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The Role of Gulf States in Peace and Security and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

by Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw

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ABSTRACT

The Gulf states – particularly Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United Arab Emirates – are emerging as influential security and development actors in the world. This paper identifies contemporary factors that drive Gulf peace and security engagement in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in general, and the Horn of Africa (HoA) in particular. While it takes into consideration recent global developments (emergence of China, the Arab Spring, the growing Saudi-Iran rift and concomitant Sunni-Shia sectarianism in the Middle East), it exemplifies Gulf-HoA relations by analysing the reasons for and regional ramifications of the involvement of Horn countries in the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen (2015). The paper also discusses the economic engagement of the Gulf states in SSA and lays out the characteristics that distinguish Gulf development cooperation from that of the European Union and the US. It highlights the regions and economic sectors in SSA with large Gulf footprints, without overlooking investment controversies surrounding agriculture and food security.

Gulf states | Sub-Saharan Africa | Economic aid | Military missions | European Union | United States

keywords

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Introduction

The "Gulf states" are the seven countries bordering the Persian Gulf in the Arabian Peninsula: Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They are characterised by their abundant hydrocarbon reserves, high per capita income, high expat-to-national ratio,[1] and religious homogeneity (Islam). In the political sphere, all but Iraq are headed by emirs and monarchs with varying levels of governing authority.

The political and economic role of the Gulf states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has long been evident. However, the Gulf states are lately widening their sphere of influence and assuming a proactive role in other regions of the African continent and the rest of the world. Although it should not be considered only a contemporary development, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), particularly the Horn of Africa (HoA), is a region in which the Gulf states are investing politically and economically.

The Arabian Peninsula and continental Africa have a long history of interaction that has resulted in shared cultures and identities that have transcended the trials of time to show their legacy in modern day SSA. From the highlands and lowlands of Eritrea and Ethiopia, to the coastlines of Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya and the islands of Tanzania, to the interiors of Sudan and Mali, the influence of Arabic culture and Islamic faith are evident in the language, traditions, architecture and

[1] UAE leads with 88 per cent non-nationals, followed by Qatar 85 per cent, Kuwait 69 per cent, Bahrain 52 per cent, Oman 44 per cent and Saudi 32 per cent non-nationals. See Gulf Research Center (GRC) and Migration Policy Centre (MPC), "Gulf Labour Markets and Migration. GCC: Total population and percentage of nationals and non-nationals in GCC countries (latest national statistics, 2010-2015)", in *GLMM Demographic and Economic Database*, http://gulfmigration.eu/?p=4944.

* Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw holds an MA in international peacebuilding from the University of Notre Dame (USA). She currently works as a freelance consultant engaged in research, analysis and advocacy related to peace and security issues in the HoA.

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religious practices of millions of people in SSA.

Although Gulf countries consist of the seven mentioned above, this report looks at the six states (sans Iraq) which make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It particularly focuses on Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar, the economic and political heavyweights among the Gulf countries and the ones having a more proactive engagement in SSA. Similarly, even though the paper makes reference to SSA as a unit, the author will focus primarily on the HoA and provide a more nuanced analysis of Gulf-HoA relations, given the relevant historical as well as contemporary relations and dynamics between these two sub-regions.

2. The role of the Gulf states in peace and security in SSA

2.1 The rise of the Gulf states as influential international and regional actors in SSA

The economic and political influence of Gulf states has expanded beyond the MENA region. From increasing their footprint in global humanitarian funding,[2] to establishing Dubai as a global investment and financial hub, Qatar bidding to host the 2022 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup and Saudi Arabia leading the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (2014-2016), Gulf states – particularly Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE – are on the rise. This Gulf revival has its roots in changing global and regional dynamics (especially in the case of MENA). One significant global factor in this regard is the tilting of global power eastwards with the emergence of China and India. For GCC countries that have relied heavily on the United States' strategic interest in MENA and its military support, the shift in power signalled the need to diversify their political and economic partners. Furthermore, the "Arab Spring" and subsequent fall of authoritarian regimes in North Africa was not only worrying to Gulf monarchies but also a reminder that the US military presence in the region, or even in their territory (in the case of Bahrain), would not insulate them from internal resistance. In fact, when the US gave its support to popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and also welcomed the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in both countries,[3] Gulf monarchies, some of which also have (Shia- or Sunni-based) Islamist movements (UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia), understood that their national interests and that of their major ally – the United States – might not be perfectly aligned. Similarly, US energy self-sufficiency, its rapprochement with Iran and its reluctance to engage

[2] "Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar rose steadily from 1% in 2000 to reach 7% of the global humanitarian funding in 2014." Céline Billat, "The Funding of Humanitarian Action by non-Western Donors: The Sustainability of Gulf States' Contribution", in *CERAH Working Papers*, No. 30 (September 2015), p. 7, http://www.cerahgeneve.ch/index.php/download_file/view/1060/164.

[3] Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "GCC Foreign Policy: From the Iran-Iraq War to the Arab Awakening", in LSE Middle East Centre, *The New Politics of Intervention of Gulf Arab States*, London, London School of Economics, April 2015, p. 52-65, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/61772.

in military intervention to get rid of Assad in Syria signalled to GCC countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the waning of US interest in the Middle East.[4] It is in the light of these developments, therefore, that the Gulf states feel compelled to assume a more proactive role in regional affairs and improve their international standing. Given the geographical and cultural proximities, the MENA region and SSA, particularly the Horn of Africa, are prime sites to form strategic alliances and pursue Gulf interests.

2.2 The role of the Gulf states in peace and security in SSA

The Gulf states are engaging in SSA's peace and security in various ways. From institutional interaction between the GCC and African Union (AU) to individual Gulf states influencing peace and security in SSA countries, Gulf countries have overtly and covertly contributed to peace and security (or the lack thereof) in SSA in general, and in the HoA in particular.

Institutionalised regional and continental relationships between SSA and the Gulf are still nascent but growing. At the third Arab-Africa Summit in November 2013 in Kuwait City, and in its ensuing Kuwait Declaration, the leaders of these two regions asserted their commitment to formalised collaboration and partnership in the areas of peace and security, development, and investment between the two regions.[5] In a sign of growing interest in collaboration, an AU high-level delegation led by Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui paid a visit to Kuwait, Qatar and UAE in 2015. The high-level African delegation met with ministers and high-level state officials in the respective countries to discuss peace and security developments in Africa and to seek collaboration to address ongoing conflicts (Somalia, Libya, Mali) and emerging challenges (terrorism, violent extremism). The AU and the respective Gulf countries expressed their mutual commitments to support the AU's continental conflict prevention and management mechanisms by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to facilitate formal partnerships.[6]

Qatar is emerging as a notable peace and security actor in the greater Middle East and HoA regions. It is particularly carving out a portfolio as a mediator, and has engaged in several peace processes (namely those in Yemen, Lebanon and Sudan).[7] In the Horn, its most recent effort was to mediate a truce between Eritrea and Djibouti in 2010 in the wake of the border dispute between these two countries

[4] Christopher Phillips, "Gulf Actors and the Syria Crisis", in LSE Middle East Centre, *The New Politics of Intervention of Gulf Arab States*, London, London School of Economics, April 2015, p. 41-51, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/61772.

[5] African Union, *Kuwait Declaration* (Min/Africa-Arab/Decl1(III) Rev.1), 19-20 November 2013, http://pages.au.int/afroarab/documents/kuwait-declaration.

[6] African Union Commission, *The African Union High-Level Delegation to the Gulf Countries Concludes the Last Leg of its Visit in Abu Dhabi*, 27 November 2015, http://goo.gl/skQ8gu.

[7] Sultan Barakat, "Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement", in *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Papers*, No. 12 (November 2014), p. 19, http://brook.gs/2aQtUSx.

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in 2008.[8] In the framework of what has been called "economic diplomacy,"[9] Qatar not only facilitates and sponsors mediation processes, but also puts financial incentives on the table to encourage conflicting parties to come to terms. For example, when Qatar took over the Darfur peace process and mediated the Doha Agreement between the government of Sudan and the Equality Movement (JEM, the major armed opposition group in Darfur) in 2010, Qatar pledged 2 billion dollars for development plans in Darfur and brokered agro investment deals worth 1 billion dollars in Sudan.[10]

In the light of growing Islamic radicalisation in the HoA and MENA, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been accused of backing insurgents and Islamists abroad. Though Qatar and Saudi Arabia dismiss these accusations as baseless, they are said to turn a blind eye to financial support from their capitals to radical Islamic movements abroad, albeit not supporting these movements directly.[11] In SSA, Qatar's support has been linked to al-Shabaab in Somalia,[12] while Saudi Arabia has been accused of promoting and supporting Wahhabi/Salafi movements in the continent. While much of the Wahhabi/Salafi proselytisation is done through non-state actors (individuals, humanitarian organisations, religious institutes, etc.), Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been repeatedly named and shamed for failing to conduct due diligence.[13] Further, in the African context, the promotion of more rigid Wahhabi and Salafi interpretations of Islam is seen as a weakening of the Sufi-based African Islamic culture that has flourished in East and West Africa for centuries.[14] Moreover, in the light of growing violent extremism in SSA, this development is a source of concern for countries with predominant or significant Muslim communities, lest such fundamentalist Wahhabi interpretations provide fertile ground for violent extremism to take root domestically. In Mali, for example, Wahhabi followers are

[8] Ibid., p. 41.

[9] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The Gulf Goes Global: The Evolving Role of Gulf Countries in the Middle East and North Africa and Beyond", in *FRIDE Working Papers*, No. 121 (November 2013), p. 19, http://fride.org/publication/1169/.

[10] Sultan Barakat, "Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement", cit., p. 19.

[11] Jonathan Masters and Mohammed Aly Sergie, "Al Shabab", in *CFR Backgrounders*, 13 March 2015, http://on.cfr.org/1foRUds.

[12] In a US diplomatic cable leaked by WikiLeaks on 24 August 2011, Ambassador Rice expressed her concerns that Qatar might be funding groups fighting in Somalia, while leaked minutes from the US embassy in Tripoli revealed that Somalia TFG president Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Amhmad had accused Qatar of funding al-Shabaab. Qatar, however, has denied the accusations and called them baseless. See Ali Abunimah, "The US Accused Qatar of Funding Somalia's Al-Shabab Militia, WikiLeaks Reveals", in *The Electronic Intifada*, 27 August 2011, https://electronicintifada.net/node/10323.

[13] Ryan Teague Beckwith, "Transcript: Read Hillary Clinton's Speech on Fighting ISIS", in *Time*, 19 November 2015, http://ti.me/1Ne19iW; Justin Huggler, "German vice-chancellor Accuses Saudi Arabia of Funding Islamic Extremism in the West", in *The Telegraph*, 6 December 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/12035838/German-vice-chancellor-accuses-Saudi-Arabia-of-funding-Islamic-extremism-in-the-West.html.

[14] Dawit W. Giorgis, *The Wahhabi Invasion of Africa*, January 2016, http://www.ethiomedia.com/1010ideas/the_wahabi_invasion_of_africa.pdf; Yaroslav Trofimov, "Jihad Comes to Africa", in *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 February 2016.

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suspected of supporting Al-Qaeda affiliated groups operating in the region.[15] In Ethiopia, the government has been in a row with the Muslim community since 2011 when, in an effort to counter what it said was an infiltration of foreign-sponsored, Wahhabi-based extremist cells, it attempted to introduce "a more moderate" Al-Habashi teaching.[16] Calling this undue interference in religious affairs by a secular state, the Ethiopian Muslim community held protests in 2011 and 2012.[17] The government rejected this allegation and sentenced 17 Muslim activists, declaring that they were engaged in terrorism and plotting to create an Islamic state in Ethiopia.[18]

An important agenda that drives Saudi Arabia's involvement in SSA is its need to deprive the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran of any support in SSA. In view of Saudi Arabia's competition with these two actors for greater influence in MENA, a larger Iranian or Brotherhood footprint in the HoA would not only undermine Saudi Arabia's geopolitical currency in the region but could also affect its access to the Suez Canal, on which it relies for trade.[19] Sudan has been a particular concern for Saudi Arabia in this regard due to its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood and amicable relationship with Iran.[20]

An interesting encapsulation of Gulf interests in the HoA emerged as Yemen – the bridge between the Horn and the Gulf – descended into crisis in March 2015. As Saudi Arabia asserted its regional hegemony and announced military action against the (predominantly Shia) Yemeni Houthis, three Horn countries, Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti, cut their diplomatic ties with Iran and voiced their support for the Saudi-led coalition. Eritrea too is said to be renting out its ports and airspace and even sending ground troops.[21] All four of the Horn countries (including Eritrea) have their own reasons for joining or supporting the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Sudan and Eritrea are two "pariahs" in the Horn whose national economies, and regional and global diplomatic influence, have been debilitated by international economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation. They are therefore keen to form new alliances that would allow them to put their geopolitical leverage to use and unchain them from their economic shackles. Djibouti for its part is a country that is heavily reliant on rent derived from military bases on its territory and would

[15] Rose Skelton, "Mali: Faith and the Fightback", in *The Africa Report*, 12 August 2015, http://bit.ly/2akzQEL.

[16] Zeleke Eresso, "Competing Narratives on the Causes of Ethiopian Muslim Protests", in *The Horn of Africa Bulletin*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (January-February 2013), p. 6-9, http://life-peace.org/resource/horn-of-africa-bulletin-january-february-2013.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Aaron Maasho, "Ethiopia Hands Lengthy Prison Terms to Muslim Activists", in *Reuters*, 3 August 2015, http://reut.rs/1MICwJE.

[19] 81 per cent of grain imported to GCC passes through the Suez Canal. See Oxford Business Group, *Oman and GCC Nations Focus on Food Security*, 10 February 2016, http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/node/900333.

[20] Magnus Taylor, "Horn of Africa States Follow Gulf into the Yemen War", in *The Africa Report*, 22 January 2016, http://bit.ly/2aRSmmm.

[21] Ibid.

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rather diversify its clients rather than its economy, as the potential for the latter is limited. In Somalia, a state that is emerging after more than two decades of turmoil, the federal government is under pressure from internal actors (members of parliament) and donors to tackle its pervasive massive corruption issues.[22] It therefore needs to find alternative sources of finance and also bolster its regional and global diplomatic currency.

While the discussion above describes the context in which several Horn countries are supporting the Saudi coalition in Yemen, more important is the implication of their involvement in existing regional dynamics in the HoA, especially how it will affect the "no war, no peace" Ethio-Eritrean relations. As reports have surfaced that Eritrea is renting out its ports and airspace and contributing 400 troops to the Saudi coalition, observers have pointed out that this would be a "get-out-of-jail-free card"[23] for the severely isolated "North Korea of Africa." While Eritrea's exact returns for its contributions to the coalition remain opaque, a UN Monitoring Group report implied that Eritrea might have received financial assistance, investment and fuel for its services.[24] What is more predictable is its diplomatic returns: support from the Yemini government and Saudi Arabia, and potentially improved relations with post-Mubarak and post-Morsi Egypt, which is rising to assume its (contemporary) historical role as an influencer of MENA affairs. This development is particularly worrying for Ethiopia, which has been pressing for the isolation of Eritrea after the devastating war between the two countries in 1998-2000. As the biggest economy in the region with a relatively stable political scene, Ethiopia is watching Eritrea closely and, to create tensions with this country, the Ethiopian government may use its newly acquired Gulf partnerships and resources to destabilise it by supporting internal and external opposition groups.[25] Ethiopia is also concerned that a revival of Egyptian power and the support Al-Sisi's government has garnered from GCC countries could turn Egypt against Ethiopia's controversial Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project to control the Nile waters. While Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan signed a historic deal for cooperation on the Nile water in March 2015,[26] the millennia-long suspicion and tension between Egypt and Ethiopia are too deep to be settled with a single agreement. As a result, the two countries still keep a close

[22] Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranks Somalia 167th out of 168 countries on corruption. See *Corruption Perception Index 2015*, https://www.transparency.org/country/#SOM_DataResearch. See also Abdi Sheik, "Somali Lawmakers Seek to Remove President over Corruption Claims", in *Reuters*, 15 August 2015, http://reut.rs/1EtS7Vx.

[23] Alex de Waal, "Africa's $700 Billion Problem Waiting to Happen", in *Foreign Policy*, 17 March 2016, http://atfp.co/1pNoo9l.

[24] UN Security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2182 (2014): Eritrea* (S/2015/802), 19 October 2015, http://undocs.org/S/2015/802.

[25] The UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea reported that Eritrea provided support to armed opposition groups, such as Ginbot Sebat and Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM), as well as alleged yet unconfirmed support to an armed opposition group in Djibouti, Front pour la restauration de l'unité et de la démocratie (FRUD). Ibid., p. 17-22.

[26] "Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan Sign Deal to End Nile Dispute", in *BBC News*, 23 March 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32016763.

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eye on each other's actions. It is for this reason that Ethiopia is wary of a potential Egypt-Eritrea coalition, for fear the latter could capitalise on internal opposition or use external actors, such as al-Shabaab, to shake up the security apparatus of the country.[27] For a country that is preaching a narrative of "Ethiopian renaissance," malice from either or both of these actors would not only undermine Ethiopia's 4 billion dollar GERD project, but it could also challenge its strategic importance as a (self-portrayed) island of stability in a largely destabilised HoA region.

In addition to the Ethio-Eritrean tie, Sudan's participation in the Saudi-led coalition, including the contribution of approximately 350-700 ground troops to the fight against the Houthis in Yemen,[28] is a concern for regional peace, security and human rights in Sudan. Sudan's 2.2 billion dollar deposit from Riyadh and Doha,[29] and additional deals it has signed with these countries,[30] could mean a further deterioration of the situation in a country that is heavily militarised, has engaged in violent conflict on different fronts (the most publicised and horrific of which was in Darfur), and has a disappointing human rights record and a head of state who is accused of genocide.

The war in Yemen is a symptom of the growing Saudi-Iran rift, or the Sunni-Shia tension (the Sunni Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia against the Shia Houthis supported by Iran) in MENA, exhibiting its ripple effect in SSA in general, and the HoA in particular. In addition to its political consequences for countries in the Horn, the Saudi-Iran tension also has economic repercussions for others. Oil-based African economies, for example Nigeria, are feeling the brunt of falling oil prices caused by the Gulf states' refusal to reduce oil production to offset overproduction as a result of Iran joining the market.[31]

3. The role of the Gulf states in the economic development of SSA

3.1 GCC economic cooperation with SSA

The Gulf states are emerging as generous development partners in the world. As records of global humanitarian assistance show, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE accounted for 35 per cent of the total global humanitarian funding from non-

[27] Alex de Waal, "Africa's $700 Billion Problem Waiting to Happen", cit.

[28] Magnus Taylor, "Horn of Africa States Follow Gulf into the Yemen War", cit.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Sudan has signed a 1 billion dollar deal for the construction of three dams and received a 500 million dollar pledge for water and electricity projects. See Privilege Musvanhiri, "Saudi-Iran Row Spills over into Africa", in *Deutsche Welle*, 7 January 2016, http://dw.com/p/1HZtP.

[31] Chis Stien, "Is Nigeria's Promise a Pipe Dream?", in *U.S. News*, 17 February 2016, http://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2016-02-17/nigerias-challenges-rise-as-oil-prices-fall; Lerato Mbele, "Nigeria's Economy Is Under Pressure from Oil Price Drop", in *BBC News*, 13 February 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/business-31455031.

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Development Assistance Committee (DAC) states from 2009-2013.[32] Gulf overseas development assistance (ODA), however, is not a recent phenomenon. Kuwait, UAE and Saudi Arabia established national development funds, and led in the establishment of other multilateral Arab institutions such as the Arab Fund, in the 1960s and 1970s to assist mostly Arab communities abroad.[33] Expanding their assistance, they established the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa in Khartoum in 1974, providing funds for SSA countries that were not part of the Arab League (and hence could not get funding from the Arab Development Bank or similar multilateral agencies).[34]

While SSA countries are becoming notable recipients of Gulf aid (receiving 12 per cent of Gulf multilateral aid), disaggregated data on exact figures and the distribution of GCC ODA to SSA is hard to come by.[35] Nonetheless, it is possible to identify some of the objectives and strategies for Gulf development assistance to SSA.

Gulf aid is founded on Islamic teachings of giving and humanitarianism. One trend in Gulf funding is to channel it to predominantly Muslim countries and to use it to promote Islam through charitable organisations.[36] By 2005 around 42 countries had received Gulf aid; however, only three SSA countries – Senegal (1.6 per cent, 1.2 billion dollars), Mali (1.1 per cent, 0.8 billion dollars) and Guinea (1.1 per cent, 0.8 billion dollars), all of which are predominantly Muslim – had received more than 1 per cent of total Arab finance each.[37]

One interesting distinguishing character of the Gulf states (in this case Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE) is that their development assistance is allocated bilaterally (rather than through multilateral institutions) and is given in the form of loans (rather than grants).[38] Further, unlike funds from Western donors, Gulf financial assistance is not conditional on economic or political reforms, making it attractive for African states that cannot meet donor standards (including those set by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund).[39] As a result, several SSA countries have been looking to Gulf finance (in terms of funds) to finance national programmes. Ethiopia and Kenya, for example, have taken loans from Kuwait and

[32] Global Humanitarian Assistance, *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014*, September 2014, p. 35, http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/?p=5212.

[33] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The Gulf States and South-South Cooperation", in Justin Dargin (ed.), *The Rise of the Global South. Philosophical, Geopolitical and Economic Trends of the 21st Century*, Singapore, World Scientific, 2013, p. 158-159.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Marta Latek, "Humanitarian policy of the Gulf States", in *EPRS At a Glance*, May 2016, p. 2, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_ATA(2016)582040.

[36] Céline Billat, "The Funding of Humanitarian Action by non-Western Donors", cit., p. 8-11.

[37] Espen Villanger, "Arab Foreign Aid: Disbursement Patterns, Aid Policies and Motives", in *CMI Reports*, No. 2007/2 (2007), p. 10-11, http://www.cmi.no/publications/2615.

[38] Ibid., p. v.

[39] Ibid.

UAE respectively to finance infrastructure projects at home.[40]

As a lack of transparency characterises Gulf funds, there is a conflation of public and private funds – both in terms of the sources of the funds (private and public sources for development) and where the funds are going (public and private investments abroad).[41] While state officials campaign for and donate to humanitarian causes abroad, and raise funds for aid,[42] public agencies in Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar also seek investment opportunities abroad and set aside funds for overseas private investment in sectors such as agriculture.[43] Several private Saudi agro investments in Sudan and Ethiopia, for example, are supported by the King Abdullah Initiative for Saudi Agricultural Investment Abroad – an 800 million dollar fund, set aside "to support investment by private sector Saudi Arabian companies in agricultural projects abroad."[44]

Given the new face of development cooperation that Gulf states are pursuing (one based on trade and investment abroad), the next section highlights GCC trade and investment interests and engagement in SSA.

3.2 GCC trade and investment in SSA

According to a comprehensive report by the Economist Intelligence Unit, GCC exports to SSA were valued at 19.2 billion dollars, representing only 2 per cent of GCC total exports in 2014, while GCC imports from SSA for the same year were worth 5.5 billion dollars, although much of this was destined for the UAE for re-export.[45]

While precise data on Gulf investment portfolios is hard to come by, the main areas of GCC economic engagement in the region include extractive industries, real estate, private investment and banking, retail, tourism and even education.[46]

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[40] The Kuwaiti loan to Ethiopia amounted to around 22.1 million dollars for water development in Axum, whereas Kenya took a loan of around 10 million dollars to develop its electricity grids. See Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, *Signing of a Loan Agreement and a Project Agreement to Finance the Axum Water Supply Project …*, 16 June 2015, https://goo.gl/c2GtfE; Ola Salem, "UAE Loan Helps Provide Electric Power to Rural Kenyans", in *The National*, 22 September 2013, http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/uae-loan-helps-provide-electric-power-to-rural-kenyans.

[41] Espen Villanger, "Arab Foreign Aid", cit., p. 1.

[42] "Sheik Mohamed, ruler of Dubai and Prime Minister of the UAE, for example, has 'personally' established aid campaigns and has provided several large donations to various initiatives." Evren Tok, Rachael Calleja and Hanaa El-Ghaish, "Arab Development Aid and the New Dynamics of Multilateralism: Towards Better Governance?", in *European Scientific Journal*, Special ed., Vol. 1 (June 2014), p. 601, http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/3679.

[43] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The Gulf States and South-South Cooperation", cit.

[44] Ibid. p. 165.

[45] Economist Intelligence Unit, *GCC Trade and Investment Flows*, December 2014, http://www.ired.org/modules/infodoc/visit.php?lid=7691.

[46] Ibid.

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Although equity markets (stock exchanges) in the continent are rather limited with the exception of South Africa, private equity and direct investment in private companies are still possible. Qatar National Bank, for example, has purchased a 23 per cent stake in Ecobank of Togo, while the Investment Corporation of Dubai has invested 300 million dollars in the Dangote Cement factory in Nigeria.[47] Islamic finance is another area where the Gulf states have a comparative advantage over other actors in SSA. In 2014, for example, Kuwait Finance House arranged South Africa's first sovereign Islamic law-compliant bond of 500 million dollars. Following in South Africa's and Senegal's footsteps, Nigeria and Kenya are also considering issuing Islamic law-compliant bonds to sovereign bodies in order to access finances from Gulf Islamic banks.[48] Given the significant Muslim population in SSA (29 per cent),[49] including in large economies such as Nigeria and Ethiopia, Islamic finance is a much needed product with potential for growth.

Africa's population is growing, its middle class is expanding, it is experiencing high rates of urbanisation, and its retail and consumer goods markets have skyrocketed and are projected to expand further.[50] Seizing this opportunity, Gulf companies are penetrating the retail market in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia.[51]

The tourism sector is an important source of income for many African economies. While the sector also has significant potential, it is rarely fully capitalised on. Understanding its embedded potential, Gulf investors are expanding their footprints in the African tourism sector in Zanzibar, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Mozambique and elsewhere in the continent.[52]

The Gulf states are also eyeing the health and education sectors in SSA after their relative success in delivering such services in North Africa. While West Africa, particularly Nigeria and Ghana, are popular Gulf destinations for investment in health services, East Africa, particularly Kenya and Uganda, have attracted the attention of Gulf countries for investment in education (especially private schools).[53]

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[47] Ibid., p. 16.

[48] Ibid., p. 13.

[49] PewResearch Center, *Christianity and Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 28 April 2010, http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/christianity-and-islam-in-sub-saharan-africa.

[50] Damian Hattingh et al., *The Rise of the African Consumer. A Report from McKinsey's Africa Consumer Insights Center*, Johannesburg, McKinsey, October 2012, http://www.mckinsey.com/global-locations/africa/south-africa/en/rise-of-the-african-consumer.

[51] Economist Intelligence Unit, *GCC Trade and Investment Flows*, cit., p. 16.

[52] Ibid., p. 15-17.

[53] Ibid., p. 20.

3.3 Main fields of impact and future prospects

In view of the above-mentioned areas of Gulf economic engagement in SSA, what makes GCC countries noticeably different from more traditional actors such as the US and European countries is the unconditionality of their terms and their practice of giving loans rather than grants. GCC countries are also different from actors such as China in that their economic interests are not tied to extractives or infrastructure development but rather to the service sector.

While the Gulf states' interest in the service sector is booming, their involvement in manufacturing industries lags behind, mostly due to inadequate infrastructure, bureaucracy and high risk linked to political instability in much of SSA. Nonetheless, Gulf states are engaged in manufacturing in South Africa, Senegal, Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire and, increasingly, Ethiopia.[54]

Similarly, infrastructure investment is an area with great potential that has received only limited contributions from GCC countries. According to a report compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2014, "Gulf-based entities, both public and private, are currently contributing around 10% of infrastructure investment in Africa," mostly in the telecom and power spheres.[55]

3.4 Gulf investment controversies

In contrast to the areas of Gulf engagement in SSA discussed above, a more controversial investment sector is agriculture. In the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis and subsequent spikes in food prices, the Gulf states have taken to heart the importance of ensuring their food security and self-sufficiency. Given their lack of arable land and adequate fresh water resources for agriculture, Gulf countries have encouraged public and private companies to invest in agriculture abroad, mostly in Africa and Asia.[56]

Although detailed data on land deals is hard to come by, Saudi Arabia is the prime GCC investor in agriculture abroad, with 70 per cent of its deals in SSA, mostly in Sudan and Ethiopia.[57] According to regional observers and international watch groups,

> in the past five years Saudi Arabia has invested more in Ethiopia than

[54] Ibid., p. 18.

[55] Ibid., p. 17. See also Economist Intelligence Unit, *Risk and Reward: The Gulf's Push into African Infrastructure*, September 2014, https://www.eiuperspectives.economist.com/sites/default/files/Risk%20and%20reward.pdf.

[56] Benjamin Shepherd, "GCC States' Land Investments Abroad. The Case of Ethiopia", in *CIRS Summary Reports*, No. 8 (2013) , p.1-4, http://hdl.handle.net/10822/558319.

[57] "Saudi Arabia Investing Heavily in African Farmland for Food Production", in *African Farming*, 5 July 2012, http://www.africanfarming.net/crops/agriculture/saudi-arabia-invests-in-african-farmland-for-food-production.

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> any other country, with Saudi Star Agricultural Development being the leading investor in the country, having committed to invest US$2.5 billion in Ethiopia by 2020. The firm plans to develop a rice-farming project on 10,000 hectares of land leased for 60 years and rent an additional 290,000 hectares.[58]

Similarly, Saudi Arabia has been the largest investor in Sudan, accounting for half of all the foreign investment.[59] But Saudi Arabia is not the only GCC country investing heavily in agriculture in SSA: UAE and Qatar are also notable investors. UAE, for example, is preparing to develop more than 28,000 hectares of land in Sudan.[60] In 2008, Qatar was in negotiations with the Kenyan government to develop 40,000 hectares in the Tana Delta part of the country as part of the deal to construct the Lamu port.[61]

Interest in agricultural investment in Africa is not unique to GCC countries. Emerging economies such as China and India are also involved in the African agro market in an effort to guarantee their food security. Given the fact that most of the SSA countries where these deals are being negotiated suffer from food insecurity themselves, the value added of these export-led agricultural foreign investments for local economies is questionable.

Further, Gulf investments in agriculture have been dubbed "land grabbing" and criticised by many analysts, human rights activists and environmentalists, who point out the negative consequences of these massive land deals: from alterations to the lifestyles of communities (affecting their access to water and grazing land or their cultural attachment to the land), to the displacement of communities without appropriate compensation,[62] to environmental degradation of natural resources such as land, water and biodiversity,[63] activists highlight the human and environmental rights dimensions of agro investment in Africa.

Overall, and as mentioned above, how these deals are handled lacks transparency and hence getting up-to-date information on agro projects is a challenge. However, some observers note that most of these deals, though large in scale, are lagging behind in terms of implementation.[64]

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Nomathemba Mhlanga, "Private Sector Agribusiness Investment in sub-Saharan Africa", in *Agricultural Management, Marketing and Finance Working Documents*, No. 27 (March 2010), p. 20, http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/ags-division/publications/publication/en/c/40487.

[61] Xan Rice, "Qatar Looks to Grow Food in Kenya", in *The Guardian*, 2 December 2008, http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2008/dec/02/land-for-food-qatar-kenya.

[62] "Ethiopia - Land for Sale", in *Al Jazeera*, 30 January 2014, http://fw.to/Mi0FXik.

[63] Pascal Liu, "Impacts of Foreign Agricultural Investment in Developing Countries: Evidence from Case Studies", in *FAO Commodities and Trade Policy Research Working Papers*, No. 47 (2014), p. 12.

[64] Eckart Woertz, "Arab Food, Water, and the Big Landgrab that Wasn't", in *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Fall/Winter 2011), p. 119-132, http://tfrasheed.org/download/

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4. Assessing main priorities and main challenges of the Gulf states

The main priorities for the Gulf states in SSA revolve around their evolving identity as influential global actors as well as the regional dynamics in MENA, particularly in view of the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, growing Sunni violent extremism, and Iran (both in terms of its internal developments and its emergence as an important international actor post-sanctions). But these three variables work together and drive one another, as was clearly revealed by analysis of Gulf involvement in the Yemeni crisis.

As GCC countries still rely on US military and diplomatic alliances and backing, they are likely to continue to engage in and support the counterterrorism and anti-piracy programmes of the US in MENA and SSA. They will do so not only to prevent the negative ramifications of terrorism and piracy in their own political economies, but also to demonstrate their own strategic importance in securing Washington's security agenda in MENA and the HoA.

Keeping the Muslim Brotherhood weak in SSA is also among the priorities of the GCC countries, most notably Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain. Given that, the expansion of the Muslim Brotherhood was a threat primarily in Sudan and Egypt (which is not in SSA but is strongly relevant for HoA dynamics), GCC countries are likely to maintain strong economic and diplomatic ties with both countries in order to influence their internal politics and prevent the reinforcement of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Ridding Iran of any base in SSA in general and in the HoA in particular will be another Gulf priority. Money and diplomatic backing will be provided in exchange for SSA allegiance to Saudi Arabia and the other GCC countries, who will strengthen their relationships with Eritrea for this reason.

Gulf states will seek to take part in the "Africa Rising" rhetoric by lending a hand to AU peace and security endeavours and expanding their trade and investment with the region. They will hope to capitalise on the growing African consumerist middle class, the booming service sector and growing (public and private) financial demand to sustain the economic growth and infrastructure development projects of many SSA countries.

Gulf states have faced resistance to the extensive land deals they have negotiated with food insecure SSA countries. However, given the abundant land, water and labour resources in the continent and also the high demand from African countries for foreign direct investment, it is likely that GCC investment in agriculture in SSA will continue.

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While these are the main areas that will anchor GCC engagement in SSA, it should not be forgotten that they will be competing with emerging actors such as China and Turkey for political influence and economic opportunities in SSA (particularly in the HoA). The implications of this for African countries is rather positive as they will now have multiple political and economic partners to choose from.

Recommendations

While GCC investments in SSA are largely welcome, investments in the agricultural sector are more controversial. In order to ensure win-win results for GCC investors and their agro investment host communities, Gulf investors both public and private should put more energy and resources into community "buy-in" of their projects through consultations with affected communities and provide appropriate compensation. They should encourage private and public investors to integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their plans, so that they can launch need-based, long-term development programmes that can benefit communities affected by these agricultural projects.

Further, in order to build trust and settle these investment controversies, the Gulf states should ensure more transparency on the scope, ownership and purpose of any agro investment deals.

The EU and US should also reconsider their agricultural trade agreements with SSA to present SSA countries with alternative opportunities to develop their small-holder agriculture and enter the global market competitively, without being forced to prematurely adopt large-scale and commercial farming. In view of the growing market for organic agricultural products, if adequately supported, small-holder SSA farmers could indeed maximise their comparative advantage in the global market.

Moreover, given the role and growing importance of emerging actors in SSA, the EU and US should re-evaluate their development cooperation models, especially the conditionality around economic reform, to ensure that they remain important economic partners for Africa.

In order to avoid being complicit in supporting radical movements and violent extremists in SSA directly or indirectly (through money channelled through non-state actors), the Gulf states should strengthen their mechanisms for due diligence.

Given the United States' role as a forerunner in the fight against terrorism, and the EU's role in its joint mission with the AU in Somalia against al-Shabaab forces, the US and EU – together with SSA countries – should demand more transparency by the Gulf states in the distribution of their ODA.

In a region where histories, identities and also conflicts are interrelated (as is the case in the HoA), all three actors (GCC, US, EU) should ensure that they understand the regional dynamics before undertaking political or military intervention in, or in support of, countries in the Horn.

One persisting security challenge in the HoA region is the unsettled Ethio-Eritrea relations. The tit for tat and proxy wars these two countries engage in to undermine and delegitimise each other could have a destabilising effect on the region. Therefore, the US and EU should make more concerted diplomatic efforts towards resolution of the Ethio-Eritrea tension.

Among the Gulf states, Qatar in particular is strengthening its relationships with both countries, and given its already notable portfolio in mediation in the HoA (between Sudan and Darfur rebels, and between Eritrea and Djibouti), Qatar could be a suitable mediator to continue the diplomatic effort to reconcile the two countries.

In the same vein, the effectiveness of international sanctions and diplomatic isolation of Sudan and Eritrea should be reviewed, as further economic crises and diplomatic desperation could make them vulnerable to becoming proxies in a regional tug-of-war in the HoA or MENA.

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