties, and reconstruction. On the other hand, the TPLF has agreed to confidence-building measures that focus on upholding the constitutional authority of the EFG to deploy security forces to the Tigray region. Additionally, they have consented to refrain from any actions that could undermine Ethiopian sovereignty,

whether independently or through alliances with foreign countries, to respect the state, and not to assist, encourage, endorse, or collaborate with any armed or subversive groups within any region of the country. According to the Agreement, the EFG will assume responsibility for the administration of the Tigray region, including the capital, Mekelle, and the Ethiopian National Defence Force and other pertinent federal authorities will be permitted to enter the city without incident. In exchange, the EFG would guarantee that the Tigrayan populace was adequately represented in government institutions.

- **Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR):** The agreement stipulated that Ethiopia has one single defense force. The two parties also consented to the development and execution of a national DDR programme for TPLF combatants in accordance with the Ethiopian Constitution. Moreover, as part of the DDR programme, the TPLF will be obligated to fully disarm within a period of 30 days, starting with the surrender of heavy weaponry and subsequently handing over light weaponry.

Ethiopia's Current Situation

Here we will examine whether the Pretoria Agreement was upheld by the two parties involved in the conflict and analyze the actions that were implemented on the ground. We will investigate this inquiry by examining the positive indicators pertaining to the accomplishments that have been made as well as the obstacles that have been encountered in the execution of the Agreement's provisions.

Positive Indicators

- **Strengthening Ethiopian Diplomacy:**

The Pretoria Agreement effectively achieved its immediate objective of terminating the two-year-long war that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands and displaced millions. The EFG's accession to the BRICS bloc in August 2023 is indicative of the improved international relations made possible by the signing of the Pretoria Agreement.

- **Improving Relations between the EFG and Tigray Region:**

As part of its efforts to mend fences with the TPLF, the Ethiopian House of Representatives has decided to remove the group from its terrorist watch list, dismiss all charges against its leaders, and free all of its detainees. On the other hand, the African Union has reported that the TPLF has already surrendered heavy weapons and that the Ethiopian government has reinstated basic services in the Tigray region.

- **Resuming Services in the Tigray Region and Delivering Humanitarian Aid:**

Services in the Tigray region have been restored, encompassing banking, communications, electricity, healthcare, agricultural supplies, and transportation to and from Mekelle. Humanitarian assistance was also provided following the signing of the peace agreement in November 2022. It is crucial to recognize that there are still obstacles preventing the resumption of aid to the Tigray region subsequent to the peace agreement. The World Food Programme (WFP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) halted their provision

of humanitarian assistance in May 2023 after reports suggested that the aid was not reaching the intended recipients in the Tigray region. However, in August 2023, the WFP declared the recommencement of food assistance to the area, and on November 15, 2023, the USAID disclosed its intentions to resume crucial food aid in Ethiopia within a month. Even prior to the suspension of aid, the quantity of aid provided was inadequate, resulting in the deaths of numerous citizens in the Tigray region as a result of hunger, rather than armed conflict.

Negative Indicators

- **Inability to Regain Control over Contested Territories:**

In November 2020, during the outbreak of the conflict between the TPLF and the EFG, a paramilitary force called Fano incorporated Western Tigray into the Amhara region. In addition, these forces have taken control of certain areas in southern Tigray, another disputed region that is currently under the control of the Amhara. Under the Pretoria Agreement, the EFG made a commitment to resolve conflicts related to disputed regions by following the constitutional principles stated in the Federal Constitution of Ethiopia. This commitment involves restoring the Tigray region's lands to their pre-war condition prior to the conflict in November 2020. The Agreement was signed nearly a year and a half ago, and the EFG has demonstrated a limited commitment to the restoration of the Tigray territories. It has satisfied itself by issuing a statement that the fate of the disputed regions will be determined through a referendum. However, the peo-

ple of the Tigray region are apprehensive that a fair referendum cannot be held, as millions of the region's inhabitants have been displaced and are unable to return.

▪ **Non-Withdrawal of Eritrean Forces:**

Practically, there is a blatant disregard for crucial provisions of the agreement. Although a year and a half has elapsed since the Agreement was signed, the Eritrean forces that allied with the Ethiopian government during the conflict have not yet pulled out of the Tigray region. This poses challenges for the displaced individuals who wish to return to their areas. Eritrean forces continue to control the western regions of the Tigray region, as they regard these disputed areas as the spoils of war. This is a dire situation for the Tigrayans because these areas are the only land route that connects their region to the outside world. As a result, the region is stifled, its links with neighbouring countries are severed, and any military and economic supplies are isolated. Additionally, the Eritrean forces have been accused of perpetrating war crimes in the Tigray region before and after the peace agreement was signed. A report released by Amnesty International on September 4, 2023, highlighted ongoing infringements against civilians in the Tigray region. Eritrean soldiers reportedly perpetrated gender-based abuses against women, while civilian males were subjected to execution.

▪ **Sluggish Implementation of the DDR Program:** The Pretoria Agreement mandated the complete demilitarization of Tigray forces within a 30-day timeframe. However, the follow-up meeting of high-ranking offi-

cial on November 7, 2022, in the Kenyan capital provided a more explicit and detailed plan. In December 2022, the National Rehabilitation Commission (NRC) was established at the federal level to supervise the demobilization and rehabilitation of former combatants. To date, the NRC has registered 371,971 former combatants from eight regional states, with approximately 70% of them being from Tigray.

The NRC has reported a delay in implementing demobilization activities because there is a lack of sufficient resources needed for the DDR programme to ensure effective success. This suggests that the EFG's effectiveness in this regard may be compromised by the potential absence of financial support from international entities that had committed to providing assistance during the negotiations. The NRC projects a budget of \$800 million for the programme, with 85% of the funding sourced from international organizations like the World Bank, while the EFG will cover the remaining portion.

In short, the Pretoria Agreement has brought about a state of fragile stability in Ethiopia. Although the ceasefire between the EFG and the TPLF effectively stopped the fighting, the main terms of the agreement have not been put into action even after a year and a half. These terms encompass the requirement for the withdrawal of foreign forces (specifically Amhara militants and Eritrean soldiers) from the Tigray region, along with facilitating the repatriation of individuals who have been displaced from their homes due to the conflict.



Implications of the Pretoria Agreement for the Stability of Ethiopian Regions

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After more than a year and a half since the Pretoria Agreement between the Ethiopian Federal Government (EFG) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), it seems that Ethiopia still has a long way to establish peace. This is not only the case for the Tigray region, which experienced an armed conflict that lasted for

over two years before the Pretoria Agreement brought an end to it, but also for the other regions of Ethiopia that are experiencing tension. Perhaps this has been evident in the tensions that have been observed in the Amhara region, which may impede any efforts to establish a sustainable Ethiopian peace. Hence, more peace initiatives are required

to foster communication and collaboration in the pursuit of forging a shared identity.

This calls into question the impact of the Pretoria Agreement on national stability and peace in the Tigray region, both of which were not determined by the national dialogue or the proposed political agreements.

Peace Prospects in the Tigray Region

On March 11, 2024, the African Union organized the Pretoria Agreement Strategic Review Meeting to evaluate the persistent challenges associated with the ceasefire provisions. The objective of the meeting was to assess advancements in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme, as well as political dialogue, transitional justice, and the repatriation of refugees. This occurred one week after the interim Tigray administration issued statements concerning the restriction of its interactions with the EFG in relation to the agreement's implementation through mediators.

Participants in the dialogue included Olusegun Obasanjo, the High Representative of the African Union and member of the committee overseeing the peace process; Uhuru Kenyatta, the former president of Kenya; Mike Hammer, the US special envoy for the Horn of Africa; as well as representatives from the European Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The meeting, which was facilitated by the African Union High-Level Panel for the Ethiopian Peace Process, was centred on the sluggish implementation of the agreement, which has the potential to reignite the con-

flict, particularly in relation to the disputed territories in the regions. The EFG delegation comprised Justice Minister Gedion Timotheos, Director General of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), and the Commissioner of the National Revenue Commission (NRC), Teshome Toga, while the TPLF delegation comprised Debretsion Gebremichael, Chairman of the TPLF, and Getachew Reda, Chief Administrator of the Interim Regional Administration (IRA) of Tigray, in addition to the involvement of Generals Tsadkan Gebretensae and Tadesse Werede. The meeting brought about the following outstanding issues:

- **Border Lands:** On February 9, the EFG, led by Abiy Ahmed, met with a delegation from the IRA of Tigray, led by Getachew Reda, to assess the progress made in putting the Pretoria Agreement into practice. However, the meeting's results were kept under wraps. Nevertheless, Getachew Reda stated during a press conference after the meeting that the alteration in the population makeup of western Tigray and the continuous displacement hindered the possibility of conducting a referendum. This stance differs from the positions taken by the EFG.

Prior to the African Union meeting, Abraham Belay, the minister of defense, made public the government's intention to allow displaced civilians to return to their homes in anticipation of a referendum that would end the conflict permanently. The EFG plans to create a temporary administrative structure in western Tigray, allocate funds directly to local empowerment initiatives, and direct

budgetary allocation until the referendum is held. This is rejected by the Tigray administration, which perceives the federal government as striving to alter the demographic landscape of the region.

These developments occur in the context of the recent displacement of nearly 7,000 civilians in western and northwestern Tigray, regions that are under the control of the FEG-affiliated Amhara forces. In this regard, the IRA of Tigray reiterated its unwavering commitment to the establishment of peace and the implementation of peaceful conflict resolution strategies, with a particular emphasis on the resolution of the border dispute in accordance with the Federal Constitution and the Pretoria Agreement.

- **Humanitarian Situation:** The lifting of the effective blockade on Tigray by the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee has enabled the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including food, medical supplies, fuel, and essential services like communications, transportation, electricity, and banking, to the Tigray region. Nevertheless, it is estimated that famine is responsible for 68% of the deaths in Tigray. The famine is primarily caused by the commercialization of food aid, leading to the suspension of aid by the World Food Programme and USAID for several months after multiple reports indicating the participation of Eritrean forces and the EFG.

The humanitarian situation in the Tigray region underscores the Ethiopian government's inadequate compliance with and handling of the crisis. Notwithstanding the

conclusion of the war, its repercussions are catastrophic. Out of a total population of around 6 million, 600,000 have lost their lives in the region. The conflict led to the displacement of nearly one million people, the suffering of nearly five million individuals due to starvation caused by the federal blockade, the interruption of essential services, and a severe food crisis resulting from the cessation of farming activities. Furthermore, around 90% of the region's population is currently experiencing malnutrition due to the destruction of crops and the loss of livestock. As the United Nations was about to recognize the state of famine in the region, the World Food Programme halted food distribution between March and December 2023 due to concerns about the process of transferring aid, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the meantime.

These circumstances demonstrate the inadequate government's commitment to meeting humanitarian obligations under the Pretoria Agreement, which calls for collaboration with UN representatives and donor partners to expedite the delivery of humanitarian aid, given that 15 million people require urgent humanitarian aid, with a total estimated cost of \$3.237 billion.

- **Disarmament:** Disarmament is one of the most challenging issues associated with the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement. While the Pretoria Agreement's main principles for disarmament are supposed to be implemented through the mechanisms outlined in the Nairobi Declaration of November 12, 2022, talks between

the Ethiopian government and the TPLF are still ongoing to review outstanding issues related to the Pretoria Agreement's implementation.

In a statement released on March 13, 2024, in response to the Pretoria Agreement Strategic Review Meeting, the TPLF acknowledged some progress towards ending hostilities and re-establishing public service facilities in the region. However, it warned that important details remain unresolved, which could harm trust between the parties and prolong the humanitarian crisis affecting the population.

Despite the accomplishments—e.g. The establishment of a National Rehabilitation Committee responsible for the rehabilitation of 400,000 fighters nationwide, with 70% of that number residing in the Tigray region; the TPLF's removal from the terrorist list; the creation of a regional interim administration; the enhancement of transitional justice and confidence-building initiatives; the removal of security details for federal government travel to Tigray; and the end of all hostile rhetoric, in return for the TPLF's concessions, which included restoring constitutional order and creating the Ethiopian National Democratic Forces (ENDF) as the sole military force responsible for national security, along with the DDR program (notwithstanding that it caused division within Tigray, particularly among the opposition, who saw it as unfair)—the failure to withdraw forces from the regions of western Tigray has resulted in heightened tension, particularly due to the Amhara's refusal to withdraw.

Tensions' Spilling over into the Amhara Region

Even though the Pretoria Agreement put an end to the war in Tigray, fighting is still going on in the Amhara region. Ethiopia is experiencing multiple internal conflicts at the same time, which increases the possibility of ethnic tensions rising. On February 29, 2024, clashes between the Amhara Fano militia and regional security forces resurfaced, resulting in widespread unrest in Bahir Dar, the Amhara region's capital. As reported by local inhabitants, the clashes resulted in the suspension of air flights between Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa, as well as the cessation of operations at Bahir Dar University as the ENDF and security personnel were involved in carrying out coordinated operations within residential areas aimed at locating and apprehending individuals affiliated with the extremist organization. West and North Gojjam, North Shewa, North Wollo, Dega Damot, and Lalibela were all affected by the conflict between government forces and the Fano Amharic militia.

Peace-related discussions are interconnected with broader regional issues in the Oromo and Amhara regions. Notably, fighting between government forces and the Amhara Fano militia started in April 2023 and continued all through the year. A state of emergency was officially proclaimed in the region on August 3, 2023, following a period of instability that was further intensified by the assassination of the leader of the ruling Prosperity Party in the region on April 27, 2023, after protests against the federal government's decision to

transform the region's special forces into a conventional police and national army. This marked the most pronounced escalation of tensions, which have already been rising due to differences over the Pretoria Agreement with Tigray, which alarmed Prosperity Party-affiliated Amhara nationalists.

On April 28, 2023, the Ethiopian Joint Security and Intelligence Task Force declared that they had initiated firm actions against extremist groups, who were accused of impeding the government's control in the area, disregarding the constitutional order. Since then, tensions in the Amhara region have risen, which is one of the reasons why lawmakers decided to extend the region's state of emergency, beginning in February 2024.

The continued tensions in the Amhara region are inextricably linked to the more extensive political issues that pertain to the other troubled regions of Tigray and Oromia. While the Amhara supported Abiy Ahmed's political

project, which was conversely the catalyst for the Tigray conflict, they continued to feel politically marginalized, encountered conflicts with the Oromo Liberation Front, and were dissatisfied with the terms of the settlement with the Tigray, particularly given the government's plan to dissolve the region's special forces, (despite the challenges involved in disarming the Tigray under the Pretoria Agreement and the ongoing dispute over the contested border territories). All these factors fueled clashes between the Fano militia and the federal forces.

Although the ruling Prosperity Party emerged victorious in the Amhara region during the controversial 2021 elections, establishing a stable political agreement that addresses political and economic marginalization and guarantees fair representation at the federal level necessitates the creation of an interim regional government. This government shall ensure that the region is fairly represented,



actively participate in national discussions, and prioritize the representation of the Amhara community, rather than solely focusing on the interests of the Fano militia or the Prosperity Party's representatives in the region.

Escalating Tensions in Various Regions

Political schisms and ethnic animosities persist and span across the Ethiopian regions. In the Oromia region, there are ongoing tensions between the federal government and the Oromo people, as well as between the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups, let alone other ethnic tensions. In 2023, the Ethiopian government and the Oromo Liberation Army resumed their talks. The second round of talks took place on November 13 in Tanzania but ended without reaching an agreement, as announced by Redwan Hussein, the National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, on November 21, 2023.

Following the Pretoria Agreement and an invitation from Shimelis Abdisa, President of Oromia Regional State, both parties have resumed talks with the goal of resolving the five-year-long conflict that has resulted in significant loss of life in the region. The first round of talks, which included the IGAD and facilitators from Kenya and Norway, took place on April 25, 2023, in Zanzibar of Tanzania. However, neither side was able to resolve the contentious issues, particularly the need for long-term answers to complex political problems. The Oromo representatives insisted on a comprehensive political settlement that involve all pertinent stakeholders. Six months later, in Dar es Salaam, the second round of

negotiations was held with the participation of the Oromo Liberation Army's leader, Kumsa Diriba, and his deputy, Gemechu Aboye, as well as officials from the state of Oromia. However, no agreement was reached that would have brought about peace or stopped the firing of weapons.

Similarly, the different regions are experiencing ethnic conflicts in which the federal government is divided along ethnic lines, impeding the establishment of regional harmony. For instance, the doubts of the Issa people in the Somali region played a role in the federal government's decision to provide support to the Afar people. The Afar people, in turn, supported the military campaign in the Tigray region. As a result, the renewed border disputes between these two parties are closely connected to federal political interventions and actions. This was unequivocally evident in 2021, when the National Electoral Board made the decision to incorporate 30 polling centers into the Somali region. The Afar objected, and the polling places were closed, which prompted the Somali region to threaten not to take part in the elections.

Given the historical precedent of the situation in western Tigray and the constitutional referendum supported by the federal government to address the border dispute between Tigray and Amhara, it is improbable that these interventions will effectively resolve the conflicts between regions. This is further supported by the fact that the 2014 referendum, which was endorsed by the federal government, saw the Issa tribes of the Somali region abandon it in 2019. The Issa tribes rejected the notion of their lands being

incorporated into the Afar region, despite being the majority population in that area.

Simultaneously with the federal government's military engagement against the Tigray forces, conflicts were also intensifying in various regions. In December 2020, the Benishangul-Gumuz region experienced recurrent tribal violence perpetrated by the Gumuz people against the Amhara, Oromo, and Shinasha ethnic groups. The security forces of the Amhara region joined the federal forces in Benishangul-Gumuz, which posed a potential risk of escalating the conflict, similar to what happened in Tigray. This occurred while the underlying issues in the region, involving tensions between the indigenous population and immigrants from the Amhara, Tigray, and Oromo ethnic groups, remained unresolved. Violence is escalating in Metekel, with clashes between the Amhara and Gumuz communities. In the southern areas of the region, specifically in Kamashi, there are confrontations between the Gumuz and Oromo groups over land disputes. Additionally, there have been reports of violations against the Amhara minority residing in the Oromia region.

Similarly, the Gambela region experiences frequent instances of ethnic violence involving the Nuer and Anyuak tribes. The most recent outbreak occurred on July 18, 2023, resulting in the deaths of 24 individuals. The violence extended to the provinces of Itang, Gog, and Gambela, as well as the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' region. Over the past nine months, this region has witnessed 138 fatalities and 113 injuries due to conflicts between local communities and refugees. The persistent conflict necessitates

the need to tackle problems related to political marginalization and land accessibility.

In short, these circumstances demonstrate that dialogue and national peace are closely connected to the struggling peace in the regions, both within and between them, as well as with the federal government. Notwithstanding the growing conflicts that escalated to the point of armed conflict between the federal government and the Tigray region, mainly due to disagreements over Abiy Ahmed's political project—which sought to restructure the political system and subsequently establish the nation—fundamental disagreements are entrenched and intensifying in the same contexts and motivated by the same factors throughout Ethiopia. This necessitates prioritizing the national dialogue as a more inclusive platform to tackle unresolved issues that have not been addressed through single-case agreements between the federal government and the sub-regions, as well as between the sub-regions themselves.



How Does the Fano Militia Exacerbate Ethiopia's Internal Crisis?

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The conflict in the Amhara region between the Fano militia and the federal government adds another layer of complexity to Ethiopia's multifaceted crisis and poses a significant challenge for the landlocked countries. This is especially true now that the militia had turned against the state, despite previously fighting alongside

the federal army in the Tigray region against the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF). Fano also fought alongside the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and played a significant role in the war with Sudan in the Al-Fashaga regions.

Given its national identity and the fragile internal situation in Ethiopia, the Fano militia,

which represents an ethnicity that has historically held significant power and wealth in the country, now presents a substantial challenge to the Ethiopian state, its internal structure, and its sovereignty.

The Fano Militia: Identity and Historical Context

Fano militia formation dates back to the 1930s, during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War. The term Fano translates to freedom fighters and has a strong nationalistic connotation, referring to fighters who defended the Ethiopian empire during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War.

The militia subsequently evolved into two distinct political and military entities: 1) a protest movement spearheaded by politicians and activists, with their primary objective being the incorporation of various regions, namely Welkait, Kafta Humera, and Tsegede, into the Amhara region; and 2) a paramilitary organization established to combat the federal government, which the militia accuses of perpetrating offences against the Amhara ethnicity. The strength of the Fano militia lies in its exceptional capacity to accommodate the Amhara special forces that have refused to integrate into the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF).

In Amharic culture, the term Fano refers to a volunteer fighter who pledges to defend their nation against any external intervention or oppression of the Amhara in general. According to this, the Fano militia identifies itself as Amhara and follows a military strategy aimed at protecting the Amhara ethnicity and opposing any aggression against it. Therefore, the military mobilization is contingent upon

the obstruction of any project that pertains to the Oromo, which is the largest ethnicity in the country.

Furthermore, a fundamental responsibility of the Fano militia is to halt the migration of the Oromo people to the Amhara region, thereby preventing their acquisition of additional lands abundant in resources and their subsequent expansion in that area.

Solidification of Fano's Position and Containment Crisis

Following the Tigray War, the Fano militia experienced a resurgence in the political arena. Their involvement in the war alongside the federal government allowed them to gain more military resources and personnel, thereby increasing its overall power. However, it became a significant threat to Ethiopia after it started to turn against the federal army at the beginning of April 2023. The militia reorganized itself and initiated military operations against the Ethiopian army and police in the Amhara region in response to the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program proposed by the Federal Government.

As the Ethiopian army continued its military operations in January 2024 to reduce the danger of ethnic militias in various regions, including the Amhara region, Oromia, Tigray, the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' region, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Afar, the Fano militia was able to intensify their operations and rebellion against the army. It fought back against government policies, including the state of emergency that has been in place since August 2023. It also



managed to carry out numerous military operations thanks to the demonstrations and turmoil in several cities, which they used to their advantage.

The policies of the federal government have made the crisis worse. For instance, the government's imposition of additional punitive measures, such as restrictions and severe censorship of Internet access, both through phones and in cafes, in various regions, has further exacerbated the situation. Internet outages have also been implemented out of concern for a potential rapid escalation

of the crisis by ethnic groups that exert substantial pressure on Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government.

The Ethiopian military has significantly reinforced its substantial presence in various locations, including the Amhara region, by deploying armored vehicles in cities such as Gondar, Bahir Dar, Dessie, Motta, and Kombolcha. This measure has been taken due to concerns about potential conflict between the army and the Fano militia. The Fano militia, following the Tigray war, has declined to surrender its weapons to the com-



mittee responsible for disarming the militia. Additionally, the security authorities imposed travel restrictions within the Amhara region. In addition, the government banned public gatherings, issued arrest warrants without a judge's approval, and instituted a curfew in some Amhara city neighborhoods.

The Amhara region rebellion is no less perilous to the security and unity of the Ethiopian territory than the Tigray rebellion, as the Amhara and Tigray are the two ethnic groups that have governed Ethiopia for an extended period. If any indicator, this suggests that the

government's inability to identify a radical resolution to this crisis may endanger the country's unity and potentially result in its disintegration in the future.

The Fano militia rebellion could potentially drive militias in other areas to reject the decision to integrate into the military, police, or civilian life, such as the Oromo Liberation Army, which holds significant control over vast territories in the Oromia region and possesses a substantial arsenal of weapons as well as extensive political and military expertise. This is particularly significant considering that the Oromo, who make up the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, still perceive themselves as being marginalized. Despite the fact that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is politically affiliated with this ethnicity, they continue to see that their regions are experiencing inadequate development.

In conclusion, in order to prevent Ethiopia from becoming embroiled in another conflict, Abiy Ahmed's administration might try reaching a deal with the Fano militia akin to the one with Tigray. However, any agreement that prohibits the militia from retaining its weapons in the Amhara region is unlikely to be accepted by the militia leaders. Furthermore, the government would not endorse such a term, as it would elicit opposition from other regions. Irrespective of the potential outcomes of this situation, Abiy Ahmed has done a dismal job leading the country and has the potential to plunge it into an unprecedented structural crisis.



3

Regional Crises

- ◀ Impact of Domestic Crises on Somalia's Foreign Policy
- ◀ Repercussions of the Ethiopia-Somaliland Agreement on Regional Security
- ◀ Motivations for Escalating Tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia in the Horn of Africa
- ◀ Challenges of Kenya's Mediation in the Somali-Ethiopian Crisis



Impact of Domestic Crises on Somalia's Foreign Policy

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A state's foreign policy is interrelated with its domestic conditions. The stronger and more cohesive the internal policies, the more effective both foreign and domestic policies become as a result of the political system. From this perspective, we attempt to apply this concept to the Federal Republic of Somalia. This study aims

to monitor and analyze the impact of internal transformations that Somalia experienced during the period (2017-2022) on Somalia's foreign policy orientations. The focus is on the period when Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo was the President of Somalia from February 2017 until May 2022, when he lost the presidential election to Hassan Sheikh

Mohamud, who assumed the presidency for the second time (2022-2026); Hassan Sheikh Mohamud had previously held the presidency from 2012 until 2017.

The Federal Republic of Somalia witnessed a number of significant developments during that period; the internal situation was marked by tension and political instability during the tenure of Farmajo due to attempts to obstruct the completion of legislative and presidential elections, leading to an escalation in political protests, because the constitutional term of the legislative institutions ended in December 2020, and Farmajo's term ended in February 2021, without holding elections to allow a peaceful transfer of power. This posed a major threat to the stability of the political system and the unity and cohesion of the state. Terrorist organizations, especially Al-Shabaab, exploited the turbulent political scene to carry out attacks aimed at destabilizing the internal situation in Somalia. The frequency and intensity of attacks by Al-Shabaab increased, particularly targeting the capital Mogadishu during the political crisis in Somalia (2020-2022). These attacks aimed at assassinating political and security officials in Mogadishu.

Undoubtedly, the increasing bombings in the capital represent a serious indicator of the fragility of the security situation and the limited ability of Somali security forces to thwart Al-Shabaab's attacks. Additionally, the terrorist group Al-Shabaab did not restrict its attacks to targeting Somali security apparatuses but also attacked the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The most notable operation carried out by

the group was in early May 2022, resulting in the death of 30 Burundian soldiers.

However, Somalia managed to emerge from this dark tunnel by completing the legislative and presidential elections in May 2022. This reflects the establishment of the principle of peaceful transfer of power and achieving governance through elections, steering away from the spectre of state collapse and societal disintegration.

From this standpoint, the study focuses on analyzing a fundamental research problem centred on the question of whether changes in political leadership affect the change in a state's foreign policy or if there is no effect due to a set of interests and goals that the state aims to achieve regardless of the influence of the political leader. Applied to the case of interest, the study seeks to determine whether internal transformations in Somalia, especially changes in political leadership, lead to shifts in Somali foreign policy orientations towards neighboring regional states.

The study is also meant to monitor and analyze the foreign policy orientations of the Federal Republic of Somalia towards neighboring regional states during the period when Farmajo held office (February 2017 – May 2022). The study also attempts to ascertain whether there has been a change in foreign policy with Mohamud assuming the presidency since May 2022.

To identify the most significant transformations that occurred in Somalia during the period (2017-2022), the study reviews in the first section the most prominent internal tensions that took place in Somalia. The second sec-

tion addresses the dissection of Somalia's crises, and the third section will interpret the transformations in Somali foreign policy. The paper concludes by examining the competition among international powers to enhance their presence in Somalia, considering it a vital state within the Horn of Africa region. The region gains strategic importance due to several considerations, foremost of which is its geographical location connecting several vital waterways that serve as a link for international trade between the continents, such as the Red Sea, which is increasingly significant as it carries 13%-15% of global trade volume. It is an important trade route for many strategic commodities such as oil and gas.

Lingering Crisis Under Farmajo

Farmajo rose to the helm in February 2017, raising hopes for a new era characterized by democracy, anti-corruption efforts, and tackling economic and security challenges. However, Farmajo attempted to dominate the political scene in Somalia and remain in power for as long as possible by obstructing the completion of legislative and presidential elections. This led to a period of political instability and internal unrest due to the postponement of electoral milestones. The scheduled timelines for holding elections were not adhered to; members of parliament, comprising both houses and totalling 329 members, were supposed to be elected by December 27, 2020, and the presidential election was slated for February 8, 2021. This section will elucidate the dimensions of the political crisis that Somalia experienced:

1. **Political Disputes Between the two Executive Heads:** Farmajo attempted to hinder the efforts of former Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, whose duties included creating a conducive environment for conducting parliamentary and presidential elections. This led to political disagreements between the executive heads over the mechanism for organizing the elections, particularly the technical bodies responsible for managing them (the Federal Election Commission). Consequently, the elections for the House of the People were not completed by December 25, 2021.

Regarding the dismissal of officials within the Somali intelligence apparatus by Roble and their reinstatement by Farmajo, these conflicting decisions highlight the differences between the two men, particularly concerning control over the intelligence agency. Tensions escalated after the Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) conducted an investigation into the disappearance of one of its officers, Ikran Tahlil. Considering the investigation's results unconvincing, Roble decided on September 5, 2021, to dismiss the intelligence chief, Fahad Yasin, a close associate of Farmajo. However, Farmajo annulled this decision, appointing a new intelligence chief and naming Fahad Yasin as the national security advisor.

Over time, the crisis between the executive heads in Somalia intensified. Farmajo accused former Roble of corruption related to land appropriation belonging to the military. Consequently, in late 2021, Farmajo decided to refer Roble for investigation and suspended

his duties. This decision can be interpreted as an attempt to exclude Roble from the political scene and pave the way for Farmajo to intervene in the electoral process to secure a second term. However, this attempt was thwarted due to international rejection of the decision and support for Roble to continue his duties.

- 2. Deterioration of Relations Between the Somali Federal Government and Federal States:** Examining the relationship between Farmajo and the five regional Somali states during his tenure reveals his efforts to tighten control over the regional states to ensure his re-election. To this end, he pursued a set of policies, including attempting to change the electoral system from the clan-based system (4.5) to direct voting. Although direct voting is more democratic, Farmajo's desire to implement it was a means to an end rather than a goal for achieving democracy. He aimed to secure votes in areas under his control, where he could easily influence voters, while opposing clans would be unable to vote.

Farmajo also made several attempts to dominate the federal states to ensure the election of loyal governors and candidates to the House of Representatives. This involved forming regional and federal electoral committees responsible for selecting parliamentary members who would elect the president, including security personnel and loyalists. Farmajo managed to secure the support of representatives from the South West State, Galmudug State, and Hirshabelle State for

his re-election. He also unilaterally formed the electoral committee for Somaliland, whose elections were planned to take place in the capital, Mogadishu. However, Farmajo could not extend his control over Jubaland and Puntland as he did with other states. Jubaland conducted its parliamentary and state presidential elections in August 2019, resulting in the re-election of state president Ahmed Mohamed Islam Madobe. The federal government did not recognize the legitimacy of the elections and their results, but international pressure forced Farmajo's administration to recognize Madobe as interim president for two years in June 2020. Farmajo used the military to assert control over the Gedo region, part of Jubaland, violating the Somali constitution and federal system, leading to a conflict between the federal government and the state government.

- 3. Utilizing Negotiations to Extend Farmajo's Presidential Term:** Farmajo attempted to gather opposing political parties by engaging in negotiations ostensibly aimed at agreeing on election procedures. However, the real hidden objective of these negotiation rounds was to prolong his stay in power. This can be deduced by reviewing the negotiation rounds between the active political elites in Somalia to resolve the political deadlock caused by disagreements over the general elections, initially planned to be held in Somalia at the end of 2020 and early 2021. The negotiations aimed to determine the optimal election model. According to the Somali opposition, Farmajo insisted on the "direct voting"

model to secure a second presidential term, while the opposition favoured conducting the elections based on the clan-based quota system.

The city of Dhusamareb, the capital of Galmudug State, hosted several consultative rounds to determine constitutional mechanisms for conducting indirect elections. The first round was organized by the federal state presidents on July 11, 2020. The second round, held on July 23, 2020, saw the participation of the Somali president and his prime minister, resulting in an agreement to conduct the elections on time to alleviate the opposition and state presidents' concerns about an extension. However, the third round of negotiations, which commenced on August 15, 2020, reached an impasse due to the non-participation of the Puntland and Jubaland leaders.

Farmajo wanted to break the deadlock of the third round of Dhusamareb negotiations and tried to contain the crisis and resolve contentious issues with all federal state presidents by organizing a conference in Mogadishu on September 13, 2020. The conference concluded with an agreement among all political parties, known as the "September 17, 2020 Agreement." According to this agreement, the Somali opposition succeeded in changing Farmajo's stance on conducting elections via direct voting, maintaining the clan-based system (the 4.5 formula).

Despite the initial optimism surrounding the conclusion of the "September 17, 2020 Agreement," Somali political parties disagreed on its implementation. A dispute arose when Roble, in November 2020, unilaterally

appointed members of the electoral commission responsible for overseeing the election process and formed another 21-member committee to resolve parliamentary and presidential election disputes without consulting other partners. There was opposition to the federal government forming the electoral commission, which included individuals close to Farmajo and elements from the security apparatus, implying that the electoral commission lacked neutrality.

As the presidential election date approached, Farmajo called for a conference in Dhusamareb on February 3, 2021, to discuss controversial issues with the opposition related to the disputed electoral commissions and the disagreement between the federal government and Jubaland State over who would manage the elections in the Gedo region, part of Jubaland State. However, no agreement was reached among the Somali political factions, leading to the presidential elections not being held on schedule.

Resolving the Political Crisis by Completing the Elections

Somalia witnessed a significant development with the organized transfer of power through the completion of legislative and presidential elections in 2022. This occurred despite Farmajo's attempts to remain in power for as long as possible. These attempts were thwarted due to internal pressures within Somalia and increasing international pressures to expedite the electoral process. The United States imposed visa restrictions on those involved in weakening the democratic process in Somalia, and the United Nations warned Somali

political leaders about the consequences of not completing the electoral milestones. These factors pressured the Somali political elite to set aside their differences and commit to a smooth power transition.

The election of Senate members was completed in November 2021, with Abdi Hashi Abdullahi elected as the President of the Somali Federal Senate. The House of the People elections concluded in April 2022, resulting in the election of Sheikh Adan Mohamed Nur as Speaker of the House. Following the completion of legislative elections, preparations began for the presidential elections in May 2022, as the Somali president is elected indirectly by the legislature. This section outlines the organizational measures taken to complete the presidential election process as follows:

1. **Conducting Presidential Elections:**

According to Somali law, the president is elected by 329 parliamentary members (54 senators and 275 representatives). This indirect electoral model was adopted at a conference sponsored by Djibouti in 2000. A 17-member committee, comprising 11 members from the House of the People and 6 from the Senate, was responsible for registering presidential candidates and organizing the election procedures. The committee scheduled the presidential elections for May 15, 2022.

The committee released the final list of candidates, including 39 nominees with one female candidate. However, several candidates withdrew from the race, reducing the number to 36. Notable figures in the presidential race included the outgoing president Farmajo,

former presidents Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, and former prime minister Hassan Ali Khaire.

On the security front, the parliamentary organizing committee requested the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to secure the election venue, held in the “Afisiyoni” area at the airbase near Mogadishu International Airport. This decision reflects the fragile security situation in Somalia, prompting the electoral committee to entrust AMISOM with securing the elections to prevent terrorist groups from targeting and disrupting them.

According to the provisional Somali constitution, the winner must secure two-thirds of the parliamentary votes in the first round. No candidate achieved this threshold, leading to a second round with the top four candidates: Said Abdullahi Dani, President of Puntland, with 65 votes; outgoing President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo with 59 votes; former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud with 52 votes; and former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire with 47 votes. In the third round, former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud won the election with 214 votes, while Farmajo received 110 votes. Farmajo's loss was anticipated as he did not have the support of the majority in both the House of the People and the Senate, preventing him from retaining his position.

2. **Priorities of the New Somali President:**

The new Somali president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, is not new to the political scene, having served as president from September 16, 2012, to February 8, 2017. He achieved several accomplishments during his tenure,

such as supporting the federal system, maintaining close relations with federal state leaders, especially in Hirshabelle, Puntland, and Jubaland, combating the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, and maintaining balanced foreign policies that avoided tensions with regional and international powers. Given the current Somali context, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's priorities for his second term (2022-2026) include:

- **Restoring Security and Stability:** Restoring security and stability in Somalia is a primary priority, focusing on combating the Al-Shabaab terrorist group not only militarily but also ideologically. This dual approach aims to reduce terrorist attacks and prevent new recruits from joining the group. The Somali government's counter-terrorism strategy combines hard and soft power. Hard power involves militarily and financially crippling the group, evident in military operations by the Somali army supported by AMISOM forces, and Western—especially U.S.—military aid in fighting the group. Additionally, efforts to undermine the group's financial activities will dry up its funding sources. Improving economic conditions in Somalia will likely reduce new recruits joining Al-Shabaab, leading to a decline in terrorist activities.

Soft power is demonstrated by appointing a former Al-Shabaab leader as the Minister of Religious Affairs. Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre appointed Sheikh Mukhtar Robow Abu Mansur, a former spokesperson for Al-Shabaab, to this position. This move reflects the desire to combat the group ideologically,

leveraging Abu Mansur's knowledge of the group's rhetoric and recruitment tactics to refute extremist ideas. The government also seeks to secure clan and tribal support, which could weaken Al-Shabaab's influence and drive them out of controlled areas if robust relationships with Somali clans are established.

- **Restoring the Peaceful Nature of Political Interactions:** President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is striving to enhance relations between the Somali federal government and the state governments, which had deteriorated during the tenure of former President Farmajo. To this end, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has made efforts to mend relations with the federal states, as evidenced by his tour of the five federal states (Jubaland, Puntland, Hirshabelle, Galmudug, and South West State) to strengthen the bond between the central government and the regions. This approach seeks to foster a reconciliatory political system, contrasting with the strained relations under Farmajo's period. Additionally, he has worked on reviving the stalled negotiations with Somaliland, emphasizing that dialogue is the only way to convince Somaliland politicians to abandon the idea of secession from the Federal Republic of Somalia. Moreover, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is likely to focus on completing the 2012 provisional constitution and putting it to a popular vote to become the country's official constitution. The provisional constitution does not clearly delineate powers between the executive and legislative branches, leading to conflicts among political factions. Establishing a clear constitution will also pave the way

for conducting direct presidential elections instead of the current clan-based electoral system, requiring a conducive environment for political parties to engage in the political process.

3. **Mitigating the Economic Crisis:**

The living conditions in Somalia are marked by deterioration due to rising food prices. Several factors contribute to this, most notably the drought affecting Somalia, which has led to a decline in agricultural production and the displacement of many individuals involved in farming and herding. Additionally, the negative repercussions of the Russia-Ukraine war have influenced the volatility of food product prices. These factors have, in turn, exacerbated unemployment and inflation rates in the country. United Nations estimates indicate that more than two-thirds of Somalis live below the poverty line. Consequently, the current Somali administration is making concerted efforts to obtain financial and technical support from international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to strengthen the Somali economy and implement economic reforms.

Somalia's Regional Policy

Under the leadership of Mohamud, the new Somali administration has taken effective steps to restore balance in Somalia's foreign policy. His approach is characterized by a neutral foreign policy that avoids involvement in regional conflicts, aims to resolve issues

with neighboring and regional countries, and engages in security cooperation with the international community to combat terrorist organizations in the Horn of Africa. One of the challenges Mohamud faces is repairing Somalia's relations with its regional neighbors, which deteriorated during Farmajo's tenure. Farmajo's foreign policy was marked by alignment with specific blocs, leading to strained relations with certain countries.

1. **Somali-Arab Relations:** During Farmajo's presidency, Somalia's foreign policy was perceived as biased and aligned with prevailing regional blocs from 2017 to 2021, which led to deteriorating relations with some Arab countries. This can be observed from Somalia's stance of neutrality regarding the Gulf crisis, where Gulf Cooperation Council states decided to boycott Qatar in June 2017. Somalia's neutral stance was interpreted as aligning with the Qatari-Turkish axis, as relations between Somalia, Qatar, and Turkey grew across political, economic, military, and humanitarian dimensions. Conversely, Somali-Emirati relations soured during Farmajo's tenure, exemplified by Somali authorities seizing \$9.6 million on an Emirati plane at Mogadishu Airport in April 2018, citing suspicions. The UAE officially denied Somalia's accusations, stating that the funds were intended to support the Somali army. The crisis peaked when Somalia ended joint military training with the UAE.

Similarly, Somali-Egyptian relations were marked by coolness. This was evident from

Somalia's reservation on an Arab League resolution in 2020 that urged Ethiopia not to begin filling the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) without reaching an agreement with Egypt and Sudan on the filling and operation rules. Additionally, Farmajo's government decided in 2020 to cancel an educational cooperation protocol with Cairo and requested the Egyptian educational mission to leave the country without providing reasons.

A shift in Somali foreign policy occurred with Mohamud's election in May 2022. He adopted an inclusive approach, abandoning bloc politics and embracing a balanced foreign policy. This shift is evident in his efforts to repair Somali-Arab relations. Strengthening Somali-Egyptian relations and restoring good ties with Egypt were part of this approach. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud worked to enhance cooperation with Egypt through bilateral talks with his Egyptian counterpart, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, at the Al-Ittihadiya Palace on July 25, 2022. They exchanged views on the situation in the Horn of Africa and discussed enhancing economic diplomatic relations and cooperation in combating terrorism. Moreover, the Somali president's visit to the UAE underscored efforts to end tensions with the United Arab Emirates. This visit resulted in the strengthening of diplomatic, economic, and security relations, with the UAE providing humanitarian aid to Somalia to address drought challenges.

2. **Somali-African Relations:** During the term of former Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo, Somali foreign policy towards neighboring regional countries was characterized by

rapprochement with Ethiopia, especially after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018. Abiy Ahmed also contributed to the rapprochement of Somali-Eritrean relations; a tripartite agreement was signed in September 2018 to enhance cooperation in combating common threats, particularly issues of terrorism, weapons, human trafficking, and drugs. In early 2020, a tripartite summit was held in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, and Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo. Discussions were conducted on developments in the Horn of Africa region. This summit aimed to strengthen the relations between the three countries and to diplomatically address regional issues by discussing security, political, and economic matters of mutual interest, thereby contributing to reducing tensions in the region. The tripartite alliance reached its peak in terms of military cooperation, with Somalia sending Somali soldiers for training in Eritrea during Farmaajo's tenure, intending to engage in the federal Ethiopian government's war against the Tigray region.

Conversely, Somali-Kenyan relations deteriorated, with Somalia deciding to cut diplomatic relations with Kenya on December 15, 2020, due to Kenya's blatant interference in Somali internal affairs, according to a statement issued by the Somali government. In connection with the above, Somali-Djiboutian relations were also characterized by cool-

ness; Somali-Eritrean rapprochement came at the expense of Djibouti. Former Somali President Farmaajo called for the lifting of the arms embargo on Eritrea, which occupies Djiboutian territory. Djibouti expressed great dissatisfaction in August 2018 with Farmaajo's call to lift the arms embargo on Eritrea, considering that Eritrea stirs security tensions with Djibouti. Relations witnessed a chapter of tension when Somalia announced in September 2021 the detention of Fahad Yasin Haji, the security adviser to the Somali president, by Djibouti when he was traveling from Turkey to the Somali capital, Mogadishu, via Djibouti. Somalia accused Djibouti of violating the rights of travellers and international travel laws.

Somali-African relations have seen a breakthrough after the election of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who has worked on enhancing bilateral relations and repairing and restoring those that had deteriorated during Farmaajo's era. Regarding Somali-Ethiopian relations, Somali President Mohamud made an official two-day visit to Ethiopia in late September 2022 after receiving an invitation from Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The president and the prime minister held talks addressing common issues between the two countries, particularly cooperation in combating terrorism and extremism, and promoting economic and regional integration. This visit came in a pressing context due to the renewed fighting in late August 2022 between Tigray People's Liberation Front forces on one side and Ethiopian forces and allied Amhara militias on the other. The Somali-Ethiopian summit resulted in a bilateral cooperation agreement between the two countries, con-

sisting of ten points focused on cooperation between joint security agencies in combating terrorism and extremism, seen as a common enemy for both countries, and intensifying efforts to combat shared environmental challenges such as drought. Both countries face recurring droughts that threaten the lives of their populations, necessitating increased efforts to address these challenges and urging international friends to provide support to drought-affected countries. The agreement also included expanding cooperation in trade, investment, communications, security, and politics, in addition to increasing educational and training grants provided by Ethiopia to the Somali people, workers, security forces, and institutions.

There was also a continued focus on enhancing bilateral relations with Eritrea; President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud made two visits to Eritrea in mid-July 2022 and early November 2022 to strengthen diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud discussed with the Eritrean president the issue of Somali soldiers to return them to Somalia after receiving military training in Eritrea during the tenure of former Somali President Farmaajo. It is in the interest of the Somali government to return these soldiers to engage them in internal battles against the activities of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, especially with the escalating terrorist threat posed by the group recently.

Furthermore, the new president has aimed to repair Somali-Kenyan relations, which deteriorated during Farmaajo's tenure. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud made an official visit to Kenya and held talks with President Uhu-

ru Kenyatta, resulting in the resumption of diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries, including the resumption of Kenya Airways flights between Mogadishu and Nairobi, and facilitating the issuance of Kenyan visas to Somali citizens. Additionally, the export of khat to Somalia was resumed, while Mogadishu would export tons of fish to Nairobi. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud also made a point of making an official visit to Djibouti in mid-July 2022 and held discussions with Djiboutian President Ismail Omar Guelleh. The talks focused on strengthening relations in all diplomatic, economic, and security fields, and reaffirming joint efforts to enhance mutual interests.

Somalia's Relations with International Powers

Somalia earns the attention of many international powers due to its strategic position as an intermediary for international trade, with its waterways extending from the Bab al-Mandab Strait to the Red Sea. This has contributed to intensifying the American-Chinese competition to enhance their presence in Somalia.

1. **Relations with the United States:**

U.S. policy towards Somalia has varied with different political leaderships. Former U.S. President Donald Trump adopted a policy in late 2020 focused on withdrawing American troops from Somalia. On December 4, 2020, he issued a decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Somalia, where about 700 elements of U.S. special operations forces were assisting Somali security forces in fighting Al-Shabaab. The U.S. forces

were providing the Somali forces with intelligence support and conducting airstrikes. Trump's decision is considered an uncalculated step as it paved the way for the diminishing American influence in Somalia. The administration of President Joe Biden, recognizing this, issued a decision in mid-May 2022, contradicting Trump's policy, to redeploy hundreds of American troops to Somalia. Under this decision, fewer than 500 U.S. military personnel will be deployed to assist Somali forces in curbing the increasing operations and influence of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. Several factors motivated Biden's decision to redeploy U.S. forces to Somalia, including preventive measures to avoid a repeat of Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan in August 2021. Taliban made use of the security vacuum created when the U.S. fully withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, leading to their control over the country. Thus, the U.S. administration is working to avoid a similar scenario by redeploying forces to Somalia.

- ### 2. **Relations with China:**
- China is striving to increase its influence in the Horn of Africa through its diplomatic, economic, and military tools. This was demonstrated by appointing a special envoy in early 2022 to promote lasting stability, peace, and prosperity in the Horn of Africa, presenting a golden opportunity for China to strengthen its relations with countries in the region, especially Somalia. On the diplomatic front, given Somalia's strategic geographical location, China has focused on enhancing

relations through high-level meetings with Somali officials. This is evident from the visit of China's special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Xue Bing, to Mogadishu on March 17, 2022, to discuss Somali-Chinese relations and ways to enhance and develop them in all fields.

Additionally, discussions took place between the Somali Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and his Chinese counterpart on March 23, 2022, to strengthen historical relations and cooperation between the two countries across security, economic, and developmental fronts. They emphasized that their relationship is based on principles of respecting regional and political sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. China is working to enhance its presence through humanitarian aid mechanisms, boosting its soft power, indicating China's determination to play a dynamic role in Somalia.

On the security and military front, China supports African peacekeeping forces in Somalia by providing advanced military equipment to maintain security and stability. China is also keen on combating piracy, which could threaten Chinese commercial interests passing through the Gulf of Aden and the Bab al-Mandab Strait. Furthermore, China is working to strengthen Somali security institutions, which was clearly demonstrated by China's provision of military equipment to the Somali government in March 2022, aiding its fight against terrorist groups, primarily Al-Shabaab. Undoubtedly, improved security in Somalia will positively impact Chinese interests there.

Economically, China is keen to strengthen bilateral relations with Somalia to protect

its economic interests in the Horn of Africa. This is evident in its focus on securing navigation in waterways and safeguarding its ships transiting the Bab al-Mandab Strait, which helps ensure China's access to essential raw materials and energy—critical pillars of the Chinese economy. The Horn of Africa region is rich in oil and natural gas, prompting China to strengthen its relations with countries in the region.

Conclusion

The period of political stagnation that Somalia experienced both internally and externally during the tenure of former Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo ended with the completion of the electoral process that resulted in Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's victory in the presidential elections. The study concludes that the change in political leadership will have implications for Somalia's internal affairs as well as the formulation of foreign policy orientations. Foreign policy for any country does not emerge from a vacuum; the orientations of the political leader play a role in determining that policy, coloring it in a specific way and steering it towards a particular direction.

We can anticipate Somalia's position in the near future, as the new Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is not a new face on the Somali political scene. He served as President of Somalia from September 16, 2012, to February 8, 2017, achieving several accomplishments during his tenure. He supported the federal system, thus enjoying close relationships with federal state leaders, especially the governors of Hirshabelle, Puntland, and Jubaland. During his presidency,



he worked on combating the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, and his foreign policy was characterized by balance and avoiding tensions with regional and international powers.

It is expected that Somalia will witness positive changes during Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's current presidency, particularly in ending the period of political tension. There is an inclination on the part of the Somali president to reduce internal conflicts and achieve political concord between the central federal government and the federal states. This is evidenced by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's efforts to tour some federal states to enhance relations and unify visions regarding the challenges Somalia faces, primarily security challenges. It appears that the central government does not wish to clash with the federal states following recent decisions to extend the presidential terms of the federal states from four to five years. A clash between the central government and state governments would impede joint efforts to combat terrorism, providing an opportunity for the Al-Shabaab terrorist group to escalate its attacks.

Regarding foreign policy, it is expected that the Somali president will work on leveraging Somalia's regional and international relationships to help address domestic challenges, primarily restoring security and stability in Somalia, strengthening security institutions,

and enhancing their combat capabilities to confront Al-Shabaab. Therefore, it is anticipated that President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud will not work to stir tensions with neighboring regional countries but will focus on strengthening relations with them, especially Ethiopia, to combat Al-Shabaab. The infiltration of Al-Shabaab from Somalia into Ethiopian territory in July 2022 is a serious indicator of the group's desire to expand abroad, necessitating enhanced military and intelligence cooperation between the two countries to counter the group's attacks.

Furthermore, it is expected that Hassan Sheikh Mohamud will leverage good relations with the United States under Joe Biden's administration to address internal challenges facing Somalia. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud seeks to gain more American support in the war on terrorism, secure aid to support the Somali economy, and assist Somalia in the famine crisis by increasing funding and expanding relief efforts to support those affected by the crisis impacting large parts of Somalia.



Repercussions of the Ethiopia-Somaliland Agreement on Regional Security

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The announced agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland, wherein the former gains access to the Red Sea through Berbera Port in exchange for recognizing the latter as an independent state and granting it a share in Ethiopian Airlines, has sparked a diplomatic crisis be-

tween Ethiopia and Somalia, which does not recognize Somaliland's independence. This crisis has cast regional shadows, with countries and organizations stepping in to support Somalia's legitimate right to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Breaking Ethiopia's Isolation

In its efforts to break isolation and realize its dream of accessing the sea, Ethiopia signed an agreement with Somaliland on January 1, whereby the latter agreed to grant the Ethiopian navy access to 12 miles of the sea through Berbera Port for 50 years in exchange for official recognition of Somaliland as an independent state and a share in Ethiopian Airlines.

The agreement was reached two months after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed addressed his country's parliament on October 10, 2023, emphasizing the need for his landlocked nation to access the sea through any country, whether Somalia, Eritrea, or Djibouti, as a crucial demand in light of development priorities and a growing population.

Development priorities are inextricably linked to regional threats, which Ethiopia is wary of due to their impact on trade and supply chain stability, as well as their implications for Ethiopia's regional standing. Since dismantling its navy following Eritrea's independence in 1991, Ethiopia has aimed to gain access to the sea.

This ambition is supported by strategic options for Ethiopia's access to the sea, given its total reliance on Djibouti, which restricts its movements amidst escalating regional competition and shifting alliances. This goal was underscored during the conflict in the Tigray region when the road linking Addis Ababa and Djibouti, passing through the Ethiopian Afar region, was blocked, reflecting the strategic pressures on Addis Ababa due to geographical isolation.

Since coming to power, Ahmed has promoted this ambition through regional integration and cooperation in the Horn of Africa, supporting his aspirations for regional dominance in the Red Sea, Nile Basin, and Great Lakes regions. He relies on linking the Ethiopian economy with regional economies as part of his larger project for regional cooperation and integration, aiming to make Ethiopia an advanced economic centre in East Africa, which is reflected in his leadership in reshaping alliances.

In 2019, Addis Ababa signed an agreement with Paris to re-establish the Ethiopian navy, paralleling its efforts to gain sea access, including the agreement with Somaliland that was cancelled in 2018. Abiy Ahmed's speech before the Ethiopian parliament in October 2023 framed sea access as an existential issue for his country, akin to the Nile, calling for options to be discussed through dialogue, while not ruling out potential confrontation if dialogue does not yield the desired outcome. This threatens to escalate tensions with regional neighbors who fear his ambitions for regional dominance.

Violation of Somali Sovereignty

The recent agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland is one manifestation of the threat posed by Ethiopia's ambitions for sea access and its relentless search for available alternatives. This raises the alertness of neighboring countries, which fear threats to their interests and regional sovereignty.

In response to the recent move, Somalia expressed reservations about steps that could violate its sovereignty. The Somali govern-

ment, led by Hamza Abdi Barre, convened the day after the agreement was announced, declaring it null and void. Somalia also recalled its ambassador to Ethiopia for consultations and called on the African Union and the Security Council to hold a meeting on this issue, condemning Ethiopian actions. Additionally, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud legally annulled the agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland and vowed to counter any Ethiopian actions that could violate his country's sovereignty.

This is not the first instance of Addis Ababa's persistent attempts to access the sea. In 2018, Ethiopia signed a similar agreement to acquire a 19% stake in Berbera Port, which was later cancelled due to Somalia's objections at the time, considering Berbera Port a significant source of resources.

The announcement of the recent agreement followed a pact between Somalia and Somaliland to resume dialogue on security issues in the coming period. This was during talks hosted by Djibouti on December 28, between delegations led by Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Somaliland's "unrecognized" President Muse Bihi Abdi.

This step came after Somaliland suspended talks in 2022, following the last talks hosted by Djibouti between the two sides in 2020, which revived stagnant waters between the parties,

especially after the Las Anod crisis between Somaliland and the Somali region of Puntland.

Ethiopia's rapprochement with Somaliland exacerbates the situation between the latter and Somalia, particularly with Somaliland's adherence to the secession scenario. This was evident in President Muse Abdi's stance on Uganda's initiative to mediate between them and Somalia last September, where he reiterated the rejection of unity talks, limiting discussions to managing relations between the two sides.

Thus, any unilateral actions with Somaliland constitute a violation of Somali sovereignty under its constitution,

which does not recognize Somaliland's independence. This brings up the issue of resuming communication and dialogue between the two parties. With the anticipation of reopening comprehensive

dialogue to manage contentious issues, Ethiopian actions intensify the situation, as their rapprochement with Somaliland poses a direct threat to Somali national security.

Escalating Regional Polarization

The current tensions are unlikely to be confined to Somalia, which resents Ethiopian actions that promote regional instability. Such concerns also grow among neighboring countries and Red Sea littoral states, which view



Ethiopian moves as threats to their strategic interests and regional peace and stability.

Regional countries had previously expressed these concerns following Abiy Ahmed's speech last October, which hinted at potential confrontations with neighboring countries. Djibouti, for instance, voiced its fears, given Ethiopia's reliance on it for 95% of its trade, generating revenues of up to \$1.5 billion since Eritrea's independence. Despite this, Djibouti sees Ethiopian ambitions not as a desire to benefit from ports but as a quest for dominance, prompting a presidential advisor to Ismail Omar Guelleh to affirm the safety and sovereignty of Djiboutian territory in response to Ethiopian statements.

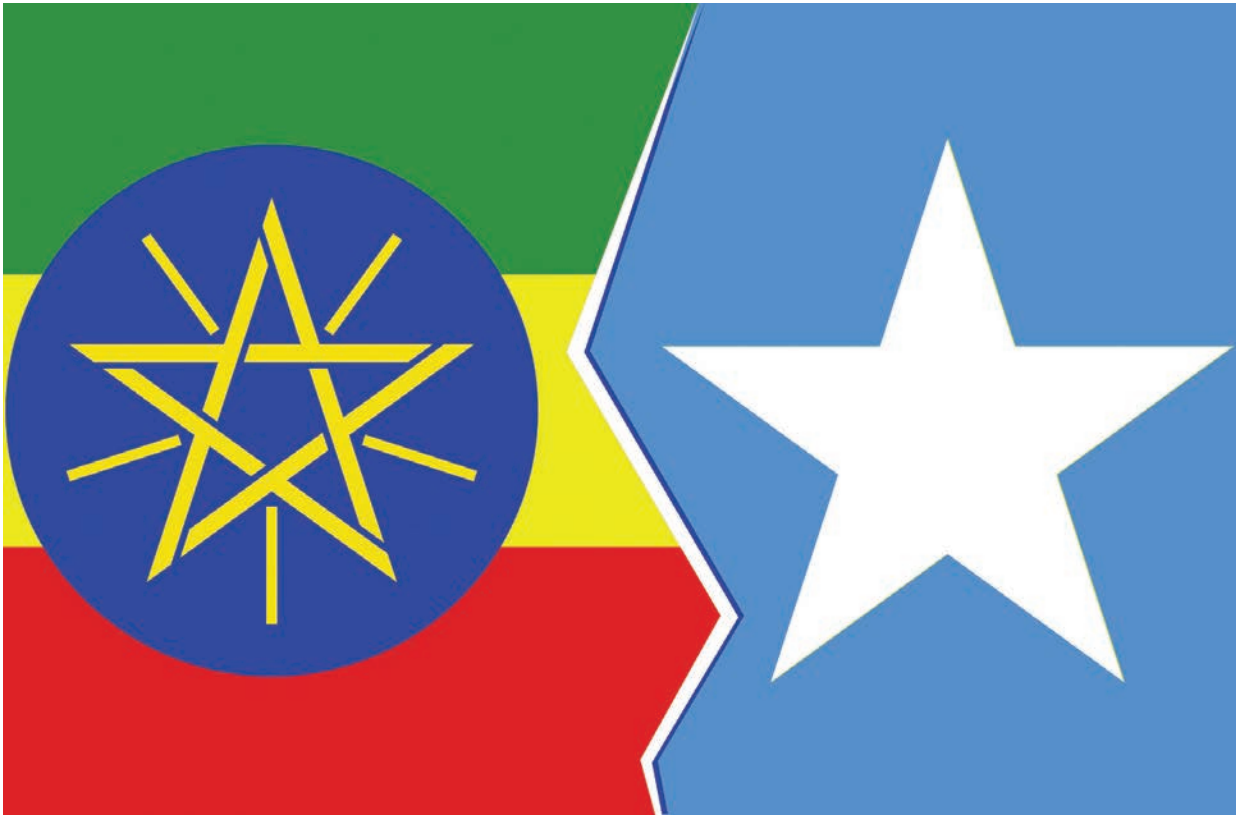
Similarly, Somalia, under former President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, was coordinating a new formula to redraw regional alliances but remained concerned about its sovereignty and stability, as expressed by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Omar.

As for Eritrea, it remains one of the most apprehensive countries regarding Ethiopian ambitions, particularly given the proximity to potential confrontation scenarios in attempts to reunify and reach the ports of Assab and Massawa. This scenario enhances the historical legacy of conflict, despite the temporary alliance between Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afwerki against the Tigray region. This alliance does not rule out the possibility of future confrontations fuelled by strategic contradictions in the region, prompting the Eritrean government to avoid engaging in dialogue regarding recent calls for sea access.

These previous concerns are most likely a part of a larger threat posed by Ethiopia in the

region, should it undertake any actions that threaten regional stability. This has prompted neighboring countries to express solidarity with Somalia's unity and sovereignty. From a regional security standpoint and to de-escalate tensions and polarization in the Red Sea, Egypt announced on January 3 its support for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This stance is reinforced by Egypt's membership in the Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, established in 2020, which Ethiopia has aimed to join since then. Ethiopian ambitions are not solely aimed at supporting development and trade goals but also pave the way for establishing a military base on the Red Sea, as reflected in a comment by Ethiopian National Security Advisor Redwan Hussein regarding the new memorandum of understanding. If realized, this ambition would exacerbate the militarization of the Red Sea region, which has seen a resurgence of various security threats, including piracy and terrorism.

Ultimately, Ethiopia's recent moves appear to stem from internal and regional instability, redirecting domestic attention outward while simultaneously intensifying regional polarization and escalating security threats in the area. This includes the resurgence of piracy in the Red Sea, Houthi threats to navigation, and the threats posed by Al-Shabaab to Ethiopia and its activities, which could extend operations abroad given the pressure exerted on them by President Sheikh Mohamud's government domestically.



Motivations for Escalating Tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia in the Horn of Africa

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The Horn of Africa is witnessing escalating tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia, as a diplomatic crisis has erupted between the two countries. The Somali government announced on Thursday, April 4, 2024, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received instructions to “inform the Ethiopian government’s ambassador in Mogadishu to leave the country within the

next 72 hours for in-depth consultations.” It also added that it would order the closure of the Ethiopian consulates in Somaliland and Puntland, which enjoys semi-autonomy, and the departure of diplomats and staff within two weeks. The statement also mentioned that the Ethiopian government is “blatantly interfering in Somalia’s internal affairs, violating Somalia’s sovereignty.”

This research paper attempts to address the reasons that led to the escalation of tensions in relations between the two countries, prompting the Somali government to expel the Ethiopian ambassador and close the Ethiopian consulates in the “Somaliland” and “Puntland” regions. It will also review the potential repercussions in light of the recent escalation.

Reasons for Tension in Relations

There are a number of reasons that prompted the Somali government to expel the Ethiopian ambassador and close the Ethiopian consulates in “Somaliland” and “Puntland.” Recently, Ethiopia has taken several provocative actions that threaten the unity and integrity of Somali territories. There is tension in the relations between Ethiopia and the Somali central government, while Abiy Ahmed works on strengthening his relations with Somali states that have separatist tendencies, particularly “Somaliland” and “Puntland.” This can be examined as follows:

Clash with the Somali President: Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud accused Ethiopian security forces of trying to prevent him from attending the 37th African Union Summit, which started in February 2024, a move condemned by Mogadishu as a “provocative act.” The Ethiopian response to this incident was reflected in a statement by “Bilen Seyoum,” the spokesperson for Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who said, “The Somali delegation was prevented when its security personnel tried to enter the African Union headquarters carrying weapons.”

Ethiopian Rapprochement with Somali States

1. Puntland Region: Puntland is located in northeastern Somalia, bordered by “Somaliland” to the west, the Gulf of Aden to the north, the Indian Ocean to the southeast, and Ethiopia to the south. Puntland declared autonomy in 1998. Recently, the Puntland region, which enjoys self-governance, has worked on enhancing relations with Ethiopia. This was evident in the meeting held on April 4, 2024, between Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Mesganu Arga, and a high-level ministerial delegation from Puntland, headed by Finance Minister Mohamed Farah Mohamed. The meeting marked a significant shift as both sides agreed to strengthen their multifaceted relations, focusing on trade, investment, cooperation in the energy sector, and joint infrastructure projects. This cooperation is expected to provide a significant boost to Puntland’s economy.

The recent rapprochement between Puntland and Ethiopia coincided with Puntland’s announcement on Sunday, March 31, 2024, that it would withdraw from Somalia’s federal system and govern itself independently. This move angered the Somali central government. It is worth noting that Puntland’s decision came in light of the region’s rejection of the constitutional amendments announced on March 30, 2024, which include changing the system of governance in Somalia from parliamentary to presidential, granting the president the authority to appoint a prime

minister, adopting a direct general election system instead of election by parliament, and extending the presidential term from four to five years. Puntland accuses the Somali central government of violating the 2012 Constitution, which was painstakingly drafted through extensive consultations and compromises. The new constitutional amendments are expected to significantly concentrate power in the hands of the president, raising the potential for worsening conflicts between political factions.

2. **Somaliland:** At the beginning of this year, the Ethiopian Prime Minister signed an agreement with the separatist Somaliland region. Under the agreement, landlocked Ethiopia will be allowed to lease 20 kilometres around the Berbera port on the Gulf of Aden, with access to the Red Sea for maritime and commercial purposes for 50 years. In return, Ethiopia will become the first country to recognize Somaliland as an independent state. The Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed aims through this agreement to secure access to the Red Sea, which has become a source of tension between Ethiopia and its neighbors, raising concerns about the potential for a new conflict in the Horn of Africa.

Based on the aforementioned, the stance of the Somali state of Puntland and the Somaliland region regarding the closure of the Ethiopian consulate is evident from the official statements issued by the Puntland state of Somalia, which downplayed the significance of Somalia's closure of the Ethiopian consulate in Garowe. It affirmed that its long-standing relations with Ethiopia rely

on deep cooperation in social and economic aspects and the freedom of movement. Additionally, the decision issued by the Somali federal government on April 4, 2024, undermines the interests of the Somali people and is based on hostility, hatred, and sabotage against the people of Puntland. Regarding the position of Somaliland, Rooda Elmi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Somaliland, announced that the Ethiopian consulate in Hargeisa "will remain open regardless of what Mogadishu says," asserting that "Somaliland is an independent sovereign state."

Potential Repercussions

This part of the research paper attempts to review the potential repercussions in light of the recent escalation by Somalia expelling the Ethiopian ambassador and closing the consulates in Somaliland and Puntland. This can be discussed as follows:

1. **Undermining Counter-Terrorism**

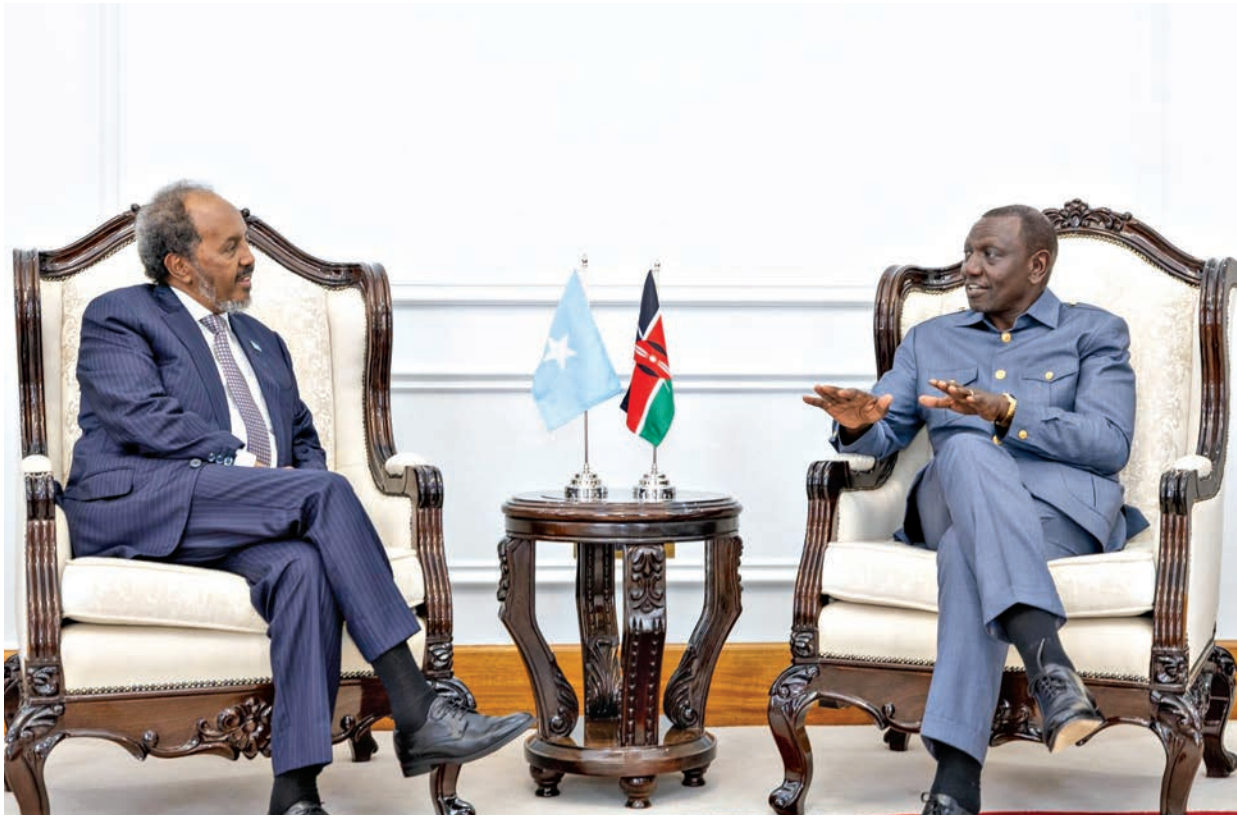
Efforts: There is no doubt that the deterioration of diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Somalia will undermine counter-terrorism efforts. Currently, 3,000 Ethiopian soldiers are in Somalia as part of an African Union peacekeeping mission to combat Al-Shabaab militants affiliated with Al-Qaeda. Additionally, the coordination of intelligence sharing will decline, reducing the capacity to actively respond to terrorist threats and attacks. It is most likely that the terrorist group Al-Shabaab will utilize the current conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia to recruit more youth and launch more terrorist attacks across the border between the

two countries, which will destabilize the fragile region.

2. **Increasing Piracy:** The escalating crisis between Somalia and Ethiopia raises concerns about the exacerbation of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. The tension between the two countries could distract them from efforts to combat piracy, providing an opportunity for pirates to increase their activities. Extremist groups, such as Al-Shabaab, exploit the chaos resulting from the crisis to fund their activities through piracy. Although piracy had ceased in Somalia for a while, its resurgence is attributed to the political and security tensions in Somalia. The Somali government still lacks sufficient capabilities to enforce maritime security along its coasts. The ramifications of piracy, especially its impact on international trade, can be reviewed as piracy poses a threat to free navigation in the Red Sea, endangering commercial ships, causing significant economic losses, and increasing shipping costs.
3. **Escalating Regional Polarization:** The increasing tension in bilateral relations between Somalia and Ethiopia raises fears of a direct armed conflict. These fears are exacerbated by the increased military naval presence in the region, especially with international naval forces combating piracy, and the defense agreement signed by Somalia with Turkey in February. Under this agreement, Turkey will provide training and equipment to the Somali navy over ten years, allowing Somalia to protect its maritime resour-

es and territorial waters from threats such as terrorism, piracy, and foreign interference. This agreement is viewed as a step by Somalia to strengthen its naval capabilities amid the tension with Ethiopia. There are concerns that these developments could lead to increased tensions in the region, potentially resulting in a direct armed conflict between the two countries. The Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea are among the most important waterways for global trade, making any armed conflict in the region have serious implications for international security and peace.

In conclusion, the recent escalatory steps taken by Somalia against Ethiopia, including expelling the Ethiopian ambassador and closing the consulates in Somaliland and Puntland, reflect Somalia's annoyance with Ethiopia's opportunistic actions threatening the unity and integrity of Somali territories. Ethiopia takes advantage of internal Somali disputes between the central government and the federal states with separatist tendencies, with the Ethiopian Prime Minister seeking to attract these states, strengthen relations with them, and encourage them to resist the authority of the central Somali government to achieve his expansionist ambitions in the Horn of Africa. Undoubtedly, there are factors that could potentially lead to a direct clash between the two countries, necessitating active diplomatic efforts from regional and international actors to alleviate the tension between the two countries and invite them to dialogue and negotiation for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.



Challenges of Kenya's Mediation in the Somali-Ethiopian Crisis

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On April 11, 2024, Kenya announced a mediation proposal between Ethiopia and Somalia as part of regional efforts to ease tensions resulting from the recent escalation between the two countries due to the memorandum of understanding between Addis Ababa and the Somaliland region on January 1, 2024. This has led to

a wave of escalating unrest in the Horn of Africa, posing a threat to regional stability. This situation has created an atmosphere of distrust, culminating in Somalia expelling the Ethiopian ambassador and ordering the closure of the Ethiopian consulates in Somaliland and Puntland on April 4, 2024.

Crisis Developments

The crisis between Addis Ababa and Mogadishu erupted following the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and the separatist region of Somaliland, creating a focal point of tension in relations between the two countries amid rapidly escalating developments. This can be detailed as follows:

1. **Signing the Memorandum of Understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland:** The agreement grants Ethiopia access to 20 kilometres of the coastline, including the port of Berbera, through a 50-year lease. According to Abiy Ahmed's National Security Advisor, "Redwan Hussien," the agreement not only includes Ethiopia's commercial access to the sea but also a leased military base. In return, Addis Ababa recognizes Somaliland, and the latter receives a share in Ethiopian Airlines, "Ethio Telecom," as well as infrastructure development between the base and the port, and further discussions on education, health, and joint military cooperation.
2. **Somali Government's Position:** The Somali government considered this agreement a direct threat to Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, stating that the agreement signed by Ethiopia with the separatist Somaliland region is null and void and has no legal basis. They also stated that Ethiopia's action, which includes recognizing Somaliland as an independent state when the time is right, poses a danger to peace and

stability in the region. Somali President "Hassan Sheikh Mohamud" affirmed in February 2024 that his country would defend itself if Ethiopia proceeded with the agreement. Somali Prime Minister "Hamza Abdi Barre" stated that Somalia would defend its territory by all possible legal means following the agreement that grants Ethiopia a sea outlet through a port in the self-declared republic.

3. **International and Regional Support for Somali Unity and Sovereignty:** Several international entities, including the United States, the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union, the Arab League, Egypt, and Turkey, openly supported the Somali stance, considering the memorandum of understanding a breach of Somali sovereignty and international law principles, as it was signed with an entity not internationally recognized and not representing the will of the Somali people. The G7, after concluding their foreign ministers' meeting held in Capri, Italy, from April 17 to 19, 2024, expressed concerns about the memorandum of understanding and encouraged member states to keep all channels of dialogue open to avoid further escalation.
4. **Escalation of Diplomatic Crisis between Mogadishu and Addis Ababa:** On April 4, 2024, the Somali government announced the expulsion of the Ethiopian ambassador, accusing Addis Ababa of blatant interference in its internal affairs. They also stated that

they would order the closure of Ethiopia's consulates in Somaliland and Puntland, with diplomats and staff being given two weeks to leave. Despite the firm stance of the Somali government, its ability to enforce the closure of Ethiopian consulates in Somalia is extremely limited, and these regions have shown no inclination to comply with the federal government's order. The situation was further complicated after the federal Somali government enacted a new constitution on March 30, 2024. This move led Puntland to withdraw its membership and not recognize the federal government, highlighting deep divisions within Somalia and the challenges faced by the federal government in maintaining national unity. Puntland's subsequent meeting with senior Ethiopian officials in Addis Ababa on April 3, 2024, to discuss enhancing trade relations, specifically regarding the use of Garacad Port, directly challenged the federal government's authority.

Mediation Accounts

Nairobi is motivated by several factors to engage in addressing the crisis between Addis Ababa and Mogadishu. These motivations include enhancing its role as a peace mediator and showcasing its ability to resolve crises and contain the repercussions of conflicts in regional countries, aligning with its economic and developmental ambitions. This can be detailed through:

1. **Kenyan Proposal:** Kenyan Foreign Minister "Korir Sing'oei" told Reuters

that Kenya proposed a regional maritime treaty to resolve tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia. This proposal was made in consultation with Djibouti and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The treaty would provide landlocked countries in the region access to seaports on commercial terms, leveraging IGAD's ability to draft a treaty for sharing maritime resources. Meanwhile, Somali State Minister for Foreign Affairs "Ali Omar" stated that before discussing port access bilaterally, Ethiopia must cancel its agreement with Somaliland. "Somalia will never accept a naval base," he added, saying that "Somalia is ready to discuss proposals as long as they meet the country's interests in protecting our sovereignty, political independence, and unity."

In this context, Kenyan President "William Ruto" has taken pivotal steps to mediate in easing tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia through a series of high-level meetings in Nairobi with Ethiopian Prime Minister "Abiy Ahmed" and Somali President "Hassan Sheikh Mohamud" on the sidelines of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) in Nairobi in February 2024. The discussions focused on calming the disputes between the two countries and enhancing bilateral relations.

2. **Enhancing Kenya's Role as a Peace Mediator in the Region:** This stems from the relative stability that Nairobi enjoys and serves its economic ambitions, particularly concerning presenting the Lamu port as an alternative for Ethio-

pia's seaport access ambitions. This effort encourages Kenya to play leading roles in the region amid the declining Ethiopian influence due to the war in the Tigray region in the northern part of the country, which ended after two years with the signing of the Pretoria Peace Agreement in November 2022 but still suffers from various security disruptions. Additionally, tensions have escalated in various Ethiopian regions due to the increased activity of armed groups and militias. Kenya has also played a significant role in peace agreements in the region, whether regarding the situation in South Sudan and the revitalized peace agreement since 2018, or supporting regional stability efforts and mediating conflicts in countries like South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Burundi, and Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

- 3. Containing Regional Threats and Tensions:** Nairobi is keen on containing tensions among neighboring countries and preventing the escalation of internal conflicts, fearing the repercussions of these crises on the Kenyan interior, given the context of long, easily penetrable borders and the intertwined ethnic and tribal extensions between the interior and exterior in the Horn of Africa and East Africa. Moreover, Nairobi fears the weakening efforts to combat terrorism in the region. The severance of diplomatic relations between Somalia and Ethiopia could affect the continued legal presence of Ethiopian soldiers in Somalia fighting al-Shabaab. Currently, there are at least 4,000 Ethiopian sol-

diers in Somalia as part of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and another 1,000 soldiers deployed under bilateral agreements with Somalia. Ethiopian forces constitute between a quarter and a third of the 14,000-strong ATMIS force, responsible for sectors in central and southwestern Somalia bordering Ethiopia. The mission is set to withdraw completely by the end of 2024, complicating the Somali government's plans to eliminate al-Shabab in the southern part of the country by 2024.

Accordingly, al-Shabaab is likely to escalate its attacks against Ethiopian forces in the Horn of Africa, exploiting anti-Ethiopian sentiments among Somalis to enhance recruitment campaigns, particularly in southern Somalia. Historically, the group has benefited from anti-Ethiopian sentiments to reinforce its support among Somali populations throughout the Horn of Africa. It depicts Ethiopia as the arch-enemy of Somali Muslims and has historically fostered a Somali narrative entrenched in anti-Ethiopian sentiments, portraying Ethiopia as a foreign occupier of Somali lands aiming to exclude Somalia, revive the Ethiopian empire, and control Somali seaports.

Both the Somali president and the Arab League separately warned that Ethiopia's move could lead to a dangerous escalation in violent extremism activities. This could extend al-Shabab's activities into Kenya, which has been subjected to several repeated terrorist attacks in the northeastern border areas (Lamu, Wajir, and Mandera counties).

Current Challenges

Despite the attempts by neighboring regional countries, primarily Kenya, Djibouti, and Uganda, to offer mediation initiatives to defuse the escalating crisis between Mogadishu and Addis Ababa, there remain existing challenges that hinder any serious steps to try to defuse these tensions. These include Somalia's refusal of external mediations, emphasizing that discussions cannot take place unless Ethiopia cancels the agreement. According to the Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement, "There is no room for mediation unless Ethiopia withdraws from the illegal memorandum of understanding and reaffirms Somalia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the principle of non-interference." The Somali federal government also commented on the G7 statement, saying that "Ethiopia must show full respect for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with international law to avoid future confrontations." Meanwhile, Ethiopia insists on its legitimate right to access the sea as a strategic matter, in light of its efforts to diversify its access to seaports.

On another side, the relationship between the Somali federal government and the Somali regional governments complicates matters, especially with the growing closeness between Somali regional governments and Ethiopia. This is particularly after the tensions escalated between Puntland and the Somali government following the recent constitutional amendments, which mediation Puntland rejected, along with its plans to return to general elections from clan-based voting. The impact of Puntland's decision on the country's internal cohesion and the potential for other splits and separatist movements within

Somalia's federal structures is concerning, especially given the ongoing security challenges and the war against the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. Additionally, the paths to reconciliation and Djibouti's efforts in mediating between Mogadishu and Hargeisa have deteriorated after reaching an agreement in December 2023 to resume bilateral negotiations. The memorandum of understanding between Addis Ababa and Somaliland has caused a return to square one.

In summary, the deterioration of Somali-Ethiopian relations has far-reaching consequences for the countries of the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region. The ongoing military actions by the Houthis in Yemen add another layer of complexity to the crisis belt region, with potential negative repercussions from the agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland exacerbating regional tensions, increasing terrorist and violent extremist activities, disrupting maritime shipping routes and international trade, hindering pathways to economic cooperation and integration, and weakening counter-terrorism efforts in Somalia and the Horn of Africa. Therefore, Kenyan mediation represents a positive step in containing the escalating crisis between the two countries and an attempt to avoid dangerous repercussions for the region as a whole.





4

Regional Issues

- ◀ Implications of Horn of Africa Crises on Red Sea Security
- ◀ Trends of Terrorism in the Horn of Africa: The Case of Al-Shabaab
- ◀ Impact of Environmental Changes on Horn of Africa Security and Stability
- ◀ The Evolving Regional Role of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa



Implications of Horn of Africa Crises on Red Sea Security

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Houthi attacks on the southern entrance of the Red Sea have introduced a highly dangerous variable in terms of threatening international navigation in one of the world's most important maritime corridors. The negative repercussions of these threats have been exacerbated by the complex situations on the opposite

shore in the Horn of Africa and its northern extensions up to Sudan. Somalia continues to suffer from ongoing terrorist threats from the Al-Shabaab militant group, especially with the uncertain outlook for international support following the end of the African Union Mission's mandate at the end of this year.

Additionally, Ethiopia's efforts to secure a naval military base in one of its neighboring countries have become a source of escalating regional tension. After reservations from Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia, Ethiopia found no alternative but to achieve its goal by signing a memorandum of understanding with the government of the unrecognized region of Somaliland. Moreover, the shifting conflict dynamics in Sudan between the armed forces and the Rapid Support Forces since December 2023 have added further complications, as the Rapid Support Forces have managed to seize control of Gezira State south of Khartoum, using it as a launching point for attacks on additional fronts, including the eastern front, in an attempt to reach the Red Sea coast.

Key Repercussions

Three main negative repercussions of the crises and conflicts in the Horn of Africa on the security of the Red Sea can be identified during this highly sensitive period. These are:

- **Providing an opportunity for terrorist organizations to extend their activities towards the coasts:** Operations against foreign military presence in Somalia have long served as the primary propaganda tool for Al-Shabaab, presenting itself as a movement aimed at restoring Somali sovereignty, especially following repeated attacks on camps of African Union Mission forces in Somalia. Additionally, the group has extended its operations into the depths of Kenya and Ethiopia, claiming efforts to deter these countries from maintaining a military presence in Somalia. Several factors enhance the likelihood of Al-Shabaab exploiting recent developments at the southern entrance of the Red Sea, intensifying the severity of threats.

This situation arises from Al-Shabaab's traditional focus on targeting major ports as primary objectives, areas where Burundian, Ugandan, and Kenyan forces of the African Union Mission are stationed. The group previously controlled the major port of Kismayo between 2008 and 2012, successfully op-



erating it for international trade as a significant source of financial revenue. After being expelled from the port, the group continued to target Somali ports, as evidenced by the attack on Bosaso port in Puntland State in February 2019.

The likelihood of Al-Shabaab extending towards the coast is further increased by the inability of strikes against the group since President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud took office in 2022 to decisively end the confrontation. Additionally, the planned withdrawal of the African Union Mission from Somalia creates an unstable security situation, intensified by current tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia following the memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland, which grants Ethiopia a military presence on the eastern coast of the African continent. This could disrupt security and intelligence cooperation between Addis Ababa and Mogadishu, negatively impacting counterterrorism efforts.

The most prominent threat in this regard remains the extended relations between Al-Shabaab, Iran, and the Houthis, which could enable the group to leverage its capabilities to perform complementary roles alongside the Houthis' current activities at the southern entrance of the Red Sea.

▪ **Invocation of International Competitors:** Traditionally, the Red Sea countries have failed to establish an effective regional collective security system, primarily due to the significant disparity in military capabilities between the northern Red Sea countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and the southern Red Sea countries like

Eritrea, Djibouti, and Yemen. Given this situation, and the immense international importance of the Red Sea as a major international navigation corridor, the void left by the absence of a collective security system from the Red Sea bordering countries has been filled by intensified international presence, particularly on the western coast of the southern entrance, as Djibouti has turned into a primary host for many foreign military bases.

While international military presence may be viewed from a functional perspective as a contributing factor to maintaining the security and stability of the Red Sea, its current nature indicates an implicit danger arising from the high level of competition among the international powers present militarily in the southern Red Sea, especially given the existing U.S. and Chinese presence alongside Russian efforts to establish a military presence in this significant location.

The United States is active through the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in securing international navigation, particularly after launching Combined Task Force 153 which focuses on the Red Sea area, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden. The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) is also active in securing coastal areas as main launch points through various means, including periodic visits, providing technical support, and military assistance. In contrast, the Chinese military base in Djibouti, established in 2017, marked a historical precedent for the Chinese military. The base, established under a ten-year renewable agreement, is equipped with various military facilities including helicopter

and drone launch and landing capabilities, and the reception of large naval vessels.

Similarly, Russia has been making strong moves to secure a stable foothold on the Red Sea coasts. Between 2012 and 2013, negotiations took place between Russia and Djibouti to host a Russian military base, which was stalled by the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014. In May 2019, it was announced that Russian ships had begun using the facilities at Sudan's Port Sudan, followed by a December 2020 announcement of an agreement to establish a logistics support base for Russian warships north of Port Sudan, which underwent a review process completed in March 2023. However, the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan between the armed forces and the Rapid Support Forces hindered its implementation. Additionally, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced ongoing negotiations between the two countries to establish a Russian logistics support base on the Eritrean coast.

- **Return of Piracy:** Since the navigation crisis in the Red Sea broke out due to the Houthi attacks starting in November 2023, piracy operations against commercial ships in the Gulf of Aden have notably increased, intensifying the risks of transiting this important maritime corridor. Repeated attacks on commercial ships occurred after they diverted their route from the Red Sea towards the south, a phenomenon not surprising given the chronic security fragility in Somalia.

Previously, the piracy phenomenon was successfully confronted due to the international consensus built in 2008 with the unanimous

adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1816, which allowed states cooperating with Somalia's transitional government to use all necessary means to combat these threats within Somali territorial waters. In December of the same year, Resolution 1851 was unanimously adopted, in which the Security Council called on states and organizations capable of providing assistance to participate in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Somali territorial waters by deploying warships and military aircraft, which was embodied in the formation of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), comprising around sixty countries and global organizations.

However, unlike the previous successful experience, it is unlikely that a similar international consensus can be built at the present moment due to the widening contradictions between major international powers, especially since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in February 2022, and the transformation of the Horn of Africa region into one of the most competitive arenas among international powers.

In conclusion, the current situations in the Horn of Africa not only obstruct the countries of the region from making a positive contribution to efforts to restore security and stability in the Red Sea, amid the significant threat posed by Houthi attacks, but also impose additional pressures on the security of the region, placing it on the priority list of tasks to ensure the Red Sea's return to its nature as a major international navigation corridor.



Trends of Terrorism in the Horn of Africa: The Case of Al-Shabaab

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The experience of terrorism in the Horn of Africa is the longest-lasting and most sustainable compared to its manifestations in other regions of sub-Saharan Africa. Since the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, terrorist activity has shown a strong presence in multiple areas of the Horn of Africa. Since the beginning of the

Al-Shabaab militant group's more organized phase in 2007, the phenomenon of terrorism in the Horn of Africa has become a constant feature of the region's security and political interactions. Despite Al-Shabaab's loss of effective control over major urban strongholds since its withdrawal from the capital Mogadishu in August 2011 and then from

the city and port of Kismayo in September 2012, the group has since managed to adapt effectively to its new reality. Over the course of a decade, the group has demonstrated that the end of its project to effectively control extensive geographic areas in central and southern Somalia does not mean it has ceased operations. The group reorganized itself by establishing a presence in the interior regions and the suburbs surrounding Somali cities, which provide a suitable hideout for its members, using these areas as launch points for attacks that have covered the entire Somali map from Jubaland in the south to Puntland in the north.

On the level of internal interactions, Al-Shabaab has shown a degree of relative stability, allowing it to avoid many of the traditional problems faced by other groups operating in its sphere. The group managed to contain cases of defection by maintaining a strong core group of members and a cohesive leadership structure in its various operational areas. This enabled it to overcome internal disputes in 2011 after foreign combatants left for new battlefields in the Middle East and other members withdrew following the organization's diminished economic capabilities. The group also managed to surpass the crisis of some elements pledging allegiance to ISIS after its emergence. Most of Al-Shabaab's members have maintained their allegiance to Al-Qaeda since 2012, making ISIS's presence in Somalia one of the weakest demonstrations of the group on the African continent compared to its branches in West and Central Africa.

Given Al-Shabaab's demonstrated ability to adapt and sustain itself, the recent expansion of its activities can be explained by the turbulence in counter-terrorism efforts in Somalia over the last decade at both planning and execution levels. These efforts have been heavily influenced by Somali political shifts and changes in the regional and international forces involved in counter-terrorism operations in Somalia. This turbulence has created "gaps" in counter-terrorism operations, which the group has exploited to achieve several field and symbolic advances.

This chapter aims to explore the multiple trends of the terrorism phenomenon and counter-terrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa, focusing on Al-Shabaab's activities in Somalia and its neighboring countries during the recent period, which reflects the most recent and relevant transformations, spanning from 2020 to 2022. Tracking the trends of the terrorism phenomenon in the Horn of Africa helps uncover the primary reasons for the persistence of the phenomenon, which go beyond local Somali considerations to include regional and international variables. The study heavily relies on the daily archives of the New Somalia, Somalia Today, and Garowe Online websites to observe various aspects of the group's activity, forming the primary material for the analysis on which the study is based.

Integrating Field and Symbolic Considerations

Since its early inception, Al-Shabaab has aimed for intensive media exploitation of its field activities, contributing to enhancing

perceptions of its capabilities among the Somali government and the general populace. Based on this, the group meticulously selects its targets to achieve both field and media gains. The target list often includes official government headquarters in the capital Mogadishu and state capitals, police stations, and prisons, as well as raids on peripheral towns and temporarily taking control of them, highlighting the weakness of the Somali government and its military and security arms.

1. **Attacks on Important Sites in the Capital Mogadishu:** Government headquarters and surrounding areas in Mogadishu are traditional targets for Al-Shabaab, which continually seeks to demonstrate its ability to carry out operations with symbolic dimensions that go beyond mere field calculations. By targeting the presidential palace or federal ministry headquarters and other government buildings in the capital, the group demonstrates its ability to penetrate all security arrangements, even the most fortified, illustrating the Somali federal government's inability to protect itself, thereby weakening any serious discussion about its ability to protect the Somali citizens. Such operations mark significant milestones in the evolution of terrorism trends in Somalia, often followed by an expansion of the group's activities, utilizing the entry of Somali security agencies into a period of reassessment and procedural development.

For example, on August 16, 2020, a suicide car bomb exploded at the Elite Hotel in the

Somali capital Mogadishu, followed by intense gunfire exchanges between Al-Shabaab combatants and security personnel, resulting in sixteen deaths and thirteen injuries. On September 10, multiple neighborhoods in Mogadishu were subjected to artillery shelling from an unknown source, with ten shells landing around the presidential palace and in the districts of Warta Nabada, Hamar Jajab, Bondhere, Shangani, and Waberi, following a suicide bombing at a checkpoint near the presidential palace that killed three civilians. In November of the same year, a suicide attack targeted a restaurant in the Hamar Jajab district in Mogadishu, killing six and injuring eight.

In January 2021, a bomb exploded at the Beehani intersection in Mogadishu, killing five escorts of former parliamentarians Mohiyadin Hassan Afrah and Hussein Arale, after an improvised explosive device was detonated roadside. On February 13, Somali police announced that seven people were injured in a suicide car bomb explosion at a checkpoint near the presidential palace. The following month, several mortar shells landed near Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu, killing three civilians and injuring others, coinciding with a meeting of state leaders and international community representatives at a hotel within the airport. In April, two civilians were killed after several mortar shells landed near the presidential palace, with some sources reporting three shells landing inside the palace. In June 2021, ten people were killed in a suicide bombing by an Al-Shabaab member at a crowded café near the Juba Hotel in Mogadishu, close to a

heavily guarded government complex housing the National Intelligence and Security Agency.

On October 29, 2022, Al-Shabaab continued its significant operations in Mogadishu, executing a double bombing targeting the Somali Ministry of Education, beginning with a car bomb that hit the ministry building, followed by a second explosion targeting gathered ambulances and civilians at the first explosion site, resulting in over one hundred deaths and more than three hundred injuries. The attack's importance lies not only in its scale and casualties but also in its significant implications for the potential transformations in Somalia's security and political landscape in the near future.

2. Targeting Prisons and Police Stations: In addition to their symbolic importance, Al-Shabaab's attacks on security facilities hold substantial value due to the confusion they cause within Somali security forces. These attacks often include operations targeting prisons and detention centers, usually resulting in the release of several group members from security custody, significantly boosting the morale of the group's combatants.

On August 10, 2020, fighting broke out at Mogadishu Central Prison between some detained Al-Shabaab members and prison guards, resulting in the deaths of four guards after a six-hour battle, during which Mubarak Ibrahim Idale, a senior Al-Shabaab leader sentenced to ten years in prison, managed to escape. In early 2021, the central prison in Bosaso, Puntland, was attacked by Al-Shabaab combatants, leading to the burning

of vehicles within the prison and the escape of several inmates. The two-hour attack resulted in the partial control of the prison by Al-Shabaab members, who cut off all access roads, allowing over 400 prisoners to escape.

3. Raiding Cities and Temporarily Controlling Them: Despite the significant reduction in the geographic area under Al-Shabaab's direct control, now limited to scattered rural clusters in southern and central Somalia, raiding cities and towns of strategic and economic importance, even for a short period, remains a significant operational pattern for Al-Shabaab in Somalia, particularly in central and southern Somalia.

On September 7, 2020, Al-Shabaab combatants raided the town of Bal'ad, located 30 kilometers from the capital Mogadishu, and managed to control it after launching a multi-pronged attack that resulted in freeing prisoners from the police station, expelling security forces from the town, and taking over the local administration center before withdrawing after several hours. In October and November 2020, the city of Dhusamareb, the capital of Galmudug State, witnessed armed clashes between Somali armed forces and Al-Shabaab combatants, resulting in several suburban areas falling under Al-Shabaab control for weeks.

In January 2021, Al-Shabaab combatants took control of the Mashalay area near the town of Qoryoley in Lower Shabelle region, South West State, after forcing Ugandan armed forces operating under the African Union Mission in Somalia to withdraw following fierce confrontations. Moreover, Al-Shabaab

combatants managed to seize the town of Amara in Mudug region, Galmudug State, in August, following a traditional assault that began with a bombing targeting a Somali army base, leading to the withdrawal of Somali special forces and Galmudug's Darawiish forces. In January 2022, Al-Shabaab combatants regained control of the town of Bal'ad in Middle Shabelle region, Hirshabelle State, after taking control of the town's five districts, resulting in casualties among the Somali army and civilians. The attack, conducted from three directions, lasted for hours and ended with Al-Shabaab combatants taking over the town's administration headquarters and the police station.

Intensifying Assassinations of Government Officials

The 'policy' of assassinations is a fundamental pillar of Al-Shabaab's operations in Somalia, aiming to restrict the efforts of political, security, and military officials, particularly concerning fieldwork. Notably, the assassination policy adopted by the group in the three years from 2020 to 2022 focused primarily on local officials, reflecting the group's intent to create the greatest psychological impact on various local communities in Somalia.

1. **Assassination of Local Officials:** In March 2020, the group targeted Abdullah Dirie, head of Ras Kamboni district in Lower Jubba region, killing him after he had served as the district head for more than nine years. In May of the same year, the group targeted Ahmed Musa Noor, governor of Mudug region in Galmudug State, while he was in

Galkayo. In July, armed group members kidnapped Mohamed Mahmoud Siad, a parliamentarian in Hirshabelle State, and took him to the Yaqle area in Middle Shabelle, where he was killed. In August, gunmen assassinated Abdugader Abu Bakr Mahmoud, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation in Hirshabelle State, after raiding him in Jowhar. A suicide bombing in Kismayo killed Shafi Rabi Kahin, chairman of the Jubaland Chamber of Commerce, in September. That same month, gunmen assassinated Noor Hashi Warsame, deputy minister of religious affairs in the Hirshabelle State government. Al-Shabaab gunmen also assassinated four Somali intelligence officers in Waberi district, Mogadishu, in December 2020.

On December 17, 2020, a significant suicide bombing in Galkayo, located on the border between Puntland and Galmudug states, killed several military leaders gathered in the city in preparation for a visit by Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble. The bombing resulted in ten deaths, including the commander of the Somali army's 21st Division, the commander and deputy commander of Somali special forces in Galmudug, and the former mayor of the city.

2. **Assassination of Federal Officials:** Al-Shabaab also targeted federal government officials and members of the federal parliament. In July 2020, the group managed to assassinate Abdul Nasser Said Musa, Deputy Minister of Security in the Somali federal government, with a roadside bomb in Heli-

waa district, Mogadishu, just days after the commander of the army, General Odowa Yusuf Rageh, survived a similar attack, on August 17.

Mohamed Ibrahim Moalimuu, the Somali government's spokesperson, was injured in a suicide bombing in Mogadishu on January 16. The police reported that a suicide bomber targeted a car carrying Moalimuu, who also serves as the prime minister's chief media advisor, at a busy intersection near the presidential palace. Somali MP Amina Mohamed was killed in an attack by a suicide bomber at the entrance of the presidential palace in Beledweyne, Hiran region, Hirshabelle State, in a major explosion that left 48 people dead and 108 injured.

Expansion in Executing Civilians

Al-Shabaab has expanded its execution of civilians to send a dual message to both the residents of areas under its influence and the government. The intent is to intimidate citizens to prevent them from cooperating with security and intelligence agencies, thereby tightening the noose around the group's combatants, while also portraying the group as capable of performing state functions, thus depicting the government as incapable of exercising its authority and essentially abandoning it in favor of Al-Shabaab.

During the period from 2020 to 2022, the pattern of executions indicated three significant new trends. The first is the extension of executions to new areas, previously confined to Middle and Lower Jubba regions. The second trend is the targeting of citizens

collaborating with external parties such as the United States and Kenya, whereas earlier focus was on those cooperating with intelligence services of the central government in Mogadishu or various Somali state intelligence services. This escalation is both quantitative and qualitative. The third trend is the use of executions as a political tool. On September 2, 2021, during preparations for parliamentary elections, Al-Shabaab spokesman Ali Mohamud Rage warned all Somalis against dealing with "infidels" by participating in the elections, specifically warning clan elders and declaring that anyone who promotes what he called "democracy" would be considered an apostate and thus a target for the group's combatants.

The upward trend in executions becomes clear by tracking several operations conducted by the group against civilians. In April 2020, Al-Shabaab assassinated a doctor in the Dherkeenley district in front of his clinic in Mogadishu, accusing him of collaborating with Somali intelligence. The group also executed six people in Jamame in Lower Jubba, Jubaland, after detaining them for collaborating with federal government intelligence, Jubaland intelligence, and South West State intelligence.

In May 2020, Al-Shabaab combatants in Adan Yabal in Middle Shabelle, Hirshabelle, executed a Somali citizen accused of spying for U.S. intelligence, claiming that he confessed before a court formed by the group to collaborating with an American officer in Halane, the headquarters of the African Union Mission in Mogadishu, who tasked him with gathering data on Al-Shabaab leaders. In

June, the group executed two individuals in a public square in Runirgood, accusing them of spying for Somali intelligence.

Continuing its series of mass executions against civilians cooperating with security agencies, Al-Shabaab combatants executed four civilians from Saakow in Jubaland in September, accusing them of spying for U.S., Kenyan, and Somali forces. In the same month, the group executed two civilians in Hiran, Hirshabelle, accusing them of spying for African forces and Somali intelligence.

In March 2021, the phenomenon of mass executions by the group resurfaced when Al-Shabaab executed five people in Bu'ale, Middle Jubba, Jubaland, accusing them of spying for the federal government. In June, Al-Shabaab publicly executed six people, including a woman, in Saakow, Middle Jubba, after a group court accused them of spying for U.S. intelligence.

Shift to Offensive Operations Against Somali Forces

While the Somali state continues its efforts to combat terrorism, aiming to project an image domestically and internationally of an anticipated decline in terrorism and improved capability of the Somali armed forces to lead future counter-terrorism efforts, numerous indicators suggest the difficulty of relying solely on Somali military capabilities to successfully counter Al-Shabaab's threats. In recent years, despite losing the ability to stabilize in strategic locations, many Somali armed forces' camps and bases, as well as those of regional armies and clan militias, have become targets for the group's attacks,

demonstrating its ability to switch from a defensive to an offensive posture.

In June 2020, several bombings occurred in Wanlaweyn in Shabelle, and a suicide car bomber attacked a camp belonging to the 21st Division in Ba'adweyn, Mudug, central Somalia. Al-Shabaab combatants also attacked a Somali forces base in Daynunay near Baidoa, where the 8th Battalion of the 60th Division was stationed, resulting in the death of the battalion commander and the withdrawal of the forces from the site. In August, Al-Shabaab combatants raided a military base near the capital Mogadishu's stadium, belonging to the 12th April Brigade, killing eight soldiers. The group's combatants also shelled a Somali army base in Garbaharey, Gedo, Jubaland. In September, Al-Shabaab launched an attack on a Somali army base on the outskirts of Beledweyne in Hiran, central Somalia.

By January 2021, Al-Shabaab regained the initiative by launching a coordinated attack on a Somali armed forces base near Bal'ad, close to Mogadishu. In April, the group attacked two military bases in Awdheegle and Bariire, central Somalia, with simultaneous bombings followed by a third explosion targeting a military convoy attempting to assist the forces, resulting in 47 soldiers' deaths, including a senior commander, according to the group's media outlets.

June 2021 was the worst month in terms of the number of attacks targeting the Somali army and the resulting material and human losses. At the beginning of the month, an attack in Wadajir district, Mogadishu, killed ten soldiers after a suicide bombing targeted

new recruits at Ta'geer Beden military training center. Al-Shabaab also attacked a Somali army base in Wabi Adi, Middle Shabelle, Hirshabelle, injuring the 4th Battalion commander and killing four soldiers. In the same month, Al-Shabaab combatants attacked a camp in Wisil, Mudug, Galmudug, killing 34 Somali army members. In November, an explosion in Bardere, Gedo, Jubaland, targeted a military training center, killing two soldiers and injuring an unspecified number of soldiers preparing for field deployment in counter-terrorism operations in the Gedo region.

In January 2022, the group intensified its attacks on convoys transporting Somali soldiers, beginning with a roadside bomb in El Tiri near Galmudug's capital, targeting a Somali special forces vehicle, killing eight soldiers. In Dusamareb, Galmudug's capital, a convoy of military vehicles was targeted by a roadside bomb while on route to Bahdo to support forces in the town after it was attacked by Al-Shabaab.

Targeting Foreign Forces in Somalia

Al-Shabaab is acutely aware of the crucial role played by foreign forces in Somalia. Without the planning, field operations, support, and training provided by these forces to Somali security and military forces, any effective counter-terrorism operations in Somalia would be unimaginable. Despite the diversity of the foreign forces active in Somalia, Al-Shabaab has managed to target all of them, whether those under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) or those providing support through bilateral arrangements with the

Somali government, such as the U.S. and Turkish forces.

1. **Targeting African Union Mission**

Forces: Al-Shabaab frequently attacks the Halane compound, the largest military base of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), located near Mogadishu International Airport, due to its strategic importance as the headquarters for the UN Mission and several foreign embassies. Besides attacking AMISOM's main headquarters in Somalia, Al-Shabaab has managed to target African camps across various parts of the country, especially after the African forces were distributed in a relatively homogeneous manner. Somalia, excluding Puntland, was divided into operational areas: Ethiopian forces are deployed in the interior regions bordering Ethiopia, such as Bay, Bakool, and Gedo; Ugandan forces in the central coastal areas, including Mogadishu and Lower Shabelle; Kenyan forces in the southern regions bordering Kenya, such as Middle and Lower Jubba; Djiboutian forces in central regions like Galguduud and Hiran; and Burundian forces in Middle Shabelle.

2. **Targeting Ethiopian Forces:** On April 1, 2020, Al-Shabaab combatants detonated an explosive device targeting an Ethiopian troop transport vehicle belonging to the African peacekeeping forces in Garbaharey, southern Somalia, killing two soldiers and injuring four others. In the following month, Al-Shabaab combatants targeted a military vehicle

belonging to the Ethiopian armed forces in Qansahdhere, Bay region, South West State. June saw a significant increase in attacks, including shelling an Ethiopian base in Halgan. In early 2022, Al-Shabaab shelled a base of Ethiopian soldiers under the African mission in Wajid, Bakool, South West State, with 13 artillery shells. An Ethiopian soldier was killed, and two others were injured by an IED planted on a road in the same town. Ethiopian forces within the UN mission were also targeted in Dinsoor, Bay region, South West State, with an IED that killed three Ethiopian soldiers.

3. **Targeting Ugandan Forces:** In April 2020, Barawe airport in South West State was attacked by two car bombs targeting Ugandan forces stationed at the airport. In October, Ugandan forces were attacked by a roadside IED in Shalanbood, killing two Ugandan soldiers attempting to defuse it. In February 2021, Al-Shabaab combatants attacked AMISOM forces in Qansahdhere, Bay region, South West State, following the Ugandan forces' expansion of their activities. Early July 2021 saw a significant increase in confrontations in Lower Shabelle after Ugandan forces were attacked on the road between Bulomarer and Golweyn in the region, following a roadside IED explosion. In January 2022, Al-Shabaab announced an attack on a Ugandan forces base on the outskirts of Afgoye, 30 km southwest of Mogadishu, resulting in intense clashes between Al-Shabaab combatants and

Ugandan forces. The group claimed to have killed three Ugandan soldiers.

4. **Targeting Kenyan Forces:** In April 2020, Al-Shabaab combatants attacked a Kenyan forces base operating under the African Union in Kolbiyow, Lower Jubba, Jubaland. In August, they launched another attack on a military base in Jubaland used by Kenyan forces in Qoqani. In January 2021, four Kenyan soldiers were killed, and eight others injured when a roadside IED exploded in Dhobley, on the Somali-Kenyan border in Jubaland. In July, Al-Shabaab claimed to have killed several soldiers in an attack on a Kenyan military base in Hoosingow, southern Somalia, following an assault by hundreds of Al-Shabaab combatants, leading to intense clashes with Kenyan forces.
5. **Targeting International Forces:** On January 5, 2020, Al-Shabaab targeted Camp Simba on Manda Island in the Lamu Archipelago off the northern Kenyan coast, the most important U.S. military presence in Kenya and a launch center for U.S. counter-terrorism operations in southern Somalia. Attackers used car bombs to breach the military facility and its adjoining airport, allowing Al-Shabaab combatants to enter the camp. Al-Shabaab claimed to have temporarily seized parts of the base. The attack resulted in three deaths, including one U.S. soldier and two U.S. Department of Defense contractors, and wounded two other U.S. soldiers. The attack also caused significant material

losses, including the destruction of six civilian aircraft operated by contractors for reconnaissance and surveillance missions supporting U.S. forces, as well as transport and medical evacuation missions for U.S. and allied Kenyan forces. Additionally, the attack destroyed an unspecified number of armored vehicles and fuel tanks used by U.S. forces.

On September 7, 2020, a suicide attack by Al-Shabaab targeted a base used by U.S. and Somali forces in Janaa Abdalla near Kismayo, involving a car bomb followed by an intense armed assault, killing two Somali

soldiers and wounding a U.S. soldier. The attack came a day after Somali and U.S. forces regained control of Janaa Abdalla from Al-Shabaab, during which Somali forces were clearing buildings and removing landmines from main roads.

Al-Shabaab also targeted the Turkish-run TurkSom military camp used for training Somali security and military personnel. On June 23, 2019, the camp was attacked when a suicide bomber detonated himself among soldiers at the camp's entrance, resulting in two deaths and at least five injuries. In January 2022, Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility



for an attack that resulted in 20 soldiers being killed at the TurkSom camp run by Turkish forces training the Somali army.

Expansion into Neighboring Countries (Kenya and Ethiopia)

For various reasons, Al-Shabaab has shown a regional orientation extending beyond its activities in Somalia from an early stage. On one hand, the group benefits from the presence of Somali populations in neighboring countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti, which means a number of followers

and sympathizers are present in these countries. On the other hand, the participation of these three countries in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has provided an additional motivation for the group's activities within these countries, framing it as a struggle to liberate the homeland from foreign forces. Consequently, both Kenya and Ethiopia have experienced increasing Al-Shabaab activities, further complicating the regional landscape.

1. **Expansion into Kenya:** Since Kenya's participation in AMISOM in 2011, the country has become a target for Al-Shabaab operations, which have often extended deep into Kenyan territory through major attacks. Notable examples include the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi in September 2013, which claimed around seventy lives; the December 2015 attack on Garissa University, which resulted in approximately 150 deaths; and the January 2019 attack on the Dusit Hotel in Nairobi, which killed 21 people. These repeated attacks on Kenyan soil reflect Al-Shabaab's desire to alleviate the pressure exerted by AMISOM forces in Somalia by raising the security and political costs for each country continuing to contribute troops to the mission.

The effectiveness of Al-Shabaab's attacks in Kenya has been significantly improved by its reliance on its local branch, "Jaysh Ayman," established in 2013 and based in the Boni Forest in Lamu County, Kenya. This branch was founded by Dubow Abdiqadir Ali, known among his followers as "Ma'alim



Ayman.” The group has managed to maintain substantial influence within Kenya, especially after withstanding the Kenyan military operation, “Linda Boni,” aimed at eliminating its presence in the Boni area. Al-Shabaab takes advantage of the contradictory circumstances in northeastern Kenya, where most residents belong to Somali tribes but hold Kenyan citizenship, following Kenya’s successful end to Somali territorial claims under the Greater Somalia project pursued in the 1960s and 1970s.

Given this complex situation, Al-Shabaab does not need to transport combatants and weapons across the often-closed Kenyan-Somali border due to escalating security threats and political tensions between the two governments. Instead, local elements within Kenya carry out assigned operations.

In July 2020, Al-Shabaab militants destroyed a Kenyan telecommunications company office in Korakora, Garissa County. In September, an explosion occurred in Garissa resulting from an attempt by Al-Shabaab combatants to plant an IED on the road between Garissa and Fafi. The last two months of the year saw a series of attacks in Mandera, near the Somali border. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for an operation that assassinated Kenyan officer Abdi Noor Omar, a leader in the anti-terrorism special forces, followed by a December attack on a police station in Sheikh Barrow, Mandera. The group also destroyed a Safaricom telecommunications office in the same city, targeting its infrastructure as primary objectives.

This concentrated activity in northeastern Kenya led Ali Roba, the local administrator

of Mandera County, to declare in January 2021 that more than 50% of the roads connecting counties in the region were under Al-Shabaab’s control. This statement came shortly after the group attacked a passenger bus in Mandera, an operation repeated two months later. In May, an IED exploded in Ishakani, near Lamu, killing civilians as it targeted a road leading to a Somali refugee camp. In January 2022, Al-Shabaab combatants attacked Banisa in northern Mandera, killing two people and injuring one.

2. **Expansion into Ethiopia:** From Al-Shabaab’s first appearance in 2006 until September 2020, its activities were primarily concentrated in southern and central Somalia. However, the Tigray War, spanning over two years with alternating periods of calm and escalation, fundamentally altered the regional operational landscape. Instead of continuing its active role in combating Al-Shabaab within Somalia through bilateral military and security cooperation with successive Mogadishu governments or its significant participation in AMISOM, Ethiopia began early on to reduce and reconfigure its troop deployment in Somalia due to the urgent need for its forces domestically and the Military leadership’s necessity to recall the Tigray group to avoid crises among its troops in Somalia related to the Tigray conflict.

The concentration of Ethiopian federal and regional state forces on the northern front created a security vacuum in the east, which quickly manifested in clashes between Somali and Afar state forces during the first year

of the conflict. One of the most significant changes in the operational landscape came in late July and early August 2022, when Al-Shabaab exploited the security vacuum in eastern and southern Ethiopia. The group launched a series of attacks involving around 1,500 combatants, some penetrating hundreds of kilometers into Ethiopian territory, reaching the western borders of the Somali region in central Ethiopia.

Regardless of the media debate over the casualties inflicted by each side, Al-Shabaab managed to expand its operational geography eastward, similar to its southern expansion in the past decade. Just as the group penetrated northern Kenya by leveraging the Somali population's presence, gaining control over the main and secondary road networks, it has now breached Ethiopian borders, capitalizing on favorable internal conditions, suggesting that this operational pattern is likely to continue in the future.

Explanatory Factors

The trends in youth organization activity in Somalia in recent years cannot be explained based on internal transformations at the intellectual or operational level within the organization. The majority of explanatory factors are attributed to the actors involved in counter-terrorism operations, whether successive Somali governments, Somali security agencies, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), or international forces with influential roles on the ground in counter-terrorism efforts. This is in light of the significant changes in the performance of all these parties.

1. **Ambiguity of the Somali Governments' Political Stance on Al-Shabaab:**

The issue of dialogue and negotiation between successive Somali federal governments and Al-Shabaab remains one of the most contentious issues in Somalia at both official and popular levels. The recurring evidence of open communication channels between the two sides, facilitated particularly by senior clan leaders who mediate between them, has expanded the scope of this debate. Additionally, international "flexible" stances towards this approach, driven by a desire to keep these channels open as an alternative means to address complex crises, have contributed to this.

During the presidency of Mohamed Abdullahi (Farmajo), several fundamental challenges impeded effective counter-terrorism operations against Al-Shabaab. Amid significant internal and external pressures on the federal government and repeated failures of its armed forces, many voices called on the federal government to halt its military losses by opening a political negotiation path with Al-Shabaab for a political settlement. This approach received relative external support, highlighted by the United States and four other Western countries voting against Kenya's proposal to designate Al-Shabaab as a terrorist group under UN Security Council Resolution 1267 of 1999 during the August 28 session.

With the change of power in Somalia, the debate over strategies to deal with Al-Shabaab resurfaced, especially since the group has achieved a significant degree of sustainabil-

ity and rootedness in central and southern regions of the country. This was through strong integration into the social fabric and economic structure of local communities in many areas. Following President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's assumption of the presidency in mid-May, numerous contradictory messages reflecting the new Somali government's ambiguous stance towards dealing with Al-Shabaab emerged. While the ultimate goal of all successive Somali governments remains the restoration of security, the debate over the means continues.

Statements from Abdiweli Ali Gaas, the Prime Minister during Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's first term, urged the president to negotiate with armed groups if necessary to restore security. The appointment of Hamza Abdi Barre, a former leader of Al-Shabaab, as the Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs also raised questions about the new government's direction. This was further complicated by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's statement during his visit to Turkey, where he mentioned the necessity of future negotiation opportunities rather than relying solely on military strategy, as reported by Bloomberg. However, he clarified that the current government is not in a suitable position to negotiate with Al-Shabaab at present. These contradictory messages reveal that the lack of clarity in the Somali leadership's approach to handling Al-Shabaab is one of the main weaknesses, prompting the organization to intensify its activities as an additional pressure tactic.

2. **Recurring Crises within Somali Security Agencies:** In August 2019, Pres-

ident Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmajo) decided to change several military and security leaders, appointing Odowa Yusuf Rageh as Commander of the Armed Forces, Fahad Yasin as Head of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), and Abdi Hassan Mohamed as Chief of Police. This marked the fifth leadership change in the armed forces and security institutions since he took office in February 2017, reflecting severe instability in managing the counter-terrorism file. Notably, the former president's choice of Fahad Yasin to head NISA, despite his lack of experience in the field, raised concerns as Yasin had previously worked as a correspondent for Al Jazeera and then as head of the Al Jazeera Center for Studies in East Africa.

These policies led to a crisis in September 2021, affecting the Somali Intelligence Agency, when its director, Fahad Yasin, submitted his resignation to President Mohamed Abdullahi (Farmajo) amid growing pressures regarding the agency's performance under his leadership and his close ties with Turkey and Qatar. The agency's focus on supporting the former president as a primary task sparked several issues, such as the disappearance of former agency employee Ikran Tahlil and the controversy over the fate of Mukhtar Robo, a former Al-Shabaab leader detained by the agency. Additionally, the agency's involvement in suppressing opposition to the former president had negative consequences.

Fahad Yasin's resignation led to a confrontation between the former president and

the former prime minister over who had the authority to appoint a new director for the agency, especially after Mohamed Abdullahi's (Farmajo) constitutional term ended in February 2021. This created a severe political crisis that ended with the appointment of Yasin Abdullah Mahmoud as interim director of the agency. In the weeks leading up to the May 2022 presidential elections, a new dispute emerged between the intelligence agency and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) over the agency's refusal to comply with AMISOM's demands to vacate two security points within its headquarters in Mogadishu after an attack by Al-Shabaab. This raised suspicions that members of the Somali intelligence might have facilitated the breach of the security system.

These growing tensions resulted in a significant information gap regarding Al-Shabaab's activities for over a year, from the political crisis triggered by the expiration of President Mohamed Abdullahi's (Farmajo) term in early 2021 until the new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, assumed office in mid-2022. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud quickly took steps to rectify the situation in the intelligence agency, beginning with the appointment of Mahad Mohamed Salad as the new director of the agency ten days after taking office. He also reinstated the former agency head, Abdullah Abdullah Mohamed, who had been dismissed by the former president. However, these measures were mainly symbolic in restoring discipline and institutionalism within the agency, without significantly impacting its operational capabilities in monitoring and tracking Al-Shabaab's activities, which may require more time.

- 3. Transformations in the African Mission and Changes in Regional Support:** The mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) persisted from 2007 until 2022. During this period, AMISOM was the primary on-ground support in combating Al-Shabaab, amid the fluctuations in the performance of the Somali Armed Forces. In recent years, with a relative improvement in Somali national military capabilities, AMISOM began to be perceived as a diminishing factor of Somali sovereignty. This led to widespread popular and political calls to end AMISOM's mandate and transfer its responsibilities to the Somali forces.

This shift in Somali attitudes manifested in a significant dispute over the mission's future, which was resolved only in February 2022. The Somali government and the African Union Peace and Security Council announced an agreement to form a new African mission called the African Union Transitional Mission to Somalia (ATMIS), replacing AMISOM. According to its mandate approved by the Security Council, the new mission is to operate on two parallel tracks: combating terrorism and addressing Al-Shabaab, and gradually training Somali forces to take over their security responsibilities. This process is expected to begin by the end of this year and conclude in December 2024, when the new mission's mandate expires.

Since its establishment, ATMIS has received significant African and international support. Mogadishu hosted Bankole Adeoye, the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs,

Peace, and Security, to finalize all forms of coordination with the Somali government. UN Secretary-General António Guterres also endorsed the gradual reduction plan for ATMIS, urging the international community to provide financial and logistical support for the new mission. However, the focus on restructuring the African mission and tasking it with making tangible progress in the gradual withdrawal process has clearly affected its ability to counter Al-Shabaab in recent months, especially with the growing popular rejection and recurring violations committed by mission personnel against Somali civilians. These violations led to death and imprisonment sentences for several Ugandan soldiers at the end of 2021.

4. Frequent Changes in the U.S. Stance on Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Since former U.S. President Donald Trump took office, the U.S. engagement in counter-terrorism in Somalia has experienced frequent changes in a short period. Since early 2019, numerous contradictory indicators emerged. On one hand, there were announcements of a planned U.S. withdrawal from Somalia. On the other hand, there was an escalation in military confrontations on the ground. The U.S. Department of Defense announced through media outlets its intention to reduce its troop numbers in Somalia, aligning with President Trump's general direction to downsize American military presence worldwide. However, unlike other cases in the Middle East, the announcement of new U.S. directions in Somalia was accompanied by a no-

ticeable increase in U.S. airstrikes on Al-Shabaab strongholds.

Contrary to the general U.S. direction, the United States announced in late January 2019 the deployment of an additional 150 soldiers to Somalia. This addition came on top of the 500 soldiers that the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) announced were present in Somalia in 2018, up from the last announced number of 50 soldiers in 2016. This steady increase in U.S. troops on Somali soil was made possible by development efforts that began in 2017 to enhance the U.S. base in Baledogle, located in the Lower Shabelle region between the capital Mogadishu and the city of Baidoa. Initially a military airport established by the Soviet Union during its rapprochement with Somalia, the base has recently become the main launch site for U.S. airstrikes on Al-Shabaab strongholds. Since 2017, the base has undergone extensive development, witnessing numerous capacity expansions to accommodate about 600 additional military personnel and over 200 civilians providing logistical support to U.S. forces by mid-2018.

Continuing with the patterns of disruption and rapid changes in U.S. involvement in counter-terrorism in Somalia, former President Donald Trump issued a surprising decision in the last months of his term in December 2020 to withdraw all U.S. troops from Somalia by mid-January 2021. AFRICOM strictly implemented this decision, managing to announce the full completion of the withdrawal two days before the set deadline.

With the continuation of the withdrawal decision without review in the first six months of the year, the U.S. decision created an

exceptional opportunity for a surge in Al-Shabaab's activity. This prompted President Joe Biden's administration to decide to resume drone strikes on Al-Shabaab sites in Somalia in July 2021 after months of cessation. The strikes began with an attack on Al-Shabaab positions in the Galmudug state in central Somalia, supporting a ground operation being carried out by Somali forces. This American airstrike opened the door for a renewed escalation of U.S. involvement. In the following month, U.S. drones conducted another strike on the towns of Bacadweyn and Gedo in central Somalia, targeting a site of Al-Shabaab combatants as they clashed with Somali special forces.

Although these changes in U.S. counter-terrorism policies in Somalia reflected the internal political debate between the Republican and Democratic parties, each seeking more support from their American electoral bases, they had profound impacts on the trajectory of counter-terrorism operations in the Horn of Africa in general. With the continuing political polarization in the U.S., where foreign military engagement is a significant issue, counter-terrorism operations in Somalia are expected to face more future challenges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interactions witnessed in the Horn of Africa region generally, and Somalia specifically, between 2020 and 2022 have proven that terrorism remains the foremost security challenge in the region. This is particularly evident from Al-Shabaab's ability to carry out significant operations with important symbolic value, assassinate federal and state

government officials, and terrorize local communities through executions. Al-Shabaab's performance has also demonstrated its capability to shift to offensive positions, forcing Somali armed forces to withdraw and retreat in many confrontations, complicating regional and international efforts to combat terrorism by intensively attacking them. Additionally, they have expanded the geographical scope of operations to include Somalia's neighboring countries, particularly Kenya and Ethiopia.

The rise in activity of the Al-Shabaab organization in Somalia has been the result of a number of national and regional factors that continue to favor the growth of the organization's activities in the near future. Given the security instability in the Horn of Africa due to internal conflicts, international support remains the critical factor that could contain the new wave of increasing Al-Shabaab activity. However, the extent of international engagement in general—and American involvement in particular—remains difficult to predict amid the significant shifts in the structure of the international system since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. These shifts leave the door open for either expanded American engagement or near-total withdrawal, based on considerations of competition with Russia rather than the necessary support that Somalia and other countries in the region need to combat terrorism.



Impact of Environmental Changes on Horn of Africa Security and Stability

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Climate change, environmental degradation including deforestation, forest clearing, overgrazing, biodiversity loss, and industrial pollution, have become existential threats to humanity that transcend national borders, presenting clear implications for international peace and security. The Earth faces a Triple Planetary Crisis: climate

change, loss of nature and biodiversity, and pollution and waste. Degraded ecosystems and resource scarcity affect food security and livelihoods, fuel internal conflicts between herders and farmers, trigger tensions related to climate-induced migration, and lead to the spread of armed opposition groups in the Horn of Africa.

Global environmental shifts further exacerbate the crises and challenges faced by regional countries, primarily the negative repercussions of climate change, making adaptation increasingly difficult. This is due to the expanded use of fossil fuels in industries and transportation, and deforestation for agriculture, housing, and infrastructure development. As major countries continue policies that ignore the environmental impact of economic expansion and as developing nations strive to catch up with industrialization and economic growth, the human impact on the environment intensifies, accelerating the pace and severity of climate changes worldwide. In the Horn of Africa, climate changes have fueled many ongoing conflicts. Prolonged droughts have damaged Somalia's fragile economy since the state collapse in the early 1990s, creating an ideal environment for many individuals to rely on arms for livelihood, with others joining armed groups like Al-Shabaab. Climate changes have also triggered internal conflicts in both Ethiopia and Kenya, causing significant displacement and refugee movements due to the irregular rainfall patterns and droughts.

In this context, ecological overshoot occurs when humans continue to use natural resources in a way that exceeds the natural ecosystems' capacity for renewal. This has led to renewed calls for individuals and states to reduce their ecological footprints. The effects of this overshoot are evident in water resource scarcity, desertification, decreased agricultural land productivity, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The impacts of ecological overshoot are clear in climate change phenomena, resulting in eco-anxiety and

direct effects on mental health. Environmental crime includes illegal mining and trafficking of minerals such as oil, gold, diamonds, cobalt, zinc, coltan, and lithium, illegal logging and timber trade, poaching, wildlife crimes, and pollution crimes (illegal dumping and trafficking of chemicals and waste, and illegal production of ozone-depleting substances). These activities affect ecosystem services and access to clean water, air, and food security. Therefore, they not only endanger wildlife, biodiversity, and ecosystems but also impact human health and well-being, limiting development opportunities for current and future generations. In Somalia, the UN Security Council has banned coal exports due to the devastating environmental and humanitarian impacts of deforestation and coal mining, and their role in intensifying conflict as a major funding source for the terrorist group Al-Shabaab and other non-governmental armed groups.

Accelerating Trends of Environmental Changes

African countries are among the least contributors to greenhouse gas emissions but are among the most vulnerable to climate change risks and the associated insecurity. The countries in the Horn of Africa face harsh climatic conditions, rising temperatures, and sea levels, with repeated catastrophic droughts, floods, and hurricanes reaching a point of no return. The region is becoming increasingly arid as global warming accelerates at an unprecedented rate. Environmental scarcity interacts with various contextual factors to exacerbate violence and fuel conflicts, making the region one of the most environmentally and humanly devastated contexts in Africa.

Climate change introduces important dimensions to security threats and instability by fueling conflicts, increasing climate-induced migration rates following exacerbated environmental crises such as drought and water scarcity, and soil degradation. Additionally, it destabilizes livelihoods, reduces water supplies, and agricultural yields amidst the weak and fragile performance of governmental institutions and systems. These pressures translate into violence and conflicts, as climate change leads to slow-onset changes like gradual temperature increases, sea level rise, biodiversity loss, ocean acidification, and land and forest degradation. The intensity of extreme weather events is also increasing, including floods, droughts, wildfires, and severe heatwaves. Climatic shocks add to a mix of complex crises, instability, and intertwined threats between terrorism, climate change, droughts, and famines, depleting coping mechanisms for many agricultural and pastoral communities in the region. This will be explained as follows:

1. **Exacerbation of Climate Emergencies:** The results of the sixth assessment report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in August 2021 revealed that the world faces unprecedented risks from climate change due to escalating climate emergencies. These impacts extend beyond the environmental dimension to social, political, and security dimensions. Understanding the security risks related to climate change has become a strategic priority for managing political affairs and peacebuilding processes. Consecutive years of below-average rainfall in the

Horn of Africa have caused one of the worst climate emergencies in the past forty years, forcing local communities to leave their homes in search of food and water. This endangers health and education sectors, increases acute malnutrition rates, and heightens the risk of waterborne diseases, affecting children's school attendance in affected areas. Overall, 15 million children are out of school, and another 3.3 million children are at risk of dropping out due to drought. UNICEF has appealed for \$986 million in urgent support to save lives and bolster climate resilience for about 4.2 million people, half of whom are children, in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea, and Djibouti.

A joint report in 2017 on food security risks linked to the compounded impacts of drought in East Africa was issued by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. The report indicated that the region faces widespread famine as exceptional prolonged droughts sharply increase food insecurity levels. Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia suffer from severe water shortages, rising food prices, and reduced food availability due to poor crop yields and livestock deaths. During 2020 and 2021, the La Niña phenomenon contributed to an exceptional drought lasting three seasons, pushing the region into an extended drought season. The region faced four consecutive drought seasons, unprecedented since satel-

lite record-keeping began in 1981. Since late 2016, several exceptionally dry seasons have been interspersed with wet seasons, which also caused devastating effects from floods, displacement, and desert locust infestations, leading to crop and livestock losses. These prolonged climatic shocks have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic disruptions, the Ukrainian war's impact, and the compounded effects of recent droughts.

2. Rising and Fluctuating Temperatures: The Horn of Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to the negative impacts of climate change. The temperatures in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya are rising faster than the global average, with severe implications for disturbances and conflicts within and across their borders. There is a 10-20% increase in the risk of armed conflict for every 0.5°C rise in temperature, and extensive research links higher temperatures to increased individual aggression, including violent crimes and riots. Consequently, global

warming raises violence rates, causing severe heat waves, increased evaporation, drying wells, and crop failures across the region, particularly in central and southern Somalia, northern Kenya, and eastern Ethiopia. Moreover, current projections indicate that Somalia will experience a temperature rise above the global average, increasing between 3.2% and 4.3% by 2100.

In this context, major cities in the Horn of Africa have seen temperature increases nearly doubling by 1.1°C due to the warming experienced since pre-industrial times. Since 1860, the temperature in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, has risen by 2.2°C, in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, by 9.1°C, and in Nairobi, Kenya's capital, by 9.1°C, according to the Eastern Africa Climate Risk Monitor and the Eastern Africa Temperature Record.

3. Recurring Extended Droughts: Drought is an integral part of daily life for local communities in the Horn of Africa. The United Nations has expressed



concerns that the threat of drought in this region could turn into a humanitarian catastrophe, damaging decades of developmental progress and making communities less able to adapt to climate change and its negative impacts on agricultural practices and land use. Drought leaves less time for recovery for herders and farmers in this region due to failed crop productivity, loss of grazing areas, and limited drinking water supplies, along with rising food prices. According to Oxfam, Somalia ranks 172 out of 182 countries in the ability to cope with climate change. The worst drought in nearly 50 years has pushed more than 7 million people to the brink of hunger, and about 3 million livestock have perished. Since January 2022, nearly a million people have been displaced, and the effects of climate change have become more severe. By May 2022, approximately 6 million people suffered from drought emergencies caused by four consecutive seasons in Somalia.

Based on the aforementioned, the 2022 Somalia Drought Response Plan aims to expand the delivery of humanitarian aid to escalating crisis areas, including providing water, food, cash assistance, and health services. It prioritizes early action and mitigation of drought impacts, appointing a special envoy for drought as part of climate change response priorities. The envoy's tasks include coordinating with local and international partners to find sustainable solutions and overcome the most urgent challenges of drought. Initiatives have been made to provide relief aid, support

livelihoods and alternative livelihoods, build local resilience projects, enhance disaster management capabilities, and support integrated water resource management to ensure access. The drought has caused water access disruptions, increased malnutrition and food insecurity, disease outbreaks, and tensions among local clans.

Ethiopia is currently experiencing one of the worst droughts it has seen in decades after four consecutive seasons of inadequate rainfall. The country relies heavily on agriculture, with declining economic growth rates, increasing population growth, lack of institutional capabilities, and rising conflict rates. The pastoral areas in eastern Ethiopia are characterized by recurrent droughts and high livestock mortality rates. During 2015 and 2016, eastern and southern Ethiopia faced the worst drought, with 2016 being classified as a climate emergency year. Northeast and southern Kenya also face harsh weather conditions from droughts, with most of their land being arid and semi-arid. The frequency of droughts in Kenya has increased from once every five years to once every three years.

4. **Fluctuating Rainfall and Flood Waves:** Rainfall patterns have become increasingly intermittent, affecting the reshaping of the productive landscape and intensifying food, water, and energy scarcity, as well as irregular internal population movements, disrupting traditional grazing routes and migration patterns. Over the past five decades, several regions in eastern and southern Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya have experienced widespread flooding. The

Juba and Shabelle rivers have overflowed, affecting towns and villages in the area. Floods are the most common climatic disaster in Kenya, with an annual prevalence rate of 27%, affecting the country's low-lying areas. These floods occur after drought periods, and in the past two decades, significant floods have occurred, with the 1997-1998 and 2003 floods being declared national disasters in Kenya, along with their various impacts on humans and livestock mortality.

Flood risks are more prevalent in major river basins, damaging crops and killing large numbers of livestock, thereby destroying livelihoods and worsening mass displacement issues. Tropical cyclones in the Indian Ocean, such as Sagar, Luban, and Pawan, in 2018 and 2019, caused devastating floods, landslides, and significant damage, leading to massive internal displacement in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. These events also triggered large swarms of desert locusts that destroyed crops in rural areas, forcing the Somali government to declare a state of emergency. In November 2020, Cyclone Gati brought two years' worth of rain in just two days, becoming the strongest cyclone to hit Somalia.

5. **Expanding Areas Prone to Desertification:** Hectares of tropical forests are being depleted and burned each year for large-scale agriculture or used as fuel for heating and cooking due to the increased demand for wood and energy needs in the region. Kenya faces a challenge with forest destruction, as

seen in the Mau Forest Complex, which is the main water source for about 12 rivers, feeding Lakes Victoria and Turkana. Illegal logging and converting forests into agricultural land and human settlements reduce river water flow and weaken ecosystems' ability to resist climate change. These forests act as a natural cooling system around the Earth's equator, maintaining the planet's climate by absorbing carbon emissions to reduce and slow the effects of global warming. Forests also provide habitats for biodiversity. Forests in Kenya include mountainous areas known as water towers due to their many springs and main rivers that eventually flow into lakes. They can store rainwater during the rainy season and release it slowly during droughts, distributing rainfall and its quantity. The continuous degradation of these forests exacerbates water crises and indirectly impacts the forest ecosystem's ability to withstand climate change.

6. **Food Insecurity and Worsening Famines:** There are three main intertwined drivers of acute food insecurity: conflicts, extreme climatic conditions, and economic crises. Food insecurity leads to social tensions and exacerbates violence, increasing the risk of new waves of displacement. The resources needed to address humanitarian crises resulting from displacement often consist of funds redirected from other uses such as development policies, environmental management, and climate change adaptation. Drought,

changes in rainfall patterns, floods, and landslides cause crop failures and increase the prices of goods and food items, worsening food insecurity crises and destroying local communities' livelihoods. The Horn of Africa communities rely heavily on agriculture and face recurrent food crises, with highly variable rainfall in terms of intensity and impact on agricultural production. In 2016 and 2017, consecutive seasons of inadequate rainfall left nearly 6.2 million people in Somalia facing acute food insecurity. Since May 2022, more than 134,000 people in Somalia have suffered from acute food insecurity, particularly in rural areas, with up to 8.1 million people in Ethiopia, and at least 286,000 people in the Oromia and Somali regions displaced in search of water and grazing resources, and about 4.2 million people, nearly a quarter of the population, in the arid and semi-arid lands of northern and eastern Kenya.

Since the political change in Ethiopia in 1991, there have been at least seven periods of food insecurity coinciding with drought waves, some of which were famines as defined by the United Nations based on specific measures of hunger, malnutrition, and mortality, while others were food crises with sharply rising hunger and malnutrition levels. The major events include the 1991-1992 famine, food crises in 1999-2000, 2006, 2008, another famine in 2011-2012, and food crises in 2014 and 2016-2017. Approximately 7.7 million people in Somalia need emergency food aid, a number similar to those affected by the 1984 Ethiopian famine.

7. **Water Supply Shortages and Livelihood Destabilization:** Environmental issues concern local communities and revolve around urgent matters threatening livelihoods and survival, such as pasture degradation, deforestation, freshwater depletion, and air and water pollution. These issues affect human well-being and present challenges to pastoral communities for governments and humanitarian agencies, given the weaker relationships and less developed humanitarian expertise with pastoral communities compared to agricultural ones. Climate change in its multiple dimensions impacts the essential life resources of the region's peoples and communities. Access to clean water sources is a major issue in many of these countries, with changes in the physical and chemical aspects of lakes and rivers, such as rising water levels due to higher temperatures, shorter ice cover periods, reduced river fish stocks, and fluctuating lake levels. Climate change imposes additional pressures on the availability, demand, and accessibility of water resources, with a potential increase in the number of people exposed to water stress. There are varying impacts on water resources and quantities from the drying up of rivers, springs, lakes, and wetlands in the region.

On the other hand, extreme heat is linked to livestock losses and crop destruction. Drought forces herders to sell large numbers of livestock, as herding is one of the main economies and a livelihood source for most

local communities in the drylands of northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia, and southern and central Somalia. Changing demographic trends, including rapid population growth and increased migration movements, deplete food stocks in local markets and reduce water quantities to support crop production due to the drying up and reduced water levels of the Juba and Shabelle rivers in the areas they flow through in southern Somalia's Lower and Middle Shabelle and Hiran regions. These combined challenges act as catalysts for conflicts between herders and farmers.

Compounded Implications of Environmental Transformations

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union issued a document emphasizing the threats of climate change on peace and security in the African continent. This was highlighted through its statement on enhancing the relationship between climate change, security, and development in Africa, and the importance of integrating climate

considerations into peacekeeping missions and post-conflict reconstruction and development. Since the publication of the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007, the securitization of global warming has reached a new level; climate change has shifted from a developmental challenge to a security threat, and its implications have become drivers of violence and conflict triggers. Extreme climatic events have exacerbated social and economic disparities, widened the severity of famines and food insecurity, degraded livelihoods, altered pastoral movement patterns, and allowed elites to exploit local grievances. The most significant of these implications and crises can be outlined as follows:

1. **The Increase in Internal Displacement and Climate Migration:** The drylands in the Horn of Africa are the traditional home for pastoral communities. The transformation in livelihoods and the vulnerability of these pastoral communities in facing climate change has become a subject of global con-



cern. Rainfall determines pastoral mobility and the use of reserve pastures among pastoral communities, as well as the changing arrangements for land tenure, leading to intensified overgrazing practices and competition for scarce resources. Repeated drought waves have forced pastoral communities to change routes and water sources to new areas, where they fight for survival policies. Climate change exacerbates migration waves and internal displacement, altering the lifestyle of residents and pushing them to leave their original places of residence for other areas, in addition to changing their economic activities. Sudden changes, such as flood waves, typically cause temporary internal displacement, while slow-emerging changes, such as drought waves, often involve circular migration, characterized by repeated movement between different areas. Migration is closely linked to adaptation policies as a strategy to cope with deteriorating livelihood conditions. Internal migration imposes additional burdens on economic resources and increases the risk of internal conflicts over scarce resources.

Climate migration affects security and geopolitical interests by escalating the risk of political instability within countries. As populations move from rural to urban areas, it damages governance efforts, increases security concerns, and heightens the influence of terrorist groups. The political ramifications of climate migration and refugee movements create geopolitical challenges for the migrants' countries of origin. Tribal conflict in Somalia represents

35-40% of all violent acts, with most disputes revolving around access to water sources and land. Climate change and environmental degradation reduce scarce water resources, forcing communities to migrate and confront each other to control diminishing resources. Families may be compelled to engage in economic activities and strategies to meet their immediate food needs, including stripping productive assets such as livestock, exchanging their lands for food, selling wood through deforestation, and pulling children out of school to seek jobs in potentially less productive sectors. Families may abandon their countries and migrate collectively to urban centers and refugee camps, while pastoral groups search for alternative grazing sources, leading to clashes with other groups.

At least one million people were displaced in Somalia in 2016, facing risks of discrimination and gender-based violence. About 300,000 Somali refugees live in the Dadaab refugee complex in Kenya, the largest refugee camp in the world. Despite this, climate change has received relatively little attention compared to areas such as counter-terrorism and security sector reform in Somalia. However, global and regional powers and international organizations have focused on combating terrorism and piracy. Forced displacement following drought and flood waves affects vulnerable communities in Ethiopia, with the World Bank estimating an increase in migrants from rural to urban areas due to climate change impacts by 2050. Addis Ababa is expected to become a hotspot for urban climate migration.

Climate-induced displacement pushes individuals to informal settlements and slums under

poor conditions with limited social services. Recurrent climate shocks limit the ability of pastoral groups to recover. Competing pastoral movement patterns represent another aspect of conflict in the region's countries. During resource scarcity periods, herders are likely to move in large numbers, intensifying competition for pasture and water resources for their livestock. Therefore, joint pastoral committees, comprised of clan elders and various pastoral groups, must enforce internal regulations in shared grazing areas vulnerable to climate change, engage in joint land use and resource allocation planning activities, integrate herders into local markets, increase herders' income during drought periods, and provide supported feed to mitigate livestock losses.

2. **Fueling Internal and Border Conflicts:** Homer-Dixon formulated the theory of Eco-Violence, arguing that many developing countries rely on four essential environmental resources: crop production, freshwater, forests, and fisheries. The scarcity and reduction of these resources due to overuse under certain conditions, particularly climate change, will lead to conflicts. Dixon used three hypotheses to link these changes to violent conflict. The first hypothesis is that reducing supplies of environmentally controllable resources such as clean water and land will provoke relative scarcity conflicts between countries or resource wars. The second hypothesis assumes that population movements resulting from environmental degradation will lead to social identity conflicts, especially ethnic clashes. The third hypothesis posits

that environmental scarcity will increase economic deprivation, civil wars, the emergence of insurgent movements, and armed groups.

There are multiple manifestations of violence and intractable conflicts associated with environmental changes. Extreme climatic events lead to food insecurity and increase conflict risks on one hand, while conflict exacerbates food insecurity on the other. Feedback loops enhance structural vulnerabilities and create new conflicts. The relationship between climate change and conflict is characterized by being a complex, indirect, and context-specific relational factor that acts as a threat multiplier, increasing food insecurity, water scarcity, and competition for resources. Resource scarcity results from environmental risks that lead to reduced supply, increased demand, and unequal distribution of resources such as agricultural land, water, pastures, and fisheries.

Based on the aforementioned, there is a growing link between climate change and conflicts through competition for water and land resources within or between groups. These conflicts increase due to the state's failure to manage resource distribution. There are a set of intermediate factors, known as contextual factors or intervening variables, that play a role in fueling conflicts over shared resources such as water and land. Severe drought is accompanied by increased violence and insecurity, as local communities struggle to access scarce grazing resources. Pastoral groups aim to maximize their share of limited grazing resources during drought periods. The intertwining dynamics of these conflicts with arms races, amid the proliferation and flow of

weapons in local communities, are also notable. Additionally, there is an association with phenomena such as terrorism and organized crime, expanding violence and fighting from local to national and transnational levels. Climate change results in unfavorable conditions of drought and desertification, intensifying competition for water and land resources and giving conflicts political dimensions in the Horn of Africa. Environmental causes take precedence over political, economic, and social causes as the main explanation for the emergence and continuation of conflicts. Climate change and other environmental developments represent

one of the new global security challenges. The phenomenon of climate-induced conflicts is linked to globalization, making it impossible to separate local, national, regional, and global levels in understanding conflict causes or designing appropriate responses.

In this context, Somalia illustrates the relationship between climate change and internal conflict. The occurrence and duration of drought are causally linked to temporal variations in the outbreak and escalation of violent conflict through livestock price shocks. The convergence of climate change, conflicts, and security fragility acts as a catalyst for



local communities to join terrorist groups amid these intersecting challenges, prolonged conflicts, and the increasing impact of climate change. The extent to which climate change poses a security threat is based on assumptions about the reciprocal relationship between environmental changes and violence levels, influencing the outbreak of conflicts that have evolved over the past decades. The link between cattle theft and the proliferation of illicit small and light weapons has created a vicious cycle of cattle theft. Pastoral militias have engaged in warfare, allied with armed groups amid the neglect and marginalization

of herders. These pastoral groups have armed themselves for self-defense and adopted preemptive violence policies. Thus, climate change fuels armed conflict in southern and central Somalia through three ways: worsening tensions between local clans, enhancing the influence of terrorist groups including Al-Shabaab, and increasing migration and internal displacement rates.

Despite the pastoral sector's contribution to Ethiopia's national economy, successive governments have neglected it, with policymakers favoring investment in the agricultural sector at the expense of pastoralism. Changes in the use of natural and water resources in the Awash River Basin in eastern Ethiopia have negatively impacted the pastoral production system and fueled conflicts over water and grazing resource uses among pastoral groups, upon which approximately 17% of the country's population relies. Repeated droughts and restrictions on grazing areas have led pastoral groups to engage in farming as an alternative income source, despite lacking basic farming skills. Access to land and water has been linked to conflicts between pastoralist and farming communities in Ethiopia. Insufficient rainfall and prolonged drought are likely to increase pasture shortages, potentially escalating cross-border tensions as pastoral groups move to the Karamoja region across the Ethiopia-Kenya border.

Turkana County in northwestern Kenya is affected by rising temperatures, unpredictable rainy seasons, and pressure on water and pasture resources, resulting in declining livestock numbers and recurrent violent conflicts between the Turkana and Pokot



groups. Conflicts have intensified during periods of water scarcity and drought in 2004 and 2009 in Samburu County in northern Kenya. Recurrent droughts have exacerbated resource conflicts between Pokomo farmers and Orma herders in the Tana River Delta in Kenya. The conflict over land use between Orma and Pokomo is complicated by complex property rights and overlapping systems of private, public, and communal lands, with different rights to access, use, lease, and own these lands. This complexity makes managing conflicts between herders and farmers challenging. While the Pokomo claim land along the riverbanks for farming, the Orma seek a passage to the river. In the absence of clear arrangements, violence can break out repeatedly.

Additionally, cross-border conflicts between southern Ethiopia and northwestern Kenya involve Ethiopian herders moving south in search of water and grazing resources, escalating tensions with Kenyan herders and fishermen. The Lower Omo-Turkana region across the Ethiopia-Kenya border is home to several pastoral groups, including the Mursi, Nyangatom, Dassanach, Merile, and Turkana, who share a history of intermittent but recurrent fighting over essential grazing resources. With continuous rising temperatures and drought waves in the region, intense competition for water and grazing resources occurred between 1989 and 2011, resulting in over 600 deaths from conflicts among the Nyangatom, Dassanach, and Turkana groups. Dam projects on the Omo River, combined with large-scale water withdrawals for agriculture, have reduced downstream water flow and grazing lands for local communities, reducing

the size of Lake Turkana. The governments of Kenya and Ethiopia have faced difficulties in addressing internal conflicts or improving the living conditions of herders in the Lower Omo-Turkana region.

3. **The Growing Activity of Armed Groups:**

Armed groups, particularly the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, have taken advantage of the implications of climate change to enhance their recruitment operations. They have relied on a variety of tactics to recruit combatants and bolster their influence, such as building channels to make local farmers less dependent on rainfall. The absence of government response created a security vacuum in most regions of Somalia, where this group intervened to provide support and alternative governance to local communities, as well as economic support to communities negatively affected by climate change-related livelihood shocks. This is evident through:

- **Exploiting Drought Crises:** Al-Shabaab contributes to environmental problems through reliance on the illegal charcoal trade as a funding source. The destruction of acacia forests accelerates deforestation and desertification. The group is not only affected by the negative impacts of climate change but also contributes to causing it. A primary example is their efforts to clear forests, supporting the charcoal trade until late 2019. For this reason, the United Nations Security Council imposed a ban on the charcoal trade in Somalia. However, before this legislation was implemented, one-third of the forests in southern Somalia were destroyed

to ship charcoal to the Arabian Gulf region. These shipments passed through the port of Kismayo, and the revenues from Kismayo and two other ports managed by Al-Shabaab were estimated to earn between \$35-50 million annually. One of the main concerns is that Al-Shabaab has realized that the level of environmental insecurity works in its favor to enhance its influence pathways.

The group utilizes the competition among pastoral communities for scarce water supplies by controlling water resources and demanding access taxes. They use the food insecurity dilemma as a tool to generate anti-government sentiments and create a political vacuum to achieve their goals. Due to rising food prices and the inability to purchase food, famine has become an opportunity to recruit more local population.

- **Weaponizing Water Resources:** Marcus King described the relationship between climate change-induced water stress and the onset of violence from the perspective of the water conflict cycle in Somalia. Water stress factors, such as rising temperatures, water scarcity, extreme weather, and groundwater depletion, have led to negative consequences. Climate shocks weaken the state's capacity to respond. As a result of these pressures, local communities suffer from livelihood degradation, accompanied by decreased agricultural productivity and mass internal and external environmental migration. Consequently, Al-Shabaab has benefited from water stress conditions to weaponize water in various ways, depending on its capabilities and the dynamics of ongoing internal conflicts in Somalia. This

includes using water as a strategic and tactical weapon, a means to terrorize and coerce local populations, destroying water management infrastructure, and poisoning wells to extort local farmers. The group has weaponized its control over scarce water resources in the Juba-Shabelle river basin, one of the few areas with fertile soil, which Somalia heavily relies on despite 90% of its flow coming from Ethiopia. The group has proven its ability to take advantage of natural resource pressures and clan tensions to grow its influence pathways, indicating future climate wars.

- **Obstructing Relief Aid Access:** Al-Shabaab has worked to obstruct and restrict the access of most humanitarian aid by organizations and relief agencies during the peak of the drought in 2011 and 2012. The group demonstrated its ability to play on local clan tensions by garnering support from internally displaced persons who are separated from traditional kinship networks and family support. The group's combatants deliberately took advantage of the Somali government's incapacity to effectively respond to climate disasters, filling critical governance gaps by providing services and emergency relief supplies. They established drought committees after consecutive rainfall shortages in 2017 to coordinate relief operations in many administrative regions across the country. The response to environmental crises has helped increase the popularity of Al-Shabaab.
4. **The securitization of environmental initiatives and the disruption of peacekeeping missions:** The environ-

mental dimension has become a key element in international relations and security studies, as a comprehensive assessment of security in developing countries—specifically African countries—is inadequate without evaluating and considering the social and economic impacts caused by resource scarcity, climate change, and natural disasters. Despite the various methodological issues regarding the impact of climate change on internal conflicts and social unrest, where renewable resource scarcity generates social effects, such as reduced agricultural productivity, migration, and the weakening of state institutions, which in turn fuel multiple types of conflicts; the abundance of non-renewable resources can have a direct impact on the economy and political systems within countries. The countries of the Horn of Africa provide a sufficient explanation of the relationship between resource scarcity and insecurity, as these countries often rely on sectors highly affected by climate change, such as agriculture and grazing. As a result, the impacts of climate change led to insecurity and increased levels of violence, such as political instability, weakening governance structures, and declining economic performance.

On the other hand, addressing climate change is viewed through a narrow lens of national security threats; where investment in climate solutions through financing adaptation policies, whether bilateral or multilateral, can increasingly be linked to efforts to combat terrorism, rather than as a necessity in itself. This trend

may harm many efforts of peacebuilding, gender equality, and human rights initiatives, or the use of climate justice initiatives and environmental peacebuilding processes within a broader security effort to counter the threat of terrorist groups. Therefore, it is essential to enhance joint strategies to address security and climate issues.

Since the end of the Cold War, the concept and scope of national security have been expanded to include non-traditional security issues such as forced population migration, terrorism, epidemics, food insecurity, and the effects of climate change, aiming to make these non-military threats an integral part of national security discourse and policy, which considers environmental threats as a response to the traditional state-centric security approach.

In connection with the aforementioned, climate change and its security implications pose significant pressures on peacebuilding in Somalia through four interconnected pathways: livelihood deterioration, climate migration, activities of armed groups, and local contexts. The Al-Shabaab movement abuses climatic vulnerabilities to gain more influence. In 2018, the United Nations Security Council recognized the negative impacts of climate change, environmental changes, and natural disasters among other factors affecting Somalia's stability. The council acknowledged the close link between security and climate in 2021, amidst the challenges of climate change and transboundary environmental pressures.

Climate change also poses serious challenges to current and future peacebuilding missions such as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). The escalation of conflict

in Somalia over three decades has been driven by a series of severe droughts, impacting state-building processes in Somalia and hindering the implementation of mission tasks. Therefore, there is a necessity to integrate climate change considerations into analysis mechanisms, planning, prevention strategies, mediation, and peacebuilding. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia was the first UN field mission to deploy dedicated climate security capabilities to assess climate-related security risks and develop appropriate strategies to manage climate risks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, climate change and environmental degradation will continue to prolong and escalate conflicts, weaken peacebuilding efforts, increase pressure on weak governance systems and structures, and essential institutions needed to build resilience to climate change. It will also erode the social cohesion of local communities and impede the security forces' ability to maintain security in affected areas. Fragile states, less prepared to deal with the repercussions of extreme weather and climate disasters, become trapped in cycles of violence fueled by climate change. Investment in local and national capacities is essential for sustaining peace, as community resilience is vital for withstanding shocks and pressures associat-

ed with climate change. Climate adaptation and peacebuilding programs must consider the environmental dimension to reduce the likelihood of conflicts.

Thus, an integrated approach to achieving and enhancing environmental peacebuilding, which connects humanitarian, developmental, and environmental priorities, is necessary to integrate climate security considerations into development plans, strengthen humanitarian development measures, adopt environmentally sustainable practices, and identify gaps for future interventions. This is especially crucial given the limited adaptive capacity of the region's countries to manage the common challenges of security and climate change risks. Additionally,

incorporating customary institutions and local governance into peacebuilding mechanisms is essential to support security and state interests at the local level, integrating climate considerations into various laws and local governance policies, and engaging the public in environmental policymaking. Provincial governments are responsible for developing their mechanisms to integrate climate change into their sectoral policies, prioritizing climate change in development planning, enhancing community resilience, and adapting



to climate change. This includes supporting sustainable community development projects for vulnerable groups, providing cash transfers within a hunger safety net program, ensuring access to sufficient food for those in need, and providing an emergency credit line that allows governments to quickly access funds in case of climate disasters. Facilitating community dialogue on natural resource management and leveraging local expertise are also necessary.

Social protection programs play a positive role in enhancing livelihoods and managing risks in light of the negative impacts of climate change, particularly on the agricultural sector, which is a primary source of livelihood for local communities. Proactive measures for food security, such as the productive safety net program to bridge the hunger gap and emergency food assistance, as well as precautionary saving strategies to address unexpected changes, are necessary. Generally, most countries in the region have low capacity to adapt to climate change, and environmental initiatives must be considered in conflict resolution and management, enhancing local initiatives to build resilience and improve living conditions in conflict-affected countries. This can be achieved through investing in community resilience programs, drought preparedness, and the role of promising innovations in the agricultural sector in arid and semi-arid areas, to reduce reliance on rain-fed sources and enhance resilience, and facilitating emergency relief aid supplies.

An integrated approach to conflict resolution mechanisms, peace promotion, and environmental justice is essential, combining

developmental and humanitarian interventions with security concerns. This involves fair treatment of all individuals concerning environmental laws, regulations, policies, and decisions, ensuring that climate adaptation funding is not confused with development aid, promoting low-carbon development paths, and transitioning to clean energy uses. Instead of focusing on the threats posed by environmental degradation, these can be leveraged to create environmental peace through collaborative efforts in managing natural resources as a means to overcome insecurity and political tensions, build trust among conflicting parties, and reconsider environmental issues within the framework of non-traditional security threats and the securitization of environmental issues.

With the ability to predict future climate changes using advanced technology, the shifts in the conflict landscape in the region can be anticipated, enabling the design of proactive responses that minimize the damage of these shifts. To reduce the negative impacts of conflicts caused by climate change, all parties involved in conflict resolution must intervene through three intersecting pathways: containing the environmental damage causing conflict, adapting to new environmental changes, and restoring natural environmental conditions. However, one of the main challenges for the region's economies to transition towards low-carbon development and climate change adaptation is accessing sustainable funding to support adaptation policies.



The Evolving Regional Role of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa

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Regional organizations and communities play complementary political, economic, security, and cultural roles that extend beyond the scope of the nation-state, defining the role of these communities and granting them regional effectiveness

and legitimacy. These regional communities, with their varied roles and effectiveness, have gained increasing importance in the African context; particularly since most African regional communities were established during the period of national liberation and

African attempts to support collective action, culminating in the establishment of the Organization of African Unity in the 1960s. This context has influenced the priorities and goals of these communities.

This context has been linked to the challenges faced by nation-states during the stages of independence, which required the creation of political and economic integration to achieve development, as well as the challenges imposed by the post-Cold War era and Africa's declining position on the international stage, emphasizing the need for political and economic cooperation among the continent's countries. It is within this context that IGAD was established, whose roles have evolved in different stages according to its objectives. On this basis, we can highlight the stages of IGAD's establishment and its various regional roles.

Legal and institutional frameworks of IGAD

IGAD was established as a political and security community aimed at facilitating consultation among its member states, unlike comparable regional communities that were established as economic and financial unions, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, known as COMESA, which was founded concurrently with IGAD in 1982. The establishment and development of IGAD have gone through different stages related to the regional and international context in which the process of African regional integration developed; the initial establishment of the organization in the early 1980s focused on combating drought and desertification crises

in the region, until the organization revised its goals in the mid-1990s to include objectives of economic integration and development.

The structure and roles of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are not separate from the reality of African regional organizations and communities, most of which were established in stages following the creation of the Organization of African Unity, in the context of the Cold War and periods of national liberation from colonialism in the 1960s and 1970s, where ideology dominated the structure and roles of these communities. The regional integration institutions that emerged during that period were characterized by political divisions and economic disparities among their member states, divided between the Eastern and Western blocs, until the end of the Cold War, which necessitated a review of regional integration experiences, with the increasing relative importance of economic integration for African countries to avoid international marginalization and the rising significance of market policies over bloc policies.

Initially, the authority was known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), officially established in 1986 according to the African Union, until it was transformed in 1996 into the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa (IGAD). The main impetus for the establishment of IGAD was the fight against drought and desertification in the Horn of Africa, as recommended by the United Nations General Assembly in 1980, with the countries in this region being the most vulnerable to drought and famine crises.

The region experienced repeated severe droughts and natural disasters between 1974 and 1984, with growing famines, environmental degradation, and economic difficulties in East Africa, which were too challenging for individual countries to address alone. This necessitated a regional approach to complement and synergize national efforts, aligning with the priorities and principles of regional integration.

The organization initially formed with the membership of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Somalia, and Eritrea joined after its independence in 1993, followed by South Sudan after its secession in 2011. The heads of states and governments first met at the organization's headquarters in Djibouti in 1986 to sign the establishing agreement. Later, the heads of states and governments issued a declaration to revitalize IGAD and expand cooperation among member states beyond merely combating drought, leading to the amendment of the organization's charter in Djibouti in 1996.

The founding member states ratified the decision in 1996 to enhance regional cooperation according to three priorities: food security and environmental protection, economic cooperation and regional and social integration, and the promotion of peace and security. The organization has worked to align with international and continental development goals and strategies, especially with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which requires parallel regional efforts to serve the ultimate continental objective. IGAD has drafted a long-term strategy up to 2050, accompanied by strategic planning, con-

ceptual formulation, and the development of implementation plans and mini-strategies, setting priorities since 2020.

IGAD's strategy aims to transform the region's economies into middle-income economies, stabilize macroeconomic indicators, ensure fair resource distribution, create wealth for citizens, improve infrastructure, energy projects, technology, and innovation, and transition to industrialization while mitigating the effects of climate change and ensuring efficient use of the environment and natural resources. Additionally, it aims to achieve security and stability in the region. In summary, the strategic intervention areas underpinning IGAD's Vision 2050, are divided into phases, including: applying science and technology for a natural resource-based economy, followed by industrialization and supporting a knowledge-based economy. The main intervention areas are food security, economic and social development, sustainable management of transboundary resources to support development and climate change management, and finally, peace and security.

IGAD's Engagement with Regional Issues

Although IGAD was initially established to address drought issues, its member states sought to elevate the organization's roles and enhance political and economic cooperation among the member countries after its transformation into IGAD. According to the organization's pre-defined roles, we can monitor the evolution of its roles as follows:

1. **Drought and Food Security Issues:** Despite the gradual shifts in IGAD's

goals and its adoption of political objectives in the mid-1990s, the organization continued to face drought waves and crises, making drought combat a persistent goal on its agenda. One of IGAD's main contributions in this field is the establishment and leadership of the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI), created on September 9, 2011, in Nairobi. This platform provides a mechanism to discuss regional priorities and solutions by bringing together member states, development partners, and UN agencies.

IGAD also developed a drought monitoring system named "IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC)," which enhances early warning systems to facilitate response. Additionally, the IGAD Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development (ICPALD) manages desertification and drought interventions within the organization's framework. Programs such as the IGAD Inland Water Resources Management Program (INWRMP) and the IGAD Biodiversity Management Program (IGAD-BMP) were also established. However, there remains a gap between early warning and early action.

Despite more than a decade since IGAD's establishment, the Greater Horn of Africa remains one of the most drought-prone regions, experiencing the worst drought in 40 years, with 18 million people facing severe food insecurity and significant livestock losses in Kenya and Ethiopia. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced in search of water and food. The region suffers from prolonged droughts, worsening the spread

of arid and semi-arid lands due to climate change, desertification, and environmental degradation, making IGAD one of the most food-insecure areas globally.

These harsh environmental conditions increase human suffering in already affected communities, leading to further displacement, poverty, hunger, and conflict. For instance, the drought in 2010-2011 worsened food insecurity, especially in Ethiopia and Kenya, and famine was declared in parts of Somalia. The 2016-2017 drought and conflict heightened food insecurity, leading to famine in two counties in South Sudan.

In 2019, approximately 27 million people in IGAD countries faced crisis-level food insecurity, a situation that has worsened over the years and continues to escalate, severely affecting pastoral and agricultural livelihoods. The region experienced heightened food insecurity due to complex crises, including climate events, conflicts, and economic challenges, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In Ethiopia, 8.47 million people faced food insecurity, with 6.45 million in South Sudan and 6.25 million in Sudan. In 2020, IGAD expressed concerns about deteriorating food insecurity due to factors such as the desert locust crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and below-average rainfall. The locust infestation devastated crops and pastures, causing severe food insecurity for 2.5 million people. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted supply chains and logistics, slowed the economy, and reduced incomes, limiting many people's access to food.

The international response to support the region varied, leaving some governments

unable to face these harsh conditions alone. According to IGAD, international funding levels for the region were: Uganda (0%), Kenya (0%), Djibouti (11%), Ethiopia (20%), South Sudan (35%), Sudan (43%), and Somalia (56%).

Overall, humanitarian response requirements for the region were met at 33% in 2020, leaving a significant funding gap. IGAD developed a response strategy proposing guidelines for a coherent approach to support all affected populations and livelihoods, identifying medium- and long-term interventions and priorities, emphasizing collective cooperation among states, governments, and humanitarian and development actors.

The region's harsh conditions are expected to worsen with climate and political and economic shocks, threatening livelihoods and weakening states' resilience to future shocks, especially in countries where government systems cannot provide adequate support to the affected. IGAD's 2020-2022 strategy focused on food security and nutrition in the context of drought, floods, and desert locusts.

This strategy's strategic priorities include supporting food security among vulnerable groups, enhancing regional trade and market access, protecting pastoralists and pastoral assets, and strengthening regional coordination through improved preparedness and response capacities and activating a disaster response fund.

Therefore, the region's environmental and social crises exceed the institutional capacities of any single organization or country,

necessitating more collective cooperation. The region suffers from significant motivating factors of food and humanitarian crises, likely to worsen without building resilience and improving early warning systems.

2. Issues of Integration and Economic Development: Experiences of integration and markets within the framework of IGAD have lagged compared to other regional economic communities' implementation of trade agreements. In January 2012, IGAD Heads of State and Government endorsed the Minimum Integration Plan, prioritizing economic cooperation and integration. IGAD's Secretariat works with member states to harmonize policies, procedures, and trade standards to enhance trade within the IGAD region.

In 2010, IGAD launched its business forum to boost cross-border trade and investment, coordinating policies among member states and aligning them regarding trade, investment, transportation, infrastructure development, and the free movement of goods and people.

According to the African Union's 2021 report on the state of regional integration in Africa, IGAD achieved moderate performance in most of the integration indicators, which include: freedom of movement, social integration, trade integration, infrastructure, financial union, monetary union, environmental integration, and political and institutional integration.

IGAD scored lowest in social integration, trade integration, and financial integration. This was attributed to the lack of robust structures

within IGAD dedicated to trade and financial integration, while financial standings were weak due to the lack of evaluation of IGAD's roles in migration, health, and gender, along with its collaborative efforts in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

The integration process in the IGAD region remains in its early stages and has not yet reached the level of a free trade area. The slow pace of integration is due to several factors, including prioritizing the free movement of people over trade integration, despite the protocol and roadmap regarding movement not significantly impacting this priority. Furthermore, weak incentives are offered to states with overlapping memberships in other regional economic communities that are advancing towards market integration. Except for Somalia and South Sudan, IGAD member states are part of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), which recently launched the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA) with the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Thus far, trade and economic integration are not prioritized by member states who achieve it within the frameworks of other regional organizations.

Additionally, Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda are members of the East African Community, which implements its common market alongside the Continental Free Trade Agreement. Moreover, one of IGAD's overarching goals is to achieve COMESA's objectives, which makes the organization's institutional structure regarding integration goals somewhat vague for achieving a free trade area.

- 3. Issues of Peace and Regional Stability:** The founding leaders of IGAD set goals and visions related to the peoples of the region, developing identity, communal living, enjoying a safe environment, alleviating poverty, and fostering peace. They aimed for IGAD to be the leading regional economic community in achieving peace and sustainable development in the region.

These goals followed the transformation of the organization's structure and nature of work in 1996, when IGAD was revitalized and tasked with addressing peace and security issues. Its mandate was expanded to cover political and economic development issues, leading to the creation of the Political and Humanitarian Affairs Division, later renamed the Peace and Security Division. This division focuses on four main security and peace-related objectives:

- **Conflict prevention, management, and resolution.**
- **Preventing and managing transnational security threats.**
- **Governance, democracy, rule of law, and human rights.**
- **Post-conflict reconstruction, development, and humanitarian affairs.**

The organization's formation was influenced by global and regional conditions, imposing new security-related priorities on its agenda. Initially, IGAD's goals focused on environmental issues to address the famine conditions prevalent at the time, during a period characterized by ideological polarization between the Eastern and Western blocs and the member states being subjected to liberation

wars and internal conflicts. The sub-region under IGAD's mandate is one of the most conflict-affected areas globally, with extended conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, particularly liberation wars and the intense international focus on the region.

With declining international attention to security issues in the region in the 1990s, leaders realized that addressing environmental and developmental challenges without tackling security risks and regional conflicts was futile, placing conflict and security issues at the forefront of IGAD's priorities. This aligns with the international consensus on the importance of regional organizations playing roles in peace and security.

The second foundation of IGAD coincided with security turmoil in Somalia, the outbreak of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war, the continuation of the Sudanese civil war ending in South Sudan's secession, as well as border disputes and rising piracy activities. These pre-existing complexities continued to impact IGAD's work and security framework. The violent post-independence wars, both between and within countries, overshadowed the regional context during IGAD's structural shift towards security and peace objectives.

IGAD's Role in Regional Crises

IGAD's regional roles in issues of peace and regional security can be seen in various regional crises, shown in the following:

1. **The Political Transition Crisis in Sudan:** IGAD has extensive experience with the situation in Sudan, having ac-

tively participated in the peace process in Sudan (1993-2005). The crises represented a test for the organization's role in establishing security. Through its Permanent Committee for Peace and Security, IGAD intervened diplomatically and politically to revive peace talks in Sudan by appointing the then Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi as an envoy for the peace process in Sudan. The diplomatic efforts led by the organization contributed to creating an atmosphere of trust between the warring parties. The Permanent Committee worked to facilitate dialogue until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya, which marked the conclusion of IGAD's peace-making initiative, considered one of its achievements in this regard.

During the transitional phase that began with the fall of the former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019, IGAD engaged in talks between Sudanese parties to reach a consensus for leading the transitional phase. IGAD's intervention came in the form of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed engaging in peace talks at the invitation of the African Union's Peace and Security Council, representing Ethiopia, which was then leading IGAD.

Among other factors, the involvement of IGAD, represented by Abiy Ahmed, the African Union represented by its envoy "Mohamed Lebatt," and international support represented by the Troika countries and the European Union, facilitated the revival of talks between the civilian and military components,

leading to the constitutional and political declaration on August 17, 2019, which later paved the way for the Juba Peace Agreement with the armed movements.

With the stalemate in the Sudanese transitional phase and the political process's stagnation for a whole year, IGAD sought to re-engage in mediation between the crisis parties. It proposed an initiative in early 2022 that received acceptance from some forces opposed to the role of the United Nations mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). This led to the unification of efforts by the UN mission, the African Union, and IGAD in a single mechanism known as the "Tripartite Mechanism," supported by the international community. Its role contributed to achieving the framework agreement on December 5, 2022, aimed at ensuring stability until the end of the transitional phase.

2. **Peace Negotiations in South Sudan:**

IGAD engaged in the mediation process to address the conflict in South Sudan after independence, with its role being active from 2013 to 2015. It quickly got involved once violence broke out in December 2013, calling for an extraordinary summit and delegating a mediation mission that succeeded in pushing for the 2015 peace agreement, which did not last long. This failure or criticism points to IGAD's ability to compel the different parties to comply with any legal agreements under its auspices. The conflict in South Sudan erupted nine years after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan, which paved the way for the South's independence.

These efforts align with the organization's commitment to enhancing its mediation capacity, coinciding with the establishment of the Mediation Support Unit within the Security Division of IGAD's Secretariat. Regarding the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan, IGAD delegated its envoys to mediate for a cease-fire since the fighting began until the signing of the agreement in March 2015. The warring parties' reluctance to sign prompted IGAD to launch a new mediation phase called "IGAD Plus," involving other stakeholders, including the African Union, the Troika, the United Nations, and the European Union, until a draft agreement was presented in July 2015.

IGAD sought to leverage its previous negotiation experience with Sudan, which culminated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. However, these efforts were driven by international community support endorsing IGAD's mediation role. The UN Security Council adopted resolution 2132 on December 24, 2013, praising IGAD's efforts in fostering dialogue and mediation. Similarly, the Troika countries supported IGAD's mediation efforts.

Only a year after the peace agreement was signed, violence broke out again in 2016, with escalating violence and security deterioration. IGAD re-engaged in the revitalized peace process, leading to the signing of the revitalized peace agreement in 2018. With renewed violence between the parties of the revitalized peace agreement, IGAD sought ways to support and maintain the gains achieved. IGAD signed an agreement with the Irish Ambassador to Ethiopia and Djibouti on September 20, 2022, to fund

a ceasefire and monitoring mechanism to ensure transitional security arrangements.

Some interpretations attribute the flaws in mediation mechanisms to the involvement of regional stakeholder countries in these efforts, as they hold divergent views on resolving the conflict according to their regional interests, forming an incoherent or institutionalized perspective of IGAD away from political stances.

3. **National Reconciliation in Somalia:**

IGAD engaged in the Somali crisis early on after the government's collapse in Mogadishu, and subsequent efforts to achieve comprehensive peace and form a transitional government (2002-2004). However, the organization failed to lead reconciliation efforts in Somalia, attributing this to the multiplicity of reconciliation initiatives, as well as the continuation of warring parties that received regional support from member states. Ethiopia supported one side while Eritrea supported the other, damaging IGAD's efforts to support the peace

process, which led to the formation of a transitional government in 2004.

As the crisis persisted, the organization activated multilateral diplomacy and coordinated its efforts with key stakeholders to bring Somali parties together and coordinate efforts towards peacebuilding. This was done through the Office of the Special Mission of IGAD in Somalia, which aims to support capacity building, peacebuilding, and reconciliation by working with the federal government and state governments.

In line with the approach of multilateral diplomacy, the organization contributed to the comprehensive political process of the Somali Federal Government and federal states. In April 2021, the Executive Secretary of the organization led a quadripartite meeting with the African Union, the European Union, and the United Nations to calm electoral disputes. Additionally, in December 2021, the organization held workshops in several Somali cities to support community peace and peacebuilding as a step towards addressing conflicts and paving the way for elections.



However, betting on IGAD's role in addressing Somalia's crises is linked to the participation of other regional and international parties.

4. **Conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray Region:**

Following the outbreak of conflict in the northern Ethiopian region on November 4, 2020, former Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, as the head of the organization led by Sudan, attempted to engage in the crisis. He succeeded in putting the crisis on the organization's agenda and called for the 38th extraordinary summit to discuss the internal conflict in Ethiopia.

This summit was held on December 20, 2020, attended by the Ethiopian Prime Minister. However, the contradictions in regional parties' positions damaged any attempt by IGAD or the African Union at that time to achieve a breakthrough in the crisis. Despite some considering that merely holding a diplomatic summit with the Ethiopian Prime Minister's acceptance was an achievement, Ethiopian intransigence was evident in Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's refusal of Hamdok's mediation attempts after four phone calls between them early in the crisis. Abiy Ahmed viewed it as an internal conflict to restore constitutional order in the country, which should not be internationalized.

Despite IGAD's failure in this crisis, it was not the only organization that failed to play a role due to various reasons. The Ethiopian Prime Minister firmly rejected all mediation efforts, insisting on a military solution and non-interference in his country's affairs, in addition to regional contradictions and biases.

The failure of IGAD's role in intervention and mediation or playing a role in the Tigray conflict reflects a set of constraints on the organization's nature of work. One of the most prominent constraints is the regional balances and intersections, as IGAD is demanded to intervene in a crisis of a member state whose membership affects the organization's mechanism and role. Additionally, the potential involvement of regional parties in regional conflicts reduces the organization's neutrality, making its role either unwelcome or ineffective.

The previous situation highlights two points. First, the organization's mandate for maintaining peace and regional security was limited and did not establish an institutional basis for regional security. Second, the nature of regional balances and alliances among its member states often weakened the organization's mandate through these alliances and balances, which frequently contributed to damaging regional security.

The organization also did not play effective roles in many crises despite developing an early warning mechanism for crisis response in collaboration with donors in 2000. It did not play a role in the Darfur conflict starting in 2003, the Ogaden crisis, or others. Its role was either reserved or accused of bias, as in the Somali-Kenyan maritime dispute. Somalia objected to IGAD's assessment of the accusations against Kenya for supporting and arming militias to fight the Somali National Army at the border, accusing IGAD's investigators of bias and threatening to withdraw its membership.

The Future of Regional Integration within IGAD

The integration experience in the Horn of Africa and East Africa remains in the early stages of regional integration compared to similar regional alliances. Despite the organization's inefficacy in role and performance, the dominance of member states and their regional leadership ambitions hinder the development of the organization's performance and regional mandate.

The organization has made progress concerning peace and security, as well as some progress in regional infrastructure, such as the establishment of the international free zone in Djibouti. However, member states still face several challenges, including instability due to armed conflict, which exacerbates the refugee and displacement situation in the region, and extreme weather conditions leading to drought challenges that threaten biodiversity. Overall, IGAD has aligned its plans with those of regional organizations and the African Union. Therefore, the latest African Union report points to the organization's failure to achieve the goals and continental commitments outlined in Agenda 2063 and the Abuja Treaty, with significant delays in achieving regional integration goals.

To enhance its role, IGAD needs to expedite the implementation of continental and regional integration plans and boost economic and social integration projects in the region, exploring new funding mechanisms and strengthening the rule of law and good governance. This role faces either regional challenges in the form of member states'

regional ambitions or institutional challenges within the organization, partly due to the ambitions of member states.

1. **Inter-State Interactions and Power Balances within the Organization:**

Concerning member states and their interactions, Ethiopia has emerged prominently, especially in the years following Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's arrival and his pursuit of a political and regional ambition to enhance Ethiopia's status in the region. Ethiopia and Eritrea moved to restore their relations, with the organization absent as a sponsor of the agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2018. This was an initial step towards Ethiopia's policy of resolving the Horn of Africa's issues and overcoming past conflicts among its countries, then moving towards regional cooperation and integration.

Weeks later, Somali-Eritrean relations resumed under Ethiopian auspices after years of Somali accusations against Eritrea for supporting the Al-Shabaab militants in 2006. These steps led the three countries in September 2018 to build a regional alliance composed of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia, aimed at establishing political, economic, social, and security relations to enhance regional peace and security.

This move was made outside IGAD's framework, raising questions about its impact on future regional cooperation among member states and increasing mistrust among them, especially since it excluded the rest of the member states. However, some views suggested that it could help resolve disputes

among member states to the extent that it stabilizes the region and involves the other member states, as well as Eritrea's return to the organization. This was evident in the alliance's efforts to mediate between Eritrea and Djibouti in their border dispute.

2. **Constraints and Prospects of Institutional Integration:** Despite the active diplomatic participation of the organization in regional crises and challenges, and its mediation attempts in several regional issues, these efforts face a number of constraints and challenges imposed on the role it is supposed to play. Among these challenges is funding; most of the organization's funding comes from international donors, with member states not committing to their financial quotas due to their lack of belief in the effectiveness of the organization's role. Another challenge is the multiple affiliations of the organization's

members to more than one regional organization. This competition in membership and the effectiveness of other organizations in economic integration issues reduce the commitment and desire of member states to develop the organization's performance.

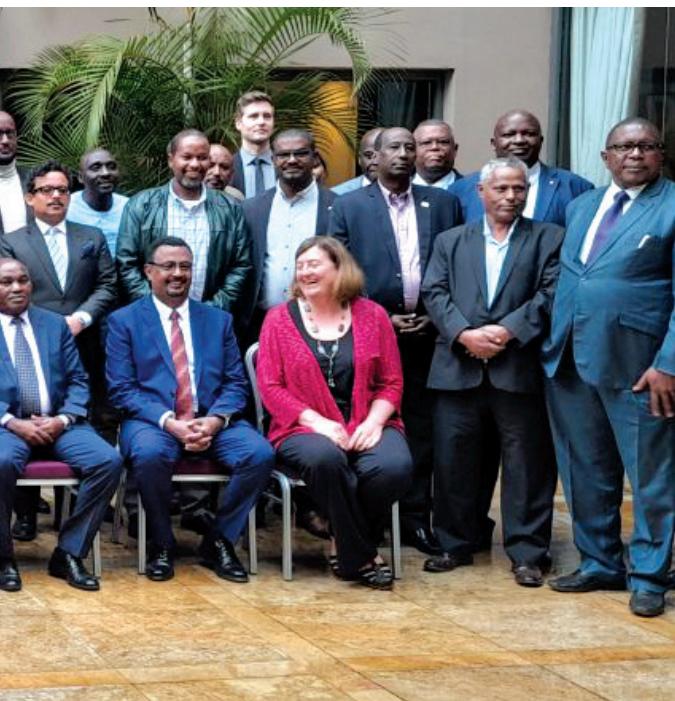
Moreover, armed conflicts, competition among member states, and regional instability pose challenges such as the weak political will of member states and the absence of a dominant regional power to lead and coordinate regional work among fundamentally competing and conflicting states. This is in addition to the dual memberships of states in competing regional institutions, which lowers the level of commitment of states to the interaction and performance within the framework of the organization.

These challenges have not only weakened the policies of cohesion and regional cooperation



but have also complicated the mediation, reconciliation, and trust-building efforts undertaken by the organization, leading to the erosion of the organization's effectiveness in intervening and mediating in regional conflicts. To address the challenges facing the organization's work, there is a need for a set of decisive interventions as follows:

- **Developing the organization's charter and agreement in a way that enhances its working structures and adds more effectiveness.**
- **Obliging member states to the mediation efforts sponsored by the organization and supporting facilitation efforts within its framework.**
- **Refraining from establishing or resorting to regional security forums and gatherings that aim to resolve conflicts outside the organization.**
- **Committing to negotiations and mediation efforts, and to their results within**



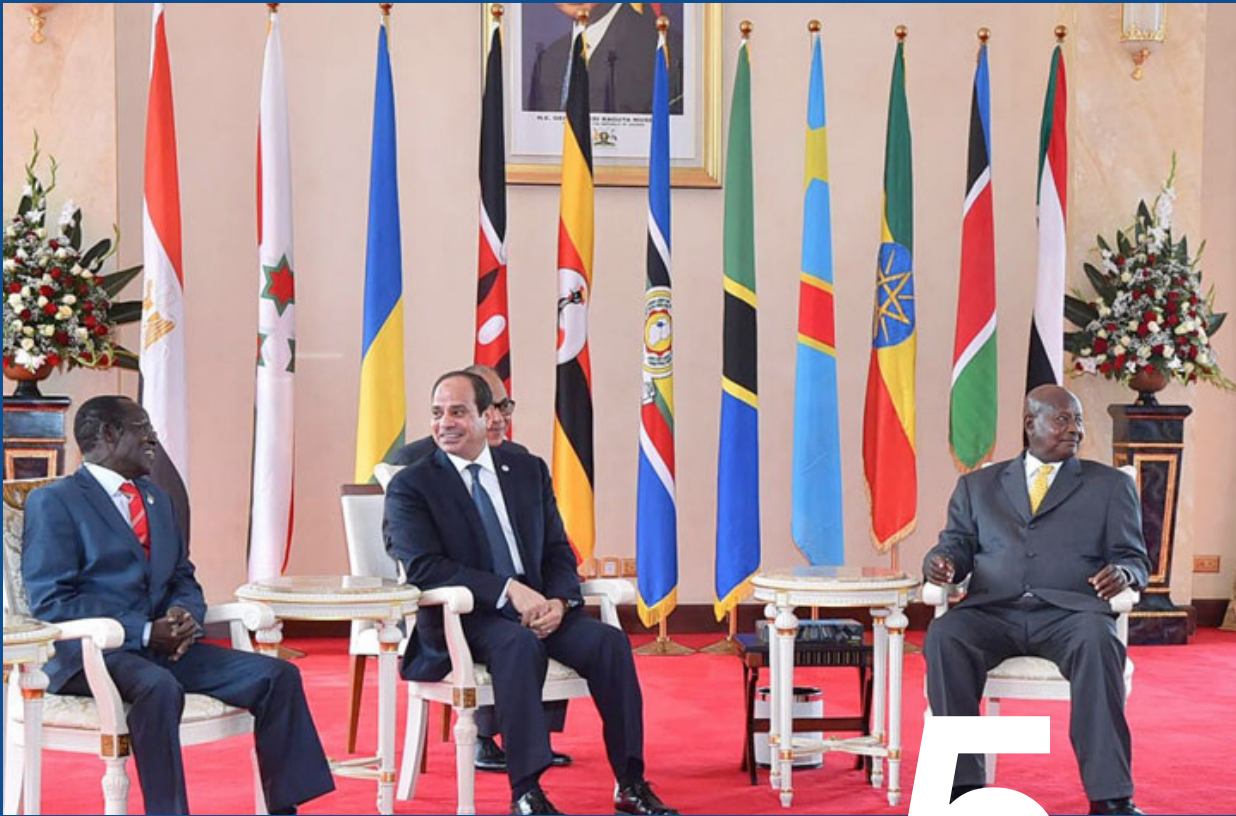
the framework of the organization's work, and recognizing its regional mandate in this regard.

- **Addressing national state crises and resolving regional crises.**

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can finally be said that IGAD is one of several regional organizations that are still in the early institutional stages of regional integration. However, IGAD is one of the regional groups that has not reached advanced stages of economic integration or the establishment of a peace and security structure, and this reality imposes significant constraints on the structure and performance of the organization. All the roles the organization plays in addressing crises and conflicts fall within the scope of diplomatic interventions and mediation efforts, without possessing a mechanism for direct intervention. Furthermore, the steps towards economic integration are slow compared to the goals of continental integration, which increases the attractiveness of other gatherings to its member states.

When discussing the development of the organization's performance, challenges related to the political will of member states arise, as they see their individual moves or joining other gatherings as more beneficial than operating under the IGAD umbrella. This is in addition to the regional entanglements among its member states in one of the most competitively and polarized sub-regions in Africa.



5

Egypt and the Horn of Africa

- ◀ The Changing Contexts of the Horn of Africa and Egypt's Policy Orientations
- ◀ Egypt's Priorities Toward Sudan a Year After Internal Conflict
- ◀ Features of the Egyptian-Eritrean Cooperation in the Horn of Africa
- ◀ Motivations Behind the Shifting Alliances Between Egypt and the Horn of Africa Countries



The Changing Contexts of the Horn of Africa and Egypt's Policy Orientations

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Despite the exceptional priority given by Egyptian foreign policy within its foreign policy priorities over the past ten years, the current strategic challenges and transformations witnessed in the region, whether at the overall regional level or in terms of internal political interactions and

transformations experienced by the existing political systems in the region, impose strategic requirements and priorities that align with the structure of existing security and political interactions in the region, in a manner that meets Egyptian regional aspirations and priorities.

Geostrategic Importance

The strategic importance of the Horn of Africa is evident in the intense international and regional competition that significantly influences its internal interactions and regional and international alliances. One of the determinants of the Horn of Africa's strategic importance is its extension along the Red Sea coast, the most crucial maritime passage for international trade. This has given the countries bordering it significant strategic weight in the equation of regional and international balances.

This importance was confirmed in recent regional interactions that impacted security in the Red Sea, including the Houthi threat that affected the movement of trade through the maritime passage, which saw 23,000 ships pass through last year, accounting for 12% of global trade and 40% of trade between Asia and Europe. Previous global repercussions were also evident in the rise of global oil prices following the grounding of the "Ever Given" ship, which disrupted commercial traffic, highlighting the critical importance of the maritime passage in the international agenda, and prompting renewed engagement in the regional security equation.

Despite the involvement of regional and international powers in the regional security equation over the past decades, which has contributed to the rise of militarization affecting the strategic interests of regional states, the escalating regional challenges in both the Middle East and the Horn of Africa drive further political and military competition and polarization in the region.

Existing military bases in the region are no longer sufficient to secure the interests of major powers and ensure the movement of international trade. Emerging security threats now require broad responses and multilateral alliances, creating a matrix of intersecting and complex interests and alliances. The recent formation of the American alliance "Sentinel of Prosperity" on December 19, 2023, to counter Houthi threats in the Red Sea, is one example of militarization in the region. This was followed by the formation of the new European Union naval mission "Asphides" in February 2024, adding to European interest and engagement in the region since Operation Atalanta in 2008 to combat piracy, and the maritime surveillance mission launched by France in the Arabian Gulf in 2020 with the participation of eight European countries.

Similarly, China's announcement on February 24, 2024, of sending a military fleet to the Red Sea to ensure observation, comes at a time when most Arab countries, including Egypt, which possesses the southern fleet and the Berenice base on the Red Sea, have refrained from engaging in existing security arrangements. This reflects the complexity of formulating strategic decisions that safeguard interests in the region, requiring substantial strategic coordination. This is especially true given that strategic contradictions and competition in interests are not only between regional and intervening international states but also among major powers present in the region, posing a threat to the expansion of competition and threats in the region, thereby impacting existing regional interests.

Regional Polarizations

The political structure of regional interactions in the Horn of Africa has provided a field for international and regional polarization, significantly influencing the course of internal and inter-state interactions within the region. The region has witnessed shifts in alliance networks, reflecting on the determination of priorities and the nature of interests. This was particularly evident with the Ethiopian-Eritrean rapprochement in 2018 and the announcement of the Horn of Africa Cooperation Organization with Somalia joining in January 2020, which in turn affected the level of relations between Djibouti and Ethiopia. Ethiopia found alternative ports to Djibouti's, which it had relied on for 70% of its trade.

Egypt maintained strategic close relations with Eritrea until 2018, when the alliance of Isaias Afwerki with Abiy Ahmed created a gap in bilateral relations, leading to a

decline in coordination on regional issues of mutual interest. Ironically, this cooling of relations coincided with Egypt's return to the region after years of decline associated with domestic political transformations post-2011, affecting Egypt's active regional policy during those years.

In this context, Egypt's relations with Djibouti were not at their peak, despite Djibouti's diverse and multiple regional and international relations, which contributed to it being the regional destination for military bases and logistical areas, economically benefiting it and increasing its geostrategic importance. However, this also contributed to the militarization of the Red Sea region, impacting the security equation in the area.

Similarly, relations with Somalia were not in a good state until the departure of Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo's regime and the arrival of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. Over the past years, regional countries like Turkey and



Qatar have strengthened their presence in Somalia at all levels, contributing to strained relations between Somalia and several regional countries, including Egypt, especially as interactions in the Middle East cast their shadows on the levels and directions of interaction in the Horn of Africa.

Enhancing Presence

The African continent has held a priority on Egypt's foreign policy agenda since 2014, with particular emphasis on the Horn of Africa and the Nile Basin, given this sub-region's strategic weight in Egyptian policy. It extends between the Red Sea to the east and the Nile stream to the west, making engagement in its interactions and building a network of regional alliances crucial for Egyptian foreign policy priorities.

Despite the aforementioned strategic reality, which coincided with a preoccupation with domestic political conditions, the reactivation of Egyptian foreign policy did not overlook traditional circles of interest in addition to newly penetrated ones. Regarding the Horn of Africa, there have been successive steps concerning all regional issues and files, allowing Egypt to accumulate a presence that could be the basis for building an integrated and sustainable strategy in defining interests and threats, and consequently building a comprehensive regional strategy to enhance presence and build a network of alliances that maintain Egyptian interests in the region.

In terms of Egyptian presence and dealings with the region, President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi's visit to Djibouti in May 2021, the first visit by an Egyptian president since independence,

gave a strong boost to bilateral relations. In February 2022, President Al-Sisi received his Djiboutian counterpart in Cairo, reflecting the highest levels of strategic coordination between the two countries, represented by the communication of political leaders. This was particularly significant given the apparent cooling in the positions of both Somalia and Djibouti regarding the Arab League's decision supporting Egypt and Sudan's rights to Nile waters, reflecting the balances and alliances in the Horn of Africa.

As for Somalia, the return of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud provided an opportunity to restore historical closeness between the two countries after years of tension and distance. Egypt was one of the regional countries visited by Sheikh Mohamud soon after assuming office, as part of rebalancing Somali foreign policy. The pivotal moment for the two countries came when Egypt publicly supported Somalia's stance regarding Ethiopian cooperation with Somaliland to access the sea through Berbera port. On January 3, 2024, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry declared Egypt's support for Somalia and its territorial integrity, followed by a visit from an Egyptian delegation to Somalia on January 7 to reaffirm Egypt's steadfast position on Somali unity and territorial integrity. This culminated in President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's visit to Cairo on January 21, after a previous visit as part of a regional tour that included Egypt in July 2022, aimed at rebalancing and abandoning former President Farmajo's policy of alliances.

Regarding Eritrea, as an important strategic ally in the region, the tension between

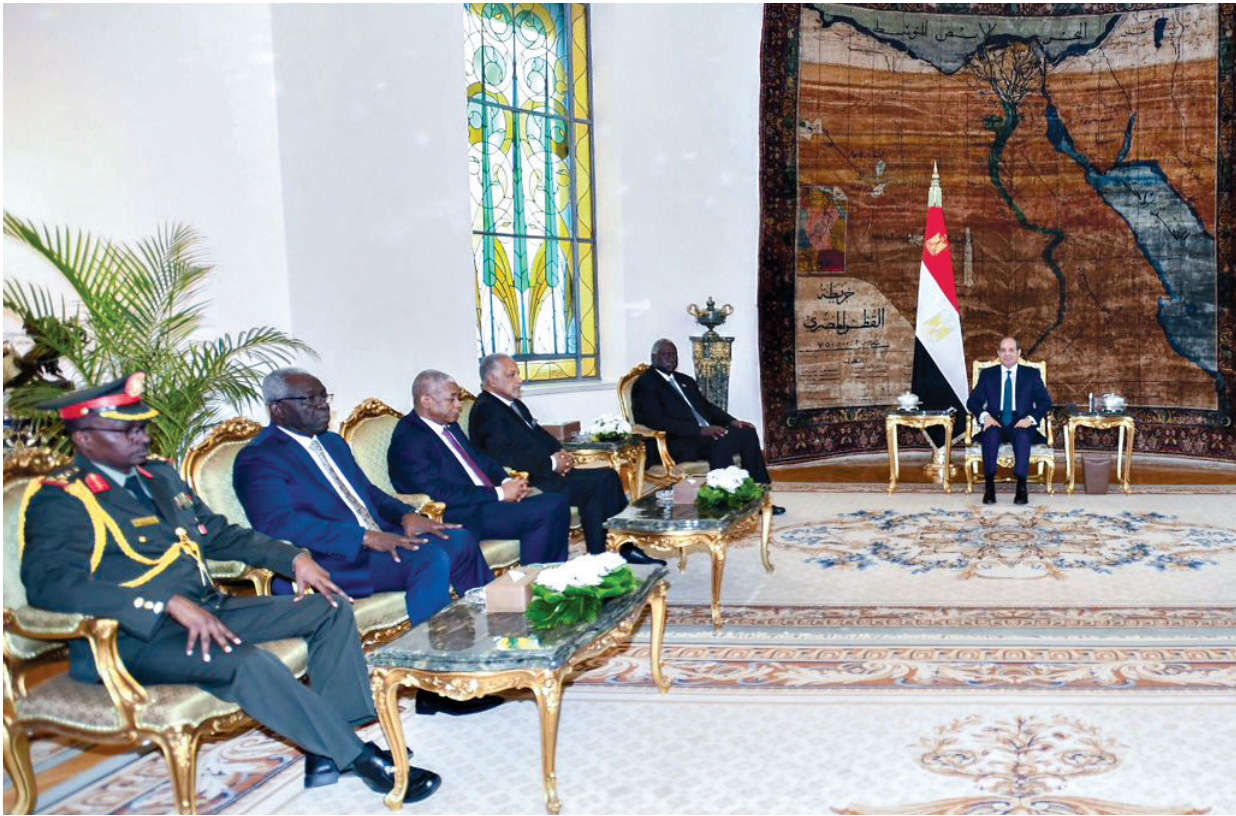
Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afwerki presented an opportunity for the latter to once again draw closer to Egypt. Eritrea holds strategic importance, whether relating to security in the Red Sea region or the stability equation in Sudan, particularly with Eritrean influence on eastern Sudan. This was reflected in President Afwerki's participation in the summit of neighboring countries on the Sudanese crisis in July 2023, followed by President Al-Sisi receiving the Eritrean Foreign Minister accompanied by a high-level delegation in October 2023. During this visit, President Al-Sisi received a letter from his Eritrean counterpart expressing a desire to develop bilateral relations, leading to Afwerki's visit to Cairo on February 24, 2024, marking the highest steps of coordination on Horn of Africa issues and the Sudanese crisis.

At the regional level, the aforementioned countries share membership with Egypt in the Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which Ethiopia sought to join, conflicting with Egyptian interests. Meanwhile, support for Ethiopian aspirations was likely to increase either from African countries or the Arab states bordering the Red Sea.

Given the growing concerns among Horn of Africa countries regarding Ethiopian movements and ambitions, Egyptian regional initiatives and policies, manifested in economic cooperation agreements and trade exchanges, as well as military cooperation and joint training agreements with Horn of Africa and Nile Basin countries, should not remain limited to bilateral agreements. It is essential to elevate cooperation to all levels, creating a

regional value-added network where Egyptian interests are part of regional interests.

Considering Ethiopia's efforts to form a Horn of Africa Cooperation Organization as an alternative to the existing regional organization, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and its attempts to alter the balance and cooperation framework within the Nile Basin, it is crucial for Egypt not to miss out on engagements that ensure involvement in forming regional balances and cooperation frameworks. Egypt should not limit itself to bilateral and limited cooperations, which ultimately do not contribute to the shape of regional cooperation. Egypt can enhance this through institutional regional mechanisms consistent with its foreign policy principles, including shared membership in several regional organizations and arrangements such as the Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea, COMESA membership, and the African Continental Free Trade Area. These multilateral regional mechanisms can support higher levels of security and trade coordination, ultimately establishing advanced levels of joint strategic coordination.



Egypt's Priorities Toward Sudan A Year After Internal Conflict

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Sudan is a key partner for Egypt in several primary circles where Egyptian interests are concentrated, such as the Nile Basin, the Red Sea, and the Sahel and Sahara. This connection makes Sudan's security and stability crucial for ensuring Egyptian interests related to Nile waters, maritime navigation in the Red Sea and hence the Suez Canal, and the security of Egypt's

southern land borders. While the fall of the Salvation Regime in April 2019 was expected to help reshape Egyptian-Sudanese relations beyond the volatile pattern that prevailed since 1989, the outbreak of internal conflict in Sudan in April 2023 has reshaped Egypt's priorities concerning Sudan. These priorities vary between security, political, economic, and humanitarian concerns and between

urgent and immediate priorities and others connected to the mid-term and long-term future of Sudan.

Multiple Implications

Since the onset of the Sudanese conflict in April 2023 it has had numerous repercussions on Egyptian interests, with significant multi-dimensional impacts. On the security level, the conflict has imposed a renewed state of civil war in Egypt's southern neighborhood, surpassing the logic of limited local conflicts previously witnessed in Sudan in Darfur and the south before its secession. This is particularly critical given the comprehensive war between two well-armed military forces: the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces.

Furthermore, the trajectory of the conflict in Sudan, nearing its first anniversary, has demonstrated its capacity to interact with surrounding conflict circles due to Sudan's proximity to the security-challenged southern Libya and the significant overlap between the conflict in Darfur and internal Chad, exacerbated by Chad's fragile transitional state. In addition, Sudan is surrounded by crisis circles, such as Ethiopia and South Sudan, which have been adversely affected by the regional instability resulting from the Sudanese conflict.

The humanitarian crisis, particularly the influx of Sudanese refugees into Egypt, presents a grave dimension of the crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated the number of Sudanese refugees in Egypt at approximately 270,000 in

March 2024, the highest among all Sudan's neighboring countries, adding to about five million Sudanese whom Egypt has allowed to reside on its land. Economically, the Sudanese conflict has caused Egypt to lose significant economic opportunities, as Sudan was a main destination for Egyptian exports and a primary source of Egypt's agricultural imports. The conflict has also created uncertainty regarding over two billion dollars of Egyptian investments in Sudan across numerous industrial and service sectors.

Priority List

1. **Protecting the Unity of the Sudanese State from the Risks of Separation:** Egypt's top priority in Sudan is to protect the country's unity and territorial integrity, avoiding the risks of separation that appear in several regions in the west, south, and east. This priority includes two important procedural elements: the first is the necessity of unifying the military institution after the inherited military plurality from the Salvation Rule years caused the current conflict between the armed forces with all units under the General Command and the Rapid Support Forces. The second element is the importance of re-establishing a consensual government that represents various parties in Sudan and effectively restores its role in representing the Sudanese state domestically and internationally. The absence of a consensual government since October 2021 has been a major source of instability in Sudan, lead-

ing to the outbreak of conflict after a year and a half.

2. **Ensuring Stability in Sudanese Areas on the Red Sea:** Egyptian interests are affected by Sudan being one of the main countries bordering the Red Sea, an international maritime corridor that has faced significant threats to international navigation since November 2023 due to repeated Houthi attacks originating from Yemeni territory, threatening commercial and military ships in a wide area centered on the Bab al-Mandab Strait. Thus, one of Egypt's priorities is ensuring the stability of the eastern regions of Sudan bordering the Red Sea. Despite the relatively safe status of eastern Sudan, which has

turned Port Sudan into the de facto capital after the capital Khartoum was affected by ongoing battles, the conflict's extension in December 2023 into central and eastern Sudan provinces after the Rapid Support Forces took control of Al-Jazeera State has posed a direct threat to eastern Sudan areas.

3. **Egyptian-Sudanese Coordination in Nile Water Management:** Restoring effective coordination with Sudan in Nile water management is an urgent Egyptian priority. This includes two important dimensions: first, ensuring the safety of Sudanese installations on the Nile, especially after some of them were threatened by combat actions, which could have serious implications



for the Aswan High Dam's safety. The second dimension is the swift return of Egyptian-Sudanese coordination on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations, given Ethiopia's unilateral approach in the construction and operation of the dam, which has hindered any significant progress in the talks.

4. **Unifying Regional Initiatives to Resolve the Sudanese Conflict:** Regarding international engagement with the Sudanese conflict, an Egyptian priority is to unify the multiple regional initiatives proposed to resolve the Sudanese conflict to ensure tangible results. Given Sudan's significant role as a pivotal state in both the Arab and African circles,

various responses aimed at quickly containing the crisis in Sudan, both militarily and humanitarily, have emerged. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was among the initiators of an initiative to resolve the Sudanese conflict. Both the United States and Saudi Arabia have also been involved in sponsoring the Jeddah negotiations before Egypt successfully launched the Sudan's Neighbors Initiative, which includes Libya, Chad, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. This initiative



is distinguished by its aim to pursue parallel progress in both political and humanitarian tracks. However, the multiplicity of sponsors for the resolution initiatives has complicated the situation, especially given the differing approaches proposed by each initiative.

5. **Launching a Regional Mechanism to Ensure Aid Flow:**

Given the difficulty of quickly achieving success in the political settlement track in Sudan, one of Egypt's priorities is launching a regional mechanism to ensure a continuous flow of humanitarian and relief aid to the most affected areas by the conflict in Sudan. This is crucial to preventing a catastrophic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Sudan. In this regard, there is a need for coordination among donor countries and agencies to ensure the maximum allocation of aid to Sudan, and among Sudan's neighboring countries, which will necessarily play the most critical roles in effectively delivering this aid to Sudanese territories.

In conclusion, Sudan traditionally holds a prominent position on Egypt's priority list. Nevertheless, the ongoing internal conflict across various regions of Sudan for almost a year has imposed additional importance on intensive Egyptian engagement to address the urgent aspects of the crisis while simultaneously envisioning new strategies to ensure Egypt's capacity to secure its interests in the extended future.



Features of the Egyptian-Eritrean Cooperation in the Horn of Africa

Nesreen Al-Sabahe

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The visit of Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki to Cairo on February 24, 2024, came at a highly sensitive and complex time, in the middle of a series of regional and international transformations in the Horn of Africa, escalating security

disturbances in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and the ongoing Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. Within this context, the general background of the visit, its key implications, and areas of cooperation and partnership between the two countries will be clarified.

Turbulent Context

The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden region is witnessing escalating tensions and increasing instability due to recent Houthi attacks, heightened regional tensions, and worsening insecurity in the Horn of Africa and East Africa. Additionally, there are continental challenges related to peace, security, and development, which can be outlined as follows:

1. **Increasing Risks and Threats to Red Sea Security:** This region is experiencing an unprecedented moment of insecurity, escalating tensions, and increasing instability due to recent Houthi attacks on maritime vessels. These attacks have created security threats to maritime navigation, international trade, and global supply chains in this vital maritime passage. The attacks have had dangerous repercussions on the interests of coastal states, regional, and other international powers. Securing this maritime passage in the western Indian Ocean is a global responsibility due to the ongoing disturbances' impact on regional and international strategic interests. Houthi attacks, including missile strikes and drone attacks on several commercial ships in the Red Sea, have resulted in many shipping companies altering their routes to longer, more costly but relatively safer paths around the African continent, increasing time and cost, and slowing down international trade.
2. **Worsening Insecurity in the Horn of Africa:** The terrorist group Al-Shabaab

continues to carry out sporadic attacks across Somalia, including in public places. Their latest attack on February 10, 2024, inside the General Gordon military base in the capital Mogadishu, resulted in the death of four Emirati soldiers and a Bahraini military officer. Al-Shabaab is considered the largest and most lethal branch of Al-Qaeda globally. The Global Terrorism Index 2023 classifies Al-Shabaab as one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world. This group still controls half of Somalia's territory, particularly in the southern states of Jubaland and South West. The unprecedented operation launched by the Somali government in 2022 allowed the government in Mogadishu to regain a foothold in the central states of Galmudug and Hirshabelle, but these military successes led to bloody retaliatory actions by Al-Shabaab.

This occurs as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) is reducing its presence in the country, with a final withdrawal scheduled for December 2024. The challenge remains in ensuring security in the areas left by these forces. Additionally, the resurgence of maritime piracy off the Somali coast has brought back the traditional phenomenon of piracy seen in 2009 and 2010, raising concerns about the turbulent security scene creating a space for coastal maritime activity by terrorist organizations, including groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

3. **Escalating Regional Tensions:** Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's announcement on January 1, 2024, about

a memorandum of understanding with Somaliland has caused tensions in relations between Somalia and Ethiopia. The Berbera port, a strategic maritime corridor on the Gulf of Aden, is free from piracy problems and covers the Bab al-Mandab entrance, a passage used by one-third of global trade. The agreement grants Ethiopia access to 20 kilometers (12 miles) of coastline, including the Berbera port, through a 50-year lease. According to Abiy Ahmed's National Security Advisor, Redwan Hussein, the agreement includes not only commercial access to the sea for Ethiopia but also a leased military base. In return, Addis Ababa recognizes Somaliland, with the latter obtaining a stake in Ethiopian Airlines and Ethio Telecom, as well as developing infrastructure between the base and port and holding further discussions on education, health, and military cooperation. This memorandum violates Somalia's sovereignty and

territorial integrity, potentially reigniting several simmering internal conflicts and escalating Somali irredentism, leading to guerrilla warfare with unified Somali forces against Ethiopia and possibly affirming claims over the Somali region inside Ethiopia.

4. **Complexity of the Sudanese Crisis:** The Sudanese crisis has entered a critical phase, with the conflict taking several successive field developments and expanding into new areas, particularly since mid-December 2023, when the Rapid Support Forces reached Wad Madani in Al-Jazirah state in central Sudan. The absence of military decisiveness, unprecedented humanitarian needs, deteriorating economic conditions, fluid security landscape, and the blending of tribal dimensions with increasing tribal violence and internal divisions in Darfur have had dangerous repercussions on neighboring countries.



These include exacerbated humanitarian crises, increased refugee flows, and worsened security issues, coupled with declining international community attention to the crisis.

Joint Coordination

Afwerki's visit adds to the accumulation of the historical relationship between the two countries, characterized by a series of understandings and unified views and positions on common challenges and issues, and mutual interest in developing and enhancing bilateral relations to include broader partnerships in various political, economic, trade, military, and security fields. In this regard, the general features and highlights of the relationship can be outlined, and the issues of mutual interest can be clarified as follows:

1. **Diversifying Strategic Partnership Areas:** Discussions focused on revitalizing trade exchange between the two countries and enhancing investment flow by supporting the presence of Egyptian companies in the Eritrean market in sectors of mutual interest and priority, where Egyptian companies have comparative advantages and accumulated expertise. Other areas of cooperation throughout history include cultural cooperation, cultural and academic exchange programs, medical cooperation, and the exchange of medical knowledge and techniques, and cadre making.
2. **Enhancing Regional Coordination:** Discussions included developments in the region, primarily the serious security

developments in the Red Sea, with both presidents emphasizing the importance of de-escalation and situation containment. They also stressed the necessity of reaching an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, paving the way for full and sustainable humanitarian access to the area and launching a two-state solution process to establish an independent Palestinian state in accordance with approved international references.

3. **Consensus and Unified Views on Horn of Africa Issues:** Both sides agreed on the need to respect Somalia's sovereignty and support it in rejecting all actions that would challenge this sovereignty. The discussion also touched on the situation in Sudan, emphasizing the importance of continued joint work between Egypt and Eritrea within the framework of the neighboring states' track to reach serious solutions to the crisis, leading to a ceasefire and ending the humanitarian suffering of the Sudanese people, fulfilling their aspirations for security, stability, and development.

In conclusion, Afwerki's visit to Cairo confirmed the depth and strength of the solid relations between the two countries and the unification and coordination of their shared views during escalating challenges and regional threats, which have implications for both countries and the region as a whole. This makes joint cooperation to confront and contain these threats and challenges a shared responsibility and an urgent necessity.



Motivations Behind the Shifting Alliances Between Egypt and the Horn of Africa Countries

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The Horn of Africa region is experiencing qualitative transformations that are reshaping its geopolitical landscape. The balances established among its countries, particularly Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia since July 2018, have proven incapable of withstanding the challenges

facing the region. This has become apparent through the discontented reactions of Horn of Africa countries towards Ethiopia's maneuvers at the start of 2024, which did not consider the interests of regional states.

Amid these transformations, the question arises: How does the current context at the beginning of 2024 differ from that of 2018, and what are the signs of engineering a new regional alliance among Horn of Africa countries led by Egypt?

The Formation of the Tripartite Alliance

When Abiy Ahmed assumed power in Ethiopia in 2018, there was an atmosphere of optimism as he adopted a “zero problems” policy with neighboring countries. This materialized practically through the establishment of a tripartite alliance among Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea, aiming to achieve several objectives, including enhancing economic and trade cooperation, developing infrastructure, boosting security and stability in the region, and fostering regional cooperation. Several shared gains were achieved during the period of the tripartite alliance, which can be outlined as follows:

1. **Political Gains:** Undoubtedly, the alliance between Ethiopia and Eritrea ended the stalemate that had marred their relations for two decades, seen as an opportunity to advance efforts towards enhancing cooperation and stability among the region’s countries. Additionally, cooperation between Ethiopia and Somalia resulted in Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed supporting former Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo’s approach, which focused on strengthening central authority at the expense of weakening the federal states’ authority.

2. **Military Gains:** Several military cooperation agreements were signed among Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia since 2018, contributing to enhancing security and stability in the Horn of Africa, combating terrorism and extremist groups, and protecting the common interests of the three countries. The agreements signed among the three countries can be reviewed as follows:

- **Military Cooperation Agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea:** This agreement, signed in 2018, included ending the state of war between the two countries, opening shared borders, exchanging intelligence information, and cooperating in combating terrorism.

- **Military Cooperation Agreement between Ethiopia and Somalia:** This agreement, signed in 2020, involved training Somali forces by Ethiopia and providing military assistance to Somalia in combating Al-Shabaab militants.

- **Military Cooperation Agreement between Eritrea and Somalia:** This agreement, signed in 2023, included exchanging military expertise between the two countries, cooperating in combating terrorism, and securing the Red Sea.

3. **Economic Cooperation:** Several agreements were signed to enhance economic cooperation, aiming to boost trade and investment among the three countries, develop regional infrastructure, promote energy cooperation, and collaborate in food security.

Signs of the Tripartite Alliance's Disintegration

The current context is marked by the fracturing of the tripartite alliance among Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea, as Ethiopia has pursued an opportunistic policy by signing a memorandum of understanding with the breakaway region of Somaliland in January 2024. Key provisions of this memorandum include allocating Ethiopia a coastal area on Somaliland's coast of 90 square kilometers to use as a commercial port and naval base, leasing Berbera port located on the Gulf

of Aden, constructing a railway line linking Ethiopia and Somaliland, and building an oil pipeline connecting Ethiopia to Berbera port. This move has angered the Horn of Africa countries, and the reasons for their discontent can be defined as follows:

- **Violation of the Sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Somalia:** The Somali government considered the memorandum of understanding illegal and a violation of its sovereignty over Somaliland.
- **Fears of Regional Destabilization:** There are concerns that the agreement could



destabilize the region, especially given the political instability in Somaliland.

- **Impact on Regional Interests:** Some countries fear that the agreement could affect their regional interests, particularly in trade and maritime navigation.

Motivations for Engineering a New Regional Alliance

There is no doubt that Ethiopia's recent opportunistic maneuvers, by strengthening its rapprochement with Somaliland, have driven the Horn of Africa countries to enhance their



rapprochement with Egypt. This suggests the emergence of a new regional alliance among Egypt, Somalia, and Eritrea, which can be observed through several indicators, shown as follows:

1. **Egyptian-Somali Rapprochement:**

Significant steps have been taken to enhance the rapprochement between Egypt and Somalia, evident in the official visit of Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to Egypt on January 20, 2024. This visit facilitated the exchange of views on issues of mutual interest, particularly the Ethiopian agreement with Somaliland. Egyptian President Al-Sisi warned against compromising Somalia's interests and emphasized Egypt's support for Somali sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this context, a question arises about Somalia's interests in enhancing rapprochement with Egypt at this time, which can be answered by the possibility of Somalia receiving support from the Egyptian political leadership in several areas, as follows:

- **Military Support:** Somalia faces security threats, and rapprochement with Egypt could provide military support to combat the terrorist group Al-Shabaab and coordinate with Egypt to secure the coasts against piracy.
- **Enhancing Trade Relations:** Somalia seeks to strengthen its trade relations with Egypt, especially in food imports, and attract Egyptian investments in various fields.


- **Reconstruction of the Country:** Somalia needs to rebuild its infrastructure after decades of conflict.
 - **Energy Cooperation:** Somalia aims to benefit from Egypt's expertise in the energy sector.
2. **Egyptian-Eritrean Rapprochement:** Eritrea's political leadership has realized that Ethiopia's policies are not in Eritrea's favor, evident from Eritrea's rejection of the "Pretoria" agreement that Ethiopia signed with the Tigray Front in November 2022 to cease the war, which excluded Eritrea despite its support for Ethiopia's war against the Tigray Front. Additionally, Ethiopia's agreement with Somaliland is seen by Eritrea as a threat not only to its ports used by Ethiopia for export, "Massawa" and "Assab," but also—more importantly—fears that Abiy Ahmed might attempt to seize the Assab port during his expansionist ambitions.

In this context, the official visit of Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki to Egypt on February 24, 2024, contributed to strengthening bilateral relations and exploring cooperation in various fields. The question arises about Eritrea's interests in enhancing rapprochement with Egypt at this time, which can be answered by the possibility of Eritrea receiving support from the Egyptian political leadership in several areas, shown as follows:

- **Combating Terrorism:** Eritrea faces threats from terrorist groups in the region, such as Al-Shabaab.

- **Red Sea Security:** Eritrea aims to secure its maritime routes in the Red Sea.
 - **Trade:** Eritrea seeks to strengthen its trade relations with Egypt, especially in agricultural exports, and attract Egyptian investments in various fields.
 - **Development of Assab Port:** Eritrea wants to develop Assab port into a regional commercial hub.
 - **Electrical Connectivity:** Eritrea seeks to connect to the Egyptian electrical grid.
3. **Djibouti's Supporting Stance for the Somali Sovereignty:** Djibouti expressed its discontent with the memorandum of understanding signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland at the beginning of this year, considering it a violation of Somali sovereignty and potentially destabilizing the region. Djibouti took several actions, including issuing an official statement condemning the memorandum, recalling its ambassador to Ethiopia, and calling on the international community to denounce the memorandum. Ethiopia's reliance on Djibouti's ports for its trade with the outside world as a landlocked country means that using other ports, like Berbera in Somaliland, would negatively impact Djibouti by diminishing its influence as a regional trade center and reducing revenues from the Doraleh port, as well as causing social repercussions such as job losses in trade-related sectors.

In this light, Djibouti is unlikely to oppose the formation of a new regional alliance led by Egypt to contain Ethiopia's opportunistic



maneuvers in the Horn of Africa. This can be translated into increased frequency of official visits between the two countries to enhance security and stability in the region and achieve economic development.

In conclusion, there is an opportunity to strengthen the alliance among Horn of Africa countries led by Egypt, considering that Egypt's foreign policy towards the Horn of Africa is based on principles of mutual respect, good neighborliness, non-interference in internal affairs, and resolving disputes through peaceful means. Egypt can activate its role in the Horn of Africa by employing its diverse tools, particularly active diplomacy to resolve conflicts, providing developmental assistance in various fields, and military cooperation to enhance the security structures of Horn of Africa countries to face terrorist threats.



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